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Abstract

This thesis explores the challenges facing minority background pupils in the process of acquiring English as an L3 in Norwegian primary schools. However, in order to investigate English as an L3, English needs to be seen in relation to the learners' L1 and L2. The research is primarily qualitative, based on observations in two classes, interviews with EFL teachers, introductory course teachers, a headmistress and councillors at three schools. In addition, the research includes a case study of a group of minority background pupils whose second language is Norwegian and third language is English. Available test results from the school where the case study was conducted add a quantitative dimension to the research.

The thesis aims at both presenting the situation for some minority background pupils in Norway, and also at discussing the current situation for minority background in Norway in general. It introduces the educational context for minority background children and presents the various introductory programs in Norway, the Ministry of Education's strategy plan, curricula for mother tongue and second language education for speakers of minority languages, and the English curriculum. Relevant theory, such as introductions to the fields of bilingualism and multilingualism, is provided. In addition, there is a description of various writing systems, such as deep and shallow orthographies. Some research studies that are related to the target group of this thesis are reviewed, both comparative case studies and comparative international studies.

It was found that minority background children meet various challenges when integrating in Norway. Firstly they often have to complete an introductory course before commencing at a regular school. Secondly they have to integrate into a Norwegian primary school where the language of instruction in all subjects is Norwegian. At the same time they have to start the process of acquiring English as an L3. In general their level of English was lower than that of their Norwegian peers. Factors such as the mother tongue, interlanguage transfer, ethnic background, and the learning context may influence the minority background children's acquisition of English. It was found that the minority background pupils' level of Norwegian was of great importance in the process of learning English. In addition, parents' attitudes and in some cases, ethnic backgrounds also appear to influence the children's learning. The Early Years Literacy Programme at the case study school, with its focus on individual learning, also appeared to have a positive effect on the minority background children. Finally the importance of teacher qualifications of those teaching minority background children was emphasised.

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1. Introduction

The present study is primarily a qualitative study of 5th and 6th graders of minority background who all have Norwegian as a second language (L2) and English as a third language (L3). The study investigates challenges facing minority background children when learning English as an L3 in Norwegian primary schools, as well as looking into factors that may hinder or contribute to the acquisition of English as an L3. The data has been collected from three schools, referred to as School 1, School 2 and School 3. School 1 offers introductory courses to minority background children, School 2 is a normal primary school which in addition offers introductory courses to minority background children, and School 3 is a primary school with a high number of minority background pupils. Although a qualitative study of this scale may not give room for a broad generalisation, it will hopefully provide general impressions of the issues at stake.

1.1 Background

A report from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet) from 2007 states that in the period between 01.01.2001 and 01.01.2006 the immigrant population in Norway increased by 89 000 people. Due to the fact that there is a growth in immigration, there is also an increasing number of children with a minority background in Norway. These children are normally placed in Norwegian schools, and have to face completely different challenges when learning Norwegian and English than their Norwegian peers. Because the curriculum for EFL education does not distinguish between the majority group of Norwegian children and those of another cultural and linguistic background, learning English is likely to be especially challenging to most minority background children. Although English is a world language, Norwegian children have an advantage when learning it because their mother tongue is close to English. The two languages belong to the same Germanic language family¹ and they share many similar words, as well as comparable structure and syntax. In addition, since Norway has close links to England and the USA, English has for a long time had a strong position as a foreign language in Norway.

The difference in literacy skills between minority and majority-speaking children in Norway seems greater than in most countries. Wagner (2004) elaborates on the results from a

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_languages last modified on 3 April 2008, accessed on 8 April 2008.

research study called ‘Progress in International Reading Literacy Study’, (PIRLS, 2001). She found that out of the 35 countries participating in the study, Norway has the most significant differences between minority and majority pupils when it comes to their skills in reading and writing in Norwegian (see section 4.3).

1.2 The present study and its aims

In order to investigate the acquisition of English as a third language, English needs to be seen in relation to the learners’ first and second languages. Reference to the subjects’ L1 (first language) and L2 are therefore made throughout the thesis. The minority background pupils in the case study in School 3 are all of non-European descent. However, pupils at the introductory courses in School 1 and 2 are of both non-European and European descent. Although reference to minority background children in this thesis is mainly to children of non-European descent, some reference will also be made to children of European descent.

The research methodology was primarily qualitative in the form of interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with teachers, councillors and a headmistress at the three schools. In addition, a case study of minority background pupils was carried out at one of these schools (School 3), where two teachers were asked to fill out a personal profile on each of the minority background pupils in their class. The teachers were asked about the children’s background, their level of proficiency in their L1, L2, and L3, and their motivation to learn English as a third language. Observations in the classroom focused on how the minority background children functioned in the EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom, how they coped with the given tasks compared to the Norwegian children, and how they were grouped, for example whether there were many minority background children placed in the same group. Available test results in English from School 3, based on Cambridge Young Learners tests, added a quantitative dimension to the study and made a comparison between the minority background subjects, the rest of the class and other classes at the same grade level possible.

The different schools where the interviews were conducted are all situated in the same county. Interviews were made with a councillor from the elementary level and a councillor from the lower secondary school at School 1. At School 2 interviews were conducted with English teachers in the 5th grade, teachers from the introductory courses, and the school’s headmistress. At School 3 where the case study was carried out, the subjects were 5th and 6th graders from two classes using the Australian ‘Early Years Literacy Programme’ (EYLP).

The two EFL teachers for the 5th and 6th grade classes were interviewed. An additional interview was conducted with another 5th grade EFL teacher at the school.

The EYLP model was originally designed for Australian children for whom English is their first language, and when first introduced at the school it was adapted to pupils' mother tongue teaching. The EYLP, or a form of it, is now used by a number of schools in Norway. The main idea behind the EYLP model is that reading should be adjusted to the individual pupil's level. In addition, the pupils are expected to read on a regular basis to increase their fluency. The pupils are divided into groups based on their abilities and the classroom is organised into various learning centres between which the groups rotate. Because this programme to a large extent focuses on the individual in the process of learning it is interesting to see what effect it has on the minority background children that participate in the programme. The situation for the subjects in the case study, as well as the situation for minority background children in Norway in general, led to the following research questions for this thesis:

- What are the challenges for minority background children in Norway learning English as an L3?
- How well do minority background children cope with learning English as an L3 in Norwegian primary schools?
- What factors hinder or contribute to the acquisition of English as an L3 for the minority background children?

One would expect, for instance, that factors such as the EYLP programme, the parents' attitudes to their children's learning, the learners' proficiency in their L1, and the distance of their L1 to their L2 and L3, would influence the acquisition of English as an L3 for minority background children in Norway.

In addition, according to the cross-linguistic research of Hammarberg (2001), De Angelis (2001), Selinker (2001) and Cenoz (2001), there is reason to believe that when learning an L3 one is likely to be influenced by the language which is typologically closer to the L3. In other words one is not always influenced most by the mother tongue when learning a third language. If this is the case, then most of the children in this study would be most influenced by Norwegian, which is their L2, as this language is typologically closer to their L3 (English) than their L1 is. Therefore, the subjects' level of Norwegian is also likely to be of importance for their acquisition of English. If their level of Norwegian is poor, they may be influenced by Norwegian to a less extent when learning English, or if their level of

Norwegian is relatively good, their influence of Norwegian when learning English may be of more significance.

1.3 The organisation of the thesis

Chapter 2 introduces the educational context for minority background children, and includes information about their current situation as learners of English in Norway. The chapter contains four subsections concerning the various introductory programmes in Norway, the Ministry of Education's strategy plan, curricula for mother tongue and second language education for speakers of minority languages, and the English curriculum.

Chapter 3 contains four subsections on relevant theory. The first subsection is about bilingualism and it gives a short overview of the field. An introduction to the field of bilingualism is an essential part of this thesis because the pupils of the case study were by definition bilinguals before starting to learn English as a third language. The second subsection is an introduction to the field of multilingualism, which for a long time has not been recognised as a field of its own. However, recent research has found important findings which indicate that when it comes to learning languages, quite different strategies are used by multilinguals than by bilinguals (Herdina and Jessner, 2008:85). In addition, the field of multilingualism is currently growing. The section on multilingualism is followed by a section concerning cultural challenges the minority background children might face. The last section in this chapter is devoted to an introduction to various writing systems, such as deep and shallow orthographies. Understanding these concepts is important in order to understand if and why children from various language backgrounds use various languages as sub-languages when learning a third language.

Chapter 4 reviews some research studies that are related to the target group of this thesis. The chapter contains two sections that review comparative case studies and comparative international studies. The studies reveal similar and important findings that are relevant and that, to some extent, can be compared to the findings of this study.

Chapter 5 outlines the various methods used in the thesis. It describes the sample of subjects, how the observations were carried out, what questions the various interviews were based on, and how the different test results are presented.

Chapter 6 presents the various findings. It starts by presenting the findings based on interviews with the councillors at School 1. Thereafter, summaries from the interviews with the headmistress, the introductory course teachers and the EFL teachers at School 2 are

presented. The chapter ends by presenting the interviews with the EFL teachers, Cambridge test results, and the pupil profiles of the subjects of the case study from School 3.

Chapter 7 discusses the challenges facing minority background children in Norway, how they cope with learning English as an L3, and factors that contribute to or impede success in their acquisition of English, based on the various findings.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis.

2. The educational context for minority background children

2.1 Introduction

In the period from 1980- 2006 the immigrant population in Norway was tripled (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2007). Due to the increase of immigration in Norway, there has also been an augmentation of minority background children in Norwegian primary schools. Many of these children have started in Norwegian schools without much training in the Norwegian language beforehand. Because these children have to learn the Norwegian language as they go along, it is evident that they face many challenges in the process of integrating into the Norwegian school system and into Norwegian society in general. Knowing Norwegian is essential in the school setting and in life in general as it is the gateway to forming relationships and understanding the target culture.

Not only do the minority background children face the challenge of learning Norwegian, and settling into the Norwegian school system and culture, they also face the challenge of learning English, as this is part of the compulsory education of primary schools in Norway. In addition, English has a high status as a foreign language in Norway. The exposure of English through media is also high, something that minority background children might not be accustomed to from their home country, and which might cause additional challenges for these children when acquiring English.

2.2 Introductory programmes

As mentioned, many of the minority background children start rather soon in the ‘normal’ Norwegian school system without much knowledge of Norwegian beforehand. In the worst case scenario children who have recently arrived into the country start directly in a regular Norwegian school without any extra education in Norwegian as a second language or in their mother tongue. In some schools the minority background children receive mother tongue- or second language education, or both. However, in certain municipalities the children get the offer of an introductory programme, which lasts for about a year, and which focuses on the Norwegian language and culture.² The course is intended to facilitate the process of integrating minority background pupils into regular Norwegian schools. Unfortunately, this offer is not given to all newly-arrived minority background children in Norway, as the

² <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/NOUer/1995/NOU-1995-12/17.html?id=336484>

different municipalities in Norway have various offers when it comes to mother tongue and Norwegian education.

In certain municipalities some schools offer an introductory course at the school. This way the minority background children follow the introductory course and then continue in the same school after they have finished the course. Teachers from such a school have been interviewed for this thesis and the school is referred to as 'School 2'. The school offers introductory courses for 1-7th graders from the whole municipality. Children who geographically belong to other primary schools in the municipality are transported to the school every morning in taxis in order to participate in the introductory course. Since the offer at this school covers children from the whole municipality, not all of the children get the possibility to continue at the school after finishing the introductory course.

The introductory course at this particular school has been an offer for a number of years and a report from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet) from 2007 indicates that more young people of minority background in the municipality are choosing to continue studying compared to those in many other municipalities in the country. The report includes the twelve municipalities in Norway with the highest percentage of immigrant population. Out of these twelve municipalities, the municipality where School 2 is situated has the second lowest percentage of immigrant population. The results of the survey indicate that in general there is a higher percentage of participation in upper secondary school among young people in the municipality than the average in the country as a whole. The percentage of pupils who begin upper secondary school in the municipality is 92% compared to 90% in the country in general. The number of non-western first time immigrants who begin upper secondary education in the municipality is 79%, compared to 71% in the country as a whole. In addition, 97% of the descendants of non-western immigrants start upper secondary school in the municipality, whereas the country in general has a participation of 88%. There is reason to believe that the offer of an introductory course to all recently arrived immigrant children in this municipality is part of the reason why such a high number of minority background teenagers enter upper secondary school.

2.3 The Ministry of Education's strategy plan

Few schools in Norway offer introductory courses for newly arrived immigrant children, and not all schools have adequate strategies for mother tongue and second language training for their minority background children. In fact for a long time in Norway there has not been any set strategy or curriculum for the minority background children. However, in February 2007,

the Department of Education in Norway published a plan of strategy called 'Likeverdige opplæring i praksis!' This plan aims to improve the education and increase the number of minority background children participating in kindergarten, compulsory and upper secondary school in the period 2007-2009. Its goals are to ameliorate the language abilities among minority background preschool children in Norway, and to improve their performances in primary school. In addition the strategy focuses on increasing the number of minority-speaking pupils who finish upper secondary school and higher education. It also enforces the importance of improving the situation for minority background adults when it comes to their possibilities for further education and fitting into Norwegian social and working life.

Some initiatives have been taken to achieve these goals. The strategy started in 2004, but then with the name 'Likeverdige utdanning i praksis', and the 2007 edition is a follow-up strategy. The initiatives that were taken included free kindergarten for all 4-5 year olds for a few hours a day in Stovner in Oslo. In 2007 this plan will continue in other parts of Oslo.

Other aims of the strategy are to ameliorate the bonds between the home and kindergarten/school and to create the opportunity of after-school tutoring in the schools, as well as to provide summer schools for those who need extra help. It further aims at putting effort into mapping out the pupils' abilities and needs through testing, which has been possible for a while in Norway through the national tests that have been established in most subjects. Finally, it enforces the importance of developing the competence of kindergarten teachers, as well as offering courses in second language didactics for teachers of basic Norwegian as a second language.

Although the strategy contains many wonderful goals and ambitions it is important to note that it is only a plan and it is not certain that its goals and intentions will reach out to all the schools and kindergartens throughout the country. The plan started already in 2004 and has a long way to go before all of its goals are reached. However, it is important to recognise that the Ministry of Education, which stands behind the strategy, cannot do the work on its own. In order to have positive results, it requires commitment and cooperation from the owners and employees of kindergartens, as well as principals and teachers in schools. Minority background pupils need to make an effort themselves, and they will need a good deal of support in order to improve their own results. Pupils in general need to cooperate with each other in order to create a good and unprejudiced environment in the school.

2.4 Curricula for mother tongue and second language education for speakers of minority languages

Multicultural perspectives have been taken into consideration in the 2006 curriculum (*K2006*), and drafts for teaching plans in mother tongue- and second language education for speakers of minority languages have been presented by the Ministry of Education in 2007. The two curricula have a similar structure and are meant to be part of a bilingual training programme. The main areas within the curricula are *language and culture, speech and listening, reading and writing, and language training* (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2007:1). The curricula are not designed for a specific age group; pupils that are following the curriculum may be at various levels when they start and may spend unequal time finishing it. Both of the curricula are divided into various levels, and the areas mentioned above are all divided into three different levels. Pupils would start at level one, and gradually progress within the various areas.

Up until 2006 there was no national curriculum for mother tongue and second language education for children of minority background in Norway. National guidelines, created by the Ministry of Education, are therefore an important step on the way. However, what is not mentioned in the 2006 curriculum, nor in 'Likeverdige oppl ring i praksis', is the need for a similar curriculum in the education of English. Although many of the immigrant children arriving in Norway have not learned any English beforehand, they still have to follow the challenging English education in Norwegian schools in addition to learning Norwegian. The creation of the curricula for mother tongue and second language training for speakers of minority languages are, of course, in their initial stages, and it is possible that a similar curriculum for English will be developed at a later stage. Principals and teachers in Norwegian schools may choose to exclude certain minority background pupils from English lessons, or give them extra training, but these are individual decisions, and guidelines from the Ministry of Education do not exist at the moment on this matter.

2.5 The English curriculum

English serves an important role in the Norwegian school system today. Already in the first grade Norwegian children start learning English. The curricula of 1997 (*L97*) and 2006 (*K2006*) both state the importance of English due to its status as a world language. These curricula were in many ways more ambitious than their predecessors. The 1997 curriculum introduced English in the first grade compared to the 4th grade in the previous curriculum

period. In addition, *L97* and *K2006* focus more on reading and writing than the previous curricula and expect, in general, more of young learners of English.

K2006 mentions the following basic subject skills for English: *being able to express oneself in writing and orally in English, being able to read English, having skills in mathematics in English and being able to use digital tools in English*. The three main areas within the subject are *language learning, communication, and culture, society and literature* (*The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school in Norway, 2006:4-6*). The curriculum has competence objectives after years 2, 4, 7 and 10. After Year 2 pupils are to show familiarity with English nursery rhymes, songs and stories, be able to communicate, for instance using simple spoken phrases in order to be understood, and understand simple instructions given in English.

The competence objectives after Year 4 within the area of language learning include pupils finding similarities between words and expressions in English and their native language. Under the area of communication pupils are expected to be able to express themselves through drama, role-play and improvisation, and to be able to use common grammatical structures, words, and simple sentence structures. Under the category of culture, society and literature pupils are expected to be able to ‘prepare oral or written texts inspired by English-language literature’.

After year 7 the competence objectives within language learning include pupils being able to ‘identify and use various situations to expand English-language skills’. When it comes to communication, the pupils should, among other things, be able to ‘understand various oral and written presentations on self-selected topics’. The category of culture, society and literature specifies, for example, that the pupils should ‘narrate about people, places and events in English-speaking countries’.

2.6 The qualifications of Norwegian EFL teachers

Even though the *K-2006* English curriculum has high expectations for the pupils, unfortunately this is not so for the teachers. At Norwegian departments of education today, English is not part of the compulsory curriculum in a Bachelor of Education. The fact that English as a subject is not compulsory within a Bachelor of Education, has led to the current situation where the majority of teachers in Norwegian elementary schools have little or no formal training in English. In fact, Drew et al. (2007:325), indicate that from a sample of 153 teachers of English at the primary level in Norway (grade 1-7), 43% had no formal education in English, and 15% had less than 10 credits (30 study points) of English, which is the

minimum formal qualification. Lagerstrøm (2000:25) also confirms this picture and points out that 4th -7th teachers in the age group 35-44 years tend to have more English qualifications than teachers under the age of 35 and over the age of 54.

The findings from Drew et al. (2007) illustrate that the direction the training of teachers is moving towards in Norway is not positive for the teaching of English as a subject. The fact that pupils in Norway for the last ten years have started learning English already in the first grade, illustrates that EFL education in primary schools has become extremely important in recent years. However, in order to follow up the development of the pupils, trained EFL teachers are definitely needed as well. It is possible that untrained EFL teachers would find it especially demanding to teach mixed ability classes where, for example, there are pupils of minority backgrounds. Trained EFL teachers are therefore important not only to teach the pupils correct English, but also to meet the individual needs of the pupils.

2.7 Summary

The situation for newly arrived minority background children in Norwegian elementary schools today differs greatly in the various municipalities in Norway. Newly arrived minority background children in Norway may get the possibility to participate in an introductory course lasting for a whole year, or they may enrol at a 'normal' Norwegian elementary school, hardly receiving any special treatment at all, all depending on to which municipality they move.

Although the situation as it is today is not satisfactory, the Ministry of Education is working on a new strategy plan to increase the number of minority background children attending kindergartens, as well as to ameliorate the learning of minority background children in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. In addition to the strategy plan, the Ministry of Education has also introduced proposals for curricula in mother tongue- and second language education for speakers of minority languages, something that has not existed up until 2007.

Even though the plans and aims from the Ministry of Education are well thought out and competent in many ways, there is still a long way to go before all the goals are achieved. In addition, the minority background children both face the challenges of learning Norwegian and of having to participate in English lessons with the same curriculum as their Norwegian peers, even though they may not know English before arriving in Norway. The K-2006 English curriculum expects a relatively high level of achievement from primary schools

pupils and it is likely that many of the minority background children will face great challenges in the process of learning English.

3. Theory

3.1 Introduction

Language is the key to communication and bilingualism and multilingualism are the key to international communication as they link nations together. According to Dysthe (2001: 48) ‘To learn to communicate is to become a socio-cultural being; it gives us access to a cultural diversity which constantly expands, from the inner circle of family to the many and various contexts we take part in’ (my translation). Language serves the role as a link between culture, interaction and individual thoughts. Language has the ability to connect cultures and it makes interaction between human beings possible. In the mobile world we are living in today, bilingualism and multilingualism therefore become extremely important. When people move to another country, learning the language spoken in that country becomes essential for them to cope with everyday life. Extra challenges arise when bilingual children have to learn a third language at the school, for example minority background children in Norway learning English at a Norwegian elementary school.

The present chapter will provide brief introductions to the field of bilingualism and multilingualism. In addition it will give an overview of the English writing system, and how this system might bring about difficulties for learners of English.

3.2 Bilingualism

In order to understand the field of multilingualism, it is important to first understand the field of bilingualism. In many aspects multilingualism builds on bilingualism, as being bilingual is a step towards becoming multilingual. In addition, being bilingual is extremely normal. According to Luykx (2003:25): ‘Around two thirds of the world’s population is bilingual’. One could therefore claim that it is more unusual to be monolingual than to be bilingual.

Since bilingualism is becoming so widespread, many children also become bilingual. There are various circumstances where bilingualism among children is natural. Arnberg (1987:xii) mentions different family situations where bilingualism may occur. For instance, children may grow up in mixed language families where the parents speak different mother tongues and raise their children to speak both languages. Since the mixed language family consists of parents with different mother tongues, the family is likely to live in a country where the language of one of the parents is the majority language of the country. In that case they may raise their children to speak both languages, and to thereby become bilingual.

However, the family may be living in a country where neither of the parents' majority languages are spoken, and in situations like this some parents decide to raise their children to become trilingual, teaching them their mother tongue languages as well as the language of the country of residence. An example could be a family where the mother is English and the father is French, but they are living and raising their children in Norway.

Alternatively, children may grow up in a single language family where both parents share the same mother tongue, but are situated in a foreign country, such as the subjects of this case study. The family might have migrated to another country, or they may be living in another country for a shorter period of time because of work, or for some other reason. In situations like these the family has to become bilingual in order to function in society. There are also situations where children grow up as bilinguals because they are living in a bilingual country, such as Canada. In Quebec children learn both French and English at school as both of these languages are considered public languages. Also, indigenous families, such as Maori families in New Zealand, have to become bilingual because their society requires them to be able to communicate in the mainstream language, which is English, in addition to their first language (Berryman and Glynn, 2003:77).

The children growing up in these various circumstances are likely to develop various degrees of bilingualism. Arnberg (1987:101) defines three degrees of bilingualism: *passive*, *active*, and *absolute*. Passive bilingualism is achieved when the parent/s consistently speak the mother tongue to the child, but the child is reluctant to or unable to produce the language on its own. With active bilingualism, the child uses the second language more actively, but is not fluent, whereas absolute bilingualism implies that the child is fluent in both languages.

Bilingual children from single language families are in many circumstances from immigrant families, such as the case study pupils of this thesis. When comparing the single language family to the mixed language family, the children coming from the single language family have an advantage in that the minority language is more likely to be spoken consistently in the home. Since the mixed language family consists of parents with different mother tongues, the parents are likely to often communicate with their children in their own language (Barron Hauwaert, 2004:1) In this case, one of the languages is likely to be the majority language of the country, and the other one a minority language. The children may then often become less fluent in the minority language, resulting in, for example, passive bilingualism. However, in single language families both parents speak the same first language and this language is therefore likely to be adopted as the family language. The children of these families often become absolute bilinguals. However, the challenge to these children is

often the acquisition of the majority language, which is the dominant language within the country. Arnberg (1987: 13) mentions that certain immigrants isolate themselves and do not adjust to the new culture. If this happens to families with children, the children may not be exposed to the majority language at all before school age.

Becoming a bilingual is not something that comes without effort. Single language families have an advantage in promoting the minority language since the children of these families are likely to be exposed to the minority language to a higher degree. However, even though the children may be able to speak the minority language fluently, it does not mean that they are able to write it unless they have been taught to. In the process of becoming literate in both languages, bilingual schools and programmes can be a great advantage. The children will then learn to read and write in both languages, and the whole responsibility of raising the children bilingually does not fall on the parents. According to Cobo-Lewis et al. (2002), there are a number of bilingual schools and programmes in the USA. However, it is mainly the Hispanics that are prioritised. There are a large number of Hispanic immigrants in the USA who are particularly situated in Florida. Due to the high number of Spanish speaking immigrants in the USA, constructing bilingual schools and programmes becomes easier. In Norway, on the other hand, there are few bilingual schools and programmes, as the immigrants in Norway come from a variety of backgrounds and speak different languages. Creating bilingual schools and programmes becomes difficult, firstly because of the economic costs, and secondly because so many different programmes and teachers speaking all these different languages would be needed.

Another problem for bilingual children not participating in a bilingual programme is that they cannot use their mother tongue whenever they have trouble expressing themselves in their second language. When bilinguals speak among themselves they often *code switch*, which means that they switch between the two languages in the middle of sentences or between sentences. Some of the reasons why code switching occurs are, according to Arnberg (1987:27), when the speakers lack the vocabulary needed or when a concept is easier explained in the other language. Bilingual children who find themselves in an environment where their mother tongue is excluded as a language of communication will not have the opportunity to code-switch or to simply ask for help if they do not know the right word or suitable translation. It can therefore often be frustrating for the children if they do not have the opportunity to use their mother tongue as a language of comparison.

3.3 Multilingualism

Bilingualism is a common phenomenon which occurs in many contemporary societies. However, the need to learn a third or even fourth language is also frequent, and people who know more than three languages are referred to as multilingual. Bilingualism and multilingualism share many similar features. For instance, according to Mackey (1967), cited in Hammarberg (2001), both bilingualism and multilingualism occur in ‘multitudes of small linguistic communities’ because of the necessity of both national and international languages, and because of the fact that people now, to a larger extent, are moving to other countries.

Even though it is mostly in recent decades that bilingualism, and in particular multilingualism, have caught the attention of researchers, these phenomena go back a long time in history. For example, in colonial times England became an important power and large parts of the world fell under its rule. The language of administration in the colonies was English, which later also became established as a second language. After the Second World War the spread of English also came to Europe and has led to bilingualism and multilingualism (Hoffmann, 2000:1). The USA has also played an important role in the spread of English through its influence on media and finance.

3.3.1 When does multilingualism occur?

It is evident that multilingualism is an important and widespread phenomenon, but in what situations does multilingualism occur and which people find the need to become multilingual? According to Hoffmann (2001:3), cited in Barnes (2006: 28), trilingualism or multilingualism may occur in five different circumstances:

- 1) Trilingual children who are brought up with two home languages that are different from the one spoken in the wider community.
- 2) Children who grow up in a bilingual community and whose home language (that of either one or both parents) is different from the community languages.
- 3) Third language learners, that is bilinguals who acquire a third language in the school context.
- 4) Bilinguals who have become trilingual through immigration.

5) Members of trilingual communities.

The circumstance mentioned in the third category is most relevant to this thesis, as minority background children acquire English as a third language in a school setting in Norway.

3.3.2 The field of multilingualism

The various circumstances in which multilingualism may occur, as listed above, indicate that multilingualism occurs frequently. However, knowledge about multilingualism has not always been widespread and for a long time multilingualism has not been considered as a field in its own right. Instead, it was looked upon as being the same phenomenon as bilingualism. It was considered that the same strategies a bilingual uses to learn a second language would naturally also apply to multilinguals learning a third or fourth language. However, multilingualism is today generally viewed as something different from that of bilingualism. For instance, it is natural that multilinguals would apply different strategies than bilinguals when learning a third or fourth language, as they would have more languages to which they could draw references. According to Herdina and Jessner (2000:85), the process of learning a third language is far more multifaceted than the process of learning a second language. In fact, bilingualism is only one possible form of multilingualism. Today multilingualism is recognised as a field of its own, and researchers such as Hammarberg (2001), Ringbom (1986), and Cenoz (2001) are among those who have done research within the field, specialising in cross-linguistic studies.

The latter mentioned researchers have explored the process of learning a third or fourth language, and the subjects of their case studies are all multilinguals. What the studies have in common is that they have found that the subjects all had a tendency to prefer the language that is typologically closer to the target language in interlanguage transfer even though this language is not their mother tongue. In other words, someone learning Spanish whose mother tongue is English and second language is French is more likely to substitute unfamiliar Spanish words with French ones due to the likeness of these two languages.

Cultural challenges

As has been pointed out, the field of multilingualism is a growing one and more and more people become bilingual and multilingual. Although being a bilingual or multilingual has many advantages, there are also some difficult challenges, especially for the children involved. Children in general do not want to differ from their peers, as being different in many cases may lead to, for example, being bullied. Bilingual and multilingual children often come from families which represent a different language and culture from the majority, and these children are therefore faced with the challenge of being different from their peers. Not only are they likely to speak another language in the home than their peers, but they may also eat different kinds of foods and dress differently. These kinds of differences may be hard to handle for a child who is trying to fit into the society and in the school, and may lead to the child resenting the minority language and culture.

According to Safder (1995: 27) children become influenced by the society and its attitude towards minority languages. If a child is a speaker of a minority language and belongs to a culture that is looked down upon by the society, the child is likely to refuse to speak the language at some point. If the schools do not value the minority language, but only the majority language, the child is likely to think that the minority language is not of importance. Sometimes even parents are embarrassed to speak the minority language in public and this attitude is likely to affect the children. Safder (1995:29) therefore points out the importance of parents' attitudes. The fact that the parents show pride in belonging to a certain culture is likely to have a positive effect on the children.

In addition to the challenge of accepting that one is different, becoming bilingual or multilingual is also time-consuming. Many children who do not take part in a bilingual school or programme, or receive mother tongue teaching in the school context, partake in language courses in their spare time. Gregory and Williams (2000) studied Bangladeshi-British children in London who went to Arabic classes from 7-9 p.m. Mondays to Fridays. A hectic programme like this, with school during the day and Arabic classes in the evenings, is not only time consuming but also prevents these children from partaking in other activities, such as sports or music, and the opportunity to get to know other children with a different ethnic background from themselves.

3.4 The English writing system

3.5.1 Introduction

Bilinguals and multilinguals are faced with the challenges of understanding how different languages function and how they are different from one another. Understanding the differences within the various writing systems, for instance, can be crucial in order to become fully literate in the other languages.

Even though the English language is based on the Latin alphabet, which is based on a phonographic principle, the English writing system is closer to a logographic system. Orthographies which possess a high one-to-one relationship between graphemes and phonemes, referred to as *shallow* orthographies, are often thought of as easy languages to learn when using the phonographic principle. *Deep* orthographies, on the other hand, often represent a distance between graphemes and phonemes, and are therefore considered harder languages to learn based on the phonographic principle. Languages such as Spanish and Finnish are considered to have a shallow orthography, whereas a language such as English has a deep orthography.

English, however, has not always had a deep orthography. A look back in history is necessary in order to understand why the English system today is as it is.

3.5.2 English through history

The period of time between 1066 and 1500 was a time in history where a more shallow writing system with a higher sound-to-letter correspondence was found in the English language. The language that was spoken at the time is referred to today as Middle English. According to Cook (2004:159), written Middle English was used at the local level and was therefore characterised by the various dialects of English. It was not until the end of this period and towards the beginning of the Modern English period (1500-1700) that books started to get printed in English and many printers saw the need for a standardised spelling in English (Cook, 2004:163).

The various dialects within the English language took part in forming the standard spelling of English. However, loan words derived from French and Latin also became part of the English language, as well as the standardisation of English spelling (Cook, 2004:183). According to Haas (1969:5), the English spelling became fixed in the Modern English period and it still has this shape today. However, the spoken language has undergone many changes throughout these 500 years.

The fact that the spoken language has kept changing, whereas the written language became standardised 500 years ago, has led to the big gap one has between the spoken and written language in contemporary English. Haas (1970:7) deals with sound-to-spelling relationships in the English language, which illustrates the gap between the spoken and written language in English. One example of this can be one-to-many correspondences where one grapheme is represented by many phonemes, such as, <c> in ‘cat’ and ‘cider’, which are represented by the different phonemes /k/ and /s/. Many-to-one relationships, on the other hand, occur when different graphemes represent the same phoneme, such as <c> in the word ‘cat’, and <k> in ‘kitten’, which both are represented by the same phoneme /k/.

In addition, irregularities that Venezky (1999:4) refers to as ‘silent letters’, occur in the English language. These letters represent no sound at all and can be found in words such as ‘know’, ‘wrestle’, ‘psychology’, and ‘hymn’.

The fact that the English language contains 26 letters in the alphabet, whereas it contains over 40 sounds or phonemes of speech might have something to do with all of the irregularities mentioned above. A solution to this has been to combine the already existing letters to create a new sound, such as the combination of <c> and <h>, which does not really have a logical explanation (Venezky, 1999:5).

3.5.3 The challenges facing learners of English

The various irregularities that have been illustrated indicate that learners of English, both as a first or second language, are likely to face a number of challenges in the process of learning the language. In addition, learners of English as a second or third language often transfer elements from their first or second language to the target language, which might lead to additional challenges, or even mistakes, when producing English.

According to Cook (2004:138) *transfer* between various languages is defined as: ‘An aspect of language that is carried over from one language the person knows to another language, for example transferring the sounds of the first language to the second, creating a distinctive foreign accent’. Cook (2004:141) also mentions that the transfer of the phonology from one language to another causes a foreign accent, but this ‘accent’ can also often be seen in writing as people from various languages often make different kinds of mistakes. Transference between languages can often be of great help, but it can also cause mistakes.

Characteristics within various writing systems can differ in, for instance, letter shapes, pen movements³, and direction⁴. However, the most dramatic difference is between meaning-based and sound-based writing systems. Whereas English has a sound-based orthography and to some extent is based on phonological strategies, Chinese is a meaning based writing system, which is based on visual strategies (Cook, 2004: 139).

If one's first language has a meaning based writing system, then learning a second language, which has a sound-based orthography, can be challenging. Haynes and Carr (1990), cited in Cook (2004: 140), found that the number of English words read per minute for a Chinese university student is 88, whereas it is 254 for mother tongue speakers of English. In addition the Chinese students scored 10% lower on comprehension questions in English.

Reading speed and text comprehension are not the only areas where L2 learners of English struggle. The spelling of English is complicated to many learners of English, perhaps due to its status as a deep orthography. According to Cook (2004:140) spelling mistakes such as insertion, omission, substitution, and transposition of letters are common mistakes among foreigners.

However, it is important to remember that not all foreign learners of English struggle with the same items and that the mistakes they make are often related to their first language. Bebout (1985), cited in Cook (2004) and Ibrahim (1978), demonstrates different kinds of mistakes in English spelling made by people with different first languages. For instance, the word 'bicture' was written by a person of Arabic decent. The reason for this mistake might be that there is no difference between /p/ and /b/ in Arabic. The word 'inteligent' was written by a person with Spanish as a first language. In fact double *l* in Spanish refers to the sound /j/. A mistake made by a Japanese person was found in the word 'brack', which might be explained by the fact that there is no distinction between /l/ and /r/ in Japanese.

From the various examples of mistakes mentioned above one can understand that the first language often influences the second language. A person's first language, whether it is based on a logographic or phonographic system, is therefore of great importance when it comes to the approach to reading. Ellis et al (2004), for instance, compares five different orthographies: Hiragana and Albanian, which both have shallow orthographies, Greek, which has a mixture of a shallow and deep orthography, and English and Kanjii, which have deep orthographies. The study found that readers of shallow orthographies use the 'phonics' strategy when reading, which indicates that each character represents its own sound and the

³ Chinese and Japanese draw horizontal lines before vertical.

⁴ When writing Arabic one starts from the right towards the left.

reader thereby decodes the writing by using sound to letter correspondence. Readers of deep orthographies, on the other hand, use the ‘look and say method’, where the reader to a larger extent has to memorise chunks of letters that make up words.

Ellis et al. (2004) show that the methods used when learning to read in different types of languages can be quite dissimilar. However, to what extent does the orthography in a person’s first language, as well as the methods used when learning to read, matter in the process of becoming literate in a second language? Treiman (1993), cited in Cook (2004), is a study based on word recognition. The subjects of the study were given various word pairs such as ‘whon’/’nowh’, and ‘truve’/’truv’ and they were to identify the word which appeared more ‘English’ in nature. The results of the study indicated that the Chinese and Japanese students had the fastest response time, whereas speakers of Germanic and Romance languages came second, and speakers of Arabic came last. From these results Treiman (1993), cited in Cook (2004), draws the conclusion that regularities within an orthography might be easier to recognise for students whose first language is meaning-based, whereas students with consonant-based alphabetic systems as first languages are more likely to use the ‘phonics’ method and decode letter by letter.

Another study, Holm and Dodd (1996), cited in Cook (2004), investigates whether English spelling influences foreign learners’ phonological awareness. The subjects of the study were to identify the number of phonemes of various words. Some words were shallow, with a complete grapheme/phoneme correspondence, such as *stamp* (five letters and five phonemes). Other words did not represent grapheme/phoneme correspondence, for instance, *whistle* (seven letters and four phonemes). The results of the study indicate that Hong Kong students had the poorest results, whereas Chinese students were the second best group. To understand these results better it is important to know that in mainland China the Chinese characters are taught on the basis of a sound-based alphabet called ‘pinyin’. In Hong Kong, on the other hand, the schools have taught the characters directly up until 1997.

When looking at all of the challenges learners of English are faced with, it is safe to say that it is not because of its easiness that English has earned its position as a global language. According to Crystal (2003:7) a language does not develop to become a global language due to its easiness, its global status or its quantity of mother tongue speakers. It does not have much to do with the number of speakers of the language, but rather who those speakers are. If the number of speakers of the language was the only factor determining its status, Chinese would have been the world language a long time ago. Speakers of English, on the other hand, have had an enormous power throughout history, not only through

colonisation, but also through economic, technological and cultural power (Crystal 2003:7). This has led to the current situation where there are 1.5 billion first and second language speakers of English compared to 1,1 billion speakers of Chinese (Crystal 2003:6).

3.5 Summary

As the world is becoming more mobile the need for people to learn other languages increases, and more people are becoming bilingual and even multilingual. In fact, as the situation is today, being bilingual is more common than being monolingual.

Due to the changes in today's world, many children are also becoming bilingual. Children may become bilingual either because their parents have different mother tongues or because the family moves to another country and they therefore have to learn a new language. Children may also grow up in bilingual communities, such as Quebec. When growing up bilingually, children may be enrolled in a bilingual school, or they may receive mother tongue teaching in the school context. Some bilingual children go to majority schools without receiving any special- or bilingual education, but participate in language courses to learn the minority language in the evenings or in the weekends. Some parents also choose to teach the children reading and writing in the minority language themselves.

Multilingualism is something that in many ways builds on bilingualism, since in most cases people become bilingual before they become multilingual. Like bilingualism, multilingualism is also growing because of peoples' increasingly mobility. Multilingualism has for a long time not been recognised as a field of its own, but rather within the field of bilingualism. Recently it has been acknowledged that multilingualism is quite different to bilingualism and that different strategies are used when learning a third or fourth language than when learning a second language, since a multilingual has more languages to compare.

English serves an important role as a global language and is a language that is not only a mother tongue to millions of people, but also a second or maybe third language. In fact there are more speakers of English as a second or third language than there are native speakers of English. However, it is not likely that English developed into a global language due to its simple orthography. English has what is often referred to as a deep orthography, which means that there is often a distance between graphemes and phonemes. This means that some aspects of the English language are hard to learn and it creates many challenges for learners of English, whether they are mother tongue speakers or second and third language learners.

4. Review of related studies

4.1 Introduction

Much research has been done within the field of multilingualism. What follows is an overview of several studies in this field. The studies have been chosen because of the closeness to the topic of this thesis and because the findings are relevant, interesting and to some extent comparable to the findings of this study.

4.2 Comparative case studies

One example of a case study within the field of multilingualism is Cenoz (2001), which was a study at an elementary and secondary school in Spain. The subjects of the study had either Basque or Spanish as their first language and the majority were speakers of both of these languages. In addition, they were all learners of English, which was the third language for most of these pupils.

One of the aims of the study was to find out more about the cross-linguistic transfer, for instance, which of the two languages the children used more actively when translating to English. The hypothesis was that it would be more natural to translate from Spanish as Spanish is closer to the English language, whereas Basque is a non-Indo European language. The results indicated that linguistic distance between the languages was indeed of importance in cross-linguistic transfer, and it was found that most translated from Spanish even if their first language was Basque. However, the results also indicated that age matters, as older learners had a tendency to use cross-linguistic transfer more frequently. This tendency is, of course, natural since the older learners generally represent a higher level in the various languages and therefore have a larger vocabulary to compare. From the study it was also found that cross-linguistic influence was more common in terms of content words than in terms of function words.

Ringbom (1986) reports on a similar project to Cenoz (2001). The study explores examination results of learners of English in Finland who have had 3-4 years of English at school. In Finland the majority of the population has Finnish as their mother tongue, whereas about 6-7 per cent of the population has Swedish as their mother tongue. Those who have Swedish as their mother tongue are mostly fluent speakers of Finnish, whereas most of the first language speakers of Finnish speak Swedish at the level of a second language. The study investigated differences between native speakers of Finnish and Swedish in their learning of English.

The results indicated that the Swedish speakers generally achieved better results. However, the difference between the Swedish and the Finnish speakers was particularly great when it came to listening comprehension. The reason why Finnish pupils struggle particularly with listening comprehension is likely to have something to do with the fact that Finnish, unlike Swedish and English, has a good sound to letter correspondence, or a shallow orthography. The Finnish learner is used to being able to match the letters to the sounds without many exceptions, and when he is exposed to spoken English he will find that it does not sound the way he would have guessed by just reading it.

Similarly to Cenoz (2001), the results also indicated that mother tongue speakers of Finnish were more likely to borrow Swedish words when learning English, than mother tongue speakers of Swedish were to borrow Finnish words in their process of acquiring English, even though the mother tongue speakers of Finnish generally represent a lower level of Swedish than the mother tongue speakers of Swedish do in Finnish. The results thus support the theory of favouring the most similar language in cross-linguistic transfer. In addition, similarly to Cenoz (2001), the results indicated that when using another foreign language as a help to learn a third language, it is mostly lexical words that are used. When it comes to more advanced lexical transfer, it is mostly the first language that is used, as it requires fluency of the language.

A study by Hammarberg (2001) shares some similarities with the previous studies. The subject of the study was a woman named Sarah Williams living in Sweden, whose first language is English and whose other languages are German, French and Italian. Sarah knew German quite well as she had been living in Germany for a number of years, whereas French and Italian were languages she had learnt through participation on language courses and travelling. In other words German was her strongest second language, whereas the other two languages could be categorised as ‘co-second languages’. When Sarah moved to Sweden she was faced with the challenge of learning yet another language. The case study follows Sarah in her process of learning Swedish.

In Sarah’s case the cross-linguistic transfer was mostly to her first language, English, but also to German when she found similarities to Swedish, for example *ansträngung/anstrengung*. In addition, Sarah proved to have a German accent at the beginning of her process of learning Swedish, whereas at later stages her accent was more influenced by English. We could therefore say that in Sarah’s case her first language had a long-term influence on her Swedish, whereas her second language, German, had more the role of a supplier language.

This case study is similar to the studies mentioned above because they illustrate that the language(s) which are typologically closer to the target language are most likely to be used in cross-linguistic transfer. What distinguishes the studies is that Sarah, the subject in (Hammarberg, 2001), possesses the knowledge of more languages than the subjects in the other studies and therefore also uses more languages in cross-linguistic transfer. In addition, she is an adult and has lived longer than the subjects of the other studies, who are children, and she thereby has a larger vocabulary in the various languages. Sarah, however, uses English and German, which are typologically closer to Swedish, the target language, more actively than she uses French and Italian in cross-linguistic transfer.

De Angelis and Selinker (2001) also share some of the findings with the case studies mentioned above. The study investigates the interlanguage transfer of two multilingual people living in Canada and Great Britain. According to De Angelis and Selinker (2001:44), 'More than two linguistic systems must be present in the speaker's mind for interlanguage transfer to occur'. In other words a person must be trilingual or multilingual in order for interlanguage transfer to occur.

One of the subjects in the study was a 50-year-old French-Canadian woman who possesses the three interlanguages, English, Spanish and Italian. French was the subject's first language, whereas English, Spanish and Italian were her second languages. The other subject of the study was a 45-year-old British man whose interlanguages were Spanish and Italian.

Subject 1 was interviewed in Italian, whereas subject 2 was told to repeat the news he had seen on TV in Italian. Similar to the other studies mentioned above, it was found that the subjects used the language which was typologically closer to the target language as an interlanguage. In this case Spanish, which is quite similar to Italian, was a language that was frequently used as an interlanguage even though this was neither of the subjects' mother tongue. The subjects tended to use Spanish words to compensate for Italian words, for instance, *cuarenta*, which is Spanish, instead of *quarenta*, which is the Italian word. The subjects also tended to invent words; in particular they Italianised Spanish words.

The subjects were also found to have both lexical and morphological transfer. One example is the replacement of the Italian word *bombe* with the Spanish word *bombas*. This transfer is lexical because of the fact that the whole Spanish word is used to replace the Italian one, but it is also morphological in that the plural ending in Spanish has been used.

Another study that also looks into the effect of multilingualism is Dagenais and Day (1998), which is a case study of trilingual pupils participating in a French immersion programme in Vancouver in Canada. Three schools with a high density of immigrant

population from this area participated in the study. The participants of the study were all non-native speakers of English and French. 15 observations of French and English classes were made, and interviews were conducted both with the teachers and the pupils. Out of the 15 pupils, three children, Brian, Cathryn and Jennifer (pseudonyms), were chosen for closer observation as well as interviewing.

Brian's parents were of Polish origin. Brian is a speaker of Polish and has become literate in the language through mother tongue teaching during the weekends. His second and third languages are English and French. Brian reports to be most fluent in Polish. He speaks English with his friends at school, and French mostly with his teacher.

Cathryn's parents are refugees from Vietnam. Cathryn says that Vietnamese is her first language and she speaks it with her parents and grandparents. Her second language is English and her third language is French. She speaks English with her friends and teachers, and French with her French immersion teacher.

Jennifer was born in Costa Rica and is a native speaker of Spanish. She speaks Spanish with her family as well as with some Spanish-speaking friends. She speaks English with her teachers and friends at school, and French mostly with her French teacher. She claims to express herself best in Spanish and English.

Through interviews with the children it was observed that all three children illustrated an awareness of the patterns in the various languages. They could point out differences between the languages, such as various sounds typical for the different languages.

From the observations in the classroom, various processes were identified. Brian's French classes, for instance, consisted of both group work and individual work. His English lessons comprised various activities, such as spelling quizzes, phonics lessons and question and answer periods. Cathryn's French classes included activities such as locating cities on maps and grammar games. In Cathryn's English lessons the students were to share a ballad they had written following a model. In Jennifer's classes observations were made of blackboard activity, group work, and individual work on grammar worksheets.

The interviews with the teachers report that they view trilingualism more as a resource than as a handicap. The teachers mention that the trilingual pupils are generally good language learners, problem solvers, and not afraid of taking risks.

4.3 Comparative international studies

The case studies mentioned above are mostly based on qualitative methods and comprise rather small samples of subjects. International studies, on the other hand, are usually more

extensive studies based on quantitative methods, and which take place in several countries. An example of such a study is the Cidree Primary English Project (Drew, 2004; Drew et al. 2007). The project investigates primary English education in the Netherlands, Germany, Norway and Hungary, and has been running from 2002 until 2007. The aims of the project are to compare the teaching of English at the primary level in the various countries, including teacher qualifications. Specific reference will here be made to the German context. Unlike countries such as Norway, English in primary education was not common in Germany before year 2000. However, the spread of English education at an early age has increased during the last few years in Germany, and today several states in Germany have decided to introduce English in primary schools. In addition, from 2008/9 all pupils will start learning English from the first grade, as has been the case in Norway since 1997.

In 2004 the Ministry of School and Education in North Rhine Westphalia commissioned an evaluation of the English education in primary schools in order to investigate how the teachers had dealt with integrating English into the school curriculum. The evaluation would also be used as a basis to create a national curriculum for English in primary schools, including the first grade. What makes North Rhine Westphalia and its evaluation particularly interesting for this thesis is that one of the aims of the study was to examine how children with an immigration background coped with learning English as a third language (Engel et al. 2007).

The study included a survey of senior management, teaching staff, lesson observations, interviews with staff, and assessment of achievement levels in listening, reading comprehension and speaking. The pupils proved to score remarkably well on the various tests despite the fact that teaching experts deemed that these tasks would be far too difficult for such young children. In fact, in listening and reading tests only 1% of the pupils scored under 25%, nearly half of the pupils scored up to 74%, and 34% scored 76-88%. What is perhaps even more surprising is that the minority background children did not seem to score significantly lower than the German children. Children who came from German-speaking families achieved an average score of 30.5 points (45 points was the maximum score). The children who did not come from German-speaking families were divided into two groups: children who grew up in bilingual homes and children who spoke other native languages. The children who grew up in bilingual homes had an average score of 28.5 points, whereas children with other native languages achieved an average of 25.7 points. Another important finding from the results was that there seemed to be a difference in achievement between children with minority backgrounds from Russia and Turkey, which were the two largest

groups. The children with Russian background scored an average of 27 points, whereas the children of Turkish background scored an average of 24.9 points. Why there is a noticeable difference between the two groups is yet to be investigated.

Another international study of great importance is PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). PIRLS 2001 took place in 35 countries and 150 000 pupils in 5777 schools were included in the study. Norway was one of the countries that participated in the study and contributed with 3459 pupils, with an average age of 10,8 from 198 classes representing 136 schools. The study was based on reading tests and interviews with children, parents, teachers and headmasters/mistresses.

Wagner (2004) elaborates on the Norwegian results from PIRLS 2001 and focuses on the minority background children. Results from the various tests in PIRLS indicated that, out of the 35 countries participating in the study, Norway had the most significant differences in reading performance between minority and majority pupils. In addition, results from questionnaires answered by the pupils themselves indicated that it was harder being a minority-speaking pupil in Norway compared to the other countries. Wagner (2004) investigates possible explanations for these rather worrying findings.

The minority-speaking pupils in the study were children who rarely spoke the majority language in the home, and whose mother and father were both born outside of Norway. The 'mixed language' family, where one of the parents speaks the majority language, was not part of this study.

Among the minority background children an interesting difference was found between Urdu and Vietnamese speaking pupils. The average score for the Urdu speaking pupils was 373⁵ with a standard deviation of 73.2, whereas the average score for the pupils of Vietnamese origin was 452 with a standard deviation of 65.7. What has to be noted here, however, is that only one of the fifteen Vietnamese pupils was not born in Norway, compared to seven out of the 22 Urdu pupils. However, when comparing only the Urdu and Vietnamese pupils born in Norway, the difference between the average scores is still 69 points.

When considering the average reading score, it is possible that background and home situation are factors that may be of importance. For instance, more of the Vietnamese children went to kindergarten than the Urdu children. Those of the Urdu children who did go to kindergarten, generally spent less time there than the Vietnamese children. Nevertheless, the two groups are quite similar when it comes to preliterate activities in the home. However,

⁵ The PIRLS report does not inform about the maximum score.

when it comes to engagement in the pupils' reading, the degree of individual reading among the adults, and reading activities outside of school, the Urdu parents reported a higher percentage of enthusiasm.

Due to the significant differences between the minority background children and the majority children, a tendency is to look at other explanations for the results. The pupils' homes and background is therefore of interest, and were investigated in this survey through the questionnaires answered by the parents. It was noted that 72.5% of the majority-speaking parents reported that they often read with their children, compared to 37.5% of the minority-speaking parents. However, the minority-speaking parents scored more on playing alphabet games with their children and letting their children play reading-oriented games on the computer. When it comes to the parents' engagement in literacy activities, just as many minority as majority-speaking parents reported that they read more than ten hours a week. However, more minority-speaking parents reported that they read less than one hour a week (16% compared to 4.1%). Another tendency that was clear from the survey was that the minority-speaking parents read in the context of work and education, whereas the majority-speaking parents read for pleasure and to receive news.

Despite all the differences between the minority and majority-speaking pupils' background, what becomes noticeable from the results is that the various background factors seem to cause more differences between poor and strong readers among the minority background children than the majority children. For instance, there are significant differences in years of attended kindergarten between the majority and minority background children. However, there seems to be a bigger difference, which can be seen in the reading test scores, between the minority children who attended kindergarten and those who did not than between the majority-speaking children who did and did not attend kindergarten. In other words, the effect of attending kindergarten seems to be greater among the minority-speaking children. The same tendency can be seen among the minority background children in the amount of books kept in the home, and the parents' education, in particular the mother's education. The difference between positive and negative outcome always tends to be higher between the minority background children than the majority children. An important point is that minority-speaking parents report more contact between the school and the home than the majority-speaking parents, perhaps because a higher level of attention is required.

With regards to spare time reading, the minority-speaking children reported a higher level of varied reading in the home than the majority children. The minority and majority-speaking children read the same amount for fun and they watched TV and videos just as

much. It was evident from the reading results that those pupils that read for fun also represented the best reading scores. In addition to a higher level of reading activity, the minority background pupils also seemed to borrow books from the library more often than majority children. However, what was strange in this context was that the pupils that rarely went to the library (once or twice a month) proved to have better reading scores. Perhaps those pupils that go to the library are the ones that need to read more. In addition, the need to go to the library among children who have a large number of books at home is perhaps not all that great.

If the minority background pupils read the most in their spare time, and pay more frequent visits to the library, then why do they still represent lower reading scores? The answer is hard to give but when asked if reading was something they do only because they have to, 49,4% of the minority background pupils answered 'yes', compared to 29% of the majority pupils. The fact that they read because they have to does not have to be synonymous with the fact that they do not enjoy reading, although there may be something in this argument.

Still one cannot claim that the minority background pupils' enthusiasm for reading is what results in lower reading scores compared to the majority background children. The high amount of reading reported both by the minority background parents and their children cannot be overlooked and perhaps one has to look elsewhere when trying to find out the reason why minority background children represent lower test scores in reading than the majority-speaking pupils. For instance, one could ask whether the Norwegian kindergartens and schools are giving these children what they need in terms of second language training.

Perhaps the question is not linked to the teacher's enthusiasm but rather the education they are given. In fact a survey from the country's general pre-school and teacher education from 2000 showed that teacher trainees only received four hours training in Norwegian as a second language during the whole degree (Nasjonalt fagråd for norsk som andrespråk, 2000). The situation is even worse for teachers who have studied Norwegian as an academic subject. In these courses no training in how to teach Norwegian as a second language is given, with the exception of certain universities that offer this as an optional subject. In addition, the National Centre for Reading Education and Research collected reading samples from second and seventh graders a few years ago. Out of the 22 classes that were selected 18 form teachers were interviewed, and it appeared that none of them had any training in teaching Norwegian as a second language. Subsequently, and perhaps more shockingly, the 15 teachers that were

teaching Norwegian as a second language did not have any training in this matter either, with the exception of one teacher who had completed education in immigration pedagogy.

It is evident then that the marked differences in results between the minority and majority-speaking pupils cannot only be explained by the minority background pupils' enthusiasm and willingness to learn, but perhaps by a combination of their background, the home and the education they are receiving here in Norway.

A media coverage in December 2007⁶ revealed some of the results from PIRLS 2007, which have not yet been published. The results from the new PIRLS study confirmed many of the aspects revealed in the 2001 study. For instance, the results from 2007 indicate that there is still a big difference in school performance between Norwegian pupils with Norwegian parents and minority background pupils with parents born outside of Norway. In fact, the difference between the performance of Norwegian and minority background pupils is still greater in Norway compared to the other 57 countries that participated in the study. According to Astrid Roe (Grønli og Bjørge, 2007) the difference between the performance in school of Norwegian and minority background pupils represents an average of two school years.

The results from PIRLS 2007 indicate that little has changed since the last study in 2001. The great division between minority background pupils and majority-speaking pupils still exists and much work is still needed in order to turn the numbers around.

4.4 Summary

Both the case studies and the national studies mentioned above are important in different ways. Although case studies such as Cenoz (2001), Ringbom (1986), Hammarberg (2001) and De Angelis and Selinker (2001) are on a smaller scale than the international studies, they still contribute to important findings within the field of multilingualism. For instance, the various results indicate that when learning a third or fourth language a person is more likely to use the language that is most similar to the target language in interlanguage transfer although this is not the person's mother tongue. The fact that the various studies indicate similar results makes it easier to draw conclusions based on the results.

The international studies include larger samples and it is therefore easier to draw conclusions based on the results found. International studies, such as the Cidree project (Engel et al. 2007) and PIRLS (2001), are important because they emphasise certain problems, and being aware of what the problems are also makes it easier to solve them.

⁶ Nrk 17.12.2007

For instance, the Cidree report (Engel et al. 2007) indicated that minority background pupils in Germany did not score remarkably lower on English tests than the majority-speaking children. PRILS (2001), and (2007) on the other hand, indicate that minority background children in Norway generally perform much lower in school than the Norwegian pupils. These results are important because they allow one to investigate possible reasons.

5. Methods

5.1 Introduction

The present chapter serves as a description of the subjects and methods used in the thesis. The thesis is mainly based on the following qualitative research: interviews with councillors at School 1, interviews with teachers and the headmistress at School 2, and observations of lessons and interviews with teachers at School 3. The reason why this particular form of research has been chosen is because the target group of the thesis, minority background children who are learning English at an elementary school in Norway, are not to be found in every classroom. Using a questionnaire survey as a source of data would be less suitable for this thesis since it would be difficult to know if and how many minority background children were in schools where the questionnaire was sent. It was therefore considered a better approach to do qualitative studies in certain schools which were willing to cooperate and where there were minority background children. The test results presented in section 5.6 add a quantitative dimension to the thesis by comparing the mean scores of the minority background children to the mean scores of the Norwegian pupils in their fifth grade class, and the other 5th grade classes at the school.

5.2 The pupils

The subjects of the case study were eight minority background pupils in a 5th grade class and three minority background pupils in a 6th grade class at a school with a high number of minority background children (School 3). In the 5th grade there was one pupil from Thailand, one from Somalia, four from Turkey, one from Vietnam and one from Pakistan. The sample from the 6th grade included two pupils from China, and one from Turkey. The fact that the sample includes pupils with different minority backgrounds makes a comparison between children with various backgrounds possible.

The 5th grade was chosen because this particular class had a high proportion of minority background children, had been participating in the Early Years Literacy Programme, and had test results in English available that could be used as a source of data for comparing the minority background pupils to their Norwegian peers. Pupils from a 6th grade class were chosen as an additional sample since there were Chinese pupils in the class. A study of these pupils may be interesting since their mother tongue possesses a writing system that is rather

unique, and they therefore have a different starting point from their peers when learning both Norwegian and English.

5.3 Observations

Observations of English lessons in the 5th and 6th grade classes in School 3 were carried out. Due to the limited time available, an evaluation that stretches over time with assessments of the progress pupils make was not possible for this thesis. However, observations were still chosen as a research method as they enable one to record how pupils function in class. Interviews with the teachers alone represent only one point of view or impression, whereas with observations in addition, different impressions can be compared. It should be mentioned though that, based on only a few observations, it is difficult to elicit more than a few details. Advice on how to collect observational data was taken from Borg and Gall (1989).

Observations in the 5th grade were carried out during four double lessons of English, whereas in the 6th grade observations of two double lessons of English were conducted. The reason why more observations were made in the 5th grade was because this group was the main focus of the case study, in addition to the fact that there were more minority background pupils to pay attention to in the group. During the observations attention was paid to how the pupils were coping in the EFL classes. It was particularly of interest to investigate what challenges the subjects were faced with and whether those challenges were greater than the challenges Norwegian learners of English face. It was possible to be present in the background and observe the children without them paying attention to it or being disrupted by the presence of the researcher. As an observer it was important not to talk to the children and interrupt their work.

As a means of recording information, notes were taken. In order to acquire information about the subjects' level of oral language, it was important to be seated near a learning centre where English was spoken. Therefore during the first observation in the 5th grade the subjects were observed at a learning centre where they were conversing with one another, and throughout the second observation they were observed while reading aloud for their teacher at the teacher's learning centre. By choosing to focus on one learning centre at a time it was possible to observe all the subjects at this particular learning centre as the various groups rotated between the learning centres during the lesson. At the third observation the pupils were asked to produce a text and were seated at the same places throughout the whole lesson. It was therefore possible to observe all the subjects without choosing a specific learning centre to observe. During the last observation the pupils had a substitute teacher and the

lesson was organised differently. For this reason one particular learning centre was not chosen for observation, but attention was paid to the different subjects in the various circumstances that occurred in the classroom.

In the 6th grade the subjects were also observed at the teacher's learning centre while reading aloud and conversing with the teacher. Nevertheless, it was easier to get an overview of what the pupils were doing in the various groups as there were only three minority background pupils in this class and they were positioned in only two different groups.

5.4 Interviews

5.4.1 Interviews with teachers at School 1

School 1 is a learning centre for minority background children. Many of the minority background pupils in School 3 had attended this particular institute before entering the school where they were currently studying, and an interview with employees at the school was therefore considered interesting in order to find out more about the subjects' past experience in language learning.

The institution is very much like a Norwegian elementary school. However, it is intended for pupils who need to learn Norwegian. The institution also has a strong connection to a lower secondary school in the same area which offers similar courses to minority background pupils in grades 8-10. The lower secondary school, on the other hand, also functions as a normal Norwegian lower secondary school.

A double interview with a councillor from the institution at the primary level and a councillor from the lower secondary school was conducted. Advice on how to carry out an interview was taken from Borg and Gall (1989: 451), who underline the importance of making an *interview guide* with questions as guidelines for the interview. The guide should include questions that are guided in a certain way, such as the *structured interview*, *semi-structured interview*, and *unstructured interview*. Structured interviews are organised with 'yes' or 'no' questions, or questions which give alternate choices. The semi-structured interview includes a series of structured questions, but the questions are often open-ended so that more complete data can be obtained. With the unstructured interview, on the other hand, the interviewer does not have a structured guide but poses questions to elicit the most interesting data.

The interviews at School 1 were more of an unstructured or open interview type and the interview guide was based on some of the questions from the interviews at the other schools (see Appendix 4). The main idea behind the interview was to get an idea of how the

institution functions. The councillors were asked questions that had to do with the organisation of the school, and about the pupils in general at the school. They were also asked who received the offer to go to this school, how the pupils met Norwegian pupils, and how long they could stay in these classes.

5.4.2 Interviews at School 2

In order to compare teachers' experiences of teaching English to minority background children, and to explore what many of the minority background children go through before integrating into the 'regular' Norwegian classroom, interviews with EFL teachers at a different primary school (in addition to School 3, where the case study was conducted) were conducted. Although this school (School 2) is a normal primary school, it also offers introductory courses for newly-arrived minority background children. Minority background children within the area participate in the introductory course offered at this school for one year before they start at the primary school closest to where they live. Those who live close to the school evidently get to continue at the school after completing the introductory course.

Interviews with both EFL teachers and teachers for the introductory courses at this school were considered as relevant research data for the thesis. A total of five interviews were conducted at the school. Two of the interviewees were EFL teachers, two were teachers of the introductory courses, and the last interviewee was the headmistress. One of the EFL teachers was teaching a 6th grade class and the other one was teaching a 5th grade class. The fact that these two EFL teachers were teaching the same grades as the EFL teachers at School 3, and the fact that they answered the same questions as one another made possible a comparison between the different teachers at the different schools and their experiences of teaching English to minority background children.

For the EFL teachers at School 2 an interview guide with semi-structured questions was prepared (see Appendix 1). Most of the questions in the interview guide were open-ended. The guide was divided into three sections, which each included several questions. Each interview lasted 25-35 minutes. All of the interviews were tape recorded, and were subsequently transcribed on a computer. Having a written version of the interviews was seen as essential in the process of working with and comparing the data.

The first section, consisting of eight questions, incorporated questions about the teacher's background, which was important in order to find out, for example, how long the teacher had been teaching these particular children. The teachers were also asked how long they had been working as teachers, about their educational background, and which subjects in

addition to English they were teaching. Additionally, the teachers were questioned on how many pupils they had in their class and how many of these pupils were of minority background. Lastly they were asked if they had any special training in teaching minority background children.

The second section contained seven questions that were linked to how the teachers viewed their role as a teacher. These questions were important in order to gain insight into the teachers' tactics for helping the minority background children, as well as an understanding of how they viewed their role as a teacher for the minority background and the Norwegian children. The teachers were asked whether they believed it was important for multilingual children to be literate in all of their languages, and how well these children were integrating with the Norwegian children. The teachers were also questioned about whether they gave the minority background children any special treatment. At the end of this section they were asked if they considered special training for teachers necessary in order to teach these children, and whether or not they believed anything more could be done for them.

The third section included 14 questions about the minority background children. The teachers were asked if they noticed any differences in performances between pupils with different first language backgrounds, whether they saw a difference between the minority background children born in Norway and those who had moved here as children, and if the minority background children had attended any special introductory course. Concerning the pupils' process of learning English, the teachers were questioned about the children's motivation, whether they considered learning English to be an advantage or disadvantage, and how they generally coped with English compared to the rest of the pupils in the class. They were also asked if they thought that multilingualism had a negative or positive effect on the children, and whether these children had any advantages as language learners. In addition the teachers were asked if they considered mother tongue teaching to be important in order for the children to maintain all of their languages, and if they noticed signs of code-switching and mixing between the languages. The teachers were also questioned about the parents' attitudes to their children's learning and whether or not that was of importance when it comes to the child's progress.

Two teachers of the introductory courses were also interviewed. One of the teachers taught a group of pupils from grades 5 to 7 who were all new beginners and had recently arrived in Norway. The other teacher taught the same age group (grades 5 to 7), although this group was at a more advanced level. Interviewing teachers for these courses was considered

relevant in order to understand what many of the minority background pupils in Norway go through before integrating into the regular classroom.

The interview guide made for the teachers of the introductory courses was also semi-structured and contained two sections (see Appendix 2). The first section included questions concerning the teachers' background. The teachers were asked how many years they had been working as teachers, and for how long they had been teaching the introductory classes. They were also asked about their educational background, and whether or not they had any special training in teaching minority background children.

The second part entailed questions about the introductory courses and how they functioned. Questions concerning the aims and the content of the courses were asked. The teachers were asked to talk about their experience as teachers for these classes, with follow-up questions on how they felt the minority background children generally coped, and about the children's strengths and weaknesses. They were also asked whether they thought anything more could be done for these children.

In order to acquire some information about the administration of the school, an interview with the headmistress was conducted. The interview guide prepared for this interview was less structured than the other guides and had 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix 3). The idea was to allow the headmistress talk about the school and its policy towards minority background children. The questions that were asked included how many children there were at the school, and how many of these were minority background children. The headmistress was also asked whether the school received any extra funding for the minority background children, about the school's policy for integrating these children, and how successful she considered this policy to be. She was also asked how she considered the minority background children contributed to the school's environment, and if she felt that anything else could be done for these children.

5.4.3 Interviews at School 3

Interviews with the teachers of the two EFL classes of the case study pupils in School 3 were carried out in order to acquire additional information about these pupils. In addition to the teachers of the two EFL classes, another 5th grade EFL teacher at the school, who also had some minority background pupils in his class, was interviewed in order to obtain further information about the target group. The interviews with the teachers were the main source of information on, for example the subjects' background and level of performance. The interview guide used for these interviews was the same as that for the EFL teachers at

School 2. However, an additional question concerning the Early Years Literacy Programme and its efficiency was added to the guide.

5.5 Individual pupil profiles

In addition to the interviews, the two EFL teachers of the 5th grade and the 6th grade class at School 3 were asked to fill out a profile of each minority background pupil in their class (see Appendix 5). The individual pupil profile contained questions concerning the subject's background, motivation, educational achievements and code-switching. In addition, there was a section about the teacher's impressions of parental influence. Since the interview with the teachers contained more general questions about the subjects, these individual pupil profiles were essentially important in order to obtain information about each of the subjects.

5.6 Test results

Cambridge test results from the subjects in the 5th grade from June 2006, December 2006, May 2007 and December 2007, were available as data for this thesis. Each testing period included three tests in listening, reading/writing and oral production. The tests were based on multiple choice, fill-in-the-gap and linking items principles. Cambridge Starters tests were used in June and December 2006, and May 2007, whereas Cambridge Movers tests were used in December 2007. The fact that these test results were available made possible a comparison among the subjects and a comparison between them and the Norwegian pupils in the class and the year level. The test results also made it possible to link performances to the impressions from the observations and the interviews and to see whether these impressions were representative for the pupils' test scores.

As part of the third test period the pupils wrote a short text based on a picture showing a picnic scene (see Appendix 6). The pupils were asked to write as much as they could about the picture in 20 minutes and were encouraged to write in complete sentences. By reading some of the subjects' written material, it was possible to comment on features of their writing and different types of mistakes they made.

5.7 Presenting the findings

A summary of the various interviews at the different schools are presented in Chapter 6. Pseudonyms have been used for the teachers and pupils. In addition, data from the observations, results from the Cambridge tests, as well as impressions from the written assignments, are included in the profiles of the 5th grade pupils. The three 6th grade pupils did

not partake in the Cambridge testing or in the written assignment and their profiles thus consist of information based on the teacher's comments and observations in the classroom only.

The test results are presented in tables which show the results (in percentages). The 5th grade test results show the mean scores in each test for three groups: the minority background pupils, the rest of the class, and the Norwegian pupils in all the 5th grade classes.

6. Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the various findings of the research. It starts by resuming the interviews with the teachers at the different schools.⁷ Thereafter the test results for the 5th grade classes in School 3 are presented. Finally the pupil profiles of the minority background children in the observed 5th and 6th grade classes in School 3 are presented. The 5th grade profiles include information given by the teachers, the pupils' level of achievement based on the test results, a sample of writing from the spring of 2007, and impressions derived from observations made in the classrooms. It was decided not to state the individual minority background pupils' test scores, but to refer to them in relation to the minority group, rest of the class and grade level averages. The 6th grade profiles are based on information given by the teachers and observations made in the classrooms.

6.2 School 1

6.2.1 Interviews with councillors

School 1 consists of an elementary and a lower secondary school. The following are summaries of the interviews with two councillors from the different levels in the school.

Olaug

The councillor at the elementary school, Olaug, reported that the school teaches grades 1-7, and has 110 pupils at present, which is the highest number of pupils the school has ever had. Most of the pupils at the school are of minority background. The pupils may be immigrants, Norwegian citizens that have been living abroad and forgotten Norwegian before returning to Norway, or children who have been adopted to Norway and have not learned any Norwegian yet. The only criteria for entering the school are basically that the children have to be living within the municipality and that they do not speak Norwegian.

According to Olaug, all the classes function as introductory courses. The pupils receive education in a diversity of subjects. However the lessons are adapted to fit their needs as Norwegian language learners. For instance, the pupils receive mother tongue teaching in small groups outside of the classroom. In addition, they are monitored by bilingual teachers in

⁷ The direct quotes from the interviews with the introductory course teachers, the headmistress and the two councillors have been translated from Norwegian

the classroom for two to three hours a week to help them understand what is going on in the classroom. The school has 50 teachers who function as mother tongue and bilingual teachers, as well as 15 Norwegian teachers. The teachers working at the school need to have relevant education, such as Norwegian as a second language, migration pedagogy or multicultural pedagogy. However, some of the older teachers might have studied Norwegian, but not to teach it as a second language.

The pupils are divided into nine groups. In the first grade there are thirty pupils divided into two groups. The pupils in the second and third grade are divided into groups who can and cannot read. Many of the pupils come from countries with different alphabets, and thus need to be taught the Norwegian alphabet from scratch. Pupils from the third and fourth grade are divided into three groups. The pupils in the first group cannot read yet, the pupils in the second group have cracked the reading code and they know some Norwegian, whereas the pupils in the third group know more Norwegian; some of them will soon be transferred to an elementary school closer to where they are living. In addition, there are three groups which contain pupils both from the 5th, 6th and 7th grade. Olaus pointed out that it is necessary to have various groups since they constantly receive new pupils and these pupils cannot start in a group with pupils who have already been in Norway close to a year.

In Olaus's opinion, having a mother tongue that is close to Norwegian is not necessarily always an advantage in the process of learning Norwegian. For instance, although knowing a language such as English is helpful in the beginning, it might actually be a disadvantage in the long run. In the introductory course the teacher might explain a message quickly in English if the pupil did not understand the message in Norwegian, whereas to the other pupils who speak languages unfamiliar to the teacher, the teacher would have to explain the message a second and different way in Norwegian. When constantly having to rely on Norwegian as the only language of communication, one is likely to learn the language quicker. In contrast, when knowing that the message is likely to be repeated in the mother tongue, the pupils may not try hard enough to understand the message in Norwegian. Olaus also pointed out that:

The English speaking pupils often struggle when they start at a normal Norwegian elementary school because all the Norwegian pupils regard English as a language with a high status, and for this reason the Norwegian pupils very often want to communicate with them in English.

The fact that so many people speak English to these pupils possibly makes it too easy for them and it slows down their progress in learning Norwegian.

Olaug reported that in order for their pupils to become acquainted with Norwegian children, and increase their input of Norwegian, the parents are advised to make their pupils go to SFO, which is an after-school programme offered at most Norwegian elementary schools. By spending time at the local SFO close to their home, the children are likely to get to know Norwegian pupils at the school where they will start after completing the introductory course. Nevertheless, not all of the parents are positive to SFO. Olaug emphasised that it is important that the parents understand the relevance of sending their children to SFO since it will make their children integrate quicker and lead to progression in their Norwegian.

Hildegunn

Hildegunn, who is a councillor and a teacher at the lower secondary school, reported that the introductory courses at their school function in a similar way to the courses at the elementary school. However, unlike the elementary school, the lower secondary school offers classes to both Norwegian pupils and introductory classes for minority background pupils. This way the minority background children become accustomed to attending a normal Norwegian school, which makes the transition to the Norwegian classroom with other Norwegians easier. Children who come to Norway and are in 8th, 9th and the 10th grade age group start introductory courses at the lower secondary school, and not at the elementary school.

Although the introductory course is meant to last for a year, exceptions have to be made and many of the pupils spend three years in these classes. However, those with a good school background, and who know English, start in the Norwegian classes much earlier. Hildegunn reported that the pupils have to learn what it is like to go to school and to show that they can take responsibility for their own learning before they are allowed to leave the school.

The fact that the minority background pupils at the lower secondary school go to a relatively normal Norwegian school makes it possible for them to share certain subjects with the Norwegian pupils. After they have been in the introductory course for a while the pupils normally have to share classes with the Norwegian pupils, such as arts and crafts, and physical education. In addition, if a pupil proves to have good English skills, or any other language that is taught at the school, the pupil will be able to join the Norwegian classes in these subjects. In this way integration into the Norwegian classroom becomes a gradual process.

In Hildegunn's opinion it is important to make the parents aware of the various activities the community offers the children. When the parents are good at integrating their

children, the children also make greater progress at school. In addition, Hildegunn pointed out that:

It is important to inform the parents about the school system in Norway and that it is expected from the parents that they help their children with homework. It is important that we do not talk behind the parents' back about how they don't do anything to help their children with the homework. Instead we have to explain to them in a clear manner what is expected of them.

Helping the children with their homework can, of course, be challenging to some of the parents if their level of Norwegian is not good enough. In addition, unlike the introductory courses at the elementary school, the introductory courses at the lower secondary school have English as a part of its curriculum. The minority-speaking parents are often not speakers of English and therefore cannot help their children with their homework in this subject. For this reason, after-school tutoring classes for minority background pupils, as well as majority-speaking pupils who struggle, have become an option at the school, and also at the local library.

Hildegunn also pointed out that many of the minority background families do not take advantage of the various kindergarten options that are available. Many of the minority background children have been living in Norway for a number of years before school age but still do not speak any Norwegian due to lack of exposure to the language. When reaching school age they therefore have to start at the introductory courses and not at normal Norwegian elementary schools. It is important to inform parents about the options that are available at the health stations so that they do not miss out on opportunities like these.

Hildegunn did not believe that pupils with different ethnic backgrounds in general represent different levels of ability at school. In her opinion, everybody is different and when it comes to the pupils' performances at school their life experience is of bigger influence than their mother tongue. Nevertheless, pupils who have a mother tongue closer to Norwegian might make quicker progress when learning Norwegian.

6.3 School 2

School 2 is a primary school that offers introductory courses to minority background children.

6.3.1 Interview with the headmistress

Lise, the headmistress, stated that the school has about 310 pupils divided into seven grades, each grade containing two classes. In addition, the school has four introductory course classes

for pupils of minority background. Out of the 310 pupils in the school, 106 are of minority background, which is roughly a third.

Lise reported that the school receives extra funding for the introductory courses, and that minority background pupils from grades 1 to 7 from the whole municipality come to their school. A lower secondary school in the area has introductory courses for grades 8 to 10. At certain times exceptions are made for the minority background pupils who start at a normal Norwegian elementary school if they live too far away from the two schools where introductory courses are held. If this is the case, the municipality provides mother tongue and Norwegian education for these pupils at their local school. Allowing some minority background children to start at a different school is not the agreement between the school and the municipality. The school is meant to receive all minority background children in the whole municipality who are to start in grades 1-7.

When it comes to the school's policy and strategies on how to teach the minority background pupils, Lise emphasised:

Our starting point is that they have a mother tongue, so that they have a language they think in and have conceptions in. And then we start from scratch and do not expect them to know anything.

They build up the Norwegian language gradually while frequently using visual aids. Lise also believes that it is important that many of the pupils experience that they are succeeding when language learning is this simple in the beginning.

In addition, since the pupils have different nationalities, they have to use Norwegian in order to communicate with one another. She believes it is a good thing that many of the pupils have different nationalities because they have experienced that if there are many children with the same nationality in one classroom, they often tend to communicate together in that language. The school also wishes to have native Norwegian teachers teaching these pupils Norwegian. This way the pupils are more likely to speak Norwegian without an accent. Children from certain nationalities receive mother tongue teaching at the school, but this is after the ordinary school day.

Lise reported that it is the municipality that mainly decides the school's policy when it comes to the organisation of the introductory courses. When she started as a principal at the school, the introductory courses were already established. However, they later established an additional group for beginners in the 5th-7th grades. According to Lise, the various municipalities in Norway offer different programmes for minority background pupils.

In fact the idea of creating a school for minority background children, such as School 1, has been suggested for her municipality. However, Lise does not believe this is a good idea, as the minority background pupils at her school have the possibility of attending a normal Norwegian elementary school, something that might make the transition to a regular Norwegian classroom easier.

In Lise's opinion their introductory course programme has been successful throughout the years, and they have received positive feedback from the refugee centre in the area. Lise was also impressed by how quickly the minority background children seem to pick up the Norwegian language. They start to communicate in a simple way, and they all have the language in common. They also have an advantage in that they get to know people with different nationalities.

Lise considered it a great asset that one of the introductory course teachers at the school has 25 years of experience within the field and is incredibly updated. The Department of Education is also planning to make a tool which will map the level of the children in the introductory courses. Sometimes it is hard for the teachers to know whether it is the children's Norwegian level or general learning disabilities which prevent them from making progress.

When asked how the minority background pupils contribute to the environment in the school, Lise answered:

They contribute to diversity and that we become fond of this diversity. They contribute to us expanding our conception of tolerance and to us working on our attitudes. It affects the environment at the school in the sense that we constantly need to work on something. We say that when we succeed it only means that we need to keep working to keep it this way because new pupils, both Norwegian and foreigners, keep coming to our school.

6.3.2 Interviews with the introductory course teachers

Torunn

Torunn has 24 years of teaching experience, 20 years of which she has been teaching introductory courses for minority background children. She started working as a teacher for introductory courses in a different municipality, and after two years she moved to another municipality where she has been working for the last 18 years. Torunn has been working as a teacher of introductory courses since they first started arranging them in the municipality in which she used to work. At that time it was mostly Pakistani and Turkish children who attended.

Torunn reported that in the municipality in which she first worked special education for minority background teachers is now required, whereas in the municipality where she is currently working, it is not a requirement at present. Torunn herself does not have any special education but she has taken many relevant courses and has 20 years of experience. Nevertheless, she believes that more requirements should be made for introductory course teachers. After all, teaching these classes is something different from teaching normal elementary school classes.

When it comes to the introductory courses themselves, Torunn explained that at their school these courses last for a year. If the pupils start the course after Christmas, they get the possibility to continue on the course for a year and half, assuming there are places available. The additional six months on the introductory course is something from which the pupils normally benefit greatly. The goal for an introductory course is to help the pupils to integrate into the 'normal' classroom in the best possible way, both socially and academically.

According to Torunn, there are four introductory courses at the school and four teachers teaching these courses. One group contains pupils from the first and second grade level, whereas another group includes pupils from the third and fourth grade level. A further group is called IK 5-7 and contains pupils from the 5th, 6th and 7th grades. However, there are also some 4th grade pupils in this group. The reason why 4th graders are accepted into this group is because there is a big difference between the 3rd and 4th grades. Some 4th grade pupils are more advanced, and they therefore prefer to 'pull them up' by letting them start in the group with pupils from the 5th -7th grades. The final group is called NBG and contains new beginners that will start in the IK 5-7 group after they have reached a certain level.

When it comes to the organisation and content of the classes, Torunn explained that the individual teachers make the plans as they go along. The Department of Education has promised to make a curriculum for these courses for a long time but so far they have not been able to produce one. Torunn understands how difficult it must be to make such a curriculum as the pre-knowledge of the pupils always varies. Their starting point as teachers is what the pupils already know. However, there are certain things that they wish to teach them in addition.

Torunn enjoys her job as an introductory course teacher very much, which is why she has been doing it for so many years. She feels privileged and looks forward to work every day: *As a teacher to these children you become very attached to them, and you are an important person for them.* In addition, the children very rarely need to be motivated. She

says that people who visit her and her class are very surprised at how different it is from the 'normal' classroom.

In Torunn's view the minority background pupils cope very well in the introductory courses, although in normal classes the extent to which they cope varies. Many do very well and then there are some that do not manage all that well. Torunn has the impression that it is mostly the social settings the pupils find difficult. Nevertheless, minority background pupils in the municipality generally do very well. She refers to a report⁸ which indicates that 98% of children from first time immigrants in the municipality complete upper secondary school, compared to 88% in the country as a whole.

When Torunn was asked what types of problems she associates with minority background children, she answered that:

I don't associate problems, I don't think about the problems. I really don't. I don't want to answer that. Most of the children are polite and smiling. Children who want to get to know me. Children who are grateful, positive, and nice. But there are of course exceptions.

When it comes to what more could be done for these children, Torunn mentions that the school often receives visitors from other schools in other municipalities. They wish to start programmes for minority background pupils. However, they are only planning to offer a few hours a week, which is not enough in Torunn's opinion. She feels that her municipality, up until now, has provided a good offer for this group.

Concerning EFL education, Torunn said that only the oldest pupils in the introductory courses receive English lessons. After they have completed half a year at the introductory course, the 5th 6th and 7th graders have one English lesson a week. In comparison, the pupils at the elementary level in School 1 do not have any English lessons at all.

Ingrid

Ingrid has been working as a teacher for two years, and started this school year as an introductory course teacher at this school. She has a Bachelor of Education, although she has no special education in teaching minority background children. Ingrid teaches 5th to 7th graders who have recently arrived in Norway. She teaches them basic Norwegian before they are transferred to Torunn's class. Ingrid does not have much experience as a teacher of this

⁸ Integrerings og Mangfoldsdirektoratet 2007

class. She talks to the other teachers concerning what material to use, and then tries to find out if it works in her class as well.

Ingrid believes that the main idea behind the introductory courses is to help the minority background children to benefit from Norwegian schooling to a greater extent. It is important that these children both speak Norwegian and understand the language. It is also important that they understand the Norwegian culture and how Norwegian society functions.

Concerning how the minority background pupils generally cope, both in the introductory courses and in the Norwegian classrooms, Ingrid draws attention to the fact that the situation has changed a great deal during recent years. At the moment there are more European pupils than in the past. She believes that it is easier for these children to fit into the Norwegian school as they not only appear more 'Norwegian', but they also come from a more similar culture.

Since there are more European pupils in the introductory classes, and thereby also more English-speaking pupils, Ingrid had been using English at certain times in her classes. In fact, she had one pupil who refused to cooperate unless being addressed in English. She therefore decided to stop using English unless she had to inform pupils about something important. She compared the English-speaking pupils to, for example, the Polish-speaking pupils, who do not receive extra information in their mother tongue. She concluded that it is important to consistently speak Norwegian since this is the language they are all trying to learn.

Ingrid considered the childrens' positive sides to be that they are very willing to learn. Since they are in a different situation from normal Norwegian pupils, they go along with things easier than the Norwegian pupils. For instance, if certain topics taught in class are childish, they still go along with them.

In Ingrid's opinion it would be a great help if the Department of Education would come up with a plan for all minority background teachers on how to teach the Norwegian alphabet to these children. The Polish children illustrate an example of how being taught the Norwegian alphabet may cause certain problems, as to them the Norwegian letters do not signify the same sounds as the Polish letters. Ingrid pointed out that when she says 'o' many of the children say 'å', and when she says 'u' they say 'o'. It is important that minority background children learn the Norwegian alphabet and its sounds in order to speak fluent Norwegian at a later stage. In addition, she believes that it would have been helpful for most teachers to attend a course on how to teach minority background pupils.

Ingrid concluded that it is great fun to teach these children: *You have to think entirely differently. But it is also very demanding because we do not have many textbooks.* Although they have some textbooks, the selection is not big enough and sometimes they have to use the 1st grade books, even though they may be teaching the 7th grade.

6.3.3 Interviews with EFL teachers

Anne

Anne has been a teacher for 16 years and at present she teaches both the 3rd and 6th grades. She has a Bachelor of Education as well as one year of English studies in Higher Education. At the moment she teaches English, as well as most theoretical subjects. Anne does not have any special education in teaching minority background children. She started teaching the 3rd grade this autumn, and has been teaching the 6th grade for nearly three years. In the 3rd grade there are 22 pupils, four of whom are of minority background, and in the 6th grade there are altogether 20 pupils, three of whom are of minority background. The minority background pupils have different countries of origin, such as Russia, Morocco, Tchetchenia and India.

Anne did not view her role as a teacher for the minority background children differently from teaching the other children. She pointed out that she has to treat all children differently and adjust the teaching towards individual needs.

Anne believes it is important for multilingual children to be literate in all their languages in order to get by in Norway; *it is important for them to be literate in Norwegian, and an advantage to be literate in English as well. In addition, it is an advantage that they become literate in their own language.*

Concerning the extent to which the minority background children integrate with the Norwegian children, Anne said:

I think on average very well. They get friends and they mingle at least at school. But of course, I see some minority background children, perhaps especially girls, who don't mingle that well in private, especially the Muslim girls. But at school I think it works very well.

Anne pointed out that after the first year of introductory courses the minority background children are treated equally to the other pupils unless they are in need of special treatment. The introductory programme they offer is a good one, but as this is the only school which offers introductory courses in the municipality, the classes are now full, and some pupils had to be rejected this year.

Anne did not notice any differences in performances between the minority background pupils with different ethnic backgrounds. Their level of English largely depends on whether or not they have learned any English before arriving in Norway. She has not noticed any similar features among pupils with shared mother tongues. The minority background children in general struggle more with English than the majority-speaking pupils, although there are individual differences. She notices a difference between the minority background children born in Norway and those who came to Norway as children. The minority background children born in Norway have gone through more years of Norwegian education and have thus learned more.

As far as the level of English is concerned, Anne has the impression that the minority background pupils in general struggle with the language since learning English comes on top of everything. She believes that many of them have more than enough trying to cope with learning Norwegian. Sometimes it is hard for them to keep the ‘balls apart from one another’, but this may have to do with the fact that they are struggling with many things at the same time, not just the various languages that they are trying to learn. She was not sure where the problems originated from but for some pupils it may be beneficial to skip English and focus on learning Norwegian. In her experience the children’s motivation varies from child to child and it is of course hard to be motivated when you struggle.

Anne did not regard English as an obstacle to developing knowledge in Norwegian, but the other way around, which indicates that it might be hard for the minority background pupils to develop their English skills. It is always English that comes last, she mentioned. She also said: *They can be very fluent in Norwegian, and still struggle with English. But if they struggle with Norwegian, then they always struggle with English.*

As for code-switching between the various languages, Anne had talked about the issue to one of her minority background pupils once, who said that he thought in Norwegian. However, this boy had been living in Norway for quite a while. She considered time spent in Norway, as well as the number of Norwegian friends, to be essential factors determining whether or not one code-switches to Norwegian when learning English.

When it comes to the disadvantages and advantages these children have as learners of English, one disadvantage is that they do not get as much help at home as the Norwegian children do. Not all of the parents know English and not all of them are literate. In her view parents’ attitudes are always important and their proficiency in Norwegian and English are definitely of importance in terms of helping their children in the best possible way. One advantage, however, is that multilingual children might have developed certain strategies

when learning foreign languages. In addition, proficiency in the mother tongue is an important foundation for learning other languages.

Tor

Tor has been working as a teacher for four years, but he started working at this school a month ago. At the moment he is teaching two fifth grades. Tor functions as a Vice Principal at the school, and therefore only teaches English and swimming. He has a Bachelor of Education, and has studied arts and crafts, and ICT for teachers. He also has a Masters degree in TESOL, teaching English to speakers of other languages. Special training in teaching minority background children is incorporated into his studies.

The two classes which Tor teaches each have 18 pupils with two pupils of minority background in each class. One of the minority background pupils is from Russia, two are from the Middle East, and one is Eastern European. Tor believes it is important not to give the minority background pupils any special treatment. He tries to give them the same treatment as he gives the Norwegians, as well as being a Norwegian role model and a representative for the Norwegian culture. If the minority background children have special needs, they will get the same kind of attention as Norwegian children. Tor pointed out that teaching in general could have been more adapted to the individual, whether they are of minority background or not.

Tor believes that for multilingual children speech is more important than writing, and that it may be difficult for some children to become a hundred per cent multilingual. He has the impression that most minority background children do not have problems integrating into the Norwegian school system, although some have big problems settling in. The key factor to how the children integrate is whether or not the parents are open to the Norwegian culture.

When it comes to the minority background pupils themselves, Tor pointed out that English and German speaking children generally have an advantage when learning Norwegian due to the closeness of the languages. He also mentioned that minority background pupils born in Norway generally do better than the pupils who have moved to Norway as children. The minority background children who come to Norway when they are between 6 and 12 years old are offered a 12 month introductory course at his school, which is an effective course in helping the children to pick up the Norwegian language quickly.

Tor had not been working at the school long enough to comment on how the minority background pupils in general cope with English. His impression, however, was that the minority background children in most cases cope more or less like the Norwegian children. Nevertheless, the English level of the minority background pupils in the 5th grade is below

average. He pointed out that one of the minority background pupils is doing extremely well in English, but then again she does well in all subjects. He also mentioned that some children have parents who belong to an international community and that they therefore have an advantage when it comes to learning English. A few years ago there were more refugees coming to the municipality, but now there are more working immigrants. The children of the working immigrants generally do better at school.

When it comes to the minority background children's motivation, Tor explained that it differs a great deal but that some of them are very motivated. He believes that multilingualism in general has a positive effect on the children. However, learning several languages might be too much to handle for certain pupils. Tor does not regard the acquisition of English as standing in the way of developing Norwegian. He does not believe that by removing the English education, learning Norwegian would be any easier. Learning English might even be an advantage for the minority background pupils. Since learning English is relatively new to the Norwegian pupils as well, it might be easier for the minority background children to connect with the Norwegians in English lessons.

When asked if proficiency in the mother tongue is important when learning other languages, Tor answered: *I think it is very important to have a mother tongue base, so to say, but that is for learning in general. It is important, very important.*

Tor believed that the parents' proficiency in Norwegian and English was decisive. However, it also depends a great deal on the pupils. Nevertheless, in general it is important that the parents are also good speakers of these languages. If they know Norwegian it is also easier for them to learn English.

When it comes to code-switching in the process of learning English, Tor had noticed that the pupils mostly translate to Norwegian. However, inter-language transfer, or code switching, might depend on the pupils' level of Norwegian. Tor had once had a pupil who also knew French, and this pupil often code-switched to French when learning English.

6.4 School 3

School 3 is a regular primary school with a high number of minority background children.

6.4.1 Interviews with EFL teachers

John

John recently started working as a teacher and currently teaches a 5th grade. He teaches all subjects besides arts and crafts. John has a Bachelor in English and History, a Master's degree

equivalent to a Masters in English, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PPU). John has no special education in teaching minority background pupils. In his opinion special education is not needed in order to teach minority background pupils. He has 24 pupils in his class and four of them are of minority background, including two from Turkey and one from China.

John does not view his role as a teacher of the minority background pupils differently from his role as a teacher of other pupils. The minority background pupils in his class do not have any particular problems, although one of the Turkish pupils has proved to have some problems with English. In his experience these pupils have integrated rather successfully. However, there might be certain pupils with special needs.

In John's opinion it is important that the minority background pupils become literate in both Norwegian and English. However, he believed the importance of their first language depended on how much they needed this language. If they have family members in their home country it would be useful to become literate in this language. They do not need their first language at school. However, in school it is important to have a foundation in either their mother tongue or Norwegian, so that it functions as a reference point for learning other languages as well as for learning in general.

Concerning the Early Years Literacy Programme at the school, John considered it to be an advantage to all pupils in general. The advantage with the programme is that it is adjusted to the pupils' individual levels. The EYLP also depends on the parents and them helping their children with their homework, something that is often a disadvantage for the minority background pupils as many of their parents do not speak Norwegian or English very well.

Apart from one minority background girl in the class, John reported that the minority background pupils have integrated well: *The environment in the class is splendid. Everyone gets along. So that's great. I don't think there is any issue.* The minority background girl, on the other hand, does not seem to be able to connect with all the pupils in the class. She prefers to have one friend only, and stay with that person all the time, whereas the other pupils in the class often spend time together in larger groups.

According to John it is not necessary to do anything more for the minority background pupils. His experience indicates that these pupils are advancing at a pace similar to the rest of the class, and consequently it is not necessary to speed them along any more than what they are already doing. Apart from one of the minority background pupils, they have all been in the class since the 1st grade.

When it comes to the minority background pupils' level of English, John reported that they seem to be doing fine. It seems as if they see the need for English and they are eager to learn. They constantly read the graded readers, and try to get to a higher level. However, John had not seen any of his pupils' writing yet since he had been teaching the class for only two months. The minority background pupils do not distinguish themselves from the rest of the class:

I think if you had a bunch of tests you wouldn't be able to tell which ones are the minority kids and which ones are the others, because they sort of blend in. I don't have any minority kids who excel in English, but they are not at the bottom. So they are somewhere in between.

John mentioned that some of the minority background pupils sometimes code-switch to their mother tongue when speaking Norwegian although this does not concern all of them. The Chinese pupil in particular seems to mix prepositions. Nevertheless, John does not believe that learning English is an obstacle to developing knowledge in Norwegian. The minority background children seem to be aware of the differences between these two languages. In fact, he states: *When they mix it up they actually tend to make the same mistakes as the Norwegians. What we call Norwegianisms. They make similar mistakes as Norwegians.*

When it comes to being multilingual John believes that it is likely to have a positive effect on the children if the languages the children learn have similarities between them. However, languages such as Turkish and Chinese are so different from Norwegian and English that it might not be an advantage for them to have these languages as their mother tongue.

John believes that a pupil who is good at Norwegian is also good at English, and vice versa. In fact, each pupil generally represents a similar level in all the different subjects.

Tine

Tine has been working as a teacher for 15 years and is currently a 6th grade teacher. She has been teaching this class for the last five years. In addition to English, Tine teaches Norwegian, music, domestic science and social studies. She has a Bachelor of Education as well as English in Higher Education. Her class has 20 pupils, of whom two are Chinese, two are Turkish, two are half Danish and half Kurdish, and one is half Norwegian and half Danish. Tine has no special education in teaching minority background children. Since the school she is working at has about 23% of minority background pupils, she wishes she did have special education in teaching these children.

Tine reported that she generally tries to treat the minority background pupils the same way as she treats the rest of the pupils in her class:

I try to set individual goals for each child whether they are of Norwegian or minority background. As for the minority background children, then of course their background has to be taken into consideration. But the overall aim for the children is the same. I try to bring out the best in each child.

Tine finds it important that the minority background children become literate in both Norwegian and English, so that they can follow their ambitions here in Norway. In addition, it is important that they know their mother tongue so that they are able to speak with their family abroad.

Tine believed that the EYLP programme is an advantage for the minority background children because they receive 15 minutes attention with the teacher in the teacher's learning centre each lesson. During the time spent at this learning centre it is easier for Tine to meet the pupils' individual needs. The disadvantage of the programme, however, is that it is harder to find individual assignments to suit the minority background children, as they often need extra help. In addition, it is difficult to give them instructions, as they often do not understand the general instructions in English given at the beginning of the lessons, and have to ask again later what to do.

According to Tine it varies a great deal how the minority background children integrate with the Norwegian children. Some of the children integrate very well, whereas others do not. In addition, some of the parents do not wish their children to associate with the Norwegian children in their spare time, which is something that often causes problems for these children as they become more excluded from the environment at school.

Tine reported that the minority background children generally receive first and second language tuition at the school for the first two to three years. In addition, they have extra English tuition twice a week.

In Tine's opinion it would be a great asset if teachers were offered special courses on how to teach minority background children. In an ideal world, more could be done for these children since the parents are rarely able to help them with their homework. That is also why they have started an after-school homework group at the school.

Tine reported that at their school they have a high number of Chinese and Turkish pupils and that she generally finds the Chinese pupils to be more motivated and to have a

stronger work ethic. There are of course exceptions, but generally the Chinese parents have higher ambitions for their children.

According to Tine, not all of the minority background pupils have attended special introductory courses before starting at the school. She believes that some of the parents seem to misunderstand what the introductory courses are all about, and they may think it is a school for special needs children in general. Many parents do not want their children to go to such a school. If all minority background children had attended an introductory course, it would have saved them the difficulties of learning Norwegian at a normal Norwegian primary school later on.

In Tine's opinion it is extra difficult for the minority background children to learn English, as English to them is a third language, whereas it is a second language to the Norwegian children. However, she has one pupil of minority background who is exceptionally good, but this pupil is also good at all subjects. When the minority background children find English hard, their motivation also drops. Their level of English is also usually below average compared to the rest of the class. Sometimes learning English is too much for them to handle and they easily fall behind. However, in general the better they are in Norwegian, the easier it is for them to learn English. In a sense these children have to think twice, via their mother tongue, when they learn English.

In addition to the challenges of learning English at school, the minority background children often do not get as much help at home. Besides, Norwegian children are often more exposed to English through listening to music and watching English TV programmes and films. The minority background children, on the other hand, often receive language input in their mother tongue.

Multilingual children, however, do have certain advantages as language learners and according to Tine they are more aware of the fact that there are differences between languages. When it comes to the importance of mother tongue teaching, Tine had the impression that it was more important 15 years ago, and that now it is more optional.

Finally, concerning code-switching, Tine had noticed that one of her Chinese pupils often thinks in Chinese first and then translates into English. However, she had the impression that minority background pupils generally translate from Norwegian into English if their Norwegian is fluent.

Mari

Mari is a 5th grade teacher who has been working as a teacher for two years, during which time she has been teaching the same class in all subjects. She has a Bachelor of Education as well as having studied English in Higher Education. Her class has 22 pupils, of whom eight are of minority background. She does not have any special education in teaching minority background children.

Mari explained that as a teacher for minority background children it is important to know something about their background and their home situation. When teaching these children one has to be more precise when talking and always give them additional explanations.

According to Mari it is important that multilingual children become literate in all of their languages. As she pointed out: *They have to know their own language to be able to develop skills in other languages.*

Mari considered the EYLP programme to have mostly positive effects on the minority background pupils. Everything is adjusted to the individual and the teachers see clearly what each pupil needs to work on. In addition to the advantages of the EYLP programme for this group, Mari found that the minority background pupils are more integrated now than when she first started teaching the class. Now that their Norwegian has progressed, it is easier for them to connect with the other children.

Mari reported that the minority background children also have extra tutoring at the school with special teachers both in Norwegian and in their mother tongue. Since the children get special tutoring, Mari does not feel that specific training is needed for the teachers teaching the regular classes. However, it is important that the teachers are open-minded.

In Mari's opinion the minority background children should be obliged to attend kindergarten in Norway and it should be free of charge for them. Certain pupils in her class were born in Norway but they could not speak any Norwegian when they started school. The parents did not know how to speak Norwegian either. However, today the parents are obliged to attend a Norwegian course when they first arrive, which makes it much easier for the women who stay at home to socialise with other Norwegian women. Most of the pupils, however, have attended special introductory courses before starting at their school and Mari found these courses to be very helpful and effective.

When it comes to the minority background children's level of performance, Mari mentioned that her Turkish pupils generally perform at a lower level in Norwegian and English compared to the other pupils. Their parents rarely help them since they do not know

much Norwegian themselves. Mari explained that they have experienced that some Turkish parents have a rather negative attitude towards school, and that if their children do not learn anything at school it is always the school's fault. This is a problem since, according to the EYLP programme, the parents are supposed to contribute by helping their children on a regular basis. This is also why they have created an after-school tutoring programme in English for the minority background pupils.

In Mari's opinion the minority background pupils' level of English depends on what their first language is, as well as their level of Norwegian. She notices that if they are good at Norwegian it is often a help when learning English. Some of the minority background pupils whose parents are more international and have positive attitudes towards learning other languages, are generally above the class average in English. The Turkish pupils, however, are generally below average. Mari had the impression that the Turkish families do not mingle with other nationalities in their spare time. They mostly have Turkish friends, and therefore their children are not exposed to other languages, such as Norwegian and English, to the same degree as many of the other minority background children.

Mari pointed out that many of the minority background children are very positive and willing to learn. She does not believe that multilingualism has a negative effect on these children. At their school the mother tongue teachers also help the minority background children with English, as well as helping them translate their English homework into their mother tongue.

Mari could not think of any advantages the minority background children have as language learners compared to other children. On the contrary, Mari believed that the minority background children have problems with the sounds of English and they tend to write phonologically when writing English.

Finally, when it comes to code-switching, Mari pointed out that some of the pupils mix sounds from both the mother tongue and Norwegian when speaking English. In general the minority background children sometimes use Norwegian words when speaking English, but so do the Norwegian pupils. When they write Norwegian, they might mix the spelling with their mother tongue.

6.4.2 Cambridge test results

This section presents the results of four Cambridge tests in the period from June 2006 until November 2007 in School 3. The minority background group that is presented in the tables are the subjects in the fifth grade class which was observed and whose profiles are presented

in section 6.4.3. The data compares the aggregate scores of the minority background group with the aggregate class and grade level scores. When the pupils did the first test in June 2006 they were in the 3rd grade, when the two following tests were conducted they were in the 4th grade, and when the last test was carried out in November 2007, they were in the 5th grade.

Table 1 shows the results of the Cambridge Starters Test from June 2006.

Table 1: Cambridge Starters Test 1(June 2006)

Test type	Minority group average (N=8)	Rest of class average (N = 16)	School 3rd grade average (N = 44)
Listening	49%	70%	64%
Reading/writing	50%	65%	62%
Oral	47%	53%	58%

As Table 1 indicates there were only minor differences in the performances of the minority background group in the various test types taken in June 2006. In listening the minority group had an average score of 49%, in reading and writing an average score of 50%, and in oral language production an average score of 47%.

When the minority group is compared to the rest of the class the differences are much greater in all three tests. In listening, for instance, the rest of the class scored 21% higher on average than the minority group, 15 % higher in reading and writing, and 6% higher in oral production.

When comparing the minority group average with the 3rd grade school average, it is noticeable that in this case also the average score is higher in all test types than for the minority group (15% difference in listening, 12% in reading and writing, and 11% in oral language). Nevertheless, the differences in performance are higher between the minority group and the rest of the class than between the minority group and the grade level average in all test types besides oral production. This particular class had a higher average score than the grade level average in both listening (6%), and reading and writing (3%).

Table 2 shows the results of the Cambridge Starters Test from December 2006.

Table 2: Cambridge Starters Test 2 (December 2006)

Test type	Minority group average (N=8)	Rest of class average (N = 16)	School 4th^h grade average (N = 44)
Listening	71%	89%	90%
Reading/writing	64%	77%	77%
Oral	62%	71%	75%

As Table 2 indicates, the minority group had progressed in all test types since the testing in June 2006. Compared to the spring, they improved their score by 22 per cent in listening, by 14 per cent in reading and writing, and by 15 per cent in oral production.

In comparison with the rest of the class aggregate score, the minority group had narrowed the gap in both listening (18% difference) and reading and writing (13% difference). However, when it comes to oral language (9% difference) the difference between the minority group and the rest of the class was now greater than in the previous test. It is worth noting that the average scores for the grade level are similar to the class averages.

Table 3 presents the results of the Cambridge Starters Test from May 2007.

Table 3: Cambridge Starters Test 3 (May 2007)

Test type	Minority group average (N=8)	Rest of class average (N = 15)	School 4thth grade average (N = 43)
Listening	76%	90%	92%
Reading/writing	59%	77%	78%
Oral	69%	82%	84%

The data in Table 3 show that the minority group had not made as much progress as in the previous tests. In fact when it comes to reading and writing, the average score had decreased by 5% since the previous test. In listening, on the other hand, the minority group had increased their score by 5 per cent (to 76%), and by 7 per cent (to 69%) in oral production.

When comparing the grade level average to the rest of the class average, the scores are similar. The class and grade level averages are also considerably higher than for the minority group.

Table 4 shows the results from the Cambridge Movers Test from November 2007.

Table 4: Cambridge Movers Test 1 (November 2007)

Test type	Minority group average (N=8)	Rest of class average (N = 14)	School 5th grade average (N = 42)
Listening	86%	96%	92%
Reading/writing	49%	71%	73%
Oral	56%	68%	69%

Since these tests represent a higher level than the ‘Starters’ tests, a comparison between the other tests is not feasible.

As the data in Table 4 indicate, the minority group appears to have coped better with listening skills (86%), than with reading and writing (49%). The group scored an average of 56 per cent in oral production, which is in between the scores for the two other test types.

If we compare the minority group to the rest of the class, it is noticeable that the average score of the rest of the class is still higher than for the minority group in all the various test types. The difference between the two groups is, however, greatest in reading and writing (22% difference). Once again, the rest of the class average and the grade level averages are similar; both are much higher than for the minority group.

Summary

To sum up it is evident that the minority group average is lower than the rest of the class average and the grade level average in all the various test types in the different periods. Even though the minority group has showed a progression throughout the process of testing, the progress they have made has not been sufficient to catch up with either the rest of the class or the school grade level, as these two groups also made progress during the testing period.

6.4.3 5th grade pupil profiles

This section provides pupil profiles of the eight the minority background subjects in the 5th grade class in School 3 that was observed. The subjects have been referred to with the following pseudonyms: Abdi, Esin, Melisa, Aarya, Lawan, Nadifa, Duong and Beria. The profiles contain information given by the teacher, how the pupils performed on the Cambridge test results, impressions from the written assignment in the spring of 2007, and impressions based on observations in the classroom.

During the first observation the pupils were observed in a learning centre where they were to converse with one another. The teacher had prepared sheets of paper with questions about the pupils’ home environment, for example if they were living in a house or apartment,

and the pupils were to interview one another using these questions. The second observation was based on an observation of the teacher's learning centre, where the pupils read books aloud to the teacher, and received feedback. In the third observation the pupils were observed producing texts. The lesson was a so called 'free-writing' lesson and the pupils sat individually while writing their texts. The pupils were not placed in the regular groups during this lesson. Finally, when the fourth observation was carried out, the pupils had a substitute teacher. Although the substitute teacher arranged an English lesson based on the EYLP programme, slight changes were made. For instance, the pupils were not placed in their regular groups. In addition, many of the pupils did not know what to do at times as many of the tasks were not pre-prepared as they normally were.

Abdi

Abdi's teacher reported that his ethnic background is Turkish, but that he was born in Norway. His mother tongue is Turkish, which is also the language spoken in the home. Abdi receives mother tongue teaching by a special teacher at the school. In addition, he receives extra lessons in Norwegian. Abdi's parents have a low level of Norwegian and English and it is therefore hard for them to help him with his homework.

According to the teacher Abdi enjoys learning English, his motivation is excellent, and he functions well in the English lessons. The graded readers that he is reading at the moment are on level 3⁹. The teacher has also noticed that Abdi's level of Norwegian is reflected in his level of English and vice versa. In other words since Abdi's level of Norwegian is below average, so is his level of English.

Based on the Cambridge test results (see section 6.4.2), Abdi's level is generally below that of the minority group average in all skills, as well as below the class and grade level average. However, during the last testing period in November 2007, Abdi improved in the listening and oral language tests and his test results were now above the minority group average, although still below the class and grade level average.

In the written assignment in the spring of 2007 Abdi wrote a rather short text. Although the text illustrates that Abdi has attempted to write in sentences, the sentences that he has constructed do not have a high degree of variety. Apart from the first sentence in the text, all the sentences start with the phrase 'I can see'. His writing also bore evidence of phonetic spelling, namely that he had not conformed to English spelling conventions but

⁹ There is a total of 26 levels in the series.

spelled the words as they sounded. For instance, he spelled *hir* instead of *here*, *dak* instead of *duck*, and *plejin* instead of *playing*. The fact that these spellings are to a high degree based on the Norwegian alphabet and its sounds illustrates that Abdi's English is partly influenced by his Norwegian. Norwegian cross-linguistic transfer was also present in the text, for example in words such as *blom* instead of the English word *flower*.

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Abdi was in a group with two girls of minority background. Abdi's level of concentration was low and he did not participate in the group activity. One of the girls asked him what was wrong and he said he had a stomach ache.

During the second observation Abdi started to read a book to the teacher which contained few words (three to four words) on each page. He read quite slowly. The teacher corrected his pronunciation in words such as *bad*, which he pronounced with the vowel /ə/ instead of /æ/.¹⁰ He also had problems pronouncing the word *owl*.

When the third observation was carried out Abdi sat at a table together with all the boys in the class writing a story about Snow White. He often raised his hand to ask for help.

During the fourth and last observation Abdi was sitting together with Melisa, a girl of minority background whose mother tongue is also Turkish, and they were working with some exercises on sheets of paper together. Abdi's level of concentration varied throughout the lesson. Towards the end of the lesson Abdi and Melisa read books together in English, although it sounded as if they code-switched between Turkish and Norwegian every now and again. It may seem natural that two children who share the same mother tongue would communicate in this language when they are conversing privately. Nevertheless, it also indicates that the two of them have maintained their mother tongues, and to a certain extent prefer it to Norwegian.

Summary

Based on the various sources mentioned above, the general impression is that Abdi's English level is below average. Nevertheless, Abdi's teacher reported that his motivation to learn English is good, but that he reads graded readers at a relatively low level (level 3 out of 26 levels). In addition, the Cambridge test results indicate that Abdi's level of performance is below average. Abdi's written assignment showed little production of text and a high

¹⁰ A Norwegian would perhaps be more likely to pronounce it with a long vowel, such as in the word *bad* (bathroom) in Norwegian.

frequency of spelling mistakes. Based on the observations in the classroom Abdi's commitment to the various tasks varied. He followed instructions, but became distracted at certain times.

Esin

The teacher reported that Esin's ethnic background is Turkish. Although her mother tongue is Turkish, she speaks Norwegian at home. Esin is literate in her mother tongue but her parents do not want her to participate in mother tongue education. In addition, she does not receive extra tutoring in Norwegian.

Esin is motivated to learn English and functions well in the English lessons. The graded readers that Esin reads at the moment are on level 4 and 5. Esin's level of Norwegian is reflected in her level of English. In other words, both her level of Norwegian and her level of English are slightly under average. Esin's parents are positive to her learning English and Norwegian, and their level in these two languages is average. They normally help Esin with her homework.

The Cambridge test results indicate that Esin started off at a level below the minority group average, but throughout the testing period she improved until her performances were above the minority group average. However, except for two tests¹¹, Esin's results were below the class and grade level average.

Esin's written assignment was short, containing six sentences, which were descriptive and indicated a certain degree of variety. For instance, some sentences started with the phrase 'there is', whereas others started with a subject. Spelling mistakes such as 'plaing' instead of 'playing', and 'siting' instead of 'sitting' were present. These types of mistakes are also typical of Norwegian learners. Even though Esin's text contained some mistakes, she had managed to follow English spelling conventions in high frequency words such as 'dad', 'boy', 'ball' and 'red'.

Observations in the classroom

Throughout the first observation Esin was observed in a group with Nadifa and Abdi, two pupils who are also of minority background. Her level of commitment appeared to be good and she was leading the conversation and deciding what to do next. When the second

¹¹ Esin's test results were above the rest of the class average on the listening tests in May 2007 and November 2007.

observation was carried out at the teacher's centre, Esin was reading rather slowly, and not very loudly. It was therefore difficult to hear what her pronunciation was like.

During the free-writing lesson in the third observation Esin was in a corner of the classroom together with two other girls of minority background, Nadifa and Melisa, while writing her story. Her level of concentration seemed to be good, although she was conversing with the girls every now and again.

The substitute teacher who organised the English lessons during the fourth observation decided to teach the class about prepositions. When the pupils were asked questions Esin was eager to answer and replied that *bak* in Norwegian is *behind* in English.

Summary

The general impression of Esin based on the various sources is that her level of English is average within the minority background group but below average compared to the rest of the class and grade level. It seems as though she makes an effort in the process of learning English. The teacher reported that she functions well in the English lessons and that she reads graded readers on level 4 and 5. Additionally, her parents support her learning of English. The Cambridge test results indicate that Esin's level of English improved until her performances were above the minority group average. The written assignment indicated that her text was short with some spelling mistakes. However, Esin also managed to spell many words correctly. In the classroom Esin appeared to be eager to learn and a leader amongst the minority background pupils.

Melisa

Melisa's ethnic background is Turkish, although she was born in Norway. Her mother tongue is Turkish, which is also the language spoken in the home. Melisa is given mother tongue education with a special teacher at the school, as well as extra teaching in Norwegian. Her parents' levels of Norwegian and English are rather low and they rarely help her with the homework in these subjects.

The teacher reported that Melisa enjoys learning English and that she is highly motivated. She functions well in the English lessons and is currently reading graded readers on level 3. The teacher felt that Melisa's level of Norwegian is reflected in her level of English, namely below average in both.

The Cambridge test results indicate that, besides one listening test in June 2006, Melisa's level is below the minority group average in all skills, which also means that her level is also below the class and grade level average.

Melisa's written assignment was relatively short and included seven sentences. Apart from one sentence that starts with the phrase 'there is', all of the sentences in the text are structured in a similar way and commence with the verb phrase 'I can see'. The spelling mistakes found in the text are often linked to the wrong use of vowels and are present in words such as 'bol' (ball) and 'gres' (grass). Spelling mistakes such as 'siting' instead of 'sitting' are also present in the text. Melisa seems to be influenced to a certain degree by Norwegian in her English writing.

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Melisa was in a group with a Norwegian boy and a Norwegian girl. The learning centre in which Melisa was observed focused on oral interaction. The Norwegian girl and boy started to interview each other and they both spoke reasonably good English. However, Melisa's level of concentration and commitment to the task were relatively low. When her group came to this learning centre, she disappeared out of the classroom and came back a minute or two later. She then stood next to the other members of her group in a very restless way. She took part in the conversation every now and then. When she spoke English, she had mostly a Norwegian accent, although a rolling 'r' was present at certain times. When she spoke Norwegian, she spoke the local dialect, which does not have a rolling 'r'. Thus the rolling 'r' is likely to be influenced by her mother tongue. Melisa also took the liberty of taking a stroll around the classroom every now and then but she always went back to her group. She often went over to another group to talk to Nadifa, another girl of minority background.

Due to the fact that the pupils performed the Cambridge Movers test during the second supervision Melisa was not observed in the teacher's centre while reading for her teacher. The pupils were called out of the classroom randomly to do the test.

Throughout the third observation Melisa was observed together with Esin and Nadifa, two girls of minority background. She wrote a story about Hansel & Gretel. Her level of concentration varied throughout the lesson. At the end of this session Melisa was observed speaking a few sentences in Turkish to Beria. When they talked to the other non-Turkish pupils standing there, they quickly code-switched back to Norwegian again.

During the fourth observation, Melisa spent a considerable amount of time together with Abdi. They started off working on exercises on sheets of paper together and towards the end of the lesson the two of them sat in a corner of the classroom reading books together. Melisa's level of commitment varied. When Melisa and Abdi were not reading aloud from the book, it seemed as if they were code-switching between Norwegian and Turkish.

Summary

Melisa's level of English is below the minority group, class and grade level average. The teacher reported that Melisa reads graded readers on level 3, which is a relatively low level. Nevertheless, she is motivated to learn English. Her written assignment was short with many spelling mistakes. During the observations Melisa appeared to be unfocused at times.

Aarya

The teacher reported that Aarya is of Pakistani descent and that she was born in Norway. Her mother tongue is Pakistani and she speaks both Pakistani and Norwegian at home. Aarya receives mother tongue teaching outside of the school, but she is not involved in extra teaching in Norwegian. Her parents were generally positive towards their child's learning of Norwegian and English. Their level of Norwegian is mediocre, which affects the child's learning of Norwegian and English. However, Aarya's parents help her with her homework in English.

Aarya's motivation to learn English is excellent and she also functions very well in the English classes. Her greatest weakness in English is written tasks. However, she reads graded readers on level 4 and 5. The teacher believes that her level of Norwegian is reflected in her level of English, namely above average in both languages.

The Cambridge test results reveal that Aarya's level is above the minority group average in all tasks. Compared to the rest of the class and grade level her performances are average.

Aarya wrote a relatively long story. She attempted to construct sentences with a certain degree of variety. Even though there are spelling mistakes, some of them indicate that Aarya is familiar with some English spelling conventions and does not spell all the words in a phonetic manner. Nevertheless, there are phonetic spelling mistakes present in the text. In words such as 'fader' instead of 'father', and 'braun' instead of 'brown', it seems that Aarya has spelled the words as they sound in Norwegian. In addition, the text indicates evidence of cross-linguistic transfer through Norwegian words that are introduced to the English text. For

example Norwegian words such as 'lilla' (purple), and 'lyse' (lyse pink), instead of 'light' (light pink), are present in the text.

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Aarya was observed in a group of four pupils, two boys and two girls. Aarya was the only one of minority background in the group. She appeared to be speaking reasonably good English and her level of commitment to the task was excellent. At one stage Aarya and the Norwegian girl in the group tested each other's vocabulary on the given topic. The Norwegian girl asked Aarya about words such as 'city', 'town', and 'village', and Aarya knew the meaning of all the English words. Aarya also spoke Norwegian well with the local dialect. When Aarya questioned the Norwegian girl about the various words, she did not know all the words, and Aarya helped her out.

When reading aloud for the teacher during the second observation, Aarya was reading well and quite quickly. Her pronunciation was good and she seemed eager to learn. She even asked the teacher if she could translate into Norwegian what she had written.

During the third observation Aarya was situated with four Norwegian girls. She wrote a story that she had named 'My best friend'. Aarya did not work as eagerly on the written task as on the oral activities during the two previous observations. When she had written one page with sentences on every other line, she raised her hand to tell the teacher she was finished. She was the first one to do this. The teacher said that her story was rather short and asked her to write another one. The teacher also mentioned that she had forgotten to use capital letters in the beginning of the phrases.

During the fourth observation Aarya started off at a group with Abdi and Melisa, working on some exercises. However, after a while Aarya changed groups and joined Esin and two other Norwegian girls. At the computer centre Aarya was sharing a computer with one of the Norwegian girls. At times Aarya worked eagerly on the given tasks. Nevertheless, she also seemed restless at times and changed groups throughout the lesson.

Summary

The overall impression is that Aarya's level of English is good. She is motivated to learn English and reads graded readers at level 4 and 5. According to the Cambridge test results, Aarya is above the minority group average, and roughly on an average level compared to the rest of the class and grade level. Her written assignment was relatively long, had varied structures, but contained some spelling mistakes. In the classroom Aarya appeared to manage

well. She was generally committed to the tasks and integrated well with the Norwegians in her group.

Lawan

According to the teacher Lawan's ethnic background and mother tongue is Thai, which is also the language spoken in the home. However, Lawan was born in Norway. She is literate in her mother tongue but does not receive mother tongue teaching at the school or outside of the school. Neither does she receive any extra teaching in Norwegian. Lawan appeared to have a good level of Norwegian. Her parents seem to have a positive effect on Lawan's learning and their level of Norwegian and English is very good.

The teacher described Lawan's motivation to learn English as perfect, and there is nothing she dislikes about learning English. She functions very well in the English lessons and does not have any weaknesses in English. She reads graded readers at level 6 and 7. The teacher had the impression that Lawan's level of Norwegian is reflected in her level of English, namely above the minority group, class and grade level average.

The Cambridge test results confirm that Lawan seems to be an excellent pupil. Not only is her level above the minority group average in all skills, but her test results are also above the rest of the class and grade level average in all skills.

In addition, Lawan's written assignment reflects a relatively high level of English for her age. Her story is rather long compared to many of the other pupils, and she has actually created a story with a beginning and an end. The fact that Lawan's story starts with the phrase 'once upon a time' and ends with 'the end', gives the impression that Lawan is aware of the genre of fairy tale or story writing and that she deliberately uses it in her text to create an interesting story. The text contains very few spelling mistakes, and the mistakes that are made are at a different level from most of the other subjects, for example, inaccuracy in the use of the present continuous form (*I will playing with you*), and the use of the plural *are* instead of the singular (*the clock are 20:30*). The latter example also shows evidence of Norwegian sentence structure and expression as the phrase is directly translated from Norwegian (*klokken er 20:30/ halv ni*). In English one would say 'the time is 20:30/ half past eight'. Lawan also managed to bring the text to life by using direct speech, for example 'The mother said "come we must go home now".'

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Lawan was in a group with only Norwegian pupils. When Lawan spoke English, her level appeared to be reasonably good and similar to the other pupils in the group. The pupils were interviewing each other using Norwegian words if they could not find the appropriate expression in English. In one instance Lawan said: 'I can 'bare'' (only), which indicates use of Norwegian in cross-linguistic transfer.

When Lawan was observed reading for her teacher during the second observation she read very quietly, so it was hard to hear what she was saying. During the free-writing session at the third observation, Lawan was situated at a table with a few other Norwegian girls while writing her story. She appeared to be concentrated on this task and she got along well with the Norwegian girls.

Finally, at the fourth observation Lawan started in the reading centre with three other Norwegian girls. They read sentences on pieces of papers to each other. It seemed as if Lawan had integrated well with these other girls. In the conversation centre Lawan and the other Norwegian girls spoke Norwegian to one another. The teacher told them to speak English, which they did.

Summary

Lawan appears to be an excellent pupil based on all the sources. The teacher said that her motivation is high and that she reads graded readers at a relatively high level (6-7). The Cambridge test results indicate that Lawan is above the minority group average, class and grade level average in all skills. Her written assignment is long and contains few spelling mistakes. Based on the observations it appeared as if Lawan had integrated well with the Norwegians in her group and she seemed eager to learn English.

Nadifa

The teacher reported that Nadifa is Somali and that she was not born in Norway, where she has been living for approximately five years. Her mother tongue is Somali and she is also literate in this language. She receives mother tongue teaching outside of the school. Her parents have a low level of Norwegian and English and they do not help Nadifa with her homework in these subjects.

Nadifa's motivation to learn English is very high and she functions well in the English classes. However, she finds written tasks challenging. Her level of Norwegian seems to reflect

her level of English, namely below the minority group, rest of the class and grade level average.

Based on the Cambridge test results, Nadifa's average scores in English were below the minority group average, except for one listening test and one reading and writing test, where her results were at the level of the minority group average. Compared to the rest of the class and grade level, however, Nadifa was below average in all skills.

Nadifa's written text was short, with a total of eight sentences. Although she had attempted to construct sentences, they neither commenced with capital letters nor were constructed correctly. Except for two sentences, all the sentences started with the verb 'is', which is normally only used in the beginning of questions. None of the sentences in the text were, however, questions, for example: 'is mami sit the tabl'. Perhaps Nadifa had attempted to use the phrase 'there is', for example: 'is ter is colours green'. The text does not bare evidence of mistakes typically made by Norwegians.

Observations in the classroom

At the first observation Nadifa was in a group with two other pupils of minority background, Esin and Abdi. Nadifa was reading slowly but her pronunciation was rather good. She seemed to be more influenced by her mother tongue when speaking English, since her English accent had a rolling 'r', which is not found in the local Norwegian dialect which she spoke. Otherwise, she spoke Norwegian with the local dialect.

During the second observation Nadifa read rather slowly and had problems pronouncing some of the words. She read a book with one sentence on each page. The teacher helped her with the pronunciation of certain words, such as 'birthday'. She showed her how to make the /θ/ sound and demonstrated how to put the tongue between the front teeth in order to produce this sound. The teacher asked what it means that 'the fox ran away', and Nadifa answered in Norwegian.

Throughout the third observation Nadifa produced a text in the company of Esin and Melisa. Her level of concentration appeared to be satisfactory, although she did interact with the other girls at certain times.

Finally, at the fourth observation, Nadifa was not in her regular group. She started off at the computer learning centre together with two other Norwegian girls. Later on she read books with two Norwegian girls. At the conversation learning centre she was together with Beria and a Norwegian girl. They spoke mostly Norwegian and the teacher told them to speak English.

Summary

The general impression is that Nadifa's level of English is below the minority group, rest of the class and grade level average. She seems motivated, but finds it difficult to learn English. Her written assignment was short, containing many errors. During the observations Nadifa appeared to be influenced by her mother tongue to a certain extent when speaking English. Nadifa also appeared to be spending most time with other girls of minority background.

Duong

The teacher reported that Duong is Vietnamese. His mother tongue is hence Vietnamese, which is also the language spoken in the home. Duong receives mother tongue teaching outside of the school. However, he does not participate in any extra teaching in Norwegian. His parents' level of Norwegian and English is average, and they do not help him with his homework in English.

According to the teacher Duong's motivation to learn English is excellent and he functions very well in the English lessons. Duong is reading easy reader books on level 3, 4 and 5. The teacher also reported that Duong is actually better in English than in Norwegian.

The Cambridge test results indicate that, except for one listening and one reading/writing test, Duong's level is above the minority group average. Nevertheless, apart from in one listening test, his performances are below the rest of the class and grade level average.

Duong's written assignment was relatively short, containing seven sentences with a similar structure. They were descriptive and all started with the definite article 'the' followed by the subject of the sentence, for example: 'The boy kicking the ball'. The text did not contain a large number of spelling mistakes. On the other hand, signs of 'Norwegianisms' were present in the text, indicating that Norwegian words and expressions had been translated into English. When translated into English, they did not make sense in the given context. For example, 'back' is similar to the Norwegian word 'bak', which means 'behind' in English and was thus wrong in the sentence: 'The ball is back the flavors'.

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Duong was in a group with two Norwegian girls, as well as Beria. It seemed to be mostly the two Norwegian girls that were interacting with one another. After a while Duong and Beria decided to interview each other. Beria started to interview Duong, but

his level of commitment to the task appeared to be rather low. He looked for answers on the sheet, but Beria pointed out that he would not find them there. She asked some more questions, to which Duong did not reply. The Norwegian girl sitting next to him then interrupted and said that he had to speak some English, otherwise he would have to do 5th grade all over again.

When observed at the teacher's learning centre during the second observation, Duong read very quietly, and it was hard to hear what he said. It looked as if he was reading rather quickly, as he flipped through the pages rapidly. It also seemed as if he was reading well, as the teacher rarely corrected him.

At the free-writing session during the third observation Duong was sitting at a table together with all of the boys in the class while writing his story. He appeared to be reasonably committed to the task.

At the last observation Duong was not part of his regular group. He sat in a group with three boys, and it seemed as if he had integrated well. The boys were talking and laughing together while working on the exercises.

Summary

The overall impression of Duong is slightly mixed. The teacher reported that his motivation was good and that he reads graded readers on level 3-5. The Cambridge test results indicate that his level of English is above the minority group average, but below the rest of the class and grade level average. During the observations Duong seemed to be passive in oral interactions. However, when participating in individual assignments, he seemed committed.

Beria

Beria's mother tongue is Turkish which is the language spoken in the home. Beria receives mother tongue teaching as well as extra teaching in Norwegian. Her motivation is good and she functions well in the English lessons. Beria's level of English is reflected in her level of Norwegian, which is below the minority group, rest of the class and grade level average. Her parents' level of Norwegian and English are average and their attitudes to their child's learning are positive. However, they do not help her with her homework.

In the Cambridge test Beria scored below the minority group average and below the rest of the class and grade level average in all skills.

Beria wrote a short text with eight sentences on the written assignment. The constructions of the sentences mostly varied between 'I can see' and 'There is' structures.

English spelling conventions were often not followed and phonetic spelling with a Norwegian influence was present. For instance, Beria had written ‘dey’ instead of ‘they’ and ‘iting’ instead of ‘eating’.

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Beria was in the conversation centre together with two Norwegian girls and Duong. Beria was reading slowly and took a few breaks while reading. Nevertheless, her English seemed to be at a reasonably good level. Beria and Duong started interviewing one another and it was Beria who seemed to be in charge. She started posing questions and decided what to do next.

Since Cambridge tests were being conducted during the second observation, Beria was not observed reading aloud for the teacher. The children went out in small groups doing the tests, and when Beria’s group came to the teacher’s centre she was called out to do the test.

While writing her story during the free-writing session, Beria was situated at a table together with two other Norwegian girls. Towards the end of the class she was observed speaking to Melisa in Turkish.

At the fourth observation Beria was not in her regular group. At the conversation centre she was observed together with a Norwegian girl and Nadifa. They spoke mostly Norwegian and the teacher told them to speak English.

Summary

The overall impression of Beria is that her level of English is below the minority group, rest of the class and grade level average. Nevertheless, she seems eager to learn and her parents support her learning, although they are not able to help her with her homework.

6.4.4 6th grade pupil profiles

This section provides profiles of three minority background pupils in a 6th grade class in School 3. The profiles are based on the teacher’s reports and observations during two lessons. The pupils are referred to by the pseudonyms Sahiba, Edy and Annabella.

Sahiba

The teacher reported that Sahiba’s ethnic background is Turkish but that she was born in Norway. Her mother tongue is Turkish, which is also the language spoken in the home. Sahiba is literate in her mother tongue and she receives 90 minutes of mother tongue teaching

weekly at the school. Sahiba does not receive any extra teaching in Norwegian at the moment, but she had for the last two years. At the moment she has extra English lessons.

Sahiba's parents' level of Norwegian is poor and she often has to translate from Turkish to Norwegian for them. In addition, her parents do not speak English, which makes them unable to help her with her English homework. The teacher has the impression that the parents are not very interested in Sahiba's development in Norwegian and English and she receives little or no motivation and guidance at home.

Nevertheless, Sahiba is motivated to learn English, although she finds the language hard to learn. In particular she finds it difficult to understand, read and pronounce English. In the English lessons she is quite passive and quiet. However she seems to be making progress. Sahiba's level of English seems to be reflected in her level of Norwegian, which is also poor.

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Sahiba was observed in various learning centres. In Sahiba's group there were normally three pupils, but on that day she was alone. The group normally also contains a girl of Asian descent and a Turkish boy, who were not present that day. The Turkish boy rarely participated in the English lessons because he is a special needs pupil.

Sahiba started in a centre where she wrote in her yellow English book. She was working with some cards with pictures on. She was looking at a card, trying to remember the English word, which she then wrote in her book. Sahiba's commitment to the task did not appear to be very high and she did not seem to know what to do all the time. Nevertheless when the extra teacher helped her, she showed interest and paid attention to what she said. The extra teacher was also helping the other children in the class.

At the next learning centre, Sahiba read a book together with the teacher. She read in a very slow manner and the teacher was asking questions to which Sahiba gave short answers. The teacher gave her homework, which consisted of writing simple sentences in English that she knew, such as *My name is... and I like....* It seemed as if these exercises represented a much lower level than the homework given to the other children. At the teacher centre the pupils read stories that they had written at home for the teacher.

When Sahiba came to the learning centre where she was to read picture books, she left the classroom together with the extra teacher. After a while the extra teacher came back. Sahiba was probably reading on her own outside the classroom. At the end of the session she came back to read big picture books in the classroom. It appeared as if she was mainly looking at the photos, but reading some of the text.

At the computer centre Sahiba seemed to be coping reasonably well. She made some mistakes and the computer commented 'please try again', but at times it also said 'excellent'.

At the last centre Sahiba worked on a crossword. She used the dictionary quite often and the extra teacher was sitting with her and helping her. At one point Sahiba pointed at a drawing of a dolphin, asking the extra teacher what this meant in Norwegian. Since Sahiba sometimes had to find the meaning of words in Norwegian before translating them into English, it seemed as if learning English to her was a longer process than for most of the Norwegian pupils.

During the second observation Sahiba was mainly observed in the teacher's learning centre while reading for the teacher. The books she read for the teacher seemed easier than the books most of the other pupils read. For instance, each page contained only one sentence and it always had a big drawing. Sahiba read the sentence *She was sad*, and the teacher asked 'what does it mean to be sad'? Sahiba then answered in Norwegian 'å være lei seg'. She went on reading a sentence 'I want to tell you something', and the teacher asked her what that meant. Afterwards the teacher went through some vocabulary that the pupils had written down in a glossary book. Sahiba had to practise the /θ/ sound. Subsequently, Sahiba read her homework aloud to the teacher. She was reading the sentences she was asked to write last week. The teacher corrected the mistakes in the book.

Summary

The overall impression is that Sahiba is a rather weak pupil in English. The teacher reported that she is motivated, but finds it very hard to learn English. From the observations it appeared that Sahiba was struggling with some of the tasks, but once she got help from the extra teacher and the main teacher she seemed motivated to learn.

Edy

The teacher reported that Edy is Chinese and that she moved to Norway four and a half years ago. Her mother tongue is Chinese (Mandarin), which is also the language spoken in the home. The teacher was not sure whether Edy is literate in her mother tongue, but she had been attending mother tongue teaching for two years. Edy had also received extra teaching in Norwegian for two years. However, at the moment she participates in neither extra Norwegian teaching nor in mother tongue teaching. On the other hand she receives extra tutoring in English.

The teacher described Edy's parents as positive to their child's learning, but that they are busy and unable to help her. Their Norwegian skills are poor and they do not speak English. As a result, Edy has been given extra tutoring in English at the school.

According to the teacher, Edy is not very motivated to learn English. She finds it hard enough just to learn Norwegian. In addition she finds English to be difficult to understand, read and pronounce. In the English lessons she is rather passive and quiet, finding it hard to engage in the various tasks. Nevertheless she is constantly making progress.

The teacher found that Edy's level of English is reflected in her level of Norwegian, namely below average in both languages. When learning English it also appears as if she has to work out the meaning of words and expressions both in Norwegian and English.

Observations in the classroom

During the first observation Edy was observed in a group with a Norwegian girl, a Norwegian boy, and a girl of minority background (also Chinese). In one of the learning centres, Edy paired up with the Norwegian girl in the group and they read books to one another. Edy's English pronunciation appeared to be good. The two of them went through three of the big picture books in only a few minutes. Afterwards they managed to read two of the small picture books as well.

At the computer learning centre the pupils were to work on a programme filling in missing words, for instance 'and' or 'a', or the negatives 'not' or 'n't. Edy asked her peers for help to find the various programmes. She seemed to do well once she had started.

At the third learning centre the pupils worked on exercises on sheets of paper. Edy appeared more restless than the other pupils, and did not seem able to sit quietly on her chair. She asked the other pupils questions related to the exercises. Towards the end of the session the two Chinese girls spoke in Norwegian together, even though they have the same mother tongue.

Summary

The teacher reported that Edy's motivation to learn English is rather low and that she finds it very difficult. From the observations it appeared that Edy was motivated in the beginning of the lesson, but after a while her motivation dropped, as well as her level of concentration.

Annabella

Annabella's ethnic background is Chinese, but she was born in Norway. Her mother tongue is Chinese (Mandarin), which is also the language spoken in her home. Annabella had been receiving mother tongue teaching for some years in the past, but not anymore. She does not receive extra teaching in Norwegian as she is fluent in this language.

Annabella's parents are positive towards her education and have high expectations for their daughter. Nevertheless, they are unable to help her with her homework as they speak little Norwegian and no English. Her brother, on the other hand, helps her when necessary.

The teacher described Annabella as a bright, ambitious, and motivated pupil who is eager to learn English. She is also a quick learner and her pronunciation is good. Her level of English is in many ways reflected in her level of Norwegian. The teacher also had the impression that when learning English, Annabella tended to code-switch to Norwegian and not to her mother tongue.

Observations in the class room

At the first observation Annabella was initially observed at the teacher's learning centre. She was in a group with Edy and a Norwegian boy and girl. The pupils read stories that they had produced at home for their teacher. When Annabella read her story she used a Norwegian word, 'karusell', and she asked the teacher for the English word. She spoke good Norwegian with the local dialect, and her level of commitment to the task was good. Her English pronunciation also appeared to be good when she read aloud.

Later on Annabella was observed in a learning centre where the pupils were to read easy readers to one another. She paired up with the Norwegian boy and they seemed to be eager to read the books. Annabella spoke good English when reading aloud. Together they read through three of the small picture books. The time spent on each learning centre was approximately 15 minutes. Towards the end of the English session the two Chinese girls were observed talking to one another. They appeared to be speaking Norwegian throughout the whole conversation even though they share the same mother tongue.

Summary

The teacher reported that Annabella is an excellent pupil who is above average in most subjects. Impressions based on the observations were that Annabella was committed to the various tasks and well prepared.

6.5 Summary

Based on the data from the interviews at the three schools, it is evident that the minority background pupils in general represent a level of English below average compared to their peers. In addition, the Cambridge test results indicate that out of the eight pupils of minority background in the 5th grade at School 3, only one represents a level above average and one represents an average level compared to the rest of the class and grade level. Based on the comments from the teacher in the 6th grade, only one of the three subjects represents a level above the rest of the class. The other pupils of minority background in the 5th and 6th grades are at a below average level in English compared to the rest of the class and grade level. Nevertheless, most of the teachers interviewed at the various schools mentioned that the minority background children were motivated, and that they did not treat them differently from other pupils.

7. Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The present chapter will discuss the findings based on the various interviews, test results, written assignments and observations made in the classroom. The chapter starts by presenting challenges the minority background pupils are faced with. It then discusses how well these children generally cope with learning English as an L3. Finally, different factors that might influence the acquisition of the minority-speaking pupils' L2 and L3 are discussed.

7.2 Challenges facing minority background children

Although some minority background children are born in Norway, some arrive just before school age and even during school age. It is evident that many challenges await minority background children in the process of integration and in particular those who arrive in Norway at a later stage. The first step of the integration process is often when they start school. Those children who live in Norway before school age might attend a Norwegian kindergarten, and for them the process of integration therefore starts much earlier. According to Mari, an EFL teacher at School 3, all minority background children should be obliged to attend kindergarten. In her experience, minority background children who did not attend kindergarten often stayed at home with their mother and therefore did not speak any Norwegian when they started school. In fact, the difference in reading performances between minority-speaking pupils who did attend kindergarten and those who did not appeared to be much greater compared to majority-speaking pupils who attended kindergarten and those who did not (see section 4.3). This indicates that attending kindergarten is indeed important for minority background children in their process of integration.

Minority background children who do not attend kindergarten and those who arrive in Norway after school age, on the other hand, often have to complete an introductory course before commencing at a regular Norwegian primary school. The introductory courses normally last for a school year, and the pupils start at a normal Norwegian elementary school after completing the course. The first challenge the children face when commencing such a course is perhaps to become acquainted with their peers, something that is likely to be even more challenging when the majority are not speakers of the same language. Olaug, who is a councillor at School 1, pointed out that the 100 pupils at the school represent a variety of 30 different mother tongues. When the pupils come from such various backgrounds, the need for

a common language, which in this case would be Norwegian, arises. It is obvious that communicating with peers in a language one hardly knows can be challenging for these children. Nevertheless, although it is likely to be challenging for them, it also puts them in a situation where they have to speak Norwegian nearly all the time, and they are thereby likely to acquire the language more quickly. In addition, learning Norwegian is not only important in order to communicate with their peers, it is also important in order to succeed in school and society.

In the process of learning Norwegian, the minority background children also have to deal with other challenges. According to Olaug, many of the minority background pupils face the challenge of learning an entirely new alphabet. Their mother tongue might have a different alphabet from the Latin one, and they have to learn the Norwegian alphabet and its sounds before they can read in Norwegian. Others might have a mother tongue more similar to Norwegian, and the process of learning Norwegian is likely to be easier to them.

Although there are many challenges facing minority background children in the introductory courses, it does not mean that they generally do not succeed. Indeed, the two introductory course teachers that were interviewed at School 2 had positive views about the minority background children. They thought of them as positive and eager to learn. They said that they did extremely well in the introductory courses. Most of the subjects at School 3 had also attended an introductory course before starting at their school. Much evidence indicates that these courses are very beneficial to these children. Based on the interviews with the councillors at School 1 and introductory course teachers at School 2, it seemed as if these courses are a great asset to minority background children. The fact that so many minority background children where School 2 is situated choose to continue studying in upper secondary school is also likely to indicate that the introductory course at the school is effective. In addition, all of the EFL teachers interviewed felt that the introductory courses were extremely useful.

Even though the introductory courses appear to be a great asset for the minority background children, the introductory course teachers at School 2 pointed out that when these children are introduced to the ordinary classroom their level of performances varies. Some of the teachers drew attention to the fact that the immigrant population in the municipality had changed in the last decades and at the moment it was mostly working immigrants and Europeans who arrived. In the teachers' opinion the children of these families generally do better at school. The fact that their appearance is more 'Norwegian' also makes the integration

process easier for them. Besides, their own culture is not all that different from the Norwegian one.

When the pupils have completed the introductory course, and perhaps successfully overcome the challenges it incorporates, new challenges await them as they are to start in a new class, and perhaps even at a new school. In a sense, the process of integration starts all over again at this point. Nevertheless, if they have had the opportunity to attend an introductory course, they will already have learned some Norwegian, which will certainly help them in the process of adapting to the new environment. However, after having learned Norwegian for only one year, their Norwegian is not likely to be fluent, and it will most likely be harder for them than for the majority-speaking pupils to follow the various lessons in the new school.

Evidently, the different challenges the minority background children face in the integration process are particularly hard in the beginning. However, as time goes by and as they become more proficient in Norwegian they are likely to integrate better into the school environment. In fact, Mari, who is a 5th grade teacher at School 3, reported that the minority background pupils in her class were much better integrated now than when she first started as a teacher for the class in the 3rd grade. She believed the main reason that these pupils had integrated better throughout the years was that their Norwegian had become increasingly better. In addition, John, who had just started as a 5th grade teacher at the school, reported that all the minority background pupils apart from one in his class had integrated well. Except for one pupil, all the minority background pupils had been in the class since the first grade. The other EFL teachers that were interviewed also reported that most of the minority background pupils managed to integrate well after some time. However, they mentioned that there were exceptions and that certain children had problems settling in and thus went through a much longer process of integration.

In addition to integrating socially at the school and adapting to Norwegian as the language of instruction, the minority background children also face the added challenge of learning English as an L3 in the school. Starting to learn a third language, while at the same time being in the process of acquiring a second language, is likely to be challenging and even confusing to some of these children. It is evident that developing several languages simultaneously is time consuming, and that for some it might be a long process. Additionally, the English curriculum in Norway is challenging and it is likely to be more demanding for the minority background children than for the Norwegian ones. When observing the minority background children during the EFL lessons in the 5th and 6th grade, most of whom had been

living in Norway for several years, it appeared that they were able to communicate in English and engage in the various tasks. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions and some of the subjects were not always as focused on the various tasks as others.

Learning English is also likely to be more challenging to the minority background children since their parents are often non-speakers of English and they are therefore likely to receive less English input outside of the school. Tine, an EFL teacher at School 3 pointed out that the minority background pupils are not as stimulated in English as the majority-speaking pupils in their spare time. While majority-speaking pupils may listen to English music and watch English TV programmes, minority-speaking pupils may watch videos, listen to music and read books in their mother tongue. If the majority-speaking pupils receive so much more input in English, there is no doubt that it gives them an advantage in learning English, and it might be hard for the minority-speaking pupils to catch up with them.

However, this is of course not always the case. Tor, who is an EFL teacher at School 2, mentioned that many of the minority-speaking parents belong to international communities where English is the main language that is being spoken. The children of these families definitely have an advantage when it comes to learning English and they might even receive more input than their Norwegian peers in their spare time.

7.3 Coping with English as an L3

Simensen (2007:252) describes the comparison of certain people to the performance of others in the same group as norm-referenced assessment, as opposed to criterion-referenced assessment, which investigates ‘to what degree the students have reached the objectives of a course or satisfied the criteria set’. The comparisons being made in this thesis are primarily norm-referenced, namely the minority background pupils are being compared to their Norwegian peers.

There is no doubt that in the process of learning Norwegian and English the minority background pupils are faced with different challenges from the majority-speaking pupils. It is therefore not surprising if minority-speaking pupils generally perform at a lower level in Norwegian and English compared to the majority group.

In fact, PIRLS (2001) indicated that out of the 35 countries that participated in the study, Norway has the most significant difference in reading performances between majority- and minority-speaking pupils (see section 4.3). The considerable difference between the majority- and minority-speaking pupils indicates that the minority-speaking pupils generally represent a much lower level in Norwegian.

All of the five EFL teachers interviewed for this thesis said that they felt that the minority background children's level of English was reflected in their level of Norwegian. If this is the case, then the gap between the majority and minority-speaking pupils' knowledge of Norwegian, as documented in PIRLS (2001), would also be the case for the minority and majority pupils' level of English. In other words if their level of achievement in Norwegian is below average, then their level of achievement in English would also be below average.

According to the Cambridge test results presented in section 5.6, the minority group average was below the rest of the class and grade level average in all test types. When considering the minority-speaking pupils individually, out of the eight pupils of minority background that participated in the tests, only one pupil was above average, and one was average compared to their Norwegian peers.

Three out of five of the EFL teachers interviewed reported that the minority background pupils usually represented a level below the rest of the class in English. One teacher said that their level of English was somewhere in between, that they did not excel in English, but they were not the least proficient either. The other teacher mentioned that certain minority background pupils performed well in English, but that there was a larger group of minority background children who performed at a lower level, and thereby pulled down the average for the group. In addition, two of the teachers pointed out that the minority background pupils seemed to be struggling with English, while one said that they 'seem to be doing fine'. The other teachers pointed out that there are differences among the minority background pupils; certain ethnic groups, such as Asians, are better at integrating and belong to international communities, which makes their children more exposed to English. However, even though many of the minority background pupils struggle with English, most of the teachers pointed out that they were highly motivated to learn English. In addition, if the subjects at School 3 are evaluated in a criterion-referenced manner, their results are not as poor as they might appear when simply comparing them to the results of the majority group. In fact, the minority-speaking pupils had many average scores above 50% in the various test types, which indicates that they usually had more correct answers than one wrong ones.

From the observations in the 5th and 6th grade it was apparent that the minority background pupils on average managed to get by in the English lessons. They appeared to be doing the tasks that they were instructed to do, and understood the content of them. Their level of commitment to the tasks varied from child to child, but on average they appeared to engage on a similar level to the Norwegians. Some of the minority background pupils needed help more often, and some seemed unfocused at times. It appeared to be the minority

background pupils who spoke Norwegian best that were generally most successful at school and had integrated best with the Norwegian pupils. The other minority background pupils seemed to a certain extent to be grouping more with other pupils of minority background. Nevertheless, the general impression of the subjects was that they had integrated reasonably well into the school environment. From the placement in the various groups it also became clear that, with the exception of one, the minority background pupils who were placed in groups with only Norwegians represented an average-above level of English compared to the rest of the class. In addition, the minority background pupils who belonged to groups with several pupils from minority background all, with the exception of one, represented a level of English below the average of the rest of the class.

Even though studies such as PIRLS (2001) and the results from the Cambridge tests indicate that the minority background pupils generally perform at a lower level compared to majority-speaking pupils in both reading abilities in Norwegian, and different skills in English, interviews with the teachers and observations of lessons show that the situation is more complex. One cannot claim that all minority background pupils are below average in English. The minority background pupils are individuals, just like the majority-speaking pupils, and they perform at various levels.

7.4 Factors that contribute to or impede success in the acquisition of English as an L3

To explain why the data presented in this thesis, as well as PIRLS (2001) indicate that minority background children in Norway generally perform at a lower level in Norwegian and English compared to the majority-speaking pupils, one has to look at various factors that may affect the process of language acquisition for the minority background children.

The importance of the mother tongue

As has been argued earlier, when considering the acquisition or level of performance of a person's third language, one also has to consider the person's proficiency in the L1 and L2 since this is likely to affect proficiency in a third language (see section 4.2). In this case, considering the subjects' level of L1 and L2 is therefore of significance in order to determine if there is a connection between their proficiency in the various languages.

In fact, four out of the five EFL teachers interviewed pointed out that proficiency in the mother tongue is very important in order to learn other languages. One teacher pointed out that she felt the school system in Norway had changed its view on mother tongue teaching over the last years. 15 years ago mother tongue teaching appeared to be more emphasised,

whereas now the focus is to a greater extent on learning Norwegian, and attending mother tongue teaching is optional.

Perhaps the change in attitude to mother tongue teaching, that it should not be the main focus of language learning for the minority background children, has affected the teachers' views on the importance of the mother tongue. Even though nearly all of the teachers agreed that proficiency in the mother tongue is important in order to learn other languages, they did not seem to emphasise this when asked whether they consider it important for multilingual children to be literate in all of their languages. Only one of the five EFL teachers interviewed mentioned that it is important for minority background children to be literate in their mother tongue so that they can develop their skills in the other languages. The other teachers appeared to emphasise the importance of being literate in Norwegian and English, whereas being literate in the mother tongue was mostly important in order to be able to communicate with family members abroad.

Out of the 11 subjects in the case study, seven attended mother tongue teaching, although only two of them attended mother tongue teaching at the school¹². Three pupils followed mother tongue teaching outside of the school. The fact that so few pupils attended mother tongue teaching at the school may indicate that mother tongue teaching is not looked upon as essential for the academic development of minority background children. However, there seemed to be a correspondence between the pupils' level of English and Norwegian, and whether or not they received mother tongue teaching. The pupils who did well in English and Norwegian did not receive mother tongue teaching, and those who did not do as well did receive mother tongue teaching. This may indicate that the pupils are offered mother tongue teaching when they first start at a Norwegian primary school, but as they improve their Norwegian and English skills, mother tongue education is taken away from them.

Interlanguage transfer

Unfortunately, the data of this study does not include enough information to draw conclusions on the importance of mother tongue education. On the other hand, research such as that by Cenoz (2001), Ringbom (1986), Hammarberg (2001), and De Angelis and Selinker (2001) indicates that a person's L1 and L2 is of importance in the process of acquiring an L3. In fact, the studies mentioned also indicate that the L2 might actually be preferred in cross-linguistic transfer when learning an L3 if the L2 is typologically closer to the L3 than L1. The subjects

¹² Missing information in two of the profiles concerning where the mother tongue education is given.

of the various case studies were all multilinguals, and learners of a third or fourth language. When learning a third (or fourth) language they generally showed to have a preference for the language that was typologically closer to the L3 as a language of comparison, even though this was not their mother tongue.

The tendency in the above-mentioned studies was also confirmed in this case study. During the observation in the classrooms, it appeared that most of the minority background pupils used Norwegian words in cross-linguistic transfer. For instance, one of the minority background girls said at one stage ‘I can ‘bare’’ (only), while another girl used the Norwegian word ‘karusell’ (merry-go-round) when reading a self-written story aloud. It should, however, be taken into consideration that the minority background children are not likely to use their mother tongue as a substitute for an English word, as they know that most of their peers and their teacher will not understand them.

Signs of Norwegian influence on the minority background children’s spoken English were noticeable as most of them showed signs of a Norwegian accent while speaking English. There were of course exceptions and two of the subjects in the 5th grade (Melisa and Nadifa) had a rolling ‘r’ in their English but not in their Norwegian (see section 6.4.3). Another boy, Abdi, also appeared to be influenced by his mother tongue when pronouncing certain words (see section 6.4.3), and Sahiba in the 6th grade had a tendency to translate from her mother tongue to Norwegian and from Norwegian to English at times (see section 6.4.4).

In fact, the above-mentioned pupils who appeared to be influenced by their mother tongue when speaking English were actually those with the lowest results on the Cambridge tests and the ones classified as the lowest achievers by the teachers.¹³ This indicates that the level of Norwegian seems to be a strong factor in the acquisition of English, and the less ‘fluent’ one is in the L2 the less this language will be applied in cross-linguistic transfer. Instead, one is more likely to resort to the mother tongue. In fact all of the EFL teachers interviewed pointed out that the minority background pupils’ level of Norwegian did affect their level of English. If their Norwegian was poor, then their level of English was generally poor. If their Norwegian was good, their level of English was usually good.

As mentioned earlier, Cook (2004:138) defines the influence of other languages when learning a foreign language as a *transfer* from one language to another. This transfer can often result in a foreign accent when speaking English. However this influence may also be visible

¹³ Three of the pupils have participated on the Cambridge tests, whereas the other pupil is from the 6th grade and has not been part of the testing. Comments concerning her level of English are based on comments from the teacher.

in writing. Based on the written assignments, signs of Norwegian influence on the subjects' English were present. Nevertheless, the signs of transfer that were observed in some of the subjects' oral English, and that were believed to be derived from the mother tongue, could not be found in the written material. However, it should be mentioned that the 'author' does not speak any of the subjects' mother tongues and would therefore be unable to recognise any transfer from these languages unless it was very obvious.

When analysing the written samples it became clear that the subjects indeed are influenced by Norwegian. In fact, the samples indicated a certain amount of transfer from Norwegian, for example in certain spellings mistakes and the use of Norwegian words such as 'lilla' (purple) or 'lyse' (light) in the English texts. The fact that the pupils tended to use content words in interlanguage transfer supports the theory in Cenoz (2001) and Ringbom (1986) that when multilinguals use interlanguage transfer, they mostly transfer content words and not function words. Some of the subjects in the case study had used words which are similar in English and Norwegian, but which convey different meanings in the two languages, such as 'back', which has a similar word in Norwegian (bak) meaning 'behind'. The minority background pupils who represented a higher level of proficiency also had signs of Norwegian influence in their English, although, their mistakes were often based on translating Norwegian expressions word for word into English, such as 'klokken er' ('the clock are' instead of 'the time is').

The fact that Norwegian transfer was evident in most of the subjects' spoken and written English gives support to the theory of cross-linguistic transfer found in Cenoz (2001), Ringbom (1986), Hammarberg (2001), and De Angelis and Selinker (2001). Since the minority background pupils used their Norwegian to such a great extent in the process of acquiring English, one may infer that the better their Norwegian is the better their chances are of succeeding in learning English. If their Norwegian is good, it may serve as a basis for learning English, and they will use Norwegian in cross-linguistic transfer to a greater extent than their mother tongue. In addition, the more Norwegian they know, the closer they are likely to come to their Norwegian peers and the better their chances of becoming fully integrated into the school environment.

The parents' attitudes

Although proficiency in L1 and L2 is likely to affect the acquisition of English as an L3 for the subjects of the case study, other factors such as the home and the parents' attitudes are also likely to be of huge importance in the process of learning English. Indeed, all the five

EFL teachers interviewed agreed that the parents' attitudes and their proficiency in both Norwegian and English were very important factors in the children's process of language acquisition.

Even though parental support and guidance is likely to be of great importance for the minority background pupils, it is probable that in many cases they do not receive the help they need. According to PIRLS (2001) far more majority-speaking parents read often to their children than minority-speaking parents (see section 4.3), which might be an indication of their attitude to the importance of literacy. This tendency is rather worrying, as PIRLS (2000:51) indicates that the difference in reading performances between pupils whose parents have been reading to them and those who have not is much greater between minority background pupils than between majority-speaking pupils. The implication is that it is even more important for minority background pupils that their parents read for them than it is for majority-speaking parents.

The EFL teachers interviewed for this thesis also raised their concern about minority-speaking parents' attitudes towards their children's language development. The teachers at School 3, for instance, pointed out that the Early Years Literacy Programme at their school depends a great deal on parental help, which becomes problematic when many of the minority background parents speak little or no English. In addition, one of the EFL teachers at School 2 pointed out that not all the minority background children received as much help at home as the Norwegian children.

One may wonder what effect it has on the children when their parents are not able to help them with their homework in Norwegian and English. In fact, six of the subjects received little or no help at home and with the exception of two, they were at a level of English below the minority group average. All six represented a level of English below the rest of the class and grade level average¹⁴. Of the three pupils that did receive help in the home¹⁵, one of the pupils represented a level above the minority group average but below the rest of the class and grade level average, one pupil was on an average level compared to his Norwegian peers, whereas the third pupil represented a level above the average of his peers¹⁶. The fact that those who did not receive help at home were the pupils representing the lowest average scores

¹⁴ Two of these subjects are 6th graders and did not participate in the Cambridge testing. Comments on their level of Norwegian and English are based on information given by their teacher.

¹⁵ Two subjects are excluded from this comparison due to missing information concerning whether or not they received help at home.

¹⁶ This pupil did not receive help from her parents but from her brother when needed. The subject is a 6th grader and did not partake in the Cambridge testing. Comments on her level of performance are based on information given by her teacher.

in English, and those who did receive help at home appeared to have better results in English, indicates that in these cases parental support is of great importance.

Ethnic background

One may wonder to what extent the parents' ethnic backgrounds play a part. Tor, an EFL teacher at School 2, pointed out that certain minority-speaking parents are not open to the Norwegian culture, which often results in them not making an effort to learn Norwegian. When they do not speak Norwegian, and perhaps not English either, they are not able to help their children with their homework. The teachers at School 2 did not report any major differences in performances between pupils with different ethnic or first language backgrounds, although one of the teachers pointed out that English and German-speaking children generally performed at a higher level in Norwegian compared to other minority-speaking pupils due to the closeness of their mother tongue to Norwegian.

At School 3, on the other hand, two out of the three EFL teachers interviewed pointed out that Turkish pupils in general appeared to perform at a lower level. Mari pointed out that the Turkish parents are generally at a lower level in Norwegian than other minority-speaking parents and they are not able to help their children with their homework. They generally have a rather negative attitude to school and blame the school if their children do not learn enough. They do not consider it their job to help educate their children. Tine also appeared to agree that Turkish pupils generally performed at a lower level. She also compared them to the Chinese pupils in her class, whom she felt were generally more motivated and had a stronger work ethic. In addition, Chinese parents generally had higher ambitions for their children. The two EFL teachers at School 2, on the other hand, did not report to have pupils with a Turkish background in their classes.¹⁷

If one compares the Turkish pupils to the other minority background pupils based on the Cambridge test results and the teachers' comments¹⁸, of the total of five Turkish pupils in the two classes, four represent a level below the minority group average. In fact only one Turkish pupil achieved an average score within the minority group. Similar findings on Turkish pupils as a group have also been found in Germany (see section 4.3) where the Turkish pupils tended to perform at a lower level in English compared to minority background children with other ethnic backgrounds.

¹⁷ The EFL teachers at School 2 reported to have Russian, Moroccan, Tchetchenian, Indian, Middle East and Eastern European pupils in their classes.

¹⁸ The minority background pupils from the 6th grade did not participate on the Cambridge testing, and the teacher's comments on their level of performance is used in order to compare them to the 5th grade pupils.

In addition, research has confirmed the supposition that Asian children generally perform at a higher level than many other minority background pupils. According to Kennedy and Park (1994), cited in Rydland (2007:4), pupils from countries such as China, Korea and Japan generally have higher average scores compared to pupils with other minority backgrounds. Additionally, according to Bakken (2003), cited in Rydland (2007:4), pupils with Vietnamese as an L1 perform at a similar level to majority-speaking pupils in Norway. PIRLS (2001:43) also indicates that pupils with Vietnamese as an L1 had high average reading scores.

There may be many factors that can partly explain why there are differences of level of performances between pupils with different ethnic backgrounds. Ogbu and Simons (1998), cited in Rydland (2007:5), pointed out that the reason why Asian pupils seem to be doing so well in Norwegian schools is that they are here of their own free will, and might therefore be more positive and willing to use the school as a tool of change. It is probable that the Turkish speaking parents have different views about the school system and about living in Norway. According to Nicolaisen (2008), Per-Willy Amundsen, who is a politician for the Norwegian party 'Fremskrittspartied', points out that although Turkish people come here as working immigrants, only half of them are actually working. In addition, most of the Turkish immigrants have not finished primary school, which may also apply to the parents of the pupils in the case study. This may explain why the teachers at School 3 have the impression that the Turkish speaking parents are generally negative to the school system and to Norwegian society in general. If they have not finished school themselves, they may not value their children's education in the same way as Norwegian and other minority-speaking parents do. In addition, they usually do not integrate and learn the language as well as other groups. The parents' attitudes are also likely to be transmitted to their children, which may cause severe consequences for the children's integration process and education.

Although the parents might be proud of their ethnic background, and want to maintain it as part of their identity, children might find it difficult to have a different background from their peers. Children do not usually want to be different from their peers, and having a different ethnic background certainly makes them different. Therefore to many minority background children, having a different ethnic background and a different first language can be challenging and demanding (Safder, 1995).

Having an ethnic background and first language that is completely different from the second or third language one is trying to learn is also likely determine to what degree one will succeed in learning other languages. Speakers of languages belonging to the same language

group as Norwegian, such as German and English, might have certain advantages when learning Norwegian due to the closeness of the languages. This advantage is something speakers of Chinese or Turkish do not have when learning Norwegian. Their languages are based on different alphabets, so that when learning Norwegian they also need to acquire the knowledge of an entirely new alphabet. In addition, writing systems such as Chinese are based on a logographic system with a *deep* orthography. The Chinese writing system is therefore very different from the Norwegian writing system, which to a much greater extent has a *shallow* orthography. Due to the differences of these two writing systems it is also likely that Chinese and Norwegian pupils use different strategies when learning to read. Chinese pupils are more likely to use the *look and say* method, as they have to memorise the various characters and what they symbolise, whereas learners of the Norwegian writing system are more likely to use the *phonics* method, where they learn the letters of the alphabet and its sounds individually, so as to then be able to put them together to make up words and sentences.

Since the Norwegian writing system needs to be approached in a different manner from the Chinese one, one should assume that it would be quite a challenge for the Chinese pupils to acquire Norwegian. However, of the two Chinese pupils¹⁹ that took part in the case study, one appeared to be doing very well in the English lessons, whereas the other pupil did not do as well. The differences in performances between these two pupils might be due to differences in their level of Norwegian. In fact, the teacher reported that the pupil who did very well in school was also fluent in Norwegian, whereas the pupil who appeared to be struggling found Norwegian hard to learn. One should therefore assume that when Chinese pupils or minority background pupils in general have achieved a good level of Norwegian, have understood the principles of the writing system and know all the characters of the alphabet, learning English, which has a similar alphabet, would be less of a challenge. Scholars such as Kennedy and Park (1994) indicate that despite the differences in writing systems, Chinese pupils do better than most other minority background pupils. It is difficult to say if this is due to the parents and their hard work ethic, although this is likely to contribute to the situation.

¹⁹ Both of the girls spoke Mandarin, but information on what subgroup of Mandarin they were speakers of was not accessible.

The learning context

Although the children's first language and ethnic background are factors that may have an influence on the acquisition of a second or third language, there are also other factors that may be of great importance. For instance, the educational environment at the school may be a crucially important factor when it comes to the minority background children and their process of learning an L2 and L3. The subjects in School 3 were in a different situation from most children in Norwegian primary schools. The school had partaken in the Early Years Literacy Programme for a number of years and the EFL education was therefore conducted in a somewhat different manner to most other primary schools.

The three EFL teachers interviewed at School 3 all agreed that the EYLP gave the minority background children certain advantages, especially that it provides teaching that meets the individual needs of the pupils. The pupils are divided into groups according to their level and they read graded readers at their own level. The fact that the EYLP is adjusted to the pupils' individual needs is of course an advantage to all pupils, not just the minority background pupils. Mari, one of the EFL teachers, pointed out that as a teacher, applying the EYLP makes it easier to point out what the pupils need to work with in the various subjects. Tine, mentioned that during the 15 minutes she has with each group at the teacher's learning centre, she is able to give each pupil individual attention. It is also easier to make them converse with one another in the small groups.

Based on the observations in the two 5th and 6th grades, it seemed as if the EYLP was beneficial for the minority background pupils. It appeared as if the tasks they were doing were generally understandable to them, and they generally seemed to cope well. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions and certain minority background pupils did not manage to keep focused and concentrate on the given tasks.

When it comes to the disadvantages of the EYLP, Tine said that since the minority background pupils generally have lower levels of Norwegian and English compared to the rest of the class it is harder to make them work individually. Often they misunderstand instructions given in the beginning of the lessons on what to do, which causes problems later on when they are to do the various tasks. The teachers also pointed out that the EYLP depends to a great extent on the parents helping their children with their homework. This is evidently hard for many of the minority-speaking parents as their level of Norwegian and English is often rather low. Nevertheless, the school has realised the problems that this may cause and they have introduced after-school tutoring in English. The offer is both for minority background pupils, as well as other pupils who find the need of extra tutoring in this subject.

Even though there might be some negative aspects for the minority background children attending the EYLP, the individually-related teaching that the EYLP provides is undeniably an advantage for the minority background children. Most minority background children, in contrast, are being taught in different learning contexts where differentiated teaching may be more challenging. To these pupils learning English might be more demanding as they may have to follow the mainstream teaching, which in many cases is based on a common textbook. In these cases the pupils are, to a less extent, likely to receive teaching geared to their individual needs. It may also be more challenging for the teachers in these learning contexts to create differentiated teaching. According to Drew (2007:6), primary EFL teachers found it difficult to provide suitable materials and tasks for pupils with a wide range of abilities. Additionally, one of the teachers interviewed at School 2 pointed out that their teaching could have been adapted more to the individual, which would have been beneficial not only to minority background pupils, but to all pupils.

Finally, although all the EFL teachers interviewed for this thesis had qualifications in English, this is not representative for most teachers at the primary level in Norway. In fact the general level of qualifications of EFL teachers in Norway teaching in grades 1-7 is extremely low (see section 2.6). It is therefore probable that since many teachers do not have formal English qualifications, the issue of differentiated teaching becomes even harder for them to address. The poor qualifications of many primary English teachers in Norway is likely to have negative consequences for the quality of teaching of minority background children in general, in addition to that of the majority group.

8. Conclusion

This study of minority background children learning English in Norwegian primary schools was meant as a contribution to help better understand the challenges these children are faced with. The fact that these children go through many challenges, which are different from those facing majority-speaking pupils, is perhaps not self evident to everyone and it is important that they are highlighted.

In order to acquire information about minority background children and how they cope in EFL lessons, a case study was organised at a school with a relatively high number of children with different ethnic backgrounds. A sample of pupils was selected and observations in a 5th grade and a 6th grade class at the school were carried out. In addition to the observations, interviews with the teachers were undertaken, and they were asked to fill out personal profiles about the subjects. An additional interview was made with another 5th grade EFL teacher at the school. Test results of the 5th grade pupils were also available and made a comparison between the minority background group and their Norwegian peers possible. Written samples were an extra source of information. Two supplementary schools were chosen for further research and interviews with EFL teachers, introductory course teachers, a headmistress, and councillors were conducted.

Based on the various forms of research conducted, different results were found. For instance, the minority background children go through many challenges in the process of integration. Firstly, many have to go through an introductory course (if they are offered such a course), where they face the challenges of learning Norwegian, as well as integrating with peers from various backgrounds. Secondly, they start at a Norwegian primary school, where they face the process of integration once again as they are placed in a new class with new peers. They have to become familiar with Norwegian as the language of instruction in all subjects and they are likely to receive less help and less individually-adapted education than in the introductory course. In addition, and thirdly, they face the challenge of learning English, which to them is likely to be their third language.

In addition to the challenges the minority-speaking pupils are faced with, there are also various factors that may affect their acquisition of English, for example the importance of the mother tongue, interlanguage transfer, the parents' attitudes, ethnic background, and the learning context. A study with a sample as small as this will not allow general conclusions to be drawn based on the findings. Nevertheless, there are a few implications that are interesting.

Even though one of the main aims for this thesis was to investigate the challenges minority background children meet when learning English, it was still of importance to look into their L1 and L2. Although this study was too narrow to get a full understanding of the importance of the subjects' mother tongue, it became clear that their L2, Norwegian, served an important role in the process of acquiring English. In fact, Norwegian was in many ways a key stepping point when learning English, which thus supports the theory of the importance of typological closeness of languages in cross-linguistic transfer, as presented by scholars such as Cenoz (2001) and Hammarberg (2001). The subjects showed clear evidence of Norwegian influence both in their spoken and written English. It also appeared that their level of Norwegian (their L2) seemed to be in concordance with their level of English, which indicates that the better their Norwegian is, the better their English is likely to be. Nevertheless, as a group the minority background pupils' level of English was lower than that of their Norwegian peers.

In addition, parents' attitudes and proficiency in Norwegian and English appear to be of importance. The better the parents' levels of Norwegian and English are, the more they can help their children with their homework, something that would be very beneficial for them. In some cases the parents' ethnic background may also play a part when it comes to their involvement in their children's learning. It appeared, for example, that Turkish speaking parents generally represented a more negative attitude to the school system than, for instance, parents of Asiatic origin.

The Early Years Literacy Programme is also a factor that appeared to be beneficial for the minority background pupils since it aims at providing teaching that is geared towards the individual. In order for minority background pupils and pupils in general to do better at school, the learning process should be adapted to the pupils' individual needs.

Even though minority background children in Norway face many similar challenges, and common factors may influence their acquisition of an L2 and L3, there is no doubt that minority background children in Norway is a very diverse group. Some are born in Norway, others are not. Some attend introductory courses, others do not. The complexity of minority background pupils in Norway as a group is huge, and finding one solution that would integrate all of these children is simply not possible. This complexity, of course, also creates limitations for the findings of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this thesis has given some indications of the language learning situation of minority background children in Norway.

There is still much to be done in order to improve the situation for these children in Norway. For instance, it is of great importance that teacher training is strengthened. It is important that EFL teachers actually have studied English in higher education. Even though all the EFL teachers interviewed for this thesis had relevant English education, this is not representative of the situation in Norway in general, where many teachers teaching English at the primary level have not studied English in higher education. Special education in teaching minority background children is also extremely important, not only for teachers of introductory courses, but also for regular teachers. An increasing number of minority background children are entering Norwegian primary schools and it is important that teachers have some knowledge of how to help them in the best possible way. Enforcing the importance of kindergarten to minority-speaking parents is also extremely significant. If minority background children have attended kindergarten before school age, not only will they speak better Norwegian, but they will also have achieved a better understanding of the Norwegian culture and developed friendships with other Norwegians.

Further research in this area could look more closely into teaching which is adapted more towards the individual over a longer period of time. The Early Years Literacy Programme is a good example of a programme that is geared towards the individual. Such a programme is perhaps an excellent idea in Norway, which is a country where pupils are given more or less the same education until they are 16. Being able to give both the pupils who struggle, and those who are above average, learning adapted to their own level might be exactly what pupils in Norway need. It would also be interesting to do research into minority background pupils in 'regular' classrooms, ones that do not use a special programme like the EYLP. Furthermore, it is important that researchers continue to investigate the importance of mother tongue education, and whether or not it is important for multilingual pupils to maintain literacy in this language. The study of cross-linguistic transfer is also very interesting, and although many researchers have developed an interest for this phenomenon in recent years, more research is needed in order to better understand how languages influence one another. More knowledge about the field of multilingualism in general is important not only to better understand the situation for minority background children in Norway, but also the situation of minority-speaking pupils in other countries who find themselves learning an L3 in the school context.

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Appendix 1

Teacher interview guide

The teacher's background

Gender:

- 1) What grade do you teach?
- 2) For how many years have you been working as a teacher?
- 3) For how long have you been teaching this class?
- 4) Which subjects in addition to English do you teach?
- 5) What is your educational background?
- 6) How many pupils are in your class?
- 7) How many minority background children are in the class?
(Where are they from?)
- 8) Do you have any special training in teaching minority background children?
(Does the school arrange courses?)

The role of the teacher

- 1) How do you view your role as a teacher to the minority children?
- Is it in any way different from your role as a teacher to the Norwegian children?
- 2) Do you believe it is important for multilingual children to be literate in all of their languages? Why? Why not?
- 3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of the EYLP programme for these minority background children?
- 4) How well do the minority background children integrate with the Norwegian children?
- 5) Do the minority background children get any special treatment?
- 6) Do you feel that specific training is needed in order to teach minority children?
- 7) In your opinion, is there anything more that should be done for these pupils?

The minority background children

- 1) Are there differences in performances between pupils with different ethnic/first language background? If so, why do you think that is the case?

- 2) Do you notice a difference in the performance of the minority background children born in Norway with those who have moved here as children?
- 3) Have those who have moved here as children attended special introductory courses?
- If so, how effective are these courses?
- 4) How would you say that the minority children in general cope with English?
- 5) In general, how motivated are they to learn English?
- 6) How does their level of English generally compare with the rest of the class?
- 7) Have you experienced that multilingualism has a negative effect on these pupils?
- Are three languages too much for the pupil to handle?
- Does learning English stand in the way for developing knowledge in Norwegian or the other way around?
- 8) What other disadvantages do these children have as learners of English?
- 9) Would you say that multilingual children have any advantages as language learners compared to the other children?
- 10) How important do you think proficiency in the mother tongue is for learning other languages?
- 11) How important are the parents' attitudes and proficiency in Norwegian/English for the children's development in these languages?
- 12) Do you feel that the child's level of English is reflected in his/her level of Norwegian?
- 13) Have you noticed which language the child code-switches to when learning English?
L1? Or L2? (Norwegian is typologically closer to English than many of the other languages).
- 14) Is there anything else of interest/relevance you would like to add?

Appendix 2

Intervju guide for lærerne for introduksjonsklassene

I Lærerens bakgrunn

- 1) Hvor mange år har du jobbet som lærer?
- 2) Hvor lenge har du undervist i introduksjons klasser?
- 3) Hvilken type utdanning har du?
- 4) Kreves spesiell opptrening/utdanning for å kunne undervise minoritetsbarn?

II Introduksjons klassene

- 1) Hvilke programme går barna gjennom før de blir integrert i det ”vanlige” klasserommet?
- 2) Hva er målet med et slikt introduksjons kurs?
- 3) Kan du fortelle meg litt om hvordan disse klassene er organisert?
 - Hvor mange klasser?
 - Hvor mange lærere er involvert?
 - Hvor mange barn i de ulike klassene?
 - Organisert i blandet eller spesifikk aldersgruppe?
 - Hvor lenge varer dette kurset?
 - Er elevene delt inn i ulike nivå ettersom de gjør fremgang?
 - Hva er innholdet/fokuset i undervisningen?
 - Snakkes det kun norsk i disse klassene?
- 4) Hvem bestemmer organiseringen og innholdet til disse klassene?
- 5) Kan du fortelle meg om din erfaring som lærer for introduksjonskurset?
- 6) Hvordan vil du si at minoritetselevne generelt klarer seg? (Både i introduksjonskurset og i det ”vanlige” klasserommet. Følger du barnas integreringsprosess etter at de har forlatt introduksjonskurset?)
- 7) Hvilke type problem assosierer du generelt med minoritetsbarn?
- 8) Hva er de positive sidene til disse barna?
- 9) Hva mer kan gjøres for disse barna?
- 10) Er det noe du vil tilføye?

Appendix 3

Intervju guide for skolens rektor

- 1) Hvor mange klasser/ barn har dere på skolen deres?
- 2) Hvor mange barn med minoritetsbakgrunn finnes det på skolen deres?
- 3) Mottar skolen ekstra finansiering for minoritetsbarn?
- 4) Hvilken politikk har skolen for integrasjon av minoritetsbarn?
- 5) Hvem bestemmer denne politikken?
- 6) Er integreringspolitikken for minoritetsbarn den samme i denne kommunen som i andre kommuner i nærmiljøet og i Norge generelt? (Eks: Barn fra Chile i Bryne som begynte på norske skoler uten noen form for introduksjonskurs).
- 7) Hvor suksessfull vil du si at denne politikken er?
- 8) Hvor mye ansvar står hver enkelt lærer igjen med?
- 9) Hvordan synes du minoritetsbarna bidrar til miljøet på skolen?
- 10) Hva mer synes du bør gjøres for disse barna?

Appendix 4

Intervju guide for rådgiverne

- 1) Hvordan er organiseringen av skolen?
- 2) Tilbyr dere kun introduksjonskurs på skolen?
- 3) Er alle elevene på denne skolen er minoritetsspråklige?
- 4) Hvor mange elever er det totalt på skolen?
- 5) Hvor mange lærere er tilsett på skolen?
- 6) Hvilke krav til utdanning stilles til lærerne?
- 7) Snakkes det kun norsk i undervisningstimene?
- 8) Hvem er det som bestemmer organiseringen og innholdet i disse klassene?
- 9) Har dere her på skolen noen spesielle strategier som dere bruker for å integrere elevene?
- 10) Hvordan er morsmålsundervisningen/ undervisningen generelt organisert?
- 11) Hvordan fungerer introduksjonskursene på ungdomsskoletrinnet?
- 12) Får elevene engelskundervisning på ungdomstrinnet?
- 13) Merker dere at elever med ulik etnisk bakgrunn representerer forskjellige nivå?
- 14) Har dere opplevd at flerspråklighet har en negativ effekt på eleven?

Appendix 5

Individual pupil profile

I Background

- 1) What is the child's name? (A pseudonym will later be used)
- 2) What is his/her ethnic background?
- 3) Was h/she born in Norway?
- 4) If not, how long has h/she lived here?
- 5) What is his/her mother tongue?
- 6) Which language(s) does s/he speak at home?
- 7) Is s/he literate in the mother tongue?
- 8) Does he/she receive mother tongue teaching at the school or outside of the school?
- 9) If so, by whom?
- 10) Does s/he receive extra teaching in Norwegian?

II The child's motivation

- 1) How would you describe the child's motivation to learn English?
- 2) What does s/he like/dislike about English?

III The child's achievements

- 1) What are his/her strengths and weaknesses in English?
- 2) How does s/he normally function in English lessons?

IV The role of the parents

- 1) How would you describe the parents' influence on the child's learning?
- 2) What is the parents' attitude to the child learning Norwegian and English?
- 3) Do you know what the parents' level of Norwegian and English is like?
- 4) How do you think this affects the child's learning of Norwegian and English?
- 5) Do the parents help the child with his/her homework in English?

V Code-switching

- 1) Do you feel that the child's level of English is reflected in his/her level of Norwegian?

- 2) Have you noticed which language the child code-switches to when learning English? L1? Or L2? (Norwegian is typologically closer to English than many of the other languages).

- 3) Is there anything else of interest/relevance you would like to add?

