

The Role of Minority Students' L1 when Learning English

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Abstract

This paper examines the context of multilingual minority students in Norwegian English classrooms, particularly focusing on the role of their L1. First, do minority students find their L1 useful when learning English? Second, how do minority students make use of their L1 when learning English? And finally, how do their teachers support the use of their L1 in the English classroom? Qualitative interviews with 10 minority students from three different secondary schools in Norway shows that although their teachers often ignore their linguistic background and do not encourage the use of the L1 in the English classroom, many students make use of their L1; they translate between English and their L1, see grammatical similarities between their L1 and English, and receive support from peers and parents through the medium of the L1. However, the lack of encouragement and support has also led many minority students to hold rather negative attitudes towards their L1 and they often consider their L1 as unfit for academic purposes. Hence, they often hesitate to make use of their L1 in the English classroom and there is great variety among the participants on whether they find their L1 useful in the context of the English classroom.

KEYWORDS: English Teaching; Multilingualism; Minority Languages; Multicultural Pedagogy; Minority Education.

1. Introduction

Although Norway always has had linguistic minorities within its borders, the increased immigration has had a great impact on the linguistic landscape of the country. As Norway has become an increasingly multicultural and multilingual society, so have the classrooms changed. We have moved from a past where languages often could be taught with only one linguistic reference, the students' common native language, to a present where the students have diverse linguistic backgrounds. This should in turn also change the way we teach languages. Thus, it is important to investigate to what extent minority students experience that their teachers approach English teaching with the students' multilingual background in mind.

The role of minority students' L1 in the context of English teaching is interesting for at least three reasons: First, key documents regulating English teaching in Norway aim at a multilingual approach to language teaching: The European Framework of Reference for Languages promotes "plurilingualism," where all the languages the student knows interact and constitute a common linguistic competence (Council of Europe, 2001). Moreover, the Norwegian curriculum for English states that the students should make use of their "native language" in the process of learning English (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). Second, research seem to indicate that the status of a language determines whether or not it will benefit the student, since status also brings support (Cenoz & Hoffmann, 2003). Therefore, if minority students experience that their L1 has no place in the classroom, its

status is reduced and consequently the students might not exploit the potential associated with their multilingualism. Finally, it is important to create a context where minority students' linguistic background is visible and appreciated, in order for the students to feel proud of their linguistic background (de Jong, 2011).

In this study, 10 qualitative interviews with minority students were conducted. Through the analysis of these interviews, the role of their L1 in the English classroom became increasingly interesting. Particularly three questions emerged as important to explore:

- Do minority students find their L1 useful when learning English?
- How do minority students make use of their L1 when learning English?
- How do teachers support the use of minority students' L1 when teaching English?

The aim was to describe the role of minority languages in the context of English teaching in Norwegian secondary schools, as experienced by the minority students themselves.

2. Background and Previous Research

2.1. L3 learning and teaching

As it has become increasingly clear that bilingualism carries with it many advantages (Cenoz, 2013; Cenoz & Hoffmann, 2003; Jessner, 2008; Komorowska, 2011; Kroll & De Groot, 2005; Sagasta Errasti, 2003), in recent years researchers have in addition started to investigate the advantages that come with even more than two languages (Jessner, 2014). A number of positive social, cultural, as well as cognitive advantages have been discovered, but first and foremost it has been ascertained that the "acquisition of a third language awakens and deepens interest in other languages, cultures and countries, creating more multicultural and global citizens" (Clyne, 1997 in Tamara Mesaros, 2008, p. 7).

Furthermore, one also knows that the learning of different languages is not independent processes, but rather, highly interconnected. Cummins' CUP model demonstrates how bilingual students benefit from language learning in all languages, and that acquisition in one language can benefit the other, because there exists *a common underlying proficiency* (1984, p. 33). This hypothesis is based on the "well-supported finding that the continued development of bilingual children's two languages during schooling is associated with positive educational and linguistic consequences" (Cummins, 2000, p. 175). This led Cummins to conclude that "academic language proficiency transfer across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their L1 will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in L2" (Cummins, 2000, p. 173). Later, this hypothesis has been referred to as the "interdependence hypothesis" (Cummins, 1991; 2000).

Research on L3 learning supports that one can expand Cummins' model to also include an L3. In this way, students who already have developed a highly proficient bilingualism will benefit when they are learning an L3, and by implication, their knowledge of their L1 and L2 will increase. Therefore, Cenoz affirms that, "L3 learners can relate new structures, new vocabulary or new ways of expressing communicative functions to the two languages they already know" (Cenoz, 2013, p. 71).

So far, the research that has been conducted on L3 acquisition, has clearly pointed out that the knowledge the students have about their background languages clearly influence the learning process of new languages (Rast, 2010). Considering the research conducted on L3 acquisition, it seems clear that minority students' L1 will not constitute any obstacle for their L3 English learning, since bilingual students tend to draw on all of their previous linguistic knowledge in order to understand input and produce output in the L3 (Rast, 2010).

The European Council has developed The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), which influences language policies across Europe. It sets out to promote what is called 'plurilingualism'. By this term the Council of Europe means that a student, who has learned a number of languages:

“Does not keep the languages and cultures in strictly separate mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4).

The aim is that the learners build up a common linguistic proficiency, not much unlike what Cummins describes in his CUP hypothesis (Cummins, 1984). This provides language teachers with a great opportunity to explore and exploit the total linguistic repertoire of minority students. The Common European Framework goes on to state that this perspective radically changes the aim of language teaching:

“It [language education] is no longer seen as simply to achieve ‘mastery’ of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the ‘ideal speaker’ as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5).

Nonetheless, there is a long way for these ideals to be implemented in the national curricula, and from there, to be implemented in the classrooms. In the case of Norway, the Norwegian Education Act (Opplæringslova) § 2-8, which deals with the education of language minority students, guarantees the right to adapted training in basic Norwegian until their proficiency in Norwegian has reached a level where they can follow the ordinary instruction. This law also guarantees the students' L1 teaching and bilingual technical training “if necessary” (Lovdata, 2016). On one hand, the curriculum is based on the research that shows that high competence in the student's L1 is a supporting factor when acquiring Norwegian. For instance, the curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities states the following: “The main goal of the teaching is to strengthen pupils' qualifications for gaining a command of the Norwegian language [...]” (Curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities, p. 1). On the other hand, it is clear that the L1 teaching only aims at endorsing the acquisition of Norwegian. The idea of a common underlying proficiency seems to be absent, and the plan does not directly encourage a proficient type of multilingualism:

“It follows from the premise for mother tongue teaching that the curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities is a transitional plan, one that shall be

used only until pupils are able to follow the teaching in accordance with the regular curriculum in Norwegian” (Curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities, p. 1).

Therefore, when the English curriculum states that the students should use their “native language,” this is not supported in the rest of the Norwegian curriculum and Education Act, which only in part encourages a multilingual approach to teaching minority students.

2.2 *Multilingual Approach to English Teaching*

Today, many minority students have been born and raised in Norway, and many students speak Norwegian equally well to their L1. If that is the case, the use of the L1 in the classroom is first and foremost a way of showing inclusion and respect, rather than a way of facilitating and promoting their English learning. Yet, for many students that have come to Norway as migrants, a multilingual approach to language learning can be crucial. Research on Norwegian classrooms suggests that other languages besides Norwegian is rarely included in the instruction (Haukås, 2016). From the research we have so far, other languages besides Norwegian and English also seem to be absent in many English classrooms (Flognfeldt & Šurkalović, 2016).

Many English teachers find it challenging to involve other languages than Norwegian and English in their English teaching. Moreover, many teachers and teachers in training express that they do not have sufficient knowledge about multilingualism and how to teach in multilingual classrooms (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016; Torgersen & Krulatz, 2015; Šurkalović, 2014). It is therefore necessary to consider what practices that may contribute to the inclusion of minority languages and the promotion of metalinguistic awareness among minority students in the English classroom. In order to develop suitable pedagogical practices, more research is necessary. However, some important points can be made about how to include minority students’ L1s.

All English teachers should aim at developing their students’ metalinguistic awareness. “Metalinguistic awareness has been identified as one, if not *the* key factor of multilingual learning” (Jessner, 2014, p. 175). For multilingual minority students this can be even more important. In order to develop such a metalinguistic awareness there are several measures that the teacher can take. Research on multilingual pedagogy suggests that multilingualism first and foremost must be normalized (Palmer et al., 2014). In order for this to happen the teacher can act as a model. Through her use of her own linguistic repertoire, the teacher can show how one can compare and draw on linguistic knowledge from several languages, when exploring a new language. To draw attention to linguistic overlap between different languages, can inspire the students to involve their own background languages in the learning process.

Furthermore, it is very important that the teacher communicate clearly to the students that a multilingual background is valuable and useful when learning more languages. The teacher should show an interest in the students’ background languages and encourage the students to involve their complete linguistic repertoire in the learning of English (Palmer et al., 2014).

When the teacher asks the students to translate a word, a sentence or a text, minority students should be allowed to translate to their first language. Some student might be reluctant to do so if they are used to a classroom context, which does not value and promote the use of minority languages as a tool in the classroom. Nonetheless, this should be encouraged, since many of these students will have better prerequisites to learn the words, if they are translated to the language they understand the best.

3. Method

The main interest of this paper is to describe the experiences of the students, not of the teachers. This has two reasons: First, it rests on an assumption of the minority students as a non-dominant group, which depends on the majority's acceptance and acknowledgment – a fundamentally unequal status relationship (de Jong, 2011). This has lead some researchers to claim that minority students even face discrimination in Norwegian schools (Laugerud, Askeland, & Aamotsbakken, 2014). Second, since most Norwegian research so far has focused on minority students' situations in the English classroom from a teacher perspective (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016; Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016; Ness, 2008; Šurkalović, 2014), there is now a need for research that considers this topic from a student perspective.

In order to describe the experiences of minority students, I decided to take a phenomenological approach and conduct semi-structured interviews with minority students (Moustakas, 1994). The aim of phenomenology is to “increase the understanding of and insight into others' lifeworlds” [my own translation] (Johannessen, Tufte, & Christoffersen, 2011, p. 83). The idea is that one has to understand the people, in order to understand the world, since it is people that create meaning of the world (Johannessen et al., 2011). Thus, the aim was to gain insight into the situation for minority students in the English classroom, by interviewing them and investigating their personal experiences.

In order to secure the reliability and to enhance the transferability of the study, the aim was to have a diverse group of participants, both in term of gender, ethnic and linguistic background, as well as location in Norway. Although these measures were made in order to increase the study's validity, this does not mean that this study claims to describe the experiences in *all* minority students.

I contacted three upper secondary schools in three different Norwegians cities, in order to invite participants with a minority background to the project. The participants that were selected had a linguistic distribution, as you may see below:

Table 1: Linguistic background of research participants

AFRICAN LANGUAGES: Primarily Kinyarwanda and Tigrinya	2 participants
ASIAN LANGUAGES: Primarily Arabic, Farsi, and Vietnamese	3 participants
EUROPEAN LANGUAGES: Primarily Bulgarian, Chechen, Croatian, Latvian	4 participants
EUROPEAN LANGUAGE (LATIN-AMERICA):	1 participant

Primarily Spanish	
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Since many of the participants already spoke several languages upon arrival in Norway, only the language they considered to be their “mother tongue”/L1 is listed in the chart above. I chose to interview students in upper secondary since one can expect these students to have the longest experience with Norwegian education, even if they immigrated to Norway at a later stage. Moreover, one can expect students at age 17-18 to be more aware of their own language learning and more sensitive to adequate or inadequate language policies, classroom practices and language attitudes, than what one can expect younger students to be. All participants in this study were provided with pseudonyms.

4. Analysis

4.1. Do minority students find their L1 useful?

To find out whether or not minority students find their L1 useful, it can be interesting to investigate what attitudes minority students have towards their own L1. By investigating the students’ attitudes towards their L1, particularly in the context of the English classroom, valuable information about the attitudes they are faced with in school is also discovered and an understanding of why they see their L1 the way they do in the context of the English classroom is developed. It is noteworthy that many of the students expressed rather negative attitudes towards their L1. The students were asked about what languages they in general valued the most. The result was this:

Table 2: Students’ evaluation of the languages they know

<i>What language is the most important to you?</i>	
<i>English</i>	7
<i>Norwegian</i>	1
<i>L1</i>	2

Only one of the participants had what one in a Norwegian context can consider being a traditionally high-prestige L1, namely the Spanish-speaking participant. He was also one of the two participants who reported that the L1 was the most important to him. The status of the participants’ L1s can potentially have impacted the responses. When the students were asked about which languages their parents valued the most, the result was this:

Table 3: Students’ evaluation of their parents’ opinions about the languages they know

<i>What language is the most important to your parents?</i>	
<i>English</i>	1
<i>Norwegian</i>	2
<i>L1</i>	7

As one can see, the students value English greatly, while their parents value the L1 the most. One student, “Yusuf,” said:

“Everyone has a goal in his life, okay? And if you think about Arabic, can it help me reach my goals? So, if the answer is no, it doesn’t help you, then you can simply throw it out, behind your back.”

Hence, the question is where these quite negative attitudes towards their L1 come from. These attitudes are not developed in a vacuum. Rather, they are developed in the intersection between home, school, friends, and society at large. According to their own accounts, their parents do not share the same attitudes. Therefore, these attitudes must come from somewhere else: From friends, teachers or society at large. They might come from friends, since the students who use their L1 more with friends are also those who report that their L1 is more important to them. However, if one considers how the students describe their experiences from the English classroom, this might indicate that their rather negative attitudes derive from here.

If this is the case, the school context devalues the students’ L1 by not acknowledging and accepting these languages as appropriate for school use. As “Yusuf” states, the L1 loses its purpose when it cannot be used to acquire an education and a profession. “Fatima” explains that she has “never experienced it as a big deal to know several languages.” If this is correct, such a practice expresses silently that minority languages have no purpose in the English classroom. The students also said that they mostly translated from English to Norwegian, if they did not understand a word. They did this, even if they had access to an online dictionary in their L1. Many claimed they preferred to use Norwegian. On the other hand, they claimed that they had a higher proficiency in their L1 than in Norwegian. This is another expression of a devaluation of their L1s in the English classroom.

Nonetheless, some students had clearly developed a metalinguistic awareness and could see that it was useful to be multilingual when learning more languages:

“I think it [learning languages] would’ve been much, much more difficult if I didn’t know Farsi; if I only knew Norwegian or English” (“Hamid”).

“Yes [it is helpful to know many languages]. For example, the English grammar is not the same as the Norwegian, but it’s similar. I think it’s really similar. For example definite and indefinite article are similar” (“Petar”).

In other words, there was great variety among the participants to what degree they saw their L1 as useful when learning English. Although the majority did not value their L1, some expressed that it was an advantage when learning new languages. In the following section, the students give examples of how they used their L1 when they were learning English, although they did not necessarily considered it to be very helpful.

4.2. How do minority students make use of their L1?

Some of the students do explain that they have used their L1 in the learning of English. For instance “Yusuf,” who used to translate from English to Arabic:

“Arabic was the only language that I could sort of translate to from English. The only solution to be able to understand the word or the sentence was Arabic. It was the only solution to understand the message in English” (“Yusuf”).

“Marija” explains that when she lived in Croatia for a while, she had to learn German. She then realized her advantage as a speaker of Norwegian, since the languages were so similar. She later applied the same strategy to English, after she saw that “some words are similar to Norwegian, while some words are similar to Croatian.” Thus, it seems that the students have found their own strategies to take advantage of their multilingualism in the English classroom, although the teachers seem to be unaware of the issue. Rather, the participants’ multilingual backgrounds seem to become irrelevant to the teachers and become a silent and invisible knowledge, which the teacher will never know anything about.

Nevertheless, some of the students have put their diverse linguistic backgrounds to use in the English classrooms on their own initiative. Some students explain that they have used bilingual dictionaries between English and their L1; others have used other students who speak the same language, while some have had the help of their parents to learn English. Some of them have acquired an advanced metalinguistic awareness, and can see how useful a complex linguistic background can be:

“So, I used my Norwegian language [to learn German], because I remembered that [Norwegian]. They didn’t speak Norwegian, but I did. And it was so much easier, for example “tie” [No: Slips/Ge: Schlips] was almost the same. So, it was much easier for me... That’s when I realized I could use it in English too” (“Marija”).

However, the teachers are most of the time unaware of these practices, and the students do not tell their teachers about how they learn English. Nonetheless, there are exceptions. “Inara” explains that her teacher has expressed that it is positive that she speaks Latvian with a friend in her English class, in order to support each other. On the other hand, “Petar” tells that the minority students in his class are forbidden from using their L1 in class.

“Yusuf” was lucky, since both of his parents spoke English. It was therefore his parents, particularly his mother, who helped him learn English. She would sit down with him and use Arabic as the reference for the English learning. He explains the role of Arabic:

“Arabic was the only language that I could sort of translate to from English. The only solution to be able to understand the word or the sentence was Arabic. It was the only solution to understand the message in English”.

He explains that this was also how he approached English in school. He would constantly lean on Arabic in order to understand English, for instance when he translated words into Arabic. However, this was not something he had learned from other students in class or his teachers. He cannot recall that the teachers ever said anything related to this practice.

When “Gabriel” attended school in Cuba, he received very little language training, apart from Spanish. He explains that they only had English “once a year, and it was just numbers, ‘What’s your name?’ and ‘How old are you?’ Just things like that. Nothing else.” Therefore, when “Gabriel” first came to Norway, he could only speak Spanish. He therefore describes his first meeting with Norwegian and English as “hard,” and he explains that he was near to giving up learning Norwegian. He first attended an introductory school for immigrants, and here the main focus was on Norwegian, although they were also taught some English. In English, the teachers used body language to communicate with him, and he was already falling behind. What changed this challenging situation was that two new boys started in the same class as “Gabriel,” one was Chilean and the other was Colombian. Both spoke Spanish and English. They helped him overcome the difficulties of learning English. He also started to listen to more music in English, and after a while he improved his English.

“Yusuf” and “Gabriel” are good examples of students who received external support (family and friends) in order to exploit their L1 in the process of learning English. None of the participants had teachers who had encouraged them to do so. The only exception is “Inara”’s teacher, who had encouraged them to continue using Latvian once they had already started to do so. In the next section, more information about the teachers’ roles will be presented.

4.3. How do teachers support the use of minority students’ L1?

In general, the students could not report any attempts by their teachers to take their multilingualism into consideration in the English teaching. When asked about what role her L1 had had in the English teaching, “Jeanette” starts laughing before she answers: “There’s no teacher who knows much about my language.” Neither had she ever seen a dictionary for her L1 to English. Except one student, nobody had experienced that their teachers had encouraged them to make use of their L1 or any other language in the learning of English: “They [the teachers] have never considered that I come from abroad, or where I come from,” says “Fatima.”

In the English classroom “Inara” cannot see that the teachers have taken her linguistic background into consideration. “I do exactly the same as the others,” she says. “It’s up to me if I can do it or not, in a way.” Although the teachers have told her to ask, if there is anything she does not understand, however that is not always enough, she says. “Before I often did that [translated from English to Latvian] because I didn’t know many words in English, so I had to translate on Google or online, sort of.” This is something she still does from time to time. However, now she tries to translate to Norwegian, rather than Latvian. She does this both to improve her Norwegian, but also because she finds it easier to translate to Norwegian than Latvian, according to herself. There is also another Latvian girl in her English class, and this has helped. Then, they can support each other using Latvian. This is something the teacher has approved of, and told them to continue to do so. The teacher has also tried to use some simple words and expressions in Latvian, such as “yes” and “thank you.” It seems that she finds this quite amusing.

Another attitude, which is expressed through the interviews, is a clear strife for equality: “I have received the same instruction as monolingual students]” (“Jeanette”), “Everyone

receives the same assignments and everyone is considered the same” (“Marija”), “Generally, there hasn’t been much differentiation [...] I’ve had the same criteria as everybody else” (“Fatima”). The students themselves generally accept this striving for equality, and they seem to consider it to be fair. As “Inara” puts it when she says that she had to give up English this year, “I think it’s my own fault. I could’ve studied more. But I gave up.” In her eyes, it was up to her to follow the English teaching, as long as everyone received just the same instruction. If she failed it could not be the fault of the instruction she received; it had to be her own fault.

It can therefore seem as if many teachers are content as long as they provide all students – monolingual and multilingual – with the same instruction. The students can give examples of how the teacher has helped them when they had difficulties understanding a task or a new grammar rule, but never anything related to their linguistic background. Generally, the students accept this situation without questioning.

5. Discussion

Through the interviews with the minority students it was discovered that there were conflicting views among the participants on whether or not they found their L1 useful in the learning of English. Some of the participants, such as “Yusuf,” would reject his mother tongue as inadequate for academic purposes in Norway, at the same time as he could describe how Arabic has been a great support for him at the initial stages of his English learning. Others, such as “Gabriel” from Cuba and “Inara” from Latvia, had received support from their Spanish and Latvian speaking peers in the English classroom. Through the medium of their L1s, friends had helped them in the language learning process. Nonetheless, others completely rejected their L1s for the purpose of English learning. They would avoid using English-L1 dictionaries or had never had access to one. Some did not see the purpose of involving the L1 in the English teaching, while others stressed the importance of learning Norwegian through the use of English-Norwegian dictionaries. Among those who had drawn on their L1 in the English classroom, many seemed to have acquired an advanced metalinguistic awareness, and could see how useful a complex linguistic background can be.

Among the practices the students described translating was one of the most common ones. They could use online dictionaries to translate English texts and they could get the help of parents and friends to translate into their L1. Some explained that they sometimes used their L1 in order to understand new English vocabulary, in cases where the new word was more similar to their L1 than to Norwegian.

Those students who did chose to use their L1 for the purpose of English learning; all did this without the knowledge of the teacher. In one case, the teacher had noticed it and encouraged them to continue to use their L1. However, most of the practices the students described were without the knowledge and support of the teacher. Rather, their bilingual backgrounds have generally been invisible in the teachers’ classroom practices. This lack of acknowledgement seems to have led the students to internalize an understanding of their L1 as unfit for academic purposes. One student, “Petar,” even explained that in his class, where many had a minority background, the students were not allowed to speak their L1s. If these students had received an English instruction aimed at exploiting their total linguistic potential and

developing a metalinguistic awareness, one could expect these students to experience a greater sense of achievement and success in the English classroom. Instead, the current situation ignores their potential to a great extent.

In a context where the students are not encouraged to make use of their L1 in the process of learning English, it is simply a coincidence if the students find a way to exploit the potential that is associated with their multilingualism. Some students, who have had friends or parents who have served as support, this has been successful and they seem to have developed a metalinguistic awareness. For those less fortunate, the instruction they have received in school has not been enough for them to develop a metalinguistic awareness that could have helped them profit from their multilingual background.

The findings from these interviews are in line with other research that has shown how teachers use the same material in diverse classrooms, as in linguistically and culturally homogeneous classrooms (Laugerud et al., 2014). Moreover, it confirms the image of English teachers and English teachers in training who are not sufficiently prepared for the multicultural and multilingual reality that exists in the current English classrooms in Norway (Dahl & Krulatz, 2016; Krulatz & Torgersen, 2016; Šurkalović, 2014).

6. Summary

Based on 10 qualitative interviews with minority students from three different upper secondary schools in Norway, this paper examines the following questions:

- Do minority students find their L1 useful when learning English?
- How do minority students make use of their L1 when learning English?
- How do teachers support the use of minority students' L1 when teaching English?

To summarize, there was great variation among the participants in this study, when it comes to whether they found their L1 useful in the learning of English. Some had experienced that it could be an advantage, however, the majority did not see their L1 as a particular asset in the English classroom. Nonetheless, a number of participants could give examples of how they used their L1. For instance, by translating via their L1 to English. Notwithstanding, the clearest finding was the lack of support minority students' L1 received from English teachers. Although only one student reported that the L1 was explicitly forbidden in the English classroom, most participants could not report of any encouragements for applying the L1 in the learning of English. Hence, it is difficult to identify the European Framework's aim for a development towards plurilingualism in the minority students' descriptions of the English classroom. Nor is it easy to see the curriculum's aim for exploiting the students' "native language" is met in the practices described by the research participants. Rather, the general impression is that the curriculum and the European Framework's aims for a multilingual language teaching is far from being implemented in most English classrooms.

Based on these findings and other research presented in this paper, one can conclude that there is a need to improve English teachers and teachers in training's knowledge of multilingualism and how to teach English in multilingual classrooms. The aims should be that students experience that their multilingualism is valued and that they are provided with the

tools necessary to develop a metalinguistic awareness, which enables them to exploit their complete linguistic repertoire in the learning of English.

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