

## **Teacher cognition in the foreign language classroom: A literature review from Norway and Sweden**

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### **Abstract**

The study of language teacher cognition (LTC) allows us to understand better language teaching regarding what teachers know, how they come to know it, and how they draw on their knowledge. Due to the recently increasing LTC research interest but simultaneously lack of synthesis and overview in Norway and Sweden, a descriptive review of the literature was conducted. Results show a great variety of topics in both countries. However, multilingualism in Norway and assessment in Sweden stand out as particularly well-researched. In addition, results also show little research collaboration among two educationally-similar countries regarding LTC. In this sense, this literature review was initiated with an a priori interest in identifying LTC research on oral skill development that would allow the establishment of joint research ventures among the authors in both countries.

### **Keywords**

Teacher cognition, oral skill development, foreign language teaching, instructional decisions.

## 1. Introduction

It is commonly agreed that in order to understand language teaching better, there is a need for research on teachers' mental lives, namely, to investigate teacher cognition (TC) understood as the "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching - what teachers know, believe, and think" (Borg, 2015). There is evidence that teacher cognition about language and language teaching is influenced by previous own experiences as a learner (Lortie, 1975). These experiences are long-lasting and resistant to change (Almarza, 1996), they have a strong influence on how teachers behave in the classroom and viceversa (Meijer et al., 1999), they are influenced by contextual factors (Richards and Pennington, 1998), and they may not correspond to what teachers do in their teaching practice (Woods, 1996). Hence, language teaching can be seen as a process that is defined by dynamic interactions among cognition, context, and experience. In addition, the influence of the sociocultural perspective in the study of TC has also brought about the demand to account for the socio-emotional dimension of teachers' lives that does not ignore "the fact that teachers' prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and, most important, the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do" (Johnson, 2006, p.236). Such conceptual complexity has resulted in multiple varieties of terms to refer to teachers' internal cognitive processes.<sup>1</sup> In light of the prolific terminological conceptualization, Borg (2003, 2019) attempts to be comprehensive when proposing the inclusive and multifaceted term teacher cognition to embrace the complexity of teachers' mental and socio-emotional dimensions.

Despite the interest in language teacher cognition (LTC) originating 50 years ago (Dunkin and Biddle, 1974), it is after the turn of the century that research on the topic increased exponentially. According to Borg (2015, p.6), this is due to three factors: the influence of cognitive psychology, the acknowledgement of teachers as active decision-makers, and finally, the decay of process-product approaches solely based on the quantification of effective teacher behaviors. To the best of our knowledge, no studies trying to establish common LTC links between these two educationally similar countries have been found.<sup>2</sup> As Borg (2015) points out,

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<sup>1</sup> According to Ellis (2006), some of the most common terms to refer to teacher cognition are 'teacher knowledge', 'teachers' mental lives', 'teacher beliefs', 'beliefs, attitudes and knowledge', 'conceptions of teaching', 'conceptions of practice', 'teachers' maxims', 'teachers' pedagogical systems', 'teachers' theories', 'teachers' personal theories', or 'knowledge, beliefs and insights'. See Borg (2003) for a summarized review on terminology, Borg (2015) for a comprehensive historical review, and Borg (2019) for an alternative and broader conceptual definition to the umbrella term 'teacher cognition'.

<sup>2</sup> The scope and delimitation of the study is due to the common specific research interest of the authors in LTC and oral skill development, one in Norway and the other in Sweden.

there is hardly any replication or evidence of systematic programs of research on LTC internationally. To investigate the possible interconnection specifically on LTC and oral skill development, the authors' special area of research interest, there is a need to carry out literature reviews. Thus, the present literature review intends to synthesize and shed light on the ongoing LTC research trends in both countries by (1) specifically identifying and classifying areas of interest, (2) illustrating the distinct focus on LTC and oral skill development, and (3) determining whether research on this particular intersection of cognition with orality points towards commonalities between both countries. Thus, the integrative report provided here attempts to serve as background to the study of LTC initially in Norway and Sweden, but eventually also to the rest of the Scandinavian research community.

## 2. Method

The literature review presented here was conducted using Cooper's (1988) procedure for synthesizing literature to (a) formulate the problem, (b) collect data, (c) evaluate the appropriateness of the data, (d) analyze and interpret relevant data, and (e) organize and present the results. The focus of this study is on teacher cognition research in foreign language teaching and learning both in academic higher education institutions and compulsory education in Norway and Sweden. The most popular foreign languages in terms of enrolled students are English, Spanish, German, and French.<sup>3</sup>

## 3. Problem Formulation

The significance of this literature review in Norway and Sweden is multifaceted, as Llovet Vilà (2018) has argued. From an in-depth research perspective, while existing research on LTC is extremely varied topic-wise, it is not, however, extensive in relation to the study of specific curricular areas such as speaking instruction. From a geographical perspective, research on LTC has been mainly carried out in English-speaking countries. From an educational context point of view, much research has been conducted with native speaking teachers working with small groups of motivated adult learners studying in universities or private institutions. From a foreign language perspective, research on LTC has mainly focused on English as a foreign language, either from a teacher or a student perspective.

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<sup>3</sup> In Norway: <https://www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/statistikk/statistikk-videregaende-skole/fagvalg-i-videregaende-skole/fagvalg-vgs/>  
In Sweden: <https://www.skolverket.se/publikationsserier/beskrivande-statistik/2020/pm---elever-och-skolenheter-i-grundskolan-lasaret-2019-20>

#### 4. Research Questions

This multidimensional knowledge gap may cause researchers and educators to spend additional time reviewing literature to capture an entire view of issues in language teacher cognition in Norway and Sweden. To help address the problem and form a combined classification of reported topics, countries, educational contexts, and foreign languages on LTC, the following research question guided this review:

RQ1. What are the major (a) topics, (b) educational contexts, and (c) major foreign languages studied in LTC research in Norway and Sweden?

Further, since our a priori specific research interest is on LTC and oral skill development and, if possible, trying to establish commonalities between countries in this area, the following research questions also guided this review:

RQ2. What are the major topics on LTC and oral skill development that make up the focus of research interest in Norway and Sweden?

RQ3.- Are there commonalities between these investigations? If so, which?

Llovet Vilà (2018) has suggested the existence of a common language teaching culture in the Norwegian context, which initially triggered the interest of this literature review and specifically the last research question.

#### 5. Data Collection

The purpose of data collection was to find empirical studies including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research approaches conducted on the study of LTC in Norway and Sweden in peer-reviewed publications (mainly journal articles and book chapters, but also PhD theses) published between 2000 to 2022. The keywords used take into consideration that publications may be in Norwegian and/or Swedish and also any of the foreign languages studied.<sup>4</sup> According to Haukås (2020), the most common terminology to refer to teacher cognition in Norwegian includes “lærerholdninger”, “lærerens holdninger”, “lærerens forestillinger”. In Swedish, the term “Lärarkognition” (Sandberg, 2018) is gaining ground, but also “lärares uppfattningar” emerges to refer to teachers’ beliefs. In English, despite the extensive variety of terms, “teacher

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<sup>4</sup> For the sake of simplification, the search in English and, consequently, the rest of foreign languages involved has been limited to the two most broadly used terms, namely, “teacher cognition” and “teacher beliefs”. Nevertheless, note from the references identified that alternative terms emerged from the search, e.g. attitudes, notions, thinking, conceptualizing, orientations, reasoning, understanding, or perspectives.

cognition” and “teacher beliefs” are commonly used. In Spanish, the terms include “cognición docente”, “cogniciones docentes” and “creencias de los profesores”. In German, they are “Lehrereinstellungen” and “Subjektive Theorien”. In French, the terms “préconceptions” and “représentations” are found. The databases that were used for this literature review included Oria, Nora, Idunn, Google Scholar, EBSCO HOST, Web of Science, LIBRIS and DiVA. Despite the attempt to narrow down the search with the aforementioned keywords used (e.g. language teacher cognition, Norway), it was necessary to read each source to confirm that it was a peer reviewed publication (rather than a MA thesis) which was analyzed with reference to the criteria in the following section.

## **6. Data Evaluation and Analysis**

A content analysis approach (Strauss, 1987) was used to analyze the collected articles based on the main topic of the studies. The criteria of selection considered the specific focus of study, namely, teacher cognition studies on any of the four foreign languages contemplated; the language of publication, that is, any of the four foreign languages but also studies on these foreign languages in Norwegian or Swedish; the context of study, either higher education institutions, for example, in-service teacher training programs at universities or compulsory education contexts, be it primary, lower or upper secondary schools; and finally, country of study, namely, Norway or Sweden.

A total of 67 publications, 38 in Norwegian and 29 in Swedish educational contexts, were identified as peer-reviewed publications. After reading each source, articles were initially classified by context and language of study, as well as by country. Thereafter, articles were categorized into major topical themes. New themes were added until the data themes reached saturation, meaning that all new data could be categorized under the already-developed themes. Table 1 below illustrates the main topics and sources of the identified publications.

## **7. Limitations**

The literature search for the studies was extensive and systematic using a framework to find as many related studies as possible, however, the review was not exhaustive. Due to the terminological variety in the field of teacher cognition, and thereby, the corresponding multiple variety of terms in the other foreign languages contemplated in this study, the findings were limited to the results that emerged in the searched databases using the aforementioned keywords. Further, as mentioned above, the construct of teacher cognition has been

conceptually challenged for not encompassing the personal, social, historical, or cultural dimensions (Borg, 2019; Burns, Freeman and Edwards, 2015). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that there were other related studies in the literature that did not emerge and were not included in this review.

## 8. Results

As a result of reviewing the studies and categorizing them into major topical themes, the table below illustrates the emerging fifteen major areas related to LTC.

### 8.1 Identification and Classification of Topics

Table 1. LTC Related Topics and Sources by Country.

Topics	Sources	
	Norway	Sweden
Assessment	Bøhn (2015), Bøhn and Hansen (2017), Flognfeldt et al. (2020), Vattøy (2020)	Baldwin and Apelgren (2018), Borger (2018), Csöregi (2022), Frisch (2021), Hildén et al. (2022), Johansson (2020), Reierstam (2020)
CLIL	Krulatz (2019), Mahan (2020)	Sandberg (2015), Sandberg (2018), Toth (2018)
Dialectology		Forsberg et al. (2019)
Grammar	Askland (2019), Cabot (2022)	Nylén (2014)
Literature	Lyngstad (2019)	
Metacognition	Haukås (2012)	Nilsson (2022), Lundberg (2012), Nordlund (2017)
Methodology	Haukås et al. (2021), Heimark (2013)	Schurz and Coumel (2022)
Motivation		Rocher Hahlin (2020)
Multilingualism	Alstad and Tkachenko (2018), Calafato (2020a), Calafato (2020b), Calafato (2022), Haukås (2015), Krulatz and Xu (2022), Krulatz et al. (2022), Lorenz et al. (2021), Myklevold (2022), Möller-Omrani and	Falk and Lindqvist (2022), Källkvist et al. (2022), Sundqvist et al. (2021)

	Sivertsen (2022), Neokleous et al. (2022), Sevinç et al. (2022), Tishakov and Tsagari (2022)	
Oral Skill Development	Llovet Vilà (2018)	Nilsson et al. (2019)
Reading Skill Development	Bakken and Lund (2018), Gilje (2014)	
Teacher Development	Drew et al. (2007), Haukås and Mercer (2021), Larssen and Drew (2014)	Jeong et al. (2022), Lundberg (2007)
Varied <sup>5</sup>	Bugge and Dessingué (2009), Chvala (2018), Chvala (2020), Haukås (2020), Solfjeld (2007)	Schurz et al. (2022) Schurz and Sundqvist (2022), Erickson et al. (2022), Baldwin and Apelgren (2015), Ponnert (2014)
Vocabulary	Hestetraet (2012)	Bergström et al. (2021)
Writing Skill Development	Lund (2016)	

One overall point worth noting is the diversity of current LTC research. Table 1 shows the result of this categorization and displays how the growing interest in LTC is slightly more prominent in Norway. Norwegian research on LTC is varied but there is a preponderance in multilingualism studies. The reason may be found in the attention that plurilingual and pluricultural competence has received at a European level in the publication of the Companion Volume to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Piccardo et al., 2019), and particularly at a national level, as a result of the recent curriculum reform where the plans for foreign languages (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020) now emphasize the recognition and valorization of linguistic and cultural diversity and the promotion of plurilingual interculturality. In Sweden, research on LTC is likewise varied, yet the area of assessment has received more attention from scholars. We are not able to hypothesize about this specific focus other than an accumulative research interest in assessment in language teaching and learning, where scholarly work inspires further investigations and research, e.g. initiation of research schools.

In a preliminary response to RQ2, as shown in Table 1, the research interest in LTC and oral skill development is minimal in both countries. However, it is worth noting that while searching

<sup>5</sup> Articles that focused simultaneously on several topics were classified as varied.

in the databases, a substantial number of MA theses on LTC in both countries were identified.<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, as shown in Table 2 below, none of these resulted in journal article publications and, therefore, are not reflected in the present literary review. These findings suggest the discouraging outcome that initiatives in Norwegian universities have in encouraging students to further develop MA theses into scientific publications. This is certainly an issue on which to put more attention in order to make visible potentially valuable research.

As mentioned in the introduction, the increasing interest in LTC is evident also in relation to the years of publication. Only three studies were published between 2000 and 2010, namely, Lundberg (2007), Solfjeld (2007), Bugge and Dessingue (2009). The rest, and main bulk of studies, were published between 2011 and 2022 with a special concentration in recent years.

## 9. Languages and educational contexts

As mentioned above, Borg (2003) claimed that much scholarly work at an international level has paid attention to native speaking teachers working with adults in universities or private institutions. Nevertheless, Borg (2012) showed a change in research focus which is also reflected in Table 2 below. Our data collection shows that studies about LTC in Norway and Sweden have mainly been conducted within the compulsory educational system among non-native English teachers, with teenagers and young adults.

In this vein, Borg (2012) also noted a change of emphasis when selecting participants and settings. While the initial tendency at the turn of the century involved the widespread use of captive audiences (pre-service teachers) in LTC research, the present findings suggest that in-service teachers represent a majority in current LTC research in Norway and Sweden. Nevertheless, Llovet Vilà (2018) has claimed that little attention has been paid so far in SFL Norwegian teacher training programs to the relevance of LTC on teaching practices. It is worth noting the interest in several studies (7) for the significance of LTC and pre-service teacher education in particular. As mentioned above, there is evidence to suggest that teacher education does shape trainees' cognitions, and that programs that ignore trainee teachers' prior beliefs may be less effective at influencing these (Borg, 2015).

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<sup>6</sup> A total of 18 MA thesis, 10 in Norway (Eilertsen, 2020; Holm, 2020; Kessner, 2016; Mehl, 2014; Rydland, 2016; Rye 2014; Strålberg, 2019; Tveiten, 2019) and 8 in Sweden (Berglund and Braun, 2018; Broman, 2020; Nilsson, 2013; Sjöberg, 2007; Tucek, 2021; Vallimaa, 2021; Vikström, 2019; Warsame, 2021) made LTC and oral skill development the mostly research topic at a graduate level.



Table 2. Focus of languages studied by educational contexts

Source	Language	Context	Career Stage	Publication
Alstad and Tkachenko (2018)	English	Higher Education	Pre-service	Journal article
Askland (2019)	English Spanish Norwegian	Lower and Upper Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Bakken and Lund (2018)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Baldwin and Apelgren (2018)	English	Higher Education	In-service	Journal article
Baldwin and Apelgren (2015)	English	Higher Education	In-service	Book chapter
Bergström et al. (2021)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Borger (2018)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Bugge and Dessingué (2009)	SFL	Lower and Upper Secondary School	In-service	Report
Bøhn (2015)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Bøhn and Hansen (2017)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Cabot (2022)	English	Higher Education	In-service	Journal article
Calafato (2020a)	SFL	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Calafato (2020b)	SFL	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Calafato (2022)	SFL	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Chvala (2018)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Chvala (2020)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Csöregi (2022)	English	Primary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Drew et al. (2007)	English	Primary school	In-service	Journal article
Erickson et al. (2022)	SFL	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Book chapter
Falk and Lindqvist (2022)	French German	Lower and Upper Secondary school	In-service	Book chapter
Flognfeldt et al. (2020)	English Norwegian	Primary School	In-service	Journal article
Forsberg et al. (2019)	English	Lower and Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article

Frisch (2021)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Book chapter
Gilje (2014)	English	Primary School	In-service	Journal article
Haukås (2012)	SFL	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Haukås (2014)	SFL	Lower and Upper Secondary School Higher Education	In-service Pre-service	Book chapter
Haukås (2016)	SFL	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Haukås and Mercer (2021)	SFL	Higher Education	Pre-service	Journal article
Haukås et al. (2021)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Heimark (2013)	SFL	Lower Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Hestetraet (2012)	English	Primary School	In-service	Book chapter
Hilden et al. (2022)	English	Lower and Upper Secondary School	Pre-service	Journal article
Jeong et al. (2022)	English	Primary School	Pre-service	Journal article
Johansson (2020)	English	Higher Education	In-service	Journal article
Krulatz (2019)	English	Higher Education	Pre-service	Journal article
Krulatz et al. (2022)	English	Primary School	In-service	Journal article
Källkvist et al. (2022)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Larssen and Drew (2014)	English	Higher Education	Pre-service	Book chapter
Llovet Vilà (2018)	Spanish	Lower Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Lorenz et al. (2021)	English	Primary School	In-service	Journal article
Lund (2016)	English	Higher Education	Pre-service	Journal article
Lundberg (2007)	English	Primary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Lundberg (2012)	English	Primary School	In-service	Book Chapter
Lyngstad (2019)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Mahan (2020)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Möller-Omrani and Sivertsen (2022)	English	Higher Education	Pre-service	Journal article
Myklevold (2022)	English German	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Neokleous et al. (2022)	English	Lower and Upper Secondary School Higher Education	Pre-service In-service	Journal article

Nilsson (2022)	English	Primary School	Pre-service	Journal article
Nilsson et al. (2019)	SFL	Lower and Upper Secondary School	Pre-service	Journal article
Nordlund (2017)	English	Primary and Secondary School	Pre-service	Journal article
Nylén (2014)	Spanish	Lower and Upper Secondary School	In-service	Licentiate Thesis <sup>7</sup>
Ponnert (2014)	Spanish	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Licentiate Thesis
Reierstam (2020)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Rocher Hahlin (2020)	French	Lower and Upper Secondary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Sandberg (2015)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Book Chapter
Sandberg (2018)	English	Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Sevinç et al. (2022)	English	Primary School	In-service	Journal article
Solfjeld (2007)	SFL	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Report
Stuvland (2016)	English	Primary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Sundqvist et al. (2021)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Book Chapter
Schurz and Sundqvist (2022)	English	Lower and Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Schurz and Coumel (2022)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Schurz et al. (2022)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Tishakov and Tsagari (2022)	English	Primary School Lower and Upper Secondary School	In-service	Journal article
Toth (2018)	English	Primary School	In-service	PhD Thesis
Vattøy (2020)	English	Lower Secondary School	In-service	Journal article

Despite the majority of cases focus on Scandinavian educational contexts, it is worth marking the presence of studies (10) utilizing data simultaneously from Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian educational contexts. In this sense, the interest in contrastive studies on LTC, especially within the European Union, is slowly emerging. However, given the educational similarities within the Scandinavian contexts, it is surprising that there are only two Scandinavian comparative studies, namely, Schurz and Sundqvist (2022) making use of LTC

<sup>7</sup> In the Swedish educational system, a licentiate degree is a pre-doctoral degree, formally equivalent to a half a doctoral dissertation.

reports on extramural English use from Austria, France, Sweden and Finland, and Hilden et al. (2020) comparing LTC assessment perceptions between Sweden and Finland. Note that the authors initiated the present literary review precisely to establish a joint research agenda on LTC and oral skill development between Norway and Sweden.

## **10. LTC Research on Oral Skill Development**

As shown in Table 1 above, only two studies focusing on LTC and oral skill development were identified. Hence, the answer to RQ2 regarding the illustration of LTC topics on oral skill development in both countries is simple. In Norway, Llovet Vilà (2018) investigates the connection between curriculum interpretation and implementation, pointing out the difficulties in deploying oral skill communicative-oriented practices in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language. The author reveals a curricular implementation gap where teachers conduct predominantly form-focused and pre-communicative-oriented practices, despite the communicative-oriented curriculum. In Sweden, Nilsson et al. (2019) map pre-service teachers' beliefs about oral skills in relation to a communicative approach in the second foreign languages French, German, Italian, and Spanish. These language student teachers face a dilemma regarding educational ideals and experiences in their classroom practice when having to make instructional decisions on a daily basis. The study reveals the struggle student teachers face with the implementation of communicative-oriented practices.

Initially, taking into account the reported missing evidence of systematic programs of research on LTC (Borg, 2015), the authors' intention with this literary review was to determine whether existing research on this particular intersection of LTC with orality could point toward commonalities between Norway and Sweden. Therefore, given the scarce number of identified publications, attempting to answer to RQ3 and drawing conclusions from these studies is scientifically challenging, if not impossible.

The table below briefly summarizes the main characteristics of the studies identified by presenting their samples, the research methodology used and the respective main findings.

*Table 3. Summary of LTC studies and oral skill development*

Source	Sample	Research Method	Conclusions
Llovet Vilà (2018)	7 in-service teachers	Semi-structured interviews, Authentic observations and Document analysis	Non-communicative oriented cognitions and form focused practices. Schooling impact on LTC. Curriculum implementation gap.
Nilsson et al. (2019)	14 pre-service student teachers	Narrative writing	Strong schooling experiences impact on LTC and grammar and oral skill development. Regardless of schooling experiences (pre- or communicative) student teachers struggle with integration of both areas.

As mentioned, Llovet Vilà (2018) has questioned whether it is legitimate to talk about the existence of a culture of teaching within the SFL community, namely, a common rationale of cognitions and values that serves as the background to teacher decision-making and action. Nevertheless, this solely applies to Norway since it is not possible to establish comparisons or generalizations with the only registered Swedish study. Interestingly, student teachers in Nilsson et al. (2019) report struggling with the implementation of communicative oriented practices and describe a dilemma regarding educational ideals and experiences in their classroom practice.

The table also illustrates the difficulty in drawing conclusions and eventual commonalities among countries by comparing and contrasting two completely different samples (pre-service vs. in-service) and research methodologies. It is worth mentioning that both studies contain inquiries into the origins of the reported cognitions which make possible the elaboration of a clear LTC framework around classroom practices. In this sense, Borg (2019) has repeatedly argued against studies in which teachers' stated beliefs are contrasted with their practices in the search for anomalies since it is not possible to separate thought and action by portraying them as adversaries which do not take into account the context that binds them together. For instance, it is known how the impact of contextual factors may impact teaching practices, and in this case, oral skill development. The student teachers in Nilsson et al. (2019) point out several contextual factors as the cause of their struggle, with the factor "students' deficient linguistic proficiency in the target language" as the key explanation. Further, Nilsson et al. (2019) define situation-specific factors as impacting oral skill development, one being language teachers'

dilemma about target language use in educational situations when grammar is taught and explained. Hence, although LTC emerges consistently as a powerful influence on teacher practices, these practices do not ultimately always reflect teachers' stated beliefs, personal theories, and pedagogical principles. In this sense, the study on LTC must also take into account "the influence on teaching of the social, psychological and environmental factors" inside but also outside the language classroom (Borg, 2015, p.46).

## 11. Conclusion

A descriptive literature review was carried out to identify and illustrate the thematic span in the study of LTC in Norway and Sweden. Despite the fact that LTC research originated five decades ago (Dunkin and Biddle, 1974), the interest in both countries has bloomed in the last five years.

The distribution of thematic topics was varied, yet in Norway there was a preponderance of studies on multilingualism, while in Sweden the research on assessment was predominant. Such an interest is due to the impact of guiding documents such as the Companion Volume to the European Framework of Reference for Languages (Piccardo et al., 2019). In addition, research on LTC, in Norway and Sweden as well as at an international level, is still mainly focused on English as a foreign language (Borg, 2015). Likewise, confirming the tendency at an international level, research attention is drawn to compulsory educational contexts. As shown above, due to the limited number of studies on LTC and oral skill development, it was impossible to draw valid and reliable conclusions regarding commonalities and thus address our a priori research interest. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out the striking interest in this topic in MA theses that did not result in scientific publications. The paucity of MA research resulting in publication is certainly an issue that deserves more attention.

We hope that this literature review will help the LTC research community not only in Norway and Sweden but also in the rest of the Scandinavian countries opens the path, given the similarities of the educational contexts, for scholars and institutions to encourage and engage in a shared agenda which establishes more lines of joint research ventures.

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