Multilingualism in Norwegian universities
Research, realities, and role models

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• Our branch specialises in:
  • Bi- and multilingualism in children and adults
    • Spoken and signed languages
  • Multilingualism in Norway
  • The relationship between Norwegian and English in Norway

Flere Språk til Flere

https://site.uit.no/ferespraaktilflere/
https://www.bilingualism-matters.org/network/trondheim
Language in Norwegian universities

- Norwegian is “the main language” (Language Policy Guidelines, NTNU)
  - Teaching and administration expected to be conducted mainly in Norwegian
- English also plays an important role in Norwegian universities
  - English is global lingua franca in academia
  - High percentage of international staff and students
- Bachelor level teaching = Norwegian
- Master level teaching = often English
- Concern about ‘domain loss’ of Norwegian in academia
Language debate in Norway

**Mer enn hvert fjerde emne undervises på engelsk: – Går greit, men blir ikke like bra som på norsk**

Stadig mer av undervisningen ved universiteter og høgskoler foregår på engelsk. Det kan føre til at studentene lærer dårligere, advarer språkekspert.


**Må lære universitetsnorsk på to år. Det skaper reaksjoner**

Ved flere fakulteter på Universitetet i Oslo vil internasjonale ansatte som får fast jobb, måtte bestå en norsktest etter to år.

https://khrono.no/ma-laere-universitetsnorsk-pa-to-ar-det-skaper-reaksjoner/748964

**Anwesha behersker ikke norsk — uaktuell for akademi for unge forskere**

Akademiet for yngre forskere har vedtektssfestet norsk som arbeidsspråk. — Ekskluderende, mener seniorforsker Anwesha Dutta.

https://khrono.no/anwesha-behersker-ikke-norsk-uaktuell-for-akademi-for-unge-forskere/724164

«More than a quarter of courses taught in English: - It’s okay but not as good as in Norwegian»

«Anwesha does not speak Norwegian — ineligible for the academy for young researchers»

«Must learn university Norwegian in two years. This creates reactions»

International staff must pass a Norwegian exam after 2 years

This can lead to students learning less well, warns a language expert.

«Anwesha does not speak Norwegian — ineligible for the academy for young researchers»
Parallel languages

- “The use of parallel languages refers to a situation in which two languages are considered equal in a particular domain, and where the choice of language depends on what is deemed most appropriate and efficient in a specific situation” (CIP, Copenhagen)

- “NTNU must practise parallel language use. In practice, this means «Norwegian when you can, English when you must».” (Language Policy Guidelines, NTNU)

- Assumptions of sufficient competence in both English and Norwegian

- “on the practical level, parallel language use is only possible when both students and teachers have adequate language competences in English and in the local language” (Kuteeva, 2014, p.333)
Realities

• Challenges for Norwegian students in reading academic texts in English (Busby, 2021; Busby & Dahl, 2021)
  • Not all students have enough English competence to read academic L2 texts

• Challenges for international staff in acquiring L2 Norwegian (Gujord et al, 2022)
  • Adult L2 acquisition, variation in outcomes

• Challenges for students (and staff) who have other language backgrounds
  • Need to learn both Norwegian and English to a high level to participate in higher education
  • Education for refugees tends to focus mainly on Norwegian (Dahl et al, 2018; Krulatz & Dahl, 2021)
Research

• Current projects connected to BM:
  • L2 Norwegian among international staff (Voclex)
  • Multilingual language practices among staff and students in Norwegian universities (AELPP)
  • Investigating L2 English reading among university students in Norway

• Aiming to gain a clearer picture of actual language practices, the effects of language policy, and the needs of staff and students
Role models

Roles of universities in bridging research on multilingualism and society:

• Conducting and disseminating research about multilingualism and language acquisition
  • Contributing empirical evidence to policy and debates

• Role in teacher training, educating teachers to be aware of multilingualism in the classroom

• Acting as a role model for acknowledging, accommodating for, and celebrating multilingualism 😊
References