

## CURRENT MEDIA PERSPECTIVES ON THE NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE. NORWEGIAN, *NORSKLISH* OR BETTER ENGLISH?

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**ABSTRACT.** *Current media perspectives on the Norwegian language. Norwegian, norsklisch or better English?* The present paper explores the current situation of the English language used in Norway, as rendered by different articles published by *Aftenposten*, a Norwegian newspaper of significant circulation. The countries' English language skills are annually tested, and according to the 2022 Education First's English Proficiency Index, Norway is ranked number four in the world, with very high skills. Nowadays, English is used in schools, at higher education institutions, at work, but English words are more and more used in Norwegian in everyday life especially by teenagers. This leads to a mixture of English and Norwegian known as *norsklisch*. The newspaper articles present various opinions about the level of English proficiency required in different fields, the influence of *norsklisch* on the language of youth, and even the need for Norwegians to improve their English language skills. The influence of the English language on the speech of different generations in Norway varies, as each generation has had different exposure and experiences with this language. Norwegians are moreover exposed to a wide variety of language variants given the fact that they have two official written norms (Bokmål and Nynorsk) and quite many dialects, which are used

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in various aspects of the public life. Fields such as research, higher education, international business may be seen as threatened by the use of English mostly because there is a clear lack of terminology in Norwegian.

**Keywords:** *Norwegian language, norsklisch, bilingualism, Anglicization, media*

**REZUMAT. *Perspective media actuale asupra limbii norvegiene. Norvegiană, norsklisch sau mai bine engleză?*** Lucrarea de față examinează situația actuală a limbii engleze folosite în Norvegia, așa cum este redată de diferite articole publicate în *Aftenposten*, un ziar norvegian cu un tiraj semnificativ. Competențele de limbă engleză ale țărilor sunt testate anual și, conform indicelui de cunoaștere a limbii engleze din 2022, furnizat de Education First, Norvegia este clasată pe locul patru în lume, cu competențe foarte bune. În zilele noastre, limba engleză este folosită în școli, în instituțiile de învățământ superior, la locul de muncă, dar cuvinte englezești sunt din ce în ce mai folosite în norvegiană în viața de zi cu zi, în special de către adolescenți. Aceasta duce la un amestec de engleză și norvegiană cunoscut sub numele de *norsklisch*. Articolele de ziar prezintă diverse opinii despre nivelul de competențe de limbă engleză solicitat în diferite domenii, despre modul în care *norsklisch* influențează limbajul tinerilor și chiar despre nevoia norvegienilor de a-și îmbunătăți abilitățile de limbă engleză. Influența limbii engleze în vorbirea diferitelor generații din Norvegia variază, deoarece fiecare generație a fost expusă diferit și a avut experiențe diferite cu această limbă. Mai mult decât atât, norvegienii sunt expuși la o paletă largă de variante lingvistice dat fiind faptul că au două norme oficiale scrise (Bokmål și Nynorsk) și destul de multe dialecte, care sunt folosite în diferite aspecte ale vieții publice. Domenii precum cercetarea, învățământul superior, afacerile internaționale pot fi văzute ca amenințate de utilizarea limbii engleze, mai ales din cauza faptului că există o lipsă evidentă a terminologiei în limba norvegiană.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *limba norvegiană, norsklisch, bilingualism, anglicizare, media*

## Introduction

The countries' English language skills are annually tested by Education First<sup>2</sup> and according to the latest ranking (EF English Proficiency Index 2022), Norway occupies the fourth position, with very high skills. Top three includes the Netherlands, Singapore and Austria. A reason could be the fact that English

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<sup>2</sup> Education First (EF) is an education company known for its language training, which has measured adult English proficiency on the basis of an online English test in 111 countries and regions.

has been a compulsory subject from the first grade since 1997 and nowadays it has “a unique position as 1<sup>st</sup> foreign language in Norway. Both by way of the education system and outside education (music, media etc.), it is the dominant ‘other language’” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2003-2004, 17). Most of the countries that have registered high scores are located in Europe and are countries with a high level of education.

In Norway significant resources are spent on education<sup>3</sup>, and children and teenagers seem to understand the importance of having a good command of the English language as a *lingua franca*. They are exposed to English not only at school, but also through music, movies, video games, or social media. Those who want to learn English well may also attend short-term or long-term study programs in English-speaking countries. This can include language courses, summer schools, or even Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programs that are taught entirely in English. In this way, students can improve their language skills quickly and effectively, in addition to getting opportunities for personal development, intercultural communication, and a global perspective.

In the article entitled “Why the Level of English in Your Country Is So Important”, Kaisa Schreck Danielsson states that “English skills matter because they give people access to a wider range of information, a more diverse, international network, and more job opportunities than ever before. They also matter at the national level because they can tell us a lot about a country’s level of innovation, competitiveness, and future prospects.” (Schreck Danielsson 2022).

Indeed, English is used in research, at schools and universities, at working places mainly in international companies, and although, nowadays Norwegian may be seen as threatened by the use of English in these fields, the Norwegian language is not in danger of disappearing. However, it has extensively changed over the past years. English words are, for instance, more and more used in Norwegian in everyday life especially by teenagers. This leads to a mixture of English and Norwegian known as *norsklisch*, and some people worry that there are too many English words in today’s language. There is even an academic interest in the way English influences Norwegian, in form of research projects, such as *Norsklisch – engelsk i norsk*, a project expected to end in August 2023 and developed at the University of Oslo by the Centre for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan.

Globalization has led to a need for bilingualism as a means of communication, but the discussion regarding bilingualism is quite complex. Colin Baker refers for instance to making a distinction between “individual

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the government expenditure on education in 2021, provided by Eurostat, with reference to Norway and other European countries: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government\\_expenditure\\_on\\_education](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_education).

bilingualism” and “societal bilingualism” (Baker 2001, 2), but also between “language ability” and “language use” (3) at an individual level. In her study *Bilingualism: The Situation in Norway*, Maria Asbjørnsen considers that “bilingualism enhances the development of many cognitive skills, including children’s attentional and executive control, cognitive flexibility and linguistic creativity” (Asbjørnsen 2013, 16) and that “bilingual children differentiate their two languages early on and share the same developmental path as their monolingual peers” (24). In fact, research has shown that children who grow up learning two languages simultaneously do not experience any confusion between the two languages or any delay in their language development. Bilingual children may have better problem-solving skills, improved memory, and greater cultural awareness. Moreover, they could switch between languages more easily and have a larger vocabulary overall.

When Norway struggled to become a nation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “it was considered important for the nation to have a pure language, and the language was seen as an expression of the people’s character, [whereas] a mixed language was seen as an identity in dissolution, but this is a delusion. There is no pure national language” (Langset 2014)<sup>4</sup>. At that time, a ‘pure’ language meant a national language that was free from foreign linguistic influences. This could support the idea of national identity and unity among Norwegians. However, there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ national language because languages change and evolve constantly through contact with other languages and through the influence of different social, historical, and cultural factors.

### Media Perspectives

In the following, we analyse current perspectives regarding the use of the English language in Norway, as rendered by different articles published in the Norwegian newspaper of significant circulation *Aftenposten* after the year 2005. This year is chosen as it marks 100 years since Norway regained its state independence. *Aftenposten* is one of the oldest newspapers in Norway being in circulation since 1860, and it is considered a reliable and respected source of information.

The newspaper covers a wide range of topics related to language, including language policies, dialects, and the use of English in Norway, and can provide valuable insights into how language issues are perceived and discussed

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<sup>4</sup> “Da var det sett på som viktig at nasjonen hadde ett rent språk, og språket ble sett på som et uttrykk for folkets karakter, et blandet språk ble sett på som en identitet i oppløsning, men det er en forestilling. Et rent nasjonalspråk finnes ikke” (Langset 2014, my translation).

in the public sphere. By analysing articles published in *Aftenposten*, we can thus gain a better understanding of how language-related issues are discussed and viewed by different stakeholders.

Although English is the first foreign language taught in Norwegian schools and Norwegians are considered, as above-mentioned, to have good knowledge of English, there is a difference between the command of the oral language and that of the standard written one. In the article entitled “The Threat Coming from Norwenglish”<sup>5</sup>, the author Bernt Hagtvet is of the opinion that “the very idea that we Norwegians think we know English is the main obstacle to getting better at the language”<sup>6</sup>. He also writes that “a little modesty towards what is correct English and willingness to accept criticism are a good start” (Hagtvet 2005)<sup>7</sup>.

A similar opinion reappears in *Aftenposten* years later, when Tia Tiller writes the article “Stuttering English Does Not Hold! English Teaching Must Be Improved”<sup>8</sup>. The author states moreover that “the most spoken language in the world is not Mandarin, but poor English”<sup>9</sup> and that “if there’s a language you should know, then that is English. And stuttering English does not hold”<sup>10</sup>. The author means that English should be a compulsory subject in the second high school year as well, since the compulsory character ceases after the first year. In high school there is not even an interest in choosing other subjects related to English such as English literature and culture. After the first high school year many students are not yet so good at English to be able to use it in a working environment. And English is chosen as a working language in many large companies with an international environment. “Therefore, your chances to get a job drop considerably if you are not good at English” (Tiller 2016)<sup>11</sup>.

According to an *Aftenposten* article from 2013, Professor Glenn Ole Hellekjær from the University of Oslo considers that “students who are good at ‘TV English’ think they do not need to learn more. When they start further

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<sup>5</sup> “Trusselen fra norwenglish“ (my translation).

<sup>6</sup> “Selve tanken at vi nordmenn tror vi kan engelsk, er det fremste hinderet for å bli bedre i språket” (Hagtvet 2005, my translation).

<sup>7</sup> “Litt ydmykhet overfor hva som er korrekt engelsk og vilje til kritikk er en god begynnelse” (Hagtvet 2005, my translation).

<sup>8</sup> “Stotrende engelsk holder ikke! Engelskundervisningen må forbedres” (my translation).

<sup>9</sup> “Det språket som snakkes mest i verden er ikke mandarin, men dårlig engelsk” (Tiller 2016, my translation).

<sup>10</sup> “Er det et språk du burde kunne, så er det engelsk. Og stotrende engelsk holder ikke” (Tiller 2016, my translation).

<sup>11</sup> “Dermed synker jobbutsiktene dine betraktelig hvis du ikke er god i engelsk” (Tiller 2016, my translation).

studies, many notice that they struggle to understand the bibliography, and this particularly affects those studying science” (Skogstrøm 2013)<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, in an article published in 2010, using English is considered “entirely natural [...] Before English got into Norwegian in the form of certain loanwords. Now it comes as idiomatic expressions and full sentences, and it rubs out parts of the old mother tongue”<sup>13</sup>. Annjo Klungervik Greenall, associate professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim states that “to a large extent, a language consists of loanwords. From that point of view, all languages are hybrid. But word borrowing used to be much slower before than it is now, when we see significant differences from year to year” (Christiansen 2010)<sup>14</sup>.

Kristin Høiland writes about English words and expressions which have become quite popular and which come automatically in the teenagers’ everyday language. Provided examples include *Best friends forever*, *Ready, Random, Love and peace*, *Oh my god* etc. (Høiland 2015). As a result of watching American films, listening to songs in English on the Internet, reading English books and newspapers or playing computer games, teenagers are no longer aware of how much influence these may have on their writing and speaking. All the languages are dynamic and subject to constant changes, and teenagers bring their contribution to this development by the language used, for instance, while talking, chatting or playing.

“Norsklish’ Takes over the Youth Language”<sup>15</sup> is the name of an article published by Kristine Grue Langset in 2014. Although widely used by teenagers all over the country, abbreviations such as *lol* (laugh out loud) and *yolo* (you only live once) appear on the list of expressions not fully understood by adults. Professor Bente Ailin Svendsen from the University of Oslo is of the opinion that “teenagers have always used their own linguistic expressions”<sup>16</sup> and that “teenagers revolt through language”<sup>17</sup> (Langset 2014). However, teachers do not seem so concerned about the use of this mixture of English and Norwegian, as they are about the correct use of Norwegian sounds such as /ç/ or /ʃ/.

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<sup>12</sup> “elever som er flinke i ‘TV-engelsk’ tror de ikke har behov for å lære mer. Når de begynner på videre studier merker mange at de sliter med å forstå pensumlitteraturen, og dette rammer spesielt realistene” (Skogstrøm 2013, my translation).

<sup>13</sup> “helt naturlig [...] Før kom engelsken inn i norsk i form av enkelte lånord. Nå kommer den like gjerne som faste uttrykk og hele setninger og visker ut deler av det gamle morsmålet” (Christiansen 2010, my translation).

<sup>14</sup> “Et språk består i stor grad av lånord. På den måten er alle språk hybrider. Men innlån av ord skjedde tidligere mye langsommere enn nå, da vi ser store forskjeller fra år til år” (Christiansen 2010, my translation).

<sup>15</sup> “«Norsklish» inntar ungdomsspråket” (my translation).

<sup>16</sup> “Ungdom har alltid brukt sine egne språklige uttrykk” (Langset 2014, my translation).

<sup>17</sup> “ungdom gjør opprør gjennom språk” (Langset 2014, my translation).

Norwegians, in general, are moreover exposed to a wide variety of language variants, given the fact that they have two official written norms (Bokmål - Book Language and Nynorsk - New Norwegian) and quite many dialects, which are used in various aspects of the public life. This linguistic diversity is seen as an advantage for language acquisition, as it exposes Norwegians to different language variants from an early age, and can make it easier for them to learn foreign languages later on.

Bokmål is the dominating written norm, being used by 85-90% of the population. Although it is in fact Norwegianized Danish, it contains loanwords from languages such as English, German, French etc. (Langset 2014). Nevertheless, both written variants, Nynorsk and Bokmål, are part of the school instruction and have been treated equally by law. According to the Language status, the 2012 Language policy status report of the Language Council, "the percentage of students using Nynorsk in schools has decreased from 34 per cent in 1944 to 14 per cent today. Many students with educational objectives in Nynorsk switch completely or partially to Bokmål later in life. In private, 8 per cent write Nynorsk, 5 per cent both Nynorsk and Bokmål" (Språkrådet 2012, 91)<sup>18</sup>. In the 2021 report there were about 550,000 Nynorsk users mentioned for the previous year (Språkrådet 2021, 10).

The 2017 Language report issued by the Language Council makes reference to the pressure exercised by the English language on Norwegian, including both Bokmål and Nynorsk.

For example, we see that Norwegian specialized terminology is minimally used in certain fields. In such subject areas, we are in danger of domain loss, and we are in danger of not being able to use Norwegian vocabulary any longer when we refer to these subjects. The lack of supply of Norwegian language standards to use in all aspects of the working and social life also leads to a weakened Norwegian specialized terminology and can have consequences such as insufficient efficiency, poorer profitability, a greater risk of errors and failing safety at the workplace<sup>19</sup> (Språkrådet 2017, 12).

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<sup>18</sup> "Frå 34 prosent i 1944 er nynorskprosenten i skulen redusert til 14 prosent i dag. Mange elevar med nynorsk opplæringsmål skiftar heilt eller delvis til bokmål seinare i livet. Privat skriv 8 prosent nynorsk, 5 prosent både nynorsk og bokmål" (Språkrådet 2012, 91, my translation).

<sup>19</sup> "Til dømes ser vi at norsk fagspråk på enkelte område er minimalt i bruk. På slike fagområde står vi i fare for at det skal skje domenetap, og at vi ikkje lenger har eit norsk ordforråd å bruke når vi kommuniserer om desse faga. Mangelen på tilfanget av norskspråklege standardar til bruk i alle delar av arbeids- og samfunnslivet fører òg til eit svekt norsk fagspråk og kan ha konsekvensar som mangelfull effektivitet, dårlegare lønsemd, større fare for feil og sviktande tryggleik på arbeidsplassen" (Språkrådet 2017, 12, my translation).

A conclusion is that “the lack of Norwegian terminology can quickly bring about full use of English” (Språkrådet 2017, 18)<sup>20</sup>. An example is provided in an *Aftenposten* article from 2019, where the readers are given the following situation: a university student who has attended lectures in English and has read bibliography for an exam in English chooses to answer an exam assignment in Norwegian. Although being well prepared for the exam, the student cannot find equivalence in Norwegian for various terms. This happens because many students find it difficult to guess the Norwegian equivalent when the bibliography and the lectures are only in English. In the given situation, here is some of what the student wrote in her paper: “«Mechanistic *strukturer* bruker individual specialization *der* organic *strukturer* har joint specialization. Managers *evne* til å *velge* det *beste alternativet* i en decision-making process *svekket* av bounded rationality, opportunistic behaviour *og* specific assets»” (Wetås 2019). Italics have been used for the words the student has written in Norwegian, so as the blending of Norwegian and English could become more obvious. Marita Kristiansen gave this example in some research done for the Language Council in 2019, which involved the language used in 250 Bachelor’s exam papers. As previously mentioned, the students under consideration had had lectures and had read bibliography in English, and at the exam they could write in either English or Norwegian. According to the article, 75% of the students wrote in Norwegian, and 33% of those who chose Norwegian, made use of quite many English specialized terms in their answers. Since the students must often find Norwegian equivalents by themselves, this could turn quite frustrating for them because many times they do not know the specialized terminology in Norwegian and do not have access to it. Norwegian terminology will also be useful when the students take up work and communicate with other Norwegian speaking people (Språkrådet 2017, 12). But unfortunately, in some fields there are hardly any written sources containing the necessary terms in the mother tongue. That is why, in general, the bibliography includes English titles and Norwegian alternatives if there are any (Brandt and Schwach 2005).

In the above-mentioned article from 2010, reference is made to several forms of the English influence on the Norwegian language: domain takeover, when bibliography and lectures are in English or when the specialized terminology is in English and not in Norwegian; code-switching, referring to loan of full phrases or sentences in English, as a consequence of following for instance certain trendsetters; loan translation, which is a direct translation of idiomatic expressions from English into Norwegian, as we may find in online newspapers (Christiansen 2010).

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<sup>20</sup> “Mangel på norsk terminologi kan fort utløyse full bruk av engelsk” (Språkrådet 2017, 18, my translation).

English as a teaching language had been more and more used first and foremost in Master's studies at Norwegian institutions preoccupied by internationalization, but its use at a Bachelor's level has started to increase over the past years. According to an article from 2009 "27 per cent of Master's students in Norway attend English-language programs [and] 85 per cent of the students in these study programs have Norwegian citizenship"<sup>21</sup>. Sylfest Lomheim, former director of the Norwegian Language Council from 2003 to 2010, stated: "I do not want to seem to oppose the use of English. [...] If there were many of these students who did research or worked internationally, it would have been a different matter. But 95 per cent work in Norway when they are done with their education. Therefore, it becomes pointless" (Dons 2009)<sup>22</sup>.

This paradox regarding the difference between the study language and the working language is also pointed out in an earlier article from 2005: "On the one hand, students and professionals need to learn an English specialized terminology. On the other hand, professionals must work with non-professionals, and they must be prepared to pass on their skills and competence to patients, students, clients and the general public."<sup>23</sup> Several reasons for the use of English instead of Norwegian in higher education are provided:

Teaching shall qualify for studies as part of an exchange program abroad, another reason can be that the teacher does not master any Scandinavian languages. A third reason is closely related to the objectives for the internationalization of the Norwegian higher education and partially for the coordination of the degree system in Europe (the Bologna process). Norway wants to attract foreign students, and today, they are rarely expected to learn Norwegian (Brandt and Schwach 2005)<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> "27 prosent av masterstudentene i Norge går på engelskspråklige programmer [...] 85 prosent av studentene på disse studieprogrammene, har norsk statsborgerskap" (Dons 2009, my translation).

<sup>22</sup> "Jeg vil ikke fremstå som motstander av bruk av engelsk. [...] Hvis det var slik at mange av disse studentene skulle forske eller jobbe internasjonalt, hadde det vært en annen sak. Men 95 prosent jobber jo i Norge når de er ferdig med utdanningen sin. Derfor blir det meningsløst" (Dons 2009, my translation).

<sup>23</sup> "På den ene siden har studenter og yrkesutøvere behov for å lære et engelsk fagspråk [...] På den andre siden skal yrkesutøvere arbeide sammen med ikke-fagpersoner, og de må gjøres i stand til å formidle sine ferdigheter og kompetanse til pasienter, elever, kunder og til almenheten" (Brandt and Schwach 2005, my translation).

<sup>24</sup> "Opplæringen skal kvalifisere til studier som del av et utvekslingsprogram i utlandet, en annen grunn kan være at underviseren behersker ingen skandinaviske språk. En tredje grunn henger nært sammen med mål for internasjonalisering av norsk høyere utdanning og delvis samordningen av gradssystemet i Europa (Bologna-prosessen). Norge ønsker å tiltrekke seg utenlandske studenter. I dag forventes det sjelden at de skal lære seg norsk" (Brandt and Schwach 2005, my translation).

The findings of the Education First's English Proficiency Index from 2022 show, among others, that men have improved their English scores to such an extent that they have surpassed women "in every region of the world and in two-thirds of the countries surveyed, although in some cases those gaps are small. English proficiency has risen significantly among all cohorts over 25 since 2015, however proficiency among the youngest cohort is declining" (Schreck Danielsson 2022).

From an early age, children in Norway, just like children in many other countries, have access to the new media and begin to use English in different online resources or by playing computer games. That is why there is a concern for the use of high quality Norwegian content in the media. The Norwegian TV and radio channel *NRK Super*, which is aimed at children, is seen as playing an important role from this point of view. As far as the use of English in advertising is concerned, one main finding of the Norwegian Language Council is that "the population is more positive about the use of English in advertising nowadays than in the past. This applies especially to the young urban population. [...] Although on the whole, Norwegian is strong in Norway, there is a tendency for English to have an increasing status and use in several areas"<sup>25</sup> (Språkrådet 2017, 13).

From an *Aftenposten* article published in 2019 we learn that the percentage of students who will mainly use the Norwegian language in the working field in Norway after graduation is about 90. This shows the important role played by universities and university colleges, which have to help the students acquire the necessary specialized terminology in Norwegian. The same idea is stressed by the Language Council. "The institutions must ensure that the Norwegian specialized terminology is developed in correlation with the subjects, and they must ensure that the Norwegian specialized terminology is used both in textbooks and in other types of written dissemination. Otherwise, we risk that more and more subjects cannot be taught in Norwegian"<sup>26</sup> (Wetås 2019).

Since Norwegian is widely used in the working and economic fields, the principle "use Norwegian when you can and English when you have to" (Språkrådet 2017, 15) should apply<sup>27</sup>. There is a clear need for terminology

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<sup>25</sup> "befolkninga er meir positiv til engelsk i reklame no enn tidlegare. Dette gjeld særleg den unge befolkninga i byane. [...] Sjølv om norsk i hovudsak står sterkt i Noreg, er det på fleire område tendensar til at engelsk har aukande status og bruk" (Språkrådet 2017, 13, my translation).

<sup>26</sup> "Institusjonene må se til at det norske fagspråket blir utviklet i takt med fagene, og de må se til at norsk fagspråk blir brukt både i lærebøker og i annen skriftlig formidling. Hvis ikke risikerer vi at stadig flere fag ikke kan formidles på norsk" (Wetås 2019, my translation).

<sup>27</sup> "norsk når du kan og engelsk når du må" (Språkrådet 2017, 15, my translation).

clarifications and for Norwegian language instruction in these fields even if English is used in various international companies.

An interesting aspect is that nowadays Norwegians also speak English with the Danes although Norwegian and Danish are historically related languages. In an *Aftenposten* article from 2019 Joacim Lund writes that “one out of three young Norwegians now speaks English with the Danes. [...] I think it’s because [...] it is hopeless for Danes to understand Norwegian when they do not even understand Danish” (Lund 2019)<sup>28</sup>.

## Conclusions

Although rather small compared to other European languages, Norwegian has two written forms and a wide variety of dialects. The general research on bilingualism and multilingualism suggests that exposure to multiple language variants can be beneficial for cognitive development. It is a fact that the Norwegians’ high English skills have been proved throughout the years in different rankings measuring English proficiency. But some argue that Norwegians need, on the contrary, to improve their English language skills. For instance, the listening skills suffered after the children’s and youth programs were increasingly dubbed. Moreover, the level of writing skills got lower given the number of abbreviations used by teenagers, which led to elementary errors in the students’ writing, and to the students’ being unaware of these deficiencies.

The influence of English on the speech of different generations in Norway reflects the changing role of English in Norwegian society. While previous generations may have regarded English primarily as a foreign language they learned in school, younger generations have grown up in a world where English is used as a *lingua franca*. From an early age, children are exposed to English due to English-language movies, music, or computer games. English is used not only consciously, but also unconsciously in oral and written situations. Quite often a mixture of Norwegian and English is preferred especially by the young people. Social media platforms allow people to connect with English speakers and access a wide range of English-language content. A ‘pure’ national language cannot exist in a globalized world. But there are still debates regarding the need for using the mother tongue to fully understand what is learnt or what is transmitted. Even if the Language Council tries to Norwegianize some of the English words, there are others that are borrowed in the original form.

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<sup>28</sup> “1 av 3 unge nordmenn snakker nå engelsk med dansker. [...] Jeg tror det skyldes [...] at det er håpløst for dansker å forstå norsk når de ikke engang forstår dansk” (Lund 2019, my translation).

While high school students may only study English for one year, some may still achieve a high level of proficiency through individual study and practice outside of school. University students who use English for academic purposes are often highly proficient in this language. They may also have studied in English-speaking countries, and their exposure to English has been more extensive than that of previous generations. As a result, their use of English is often more nuanced and refined.

English seems to gain ground in the fields of international economic life, business, oil industry, research and higher education, where there is often a lack of terminology in Norwegian, which favours the use of English. However, although Norwegian has undergone significant changes over the past years, the language is not threatened to die out. It is still the mother tongue of the majority and is still predominant in society. Moreover, the school system in Norway gives importance to the mother tongue education.

So as to research the current situation of the English language in Norway, we have used articles published in the daily newspaper *Aftenposten* after 2005. We consider that its long-standing reputation for quality and broad readership make it a useful information source for those who want to understand how Norwegian language-related issues are perceived and debated.

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