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Teachers' dialect use and the newly arrived learner in a technical VET programme in Norway

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Abstract

For new speakers of Norwegian, oral comprehension in school is significantly challenged by teachers' use of dialect in oral communication. It can be argued that this is especially pronounced in vocational education and training (VET), where oral skills are both a foundational learning tool during training, and an integral component of professional vocational competence. This study examines VET teachers' use of dialect in oral communication and its impact on newly arrived students' participation and learning. Based on a linguistic ethnographic investigation of the linguistic challenges faced by newly arrived students as they transition to mainstream VET classes, the article highlights pedagogical, linguistic, and ideological dimensions inherent in teachers' dialect use. The main finding is that teachers' use of dialect runs the risk of jeopardising students' oral comprehension, and thus their learning and inclusion in school. We conclude that dialect comprehension is largely taken for granted and that there is an underlying preconception that the default learner in Norwegian school is the learner who has a Norwegian-cultural and Norwegian-language background, including long exposure to the Norwegian dialects. It is high time that this preconception is challenged. Theoretically, the study is situated within the critical sociolinguistic tradition and draws on concepts from theory on language ideologies.

Keywords: vocational education and training, second language learning, dialects, language ideologies, newly arrived students

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Introduction

In Norway, dialects[1] are widely recognised and used in all areas of society, including schools. According to the Norwegian Education Act (2024, §15-1), both teachers and students can choose to use the oral variety of Norwegian they prefer. Even though Norwegian dialects may differ both phonologically, prosodically, morphologically, syntactically, and lexically (Røyneland & Lanza, 2023, p. 341), they are considered mutually intelligible. However, many new speakers of Norwegian[2] find them very difficult to understand (e.g., Røyneland & Jensen, 2020, p. 13). This is the case for 19-year-old Jamal, a newly arrived student[3] in a technical vocational education and training (VET) programme, who participated in a linguistic ethnographic study investigating linguistic challenges in the transition from introduction classes[4] to VET (Andreassen, 2024). He struggles to understand his teachers' oral instructions due to their use of different dialects and describes that to him, a new dialect is 'almost like a new language'.

This serves as the starting point for this article, which explores VET teachers' dialect use in oral communication and its implications for newly arrived students' participation and learning, and thereby their educational and societal inclusion at large. This aligns with the study's critical sociolinguistic framework, where language use and power structures are seen as inextricably linked (Blommaert, 2010). Within this theoretical tradition, a main research interest lies in investigating how language policies, practices and attitudes reflect over-arching language ideologies, that is, 'the understandings, beliefs, and expectations that influences all choices made by language users' (McGroarty, 2010, p. 3), and how these ideologies impact people's lives socially, politically, and economically (Heller et al., 2018, p. 1). In the context of education, this typically involves the study of language ideological influences on learning and teaching, with the aim of helping teachers develop 'pedagogical practices informed by heightened social awareness and sensitivity' (McGroarty, 2010, p. 5). Such studies are especially pertinent in educational contexts characterised by great linguistic and cultural diversity, as is the case for many VET programmes in Norway, and other Western countries today (e.g., Carlana et al., 2022; Kalcic & Ye, 2023). Situated within this critical sociolinguistic tradition, our research aims to illuminate pedagogical, linguistic, and ideological dimensions of teachers' use of dialect. More specifically, we ask the following questions: How may VET teachers' use of their respective dialects affect their oral instructions, how does the newly arrived student experience this, and what linguistic ideological underpinnings seem to influence teachers' use of dialect?

The use of dialects by teachers poses a significant challenge for new speakers of Norwegian in all areas of education but it can be argued that its impact is especially pronounced in VET, where oral skills play a particularly important role (Oliver et al., 2012). Oral skills are both a means and an end to learning in

VET. It is a fundamental learning tool during training (Hultqvist & Hollertz, 2021; Wildeman et al., 2023), and it is a crucial part of the professional vocational competence (Bergsli, 2022, p. 88; Eliasson & Rehn, 2017, p. 52; Filliettaz, 2022). VET also places particularly high demands on students' real-time oral comprehension (van Batenburg et al., 2020). For instance – a student in restaurant and food studies must quickly respond to verbal cues from the teacher in a busy kitchen, while a student in health care transferring a patient from a wheelchair to a bed needs to be able to understand oral instructions given there and then – in the moment, without written support. Additionally, in the initial school-based training in VET, many students lack practical and theoretical experience with the profession for which they are training. This absence of experience renders vocationally oriented language comprehension an abstract and challenging endeavor (Andreassen, 2024), posing difficulties for both new and experienced speakers of the target language.

By focusing on language demands and challenges in VET, this article sheds light on a substantial challenge in upper secondary education[5]: late-arriving adolescent immigrants predominantly pursue vocational education, both in Norway and in other Western countries (Carlana et al., 2022, p. 2; Jørgensen et al., 2021; Kalcic & Ye, 2023). This is often justified by the fact that it seemingly is an education that makes less demands on literacy and language skills than other educational pathways (Herrera et al., 2022, p. 23; Loeb et al., 2016, p. 2; Paul, 2023, p. 158). Yet newly arrived adolescent students' completion rates in VET are lower than others' (Fjæstad, 2024; Jeon, 2019; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2017), with many attributing their struggles to language-related challenges (e.g., Blixen & Hellne-Halvorsen, 2022, p. 333; Ibrahim, 2022; Jørgensen et al., 2021). In order to better facilitate educational success for newly arrived students, it is therefore crucial to thoroughly explore and understand the consequences of current language and teaching practices in VET. Nonetheless, research in this area remains limited (Filliettaz, 2022, p. 103; Paul, 2023, p. 158), and the present article thus addresses an important gap in research concerning the educational provision of newly arrived adolescent students.

Dialects in Norwegian school and society

Norway is a peculiar society linguistically speaking. In addition to having two official written standards: Bokmål and Nynorsk, there is no officially recognised oral standard and a plethora of dialects are used in all areas of society (e.g., Røyneland & Lanza, 2023, p. 337). As described in the introduction, this also includes school. The Education Act §15-1 (2024) establishes that both students and teachers can choose to use the oral variety of Norwegian that they prefer. However, the teaching staff and the school leaders are encouraged to take into

account the spoken forms used by the students in their choice of words and mode of expression.

This widespread recognition of dialects is tied to democratic and egalitarian principles; it is intended to lay the ground for a society where people have the same possibilities and rights to participate in all domains of society, regardless of geographic, sociocultural, and thus, dialectal background (Røyneland & Lanza, 2023, p. 339). Originally, the right to choose to use one's preferred dialect in school served a dual purpose. Firstly, it was a measure to prevent teachers from speaking Danish, a remnant from when Norway was under Danish rule, and later, from speaking what was considered an elite language at the time – spoken Bokmål, as these varieties were unfamiliar to most of the pupils. Secondly, it sought to promote the Norwegian regional dialects, and to prevent that pupils were discriminated against due to their dialect (Høyland, 2021; Jahr, 2013). The promotion of Norwegian dialects has been largely successful. Unlike in many other countries, dialects have enjoyed a high status in Norway, especially since the 1960s and 1970s (Fondevik & Osdal, 2018, p. 374; Otnes & Aamotsbakken, 2017, p. 235).

Although there is no official oral standard in Norwegian, the dialect spoken in southeastern Norway, often referred to as 'spoken Bokmål' or 'Standard Eastern Norwegian', is considered an unofficial standard (Mæhlum, 2009). This variety is commonly employed by teachers of Norwegian as an additional language[6] (henceforth, NAL) as a pedagogical strategy (Røyneland & Jensen, 2020, p. 7), serving to bridge the gap between written and spoken language, given its proximity to the written standard Bokmål (Husby, 2009, p. 16; Reppen, 2011). Several studies have pointed out that not learning the regional dialect in school creates substantial difficulties for new speakers of Norwegian, as it creates a discrepancy between the spoken language in and outside the NAL classroom (e.g., Rambøll, 2011, p. 35; Reppen, 2011). When the students interact with people outside the classroom, they struggle to understand the dialect diversity they meet (e.g., Holmefjord, 2013; Kristoffersen, 2023; Røyneland & Jensen, 2020; van Ommeren, 2011). Understanding dialects is also a challenge for new speakers with a high level of Norwegian proficiency. Strzyż (2013) investigated dialect comprehension among ten Polish immigrants who had lived in Norway from three to nine years and had a high level of proficiency in Norwegian. All research participants understood more spoken Bokmål than other frequently spoken dialects, they had little knowledge about dialectal words and also struggled to recognise words they knew when these were spoken with a dialectal pronunciation (Strzyż, 2013, p. 99).

Many first language speakers do not seem to share the view of Norwegian dialects as a challenging feature of the Norwegian language, but rather consider the dialects to be mutually intelligible (Nesse & Høyland, 2023, p. 261). However,

this perception may not solely be rooted in linguistic factors (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998, p. 4), given the substantial linguistic differences among Norwegian dialects. It is most likely also related to the widespread use of, and respect for, dialects in Norway, which fosters a high degree of linguistic receptive elasticity (Haugen, 1981) within the Norwegian language community. Receptive elasticity refers to the community's ability and willingness to understand diverse dialects. Hårstad (2021, p. 35) points out that high receptive elasticity translates to lower productive elasticity among Norwegian language users – they expect to be understood without accommodating to the interlocutor. Several studies confirm this impression and find that Norwegians are reluctant to adapt their dialects and sometimes even prefer switching to English rather than to spoken Bokmål (Holmefjord, 2013, p. 56; Husby, 2009).

Research findings like this have led to discussions about dialect use both in and outside school. Røyneland and Lanza (2023) pose the question of whether Norwegians should 'stop using dialects in order to accommodate the increasing immigrant population?', or if new speakers 'should be expected to learn to understand Norwegian with all its diversity' (Røyneland & Lanza, 2023, p. 337). Their ideal solution is the latter; new speakers should be exposed to a greater overview of dialectal variation in Norway. However, they think it is more realistic to promote dialect diversity while all the same embracing the use of English in cases where it can contribute to better communication. Heide (2017, p. 24) reaches a similar conclusion: newcomers should learn more about the local dialect and linguistic variation generally, as this, according to him, will lead to better communication and integration into the host society. Husby (2009, p. 34), on his side, proposes two alternatives – either a continuation of today's situation: the new speaker should be able to understand several Norwegian dialects whereas the first language speaker communicates in his preferred local dialect, or: the new speaker may continue to use his spoken Bokmål and the first language speaker develops a higher competence in employing spoken Bokmål in communication with new speakers. He suggests such competence could be developed in school while at the same time admitting that this is unrealistic, and that today's situation will probably persist (Husby, 2009, p. 34).

Several studies thus discuss what NAL learning should entail with regards to dialects, but few examine the actual characteristics of classroom practices. An important contribution in this regard is Høyland (2021) who investigates three teachers' language use in the NAL classroom. She finds that the teachers vary a lot both intra- and inter-individually on the axis between dialect and written-like speech and explains this, amongst other things, by the fact that they are language teachers and language users simultaneously:

> Put simply, as language teachers, they use variants for pragmatic and didactic reasons, while as language users, they are left to language ideological currents,

> where the strong ideological appreciation of dialect use that prevails in Norway is especially influential. (Høyland, 2021, p. 394)

The same tendencies can be seen in Tollaksvik's and Hoff-Blyseth's studies on NAL teachers' use of dialect. Tollaksvik (2021, p. 93) saw that when teachers in her study had informal conversations with their students, they adapted their dialects to a lesser extent than during knowledge dissemination. Hoff-Blyseth (2024) similarly found that the teacher in her study consciously switched between spoken Bokmål in instructional talk and dialect in conversational talk. Hence, the teachers were aware that some of the meaning in their communication was in danger of being lost if they spoke in dialect and therefore chose spoken Bokmål to communicate subject content but switched to dialect when engaging in informal conversations about non-academic matters. The teachers thus considered spoken Bokmål a simplification of their oral language that better ensured academic understanding. From this perspective, the teachers' use of spoken Bokmål can be regarded as a form of *foreigner talk*, a 'simplified speech which is used by native speakers when talking to foreigners' (Rosa & Arguelles, 2016, p. 46).

The existing literature sheds light on the challenges that teachers' dialect use poses to NAL learners. It also shows that many NAL teachers, teaching in classes specifically designed for NAL learners, adapt their dialect when communicating subject content. However, we lack knowledge on what awaits the newly arrived learners after they transition to the mainstream school system. Høyland (2021) maintains that 'there is a lack of recent studies of the effect of teachers' spoken language practices on second language learners' language learning' (p. 402). To the best of our knowledge, this also applies to their subject learning. As such, our investigation into teacher practices related to dialect use in mainstream classrooms and their consequences for newly arrived students provides an important supplement to the existing body of research.

Language ideologies

Language ideologies refer to taken-for-granted beliefs about language, language use, and language users. They are 'the abstract (and often implicit) belief systems related to language and linguistic behavior that affect speakers' choices and interpretations of communicative interaction' (McGroarty, 2010, p. 3). As such, they influence what is considered 'normal', 'appropriate', 'correct', 'expected', and 'good' language use in a given sociocultural context. Language ideologies are reproduced through language policies and practices in all domains, but institutions such as schools play a particularly central role in their perpetuation and reinforcement (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 652): When certain linguistic practices and

beliefs are taken up by the education system, they tend to become naturalised, i.e., the natural and neutral way of thinking and acting (Fairclough, 2012).

Studies of language ideologies have become more prevalent in recent decades, in line with globalisation and increasing migration and linguistic and cultural diversity (Blommart, 2011; Woolard, 2016). This is timely, not least in the context of education, because language contact in school involves language ideological tensions and contestation, where both old and new forms of language practices 'can reflect and convey ideologies with the potential to inspire or alienate learners and teachers' (McGroarty, 2010, p. 30). Several studies of language ideology in the context of language diversity in school, concern *native-speakerism* (Holliday, 2015; Ortega, 2019). Originally used to describe the tendency to value native speakers of English as the most suitable English teachers, this concept is now also used to describe the underlying view of the native speaker – who is 'born into' a language, has grown up in the target language community and has had the target language as a language of instruction – as the ideal speaker, and native-like competence as the goal of additional language learning (Ortega, 2019, p. 28). In the Norwegian context, van Ommeren and Kjelaas (forthcoming) argue that 'Norwegian-centricity' – extensive experience with Norwegian language and culture, including the wide variety of regional dialects, as well as familiarity with Swedish, Danish, and English (see also Andersen, 2024) – is also part of the native-speaker ideology. They claim that such experiences are assumed in the Norwegian education system, and that this is discriminatory and exclusionary towards students from other backgrounds.

Dialects are frequently subject to language ideological investigations. Many studies highlight the tensions between a standard and other varieties (Pennycook, 2010), most commonly focusing on how the 'existence of a national or regional standard language advantages some speakers who share it and simultaneously disadvantages those who do not' (McGroarty, 2010, p. 9). However, in the context of education, most of these studies investigate how *teachers* and the school convey a standard and purist ideology, whereas the *students*' use of dialect/non-standard is sanctioned. This has led researchers to urge teachers to embrace and value nonstandard or minority language practices in the classroom (Jaspers, 2022, p. 282). The lack of an official oral standard and the prestige associated with Norwegian dialects makes our research context unique – rather than examining how familiarity with a national oral standard provides certain advantages, we examine how lack of oral perception of regional dialects creates obstacles for newly arrived students.

One strand of research on language ideologies and dialects in modern Western societies draws on the notions of *authenticity vs. anonymity* to describe what grants linguistic authority (Røyneland & Jensen, 2020). While the use of dialects is typically linked to an ideology of authenticity, the use of a standard is generally

associated with an ideology of anonymity (Woolard, 2016). The ideology of authenticity suggests that a language variety reflects the very nature of a community or a speaker, whereas the ideology of anonymity regards language as a neutral tool of communication, equally accessible to everyone (Woolard, 2016, p. 7). In the Norwegian context, Røyneland and Lanza (2023, p. 348) suggest that a reason why Norwegians seem unwilling to adapt their dialect to new speakers of Norwegian may be due to such an ideology of authenticity, where 'one's dialect is considered the very iconic representation of the essence of who the individual is' – someone who belongs to a certain place and a certain group. Shifting to another dialect can thus be experienced as *in*authentic and as a betrayal of one's own identity and of the geographical place and social group to which one belongs.

Language ideologies can be investigated using different methods and materials. The most common approaches are either to look at metalinguistic discourse (Jaffe, 2009, p. 17), that is, language about language, or to examine people's actual language use (Woolard, 2016). In this article, we mainly focus on the latter: We examine teachers' language use in an instructional video and in a classroom episode. These examples illustrate what can be roughly described as transactional and ideological language use, respectively. Transactional language seemingly serves as 'unproblematic message delivery', while ideological language has more explicit 'ideological/attitudinal outcomes beyond the message content' (Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 161). Although the latter is the most explicitly ideological, both forms of language use reflect language ideologies. Following Woolard (2016, p. 7), language ideologies can be implicit or explicit – unspoken assumptions that underpin social behaviour and interpretations of acts and events, or more overt expressions of attitudes towards language use.

When examining the ideological underpinnings of teachers' dialect use, we use the interrelated concepts of stance (Jaffe, 2015), styling (Rampton, 2001), and crossing (Rampton, 1995; Rampton et al., 2019). *Stance* refers to the speaker's positioning vis-à-vis their utterances. It captures both the semiotic processes at work in interaction; which semiotic resources and strategies the speaker deploys, and their sociolinguistic significance; what attitudinal or ideological meaning they convey (Jaffe, 2015, p. 162). As such, it provides guidance to interlocutors regarding the type of relationship the speaker wants to establish pertaining to the form and content of their speech (Jaffe, 2007, p. 56). Stance is particularly salient in interactions involving *styling*, that is, 'the intensification or exaggeration of a particular way of speaking for symbolic and rhetorical effect' (Rampton, 2001, p. 85). Stylisation reflects the connection between the social and the personal and can be described as 'how people use sociolinguistic variation in identity projections' (Jaffe, 2009, p. 14) to position themselves. Styling is closely related to *crossing*, a reflexive act of communication wherein an individual performs a

distinctly marked speech in a language, dialect, or style that can be interpreted as portraying 'the other' (Rampton, 1995, pp. 151–153). According to Rampton et al. (2019), both styling and crossing are 'clearly nonhabitual speech' (p. 630) but crossing involves a more explicit transgression of social and ethnic boundaries, and thus raises questions of *legitimacy*, of whether the speakers perceive themselves or is perceived as legitimate users of the given language or variety.

Methodology

This study aligns with a linguistic ethnographic (henceforth *LE*) methodological framework, an interdisciplinary approach to studying language and social phenomena. The fundamental premise of LE is that language and linguistic relations must be investigated in context, as they unfold in concrete situations, and interpreted in light of the socio-cultural circumstances of which they are a part (Lefstein & Snell, 2017, p. 4). In order to achieve this, both linguistic and ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis are combined. Researchers collect and analyse linguistic data, such as conversations and texts, and ethnographic data, such as observations, informal conversations, documents, and formalised interviews. In other words, LE is not a unified research paradigm or a cohesive school, but rather 'a site of encounter' (Rampton, 2007, p. 585), where different research traditions come together (Lefstein & Snell, 2011, p. 45). This represents a significant advantage of the method, as discussed by Daugaard (2016), who posits that the strength of linguistic ethnographic analysis emerges in the interplay of diverse empirical material allowing them to reinforce, enrich, and challenge one another (p. 9).

The data material in this article draws from a larger research project investigating linguistic challenges in the transition from introduction classes to VET. It was conducted in two phases, beginning with 10 weeks of fieldwork in an introduction class in the spring and continuing the ensuing fall by following two students from the introduction class for 10 weeks as they each started in their own class at two different upper secondary schools in different vocational programmes. The focal participant of this article, 19-year-old Jamal, was a student in one of these VET classes. The fieldwork was conducted by the first author, Andreassen, who spent 2–3 days a week as a participant observer during the fieldwork period. The data material is outlined in the table below. In this article, we use fieldnotes from observations in one VET class, a transcribed excerpt from a teacher-produced instructional video, and a semi-structured in-depth interview with Jamal.

Table 1. Overview of data material.

Data material	**Research participants**	
Fieldnotes	Students, teachers and other school personnel in the introduction class and in the two VET-classes	
Interviews	Introduction class, spring: - 9 individual student interviews - 1 individual teacher interview - 1 group interview with teachers - 1 interview with student counsellor	Two VET classes, fall: - 9 individual student interviews - 3 individual teacher interviews - 3 group interviews with teachers - 1 interview with a department manager
Photographs	Classroom situations and physical environment	
Instructional videos	Teacher	

After obtaining permission to conduct observations in Jamal's class, the researcher approached Jamal to participate as a focal participant. All research participants, including Jamal, were informed about the aim of the project, what their participation would entail, and the publications that would result, and signed a consent form. Following Perry (2019, p. 166), we understand consent as 'an ongoing, iterative process,' rather than a one-time event concluded with the signing of a consent form. Continual checks throughout the fieldwork period whether the research participants were comfortable with all aspects of the project were ensured. This approach, referred to as *process responsiveness* by Lahman et al. (2015, p. 451), is particularly valuable in a research ethical perspective when engaging with research participants like ours, who have a different linguistic and cultural background than us as researchers, as it facilitates a continuously shared understanding.

During observations, the researcher often had a role similar to that of a teacher assistant – sitting at the back of the classroom during teaching, jotting down fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 29), while walking around and observing, talking to student and teachers when students were doing individual or group work. Fieldnotes were expanded upon shortly after to fill in details and elaborate on diverse situations (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 48). The interviews were semi-structured, aligning with principles of LE, which advocate for an open and flexible research approach (Copland & Creese, 2015). Interviews with students covered aspects such as for instance their linguistic repertoire, their educational background in the home or transit country and their experiences with learning

the Norwegian language. All interviews were conducted in Norwegian. When interviewing students, Andreassen adjusted her dialect to align more closely with spoken Bokmål, to enhance students' understanding.

In line with critical sociolinguistic research methods we approach the topic attempting to provide both a *descriptive analysis* – that is, a description of how things are, *explanatory interpretations* – explanations of why things might be the way they are, and a *critical discussion* of the consequences (Kjelaas, 2023, p. 51). Adhering to LE principles, our analysis is data-driven, while at the same time informed by the critical sociolinguistic framework. It has thus been an abductive process in which data and theory have worked together to guide the analysis (Tjora, 2018).

We first describe the issue of teachers' use of dialect through an ethnographic account of a Friday morning in Jamal's school workshop, followed by Jamal's reflections. This section illustrates both the extent, and the pedagogical implications of unmarked and unconscious dialect use in teachers' oral instructions. Next, we highlight the challenges associated with dialects by analysing a segment from an instructional video that captures the linguistic dimensions of dialect use. We then interpret a classroom episode, that serves to identify both pedagogical and ideological aspects of teachers' dialect use. In conclusion, we critically discuss implications for policy and practice.

Analysis

Dialects as neutral tools of communication in school or as 'new languages' for NAL learners?

It is Friday morning and the students in a technical VET programme in an upper secondary school in Norway have gathered in the school's workshop. The workshop gives the impression of an authentic car mechanics garage with machinery that students will learn how to operate, digitally and manually, in order to perform various technical tasks. After a short introduction by the teacher, Glenn, the workshop is soon buzzing with activity while Glenn walks around giving instructions uttered in his distinct variety of the regional dialect, Trøndersk, making sure all students get started with a project. Should students need help understanding how to use a machine, they don't have to wait for Glenn's help – they can access online instructional videos via QR codes on the various machines, created by one of the school's teachers, who, like Glenn, gives instructions in his own dialect variety.

One group of boys is eagerly trying to figure out the problem with a car they got in today while at the other side of the room two girls are busy perfectioning their painting

skills on a motorcycle frame. One of the newly arrived students in the class has put on a welding helmet, protective gloves and a welding apron and steps into a cubicle, closes the curtain behind him and gets ready to weld. After some time, the teacher stops by and instructs him on how he can weld to make the material more even. At the end of the day, the student shows me a candlestick he has made. He also shows me a burn mark he got on one hand that stemmed from the first time he used the welding machine – he had only partially understood the teacher's instructions on HSE (health, safety, andenvironment) regarding the use of a special kind of protective gloves and a spark from the torch went straight through his regular winter gloves.

Figure 1. Teacher instructing student in the school's workshop.

Jamal, on his side, is working on a project all students must accomplish – an exercise in turning, which requires handling a lathe – a machining tool that can, amongst other things, create cylindrical objects out of different kinds of materials. He shows me the work drawing that should guide the project, which is a technical drawing accompanied by numbers, mathematical signs, symbols, a table, and text – some in Norwegian and some in English (Figure 2). When Jamal is about to start the actual process of turning the cylinder, he gets help with adjusting the lathe from a more experienced student doing his apprenticeship in the school's workshop. Both Jamal and the student helping him are new speakers of Norwegian and communicate in spoken Bokmål.

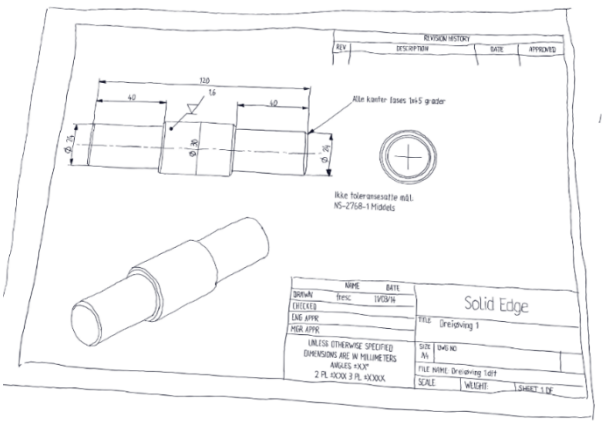

Figure 2. Workdrawing.

The description of the workshop session above makes evident that while the workshop environment fosters hands-on learning, students' learning depends heavily on teachers' oral communication, both in person and through instructional videos. Understanding the teachers' oral instructions, messages,

explanations, corrections etc. requires a range of linguistic competences, such as familiarity with technical disciplinary vocabulary (see also, e.g., Filliettaz, 2022; Oliver et al., 2012), digital literacy to understand instructions related to data software controlling the machines (see also, e.g., Cedefop, 2020), and listening skills in Norwegian and English – as both technical and digital vocabulary entails extensive use of English words (Andersen, 2024). An important and often neglected layer of complexity to these linguistic competences is brought about by teachers' dialect use, which influences all aspects of their oral instructions and guidance.

The teacher, Glenn, speaks in his dialect both when giving instructions to the whole class, and in communication with students one-on-one, and thus seems to consider his use of Trøndersk as unmarked, a way of speaking which (supposedly) includes everyone in the class. Students' understanding of his dialectal speech is taken as a matter of course and beyond question. However, Jamal, during an interview explains that after five years in the region, he still struggles with Trøndersk and that he only understands it 'a bit':

> Maybe now, trøndersk, like if someone speaks [it], we, we understand a bit, Trøndersk. But other dialects, I [laughs], probably the first time I will not understand anything.

To him, dialects is challenging to comprehend, to the extent that he likens it to understanding a new language:

> I think that when you learn a dialect, [it's] almost like… not entirely… but almost like a new language. […] There are some dialects – big difference between Bokmål and dialect. In a way you feel it's a different language.

What is neutral and universally available to Glenn, then, is neither neutral nor available to Jamal. Indeed, Glenn's use of Trøndersk unintentionally results in excluding Jamal linguistically and, as a consequence, socially and professionally. As such, it can be argued that Glenn's use of dialect in certain respects reflects an ideology of anonymity (Woolard, 2016): The dialects are naturalised and have achieved a status as self-evident in schools, that is, as anonymous tools of communication.

Glenn's matter-of-fact dialect use can be seen in the context of teachers acting as language *users*, rather than language *teachers*. Following Høyland (2021), as language users, teachers are more influenced by language ideological currents, while in their role as language teachers they tend to use language more in accordance with didactic principles. We can thus assume that VET-teachers', who, according to several studies, are less inclined to perceive themselves as teachers of language compared to their counterpart in general education (Christensen et al., 2018; Hellne-Halvorsen, 2019; Paul, 2023; Wildeman et al., 2023), are likely to first and foremost act as typical Norwegian dialect users. Paul

(2023, p. 174) suggests that several factors contribute to VET teachers' reluctance to view themselves as teachers of language: 'the 'invisibility' of language and literacies as features of vocational knowing', minimal emphasis placed on language and literacy within VET teacher education, and insufficient support and guidance provided for language teaching in VET by additional language teachers and school leaders.

When several layers of linguistic complexity intersect

To illustrate the dialect-related difficulties Jamal may encounter in teachers' oral instructions, we will in the following analyse a transcribed excerpt from an instructional video that students could access using a QR-code on the workshop's sheet metal bending machine. In this particular video, the teacher is instructing students on setting up the sheet metal bending machine using software on a connected computer. The video shows footage of the computer screen where the teacher is in the process of plotting various parameters, while at the same time we see the teacher in the bottom right corner giving instructions. In the following phonological transcription of an extract from the video, words characterised by dialectal speech are in bold:

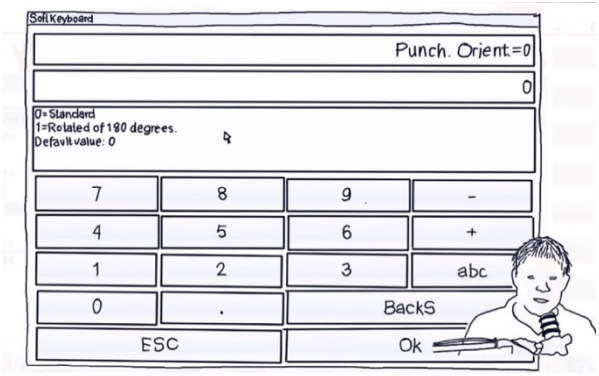

Figure 3. Screenshot from instructional video.

/tryk po ˈ**insøːʈ** (.) hæɾ **kɑɲ** vi **vælg** dɑ um ˈopniŋen stoːɾ muːt os **ɑʌso deɲ** kʉrvɑ deːlɳ av (.) pøŋʃɳ **lig** muːt os **deɲ** som **lig** muːt **ɑnlægɛ** bɑːk (.) **nu** stoɳ ˈ**munˌteʈ** me **ɑnlægɛ** bɑːk so vi **vælgɛ** eːn (.) ˈ**ruteʈ** ˈbaseˌɾiŋ/[7]

Translation of the transcription into English:

Press insert. Here we can choose whether the opening is facing us, that is, the curved part of the punch is facing us, the one that faces the installation on the backside. Now it's installed with the system behind, so we choose one, rotated base.

As the transcript indicates, more than a quarter of the teacher's spoken words exhibit linguistic features unique to Trøndersk dialectal speech, diverging from the spoken Bokmål commonly taught to Jamal and other immigrants in introduction classes (Husby, 2009) and which is, as mentioned, unofficially seen as the oral standard of the Norwegian language (Mæhlum, 2009). For instance, the teacher consistently palatalises long alveolars and alveolar clusters, as evidenced by /kɑɲ/ compared to spoken Bokmål /kan/ 'can', /ɑʌso/ vs. /ɑltso/ 'so, thus', and /deɲ/ vs. /den/ 'the'. Additionally, he tends to lower short

vowels, such as /vælg/ compared to /velgə/ 'choose' and /ɑnlægɛ/ vs. /ɑnlegɛ/ 'the installation', a feature commonly found in many eastern and northern dialects, and hardly ever in spoken Bokmål (Mæhlum & Røyneland, 2023, p. 56). Another non-standard feature is the placement of primary stress on the first syllable in polysyllabic loanwords, as seen in /ˈmunˌteʈ/ 'installed' and /ˈɾuteʈ/ 'rotated', while spoken Bokmål usually places stress on the ultimate or penultimate syllable, as in /munˈteːʈ/ and /ruˈteːʈ/ (Mæhlum & Røyneland, 2023, p. 48). Additionally, we observe instances of apocope, such as the loss of the final unstressed vowel (/vælg/ vs. /velgə/), the loss of final [ɾ] in weak present tense (/vælgɛ/ vs. /velger/ 'chooses'), and monosyllabic strong present tense (/lig/ vs. /ligəɾ/ 'lies') (Skjekkeland, 1997, p. 173).

Another complicating factor is that the teacher occasionally uses the English word displayed on the screen, while at other times he translates it, without framing it as a translation. While the teacher talks about /ˈruteʈ ˈbaseˌɾiŋ/ (from transcription) – the corresponding visual representation is *rotated of 180 degrees*, as seen in the illustration to the right. The lack of correspondence between the teacher's oral mediation and the visual representation on the screen requires students to rely heavily on their oral comprehension, which requires being familiar and comfortable with the teacher's use of dialect. The teachers' dialectal pronunciation is also present when he uses English words. For instance, when the teacher uses the word 'insert' – it undergoes a dialectal alteration with primary stress on the first syllable. The English word is thus given a Trøndersk pronunciation – which makes it even more difficult for students to understand that they are, in fact, dealing with an English word amid this explanation.

Although the teacher's instructions contain no lexical dialect features, they are strongly influenced by his use of dialect at the phonological level, placing high demands on the oral perception of newly arrived students like Jamal. As we can observe from the excerpt, several layers of linguistic complexity intersect: First, Norwegian is an additional language to Jamal. Second, English, which is used in code-switching with Norwegian, is an almost entirely additional new language to him. Thirdly, technical VET is a linguistic field characterised by a distinct disciplinary literacy and oracy that is completely new to Jamal. In addition, as shown above – the teacher's dialect influences all these components. In an interview, Jamal points out that understanding dialects is not something he can achieve on his own, because:

> [If] I don't understand a word and write it in google, or, ehm, translate it, then I will not find the translation for that word, therefore [spoken] Bokmål is very important.

Jamal is thus dependent on the help of a first language speaker of Norwegian to understand the teacher's dialectal speech – in that way, teachers' unconscious use of dialects can be seen as reflecting *nativespeakerism* (Holliday, 2015) – the

education they provide presupposes not only Norwegian language skills, but the linguistic receptive elasticity typically associated with growing up in a Norwegian-speaking home in Norway. It is adapted to learners who have not only mastered one variety of Norwegian, but who have been exposed to a wide variety of dialects during their childhood and schooling, what van Ommeren and Kjelaas (forthcoming) have coined as Norwegian-centricity.

Standardising dialect as an act of stance-taking

One day in the classroom, Jamal's teacher, Glenn, finds himself frustrated by the students' lack of participation during a whole-class discussion he is attempting to facilitate. He asks about how a car is lifted in the workshop and no one raises their hand to respond. He then turns to Jamal and asks the question directly to him. Jamal does not answer – his body language indicates that he has not understood the question. Glenn then repeats the question in spoken Bokmål, slightly raising his volume and slowing his speech, compared to the first time he asked the question. His facial expression and mannerisms take on, what we interpret as a caricatured and performative quality, suggesting an exaggerated attempt at clarity. Jamal now immediately understands the question and provides the correct answer.

In the episode described above, Glenn first speaks in his variant of the regional dialect when asking a question, but then switches to spoken Bokmål as a form of *foreigner talk*, in a quite performative manner, to be understood by Jamal. Employing various paralinguistic resources (Jaffe, 2007, p. 56) such as intonation, volume, speed of speech, and facial expression, Glenn's way of speaking not only serves to improve Jamal's understanding, but also to convey stance with regards to the shift to spoken Bokmål. His performance can be construed as a form of stylisation – 'a reflexive communicative action in which speakers produce specially marked and often exaggerated representations of linguistic varieties that lie outside their habitual repertoire' (Rampton, 2013, p. 361).

Glenn's performance yields two distinct effects: the first, and most obvious, is that Jamal understands what Glenn says and responds aptly to the question. This demonstrates a clear didactic and transactional effect, where the intended message is effectively conveyed, unlike when Glenn spoke in Trøndersk. At the same time, Glenn's performative speech explicitly conveys stance, giving it a clear ideological effect. He communicates that this way of speaking is marked and unnatural to him, compelling him to step beyond his linguistic comfort-zone, so to speak, and into discomfort. As such, he exhibits low linguistic productive elasticity (Hårstad, 2021).

The ideological effect is dual: firstly, his stylisation positions him in relation to spoken Bokmål – it is not his preferred linguistic variety, it is not his language – it is not *him*, and he seems to feel alienated using it. Concurrently, Glenn positions

Jamal as someone in need of adapted language to understand. This dynamic can be understood as a form of *linguistic othering*, where Jamal is positioned as the linguistically inferior other. Essentially, Glenn's attempt to overcome his own discomfort may have inadvertently led to the othering of Jamal. It is worth noticing that Jamal didn't seem to grasp the caricatured nature of Glenn's speech, as such comprehension requires relatively advanced linguistic and socio-linguistic competence. However, for his classmates, who predominantly have Norwegian as their first language, this was probably readily apparent, something which is problematic, irrespective of Glenn's intentions and Jamal's (lack of) perception and reaction to it.

Glenn's linguistic conduct reflects an ideology of linguistic authenticity: When compelled to depart from his dialect, he seems to perceive it as a departure from his authentic self. This discomfort with deviating from his own dialect resonates with findings in other research on dialect use in Norway, which shows that some language users prefer to switch to English, rather than to a more standardised spoken language (e.g., Husby, 2009; Røyneland & Lanza, 2023). Within this ideological framework, one considers there to be a 'naturalising relationship between the linguistic form and the speaking self' (Woolard, 2016, p. 22) – the linguistic form is a representation of the essence of the person. As such, changing his dialect might be perceived as problematic to Glenn's identity project and unmarked use of a dialect that is not 'his own' would make him appear as inauthentic, as a fake. It is likely that Glenn does not consider himself a legitimate user of spoken Bokmål, neither in terms of geographical nor social belonging. In this frame of thought, transitioning to spoken Bokmål becomes an act of *crossing*, as he makes use of 'a language or variety that, in one way or another, feels anomalously other' (Rampton, 1999, p. 54).

Discussion

In our analysis, we have highlighted the pedagogical, linguistic, and ideological dimensions of teachers' dialect use in a technical VET programme. We have seen how an everyday situation in the school's workshop involves high and complex linguistic demands, where the teachers' use of the regional dialect constitutes a significant challenge for new speakers of Norwegian. Furthermore, we have seen how the case student Jamal experiences the teachers' dialect use as 'a new language' that he struggles to understand. We then looked at what characterises the use of dialect in an instructional video, and how the teacher Glenn's shift from his dialect Trøndersk to the standard spoken Bokmål appeared performative and stylised. In summary, we argue that the teachers' dialect use in VET is an obstacle to Jamal's participation and learning, and potentially acts as a source of stigma and othering. In the ensuing discussion, we discuss what implications these

findings should have regarding both policy and practice for newly arrived students in VET, as well as in other educational contexts.

The recognition of dialects in Norwegian schools is based on egalitarian and democratic principles and is intended to prevent discrimination on geographical, socio-economical, and linguistic grounds (Jahr, 2013). In other words, the goal is inclusion and recognition. Paradoxically, as we have seen – this recognition of certain language varieties and users can have an exclusionary effect on others, namely new speakers of Norwegian. Put differently, the linguistic inclusion of some leads to the linguistic exclusion of others. This illustrates how globalisation and increased linguistic diversity in school and society can engender new sociolinguistic tensions and dilemmas (Blommaert, 2010), wherein consideration for one marginalised language group often comes at the expense of another. In education, this might involve language ideological contestation, where both old and new forms of language practices 'can reflect and convey ideologies with the potential to inspire or alienate learners and teachers' (McGroarty, 2010, p. 30).

In our study, both the student, Jamal, and the teacher, Glenn, seem to feel alienated due to the language practices they take part in in VET and a conflict arises between Glenn's right to use his dialect, and his obligation to strive for students' comprehension. The Education Act (2024, §15-1) highlights student-centeredness in stating that teachers and school management should, as far as possible, take the pupils' spoken language into account in their choice of words and expressions, and it is clear that the consideration of Jamal's participation and learning must supersede Glenn's preference to use his dialect in this context. However, in our case, §15-1 does not translate to linguistic accommodation in practice. This raises the question of whether there should be clearer guidelines for schools regarding the language/variety of instruction for newly arrived students. Today, the mainstream system does not recognise that dialects are challenging to newcomers neither in specific guidelines nor at curriculum level. This contrasts with adult education, catering mainly immigrants, where dialect comprehension is duly taken into account. In this context, teachers traditionally have been advised to standardise their speech and avoid special dialect words and expressions in their teaching (Husby, 2009, p. 31).

Also, in the curriculum used in Norwegian courses for newcomers in this educational context, dialect comprehension is recognised as challenging. Even at the 'high intermediate' level B2, which is the requirement for entry to higher education in Norway, students' oral comprehension is described as being dependent on the interlocutor adapting their dialect to the new speaker's needs (Norwegian Directorate of Higher Education and Skills, 2021). When such adaptations are not possible, as is the case with auditory and audiovisual material, it is only expected that students understand 'most of the content' and only when it is 'in a familiar dialect.' In other words, there is an explicit curricular

recognition that dialect comprehension is demanding. Mainstream school, however, overlooks this aspect, even in curricula specifically aimed at newly arrived learners (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). Thus, an implication of our study and previous research (e.g., Huseby, 2009; Strzyż, 2013), would be to recognise and include dialect comprehension in guidelines and curricula for newly arrived students.

In addition to policy change, individual schools and teachers have a responsibility to adapt their teaching and support in order to include all students. A recommendation regarding the teaching of newly arrived students, is that all teachers take on the responsibility as both subject teachers and language teachers (Gibbons, 2015; Paul, 2023; Wildeman et al., 2023). This demands a heightened *language awareness* – an awareness of how language is a foundational part of learning in all subjects and vocations, and that all subjects and vocations are associated with subject-/vocation-specific language (Paul, 2023). In the VET context, Wildeman et al. (2023) describe a language-aware teacher as a teacher who 'shows students what thinking looks like in a certain subject area, gives examples of using language in different vocational practices, and supports students in choosing and using appropriate language for thinking and communicating in specific vocational disciplines' (p. 479–480). Moreover, they argue that language awareness should include an awareness of language from the *learner's perspective*: in order to accommodate teaching and learning activities, teachers must be sensitive to the students' linguistic experiences and 'take potential difficulties students might experience into account' (Wildeman et al., 2023, p. 482).

Our findings support this recommendation for student-centeredness: Listening to Jamal's experiences and observing his strategies in the workshop, classroom, and beyond, provide important insight into the linguistic challenges he encounters and how these can be accommodated pedagogically. Additionally, based on our study and on insight from critical sociolinguistic research in education (e.g., McGroarty, 2010), we argue that language awareness in VET should also encompass a *critical* language awareness, that is, an awareness of language ideologies, of how these ideologies influence teaching and learning and with what consequences for whom (McGroarty, 2010). It is through acquiring such critical insight, that teachers can increase their 'ability to act as agents of change' (Jaspers, 2022, p. 282).

However, in VET, several studies demonstrate that the language awareness among teachers is relatively low (Gibbons, 2015; Paul, 2023; Wildeman et al., 2023). For example, Wildeman et al. (2023) find that there is great variation in VET-teachers' 'awareness of the relation between language and learning' and in their 'sense of responsibility to stimulate students' language proficiency' (p. 496). Paul (2023) argues that this has to do with 'language and literacies in many

vocations, and consequently also in VET, being 'invisible'' (p. 159), whereas Loeb (2020) points to institutional barriers that impede the advancement of students with migrant backgrounds' linguistic and vocational knowledge. Thus, following Høyland (2021), VET teachers are likely to primarily act as language *users* rather than language *teachers* and as such, be more inclined to follow language ideological trends 'where the strong ideological appreciation of dialect use that prevails in Norway is especially influential' (Høyland, 2021, p. 394).

As described initially, clear and comprehensible oral communication is particularly important in VET. Vocational training, whether in school or within workplaces, places high demands on students' oral skills, and a lack of oral comprehension could have serious consequences, such as for instance if a message related to HSE in a workshop or nursing home is misinterpreted. Another reason for emphasising oral comprehension and dialect use in vocational education is that many newly arrived students choose this educational path (Carlana et al., 2022; Jørgensen et al., 2021), making it crucial to develop good didactic practices, including adapted linguistic practices, to accommodate this group of students in this particular educational context.

We have seen several compelling reasons why VET teachers should adapt their dialects to facilitate oral comprehension among newly arrived students. At the same time, and for the same reasons, it is important that vocational students *are* exposed to and make experiences with dialects. They quickly embark on work placements and apprenticeships where little linguistic adaptation to new speakers is assured. Failing to provide exposure to and training with dialect use is thus unfortunate, as highlighted by Reppen (2011), who describes how students themselves find this frustrating. Consequently, teachers should incorporate dialects into their communication with students, albeit with language-awareness. Hoff-Blyseth's (2024) findings offer valuable direction in this regard: The teacher in her study used dialect during *conversational talk*, when the topics and dialogue were informal and personal, while reverting to spoken Bokmål during *instructional talk*, when teaching subject content. This balanced approach demonstrates a good example of high language awareness where the teacher ensured the best possible understanding of the subject content, while at the same time providing regular exposure to dialectal speech.

Concluding remarks

Linguistic practices and demands in VET remain an important and understudied topic (Filliettaz, 2022; Paul, 2023; Wildeman et al., 2023). While the analysis presented in this article is context-specific and thus not fully generalisable, it offers valuable insight into how teachers' dialectal language practices, and the ideologies that inform them, might ultimately risk jeopardising the inclusion of

newly arrived students in school and in society at large. Dialect comprehension is taken-for-granted in the Norwegian education system, both in policy and practice. This reflects nativespeakerism (Holliday, 2015) and Norwegian-centricity (van Ommeren & Kjelaas, forthcoming); an underlying perception that the default learner in Norwegian school is the learner who has a Norwegian-cultural and Norwegian-language background, including long exposure to the Norwegian dialects. Seemingly the Norwegian education system works from 'the assumption that all students share a common language' which in turn includes a presumption that 'all students, therefore, share at least a common set of social and cultural experiences, practices, and knowledge about what it means to be a user of that language'(Cross, 2011, p. 11). In an increasingly diverse school and society, this assumption is clearly no longer valid and must be challenged. Our study illuminated why this is important, how it can be countered, and thus how to facilitate better education, and promote inclusion and social equality for a vulnerable group in Norwegian schools; newly arrived students in VET.

Endnotes

[1] In this article, Norwegian dialects are understood as 'different varieties of spoken language that are geographically determined' (Mæhlum & Røyneland, 2012, pp. 25–26).

[2] By 'new speaker of Norwegian' we refer to individuals who relate to and regularly use a language other than the predominant language used within the household in which they grew up (Williams, 2023, p. 1). A new speaker is not only someone who learns a target language, but who also makes social and economic use of it (O'Rourke, 2020).

[3] There is no precise definition of 'a newly arrived student', but in Norway the term is often used to refer to students who come to Norway when they are in secondary or upper secondary school (e.g., Kjelaas & van Ommeren, 2022), as this gives them special rights in terms of curricula (Regulations relating to the Education Act, 2024, § 5-12).

[4] Introduction classes go by many names (introductory class, welcome class, combination class etc.) and are classes for newly arrived youths between 16 and 24 years of age to learn the Norwegian language and primary school subjects. The classes are intended as a preparation to start upper secondary school and the duration of enrollment can extend up to four years.

[5] In the Scandinavian countries, VET is part of upper secondary education, as a specific track that students can choose, whereas in other countries, VET may be organised differently.

[6] We employ the term additional language to refer to languages learned 'after the learning of one or more languages has taken place in the context of primary socialisation' (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 21). We prefer this terminology as we feel it steers clear of the linear and monolingual orientation towards languages, often implied through the term second language.

[7] Nordic readers who are not familiar with phonological transcriptions might appreciate the following transcription, where words with a dialectal pronounciation are in bold: Trykk på **innsørt.** Hær **kainn** vi **vælg** da om åpningen står mot oss **– aillså dein** kurva deln av pønsj'n, **ligg** mot oss, **deijn** som **ligg** mot **annlægge** bak. **No** står'n **monntert** me **annlægge** bak så vi **vælge** én....**rottert** basering.

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