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Is anglophone complacency a virtue of necessity?: The gap between the need for and supply of occupational second foreign language skills in Norwegian business and government

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The present study examines why businesses and government ministries use and need occupational second foreign language (L3) skills but fail to mention these in job advertisements. It contrasts data from two quantitative surveys of language use in business and government domains with two studies of the mention of L3 skills in job advertisements. While the former show that L3 languages are still used and still considered important and relevant, the latter show that such skills are hardly mentioned in job advertisements, not even as cautious requests for positions where these would be highly relevant. The authors discuss whether this may be due to the lack of L3 skills among new employees, or due to the belief that English is sufficient, also known as “Anglophone complacency.”

Key words: Second foreign languages, L3, language policy, needs analyses

The 2007 publication of a national survey of foreign language use in Norwegian businesses (Hellekjær, 2007) led to extensive debate about the status of, and need for occupational language skills. One issue was the uneven level of Norwegians' occupational English proficiency (hereafter referred to as the L2). Another concerned the under-use of second foreign languages such as German, French or Spanish (hereafter referred to as the L3). The survey showed that business use of German and French had been more than halved since 1973, and that for some businesses poor L3 proficiency had resulted in lost sales and other difficulties. Representatives of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO) reacted by publically and repeatedly arguing for the importance of L3 skills in business, German in particular. Others, such as the Oslo Chamber of Commerce (Sentio, 2011), complained about the difficulties in finding staff with L3 skills. However, the employers' supposed need for occupational L3 skills stands in contrast to recent studies of job advertisements (Vold & Doetjes, 2012). These show that employers today rarely, if ever, specify the need for L3 proficiency when hiring staff, while they were quite willing to do so during the early 1980s (Kvam & Schewe, 1984). One possible explanation could be that

employers have developed a case of what Hagen, Davila-Philippon, and Nordgren call “Anglophone complacency” (2006, p. 6) – the belief that it is possible to get by with English only. Another could be that employers no longer expect to get relevant applicants with adequate L3 skills and, as mentioned by Grin, Sfreddo, and Vaillancourt (2010), consciously avoid mention of the L3 to avoid increasing hiring costs, or in other words, low supply leads to low demand.

The aim of the present study is therefore to investigate, and if possible, explain the gap between L3 use and needs in business and government and the lack of mention of L3 skills in current job advertisements.

The present study will start by examining data on current L3 use from two recent needs analyses of language skills (hereafter referred to as NAs) by Hellekjær (2007, 2010) from business and government. These findings are then contrasted with data from job advertisement studies (Kvam & Schewe, 1984; Vold & Doetjes, 2012; Hellekjær & Rage, in progress). The study concludes with a discussion of possible explanations for this situation and with suggestions for further research.

Foreign language instruction in Norway

Norwegians are reputedly quite proficient in English (Bonnet, 2004). One reason is that English is taught from the first grade onward, and is compulsory for general studies as well as vocational students in upper secondary school. There is also extensive media exposure to English, although the importance of this for language learning is difficult to quantify (Rindal, 2010). In fact, the position of English is so strong in Norway that Graddol (2007) argues that it comes close to being a second, not a foreign language.

The position of the L3, however, became rather tenuous following the 1974 curriculum reforms (see Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet, 1974, 1976). The main goal of the 1974 reform was to open up what many considered a somewhat elitist general studies branch of upper secondary school (gymnaset) to new student groups. This was to be done through less stringent admission requirements, and less rigid requirements with regard to subject combinations

(Bjørndal, 2005; Telhaug, 1979). While a second foreign language in addition to English was retained, a third compulsory foreign language, French, was removed, in part due to poor motivation among many students (Telhaug, 1979, p. 19). There was also an extensive debate in which some participants wanted to do away with grades altogether at the primary and lower secondary levels. A compromise decision was made that L3 language grades, as well as those of other electives, were no longer to count in applications to upper secondary school (Bjørndal, 2005, pp. 167-168).

In other words a number of decisions, some perhaps more by accident than design, demoted the L3 courses into elective, low-status, lower-secondary school subjects that were no longer required for admission to the general studies branch of upper secondary school. The need to accommodate applicants without a prior L3 course also meant introducing beginner courses, which allowed students to start the same L3 subject anew, or to switch to an entirely new L3. In the years to follow there was little interest in this issue. The resulting long decline was not checked before the 2006 Knowledge Promotion curriculum reform (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006a, b) restored the status of the L3 languages by again letting them count for admission to upper secondary school. From 2012 onwards students were also granted extra credits for the completion of advanced level, elective L3 courses when applying to higher education (Rage, 2011).

A recent comparison with other European countries from before the recent changes have had effect shows that in 2008, Norwegians studied an average of 1.6 languages, slightly above the 1.4 average (Mejer, Boateng, & Turchetti, 2010, Table 1). Furthermore, a high proportion of Norwegians report that they can speak two foreign languages, that is to say English and an L3 (Mejer, Boateng, & Turchetti, 2010, Figures 3 & 4). However, this does not mean they can speak and use an L3 language at the level required for occupational use.

What are needs analyses?

In the present study I define a needs analysis (NA) for languages as “the processes involved in gathering information about the needs of a particular client group in industry or education (Brown, 2009, p 269; see also West, 1994).

Early NAs tended to focus on “discrete language items of grammar and vocabulary” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 122). Starting with Munby (1978), Richterich & Chancerel (1978), and Richterich (1983), NAs have used performance-oriented analyses to identify language functions and situations for language use (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Long, 2005). Interestingly, the early studies mentioned above were preceded by a pioneering, large-scale Swedish NA study by Dahllöf (1963). He examined what is required of upper secondary school students by institutions of higher education, by business and public administration, in general and with regard to English and L3 language skills.

Internationally, a number of NA studies touch upon the role of the L3, often in connection with the role of English as a Lingua Franca (hereafter referred to as ELF) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (hereafter referred to as BELF), (e.g. Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011). The BELF NAs for the most part examine the use of English and other languages for business communication purposes by non-native speakers (Charles, 2006; Ehrenreich, 2010; Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2008; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Nickerson, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2010; Sweeney & Hua, 2010). There is also a recent and quite comprehensive Finnish study focusing on the language needs in engineering by Huhta (2010). The studies are unanimous about language skills being needed in combination with a professional degree: “language skills without the necessary professional profile are not sufficient” (Ehrenreich, 2010, p. 417). They are just as unanimous about English being an absolute *must* in business, but in combination with the L1 (see for instance Charles 2006, Ehrenreich 2010; Rogerson-Revell 2007). L3 proficiency, on the other hand, is merely considered an advantage (Ehrenreich 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken 2010). Ehrenreich (2010), Huhta (2010), and Charles (2006) further discuss the use of L3 languages, concluding that: “Although English is clearly the dominant language in international business, other languages do not disappear from the business scene but interact with English in many ways” (Ehrenreich, 2010, p. 411). Other NAs that focus on

overall language use in business show that L3 languages are still used fairly extensively (e.g. Hagen et al., 2006; Verstraete-Hansen, 2008).

NA studies from the public sector appear to be few and far between, and primarily from US business (e.g. Brecht & Rivers, 2005; Clifford & Fischer, 1990; Lett, 2005; Winn, 2005); the most recent deal with language needs in a post 9/11 security perspective (e.g. Herzog, 2003; Tare, 2006).

Norwegian needs analyses

A number of quantitative surveys of language use and needs in business have been carried out in Norway since 1973 (e.g. Norges Handelshøyskole, 1973; Lie & Skjoldmo, 1982; Hellum & Dypedahl, 1998). Others, Kvam and Schewe (1984), Vold and Doetjes (2012), and Hellekjær & Rage (in progress) have examined job advertisements. There has also been a qualitative study from Norwegian subsidiaries in Belgium (Gunderson, 2009).

These studies show that the foreign languages used are, in order of importance: English, German, French, and Spanish. Hellekjær (2007) found a strong decline in the overall use of the L3 languages since the 70s, and an increased reliance on English. Yet another found that the L3 languages that are used in businesses closely mirror those that are taught in schools (Lie & Skjoldmo, 1982). Kvam and Schewe (1984) found a large number of employers asking for German skills, three decades later L3 languages are hardly mentioned at all (Vold & Doetjes, 2012; Hellekjær & Rage, in progress). Three public sector NAs largely mirror these findings, Hellekjær's (2010) quantitative survey from government ministries, Fairway's (2011) qualitative follow-up study from government directorates, and a recent study of ministerial job-advertisements (Hellekjær & Rage, in progress).

Methodology

The data used in the following analysis of L3 use are as mentioned from two quantitative surveys (Hellekjær, 2007, 2010) that both use a quasi-experimental, one-group, post-test research design (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002, pp. 106-107). The statistical analyses, which use the Statistical Processing Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS), are largely descriptive and concentrate on frequency

analyses. The findings are triangulated against two quantitative studies of job advertisements (Vold & Doetjes 2012; Hellekjær & Rage, in progress).

The business survey data

The first NA, Hellekjær (2007), is a quantitative survey of language use in Norwegian business. The questionnaire comprises items including background variables such as the branch and firms' size in terms of number of employees and branch, to whether they were involved in exporting and importing and in which markets. There are also items about the firms' working language, for which tasks foreign languages are used, about problems encountered due to language issues, the need for in-service courses, the respondents' views about the future need for foreign languages, and finally, about whether language proficiency is taken into consideration when hiring staff. The questionnaire (in Norwegian) can be found in Hellekjær (2007).

The survey was carried out in December 2005 by market research provider Field-Work Scandinavia (<http://www.fieldwork.no/>) using an e-base that included 7844 executives from all over Norway, from which a subsample of 1600 top and mid-level executives were selected according to branch. Of these, 1032 returned filled-in questionnaires, giving a 64% reply rate. Table 1 provides an overview of the entire sample according to branch, of the 302 exporters, the 362 importers, and of the L3 users among the two latter groups.

Table 1. Overview of respondents according to branch, export and import activities, and use of the L3, from Hellekjær (2007). N=1032

Trade	All	Exporters		Importers	
		All	L3*	All	L3*
Mining, agriculture, forestry, fisheries	1% (10)	1% (3)	2% (1)	0% (1)	0% (0)
Manufacturing	15% (153)	32% (98)	35% (17)	25% (92)	23% (16)
Power utilities	1% (12)	0% (1)	0% (0)	0% (2)	0% (0)
Construction	9% (92)	3% (10)	2 (1%)	8% (30)	12% (8)
Commodity trade	18% (183)	14% (42)	8% (4)	32% (117)	36% (25)
Hotels and restaurants	2% (25)	2% (5)	0% (0)	1% (3)	1% (1)
Transport and communications	7% (73)	6% (19)	12% (6)	6% (21)	12% (8)
Financial services	5% (47)	1% (4)	0% (0)	2% (6)	1% (1)
Real estate, sales and rentals	2% (21)	1% (3)	2% (1)	1% (3)	0% (0)
Computer services	5% (55)	8% (23)	6% (3)	6% (20)	6% (4)
Other services	35% (361)	31% (94)	33% (16)	19% (67)	9% (6)
Total	100% (1032)	100% (302)	100% (49)	100% (362)	100% (69)

* The respondents use at least one L3

With regard to being representative, a direct comparison of the percentages for key branches in Table 1 for the sample as a whole (All) with those for reference population of 431 510 Norwegian firms for 2005 in Statistics Norway proved difficult. However, the percentages for selected branches such as Construction (9%), Commodity trade (16%), Hotel and restaurants (2%), and Transport and communications (6%), except for a diverging 5% for Financial services, are comparable to those in Table 1. This argues for the sample being reasonably representative.

Concerning language use, the overview shows that 49 (16%) of the 302 exporters use L3 languages compared to 69 (19%) of the 362 importers, while cross tabulation showed that firms that actually use the L3 often use several. Since analysis showed considerable overlap between importers and exporters, and that this could not be resolved due to limitations in the questionnaire, further analysis focuses on the 302 export firms.

It should be kept in mind that the respondents, being primarily mid or top-level managers, may or may not have a complete overview of export activities in their firm (see Reeves & Wright, 1998, p. 38; Vandermeeren, 2003) Reeves and Wright (1998) and Vandermeeren (2003) also mention that businesses and organizations might not be properly aware of their real language needs, and therefore often underestimate and understate these. Nevertheless, I would argue that their answers provide reasonably useful, although perhaps somewhat understated, information on management perceptions about the use of, and need for L3 language proficiency in Norwegian export firms.

The government ministry survey data

The second survey, Hellekjær (2010), is from the public sector. It presents a net-based survey of 845 employees in 18 government ministries and The Office of the Prime Minister. The online questionnaire comprised 76 items about the respondents' ministry, education, language backgrounds, language areas contacted and languages used, and about their use of English and difficulties encountered. There were comparable items for L3 use. The questionnaire, in Norwegian, is available in Hellekjær (2010). There was also a final open-ended question in which many respondents, in particular the L3 users, added their comments. The questionnaire also used a filter-item to guide respondents past irrelevant questions, translated below:

19. Do you use English and/or another foreign language at work?

- I only use English at work
- I use English and a foreign language at work
- I only use a foreign language at work
- I do not use English or another foreign language at work

The respondents' answers to this filter-item guided them through the online questionnaire. Those who did not use English or another foreign language were directed to the end of the questionnaire, while those who only used English were moved past the items about L3 use. Only the respondents who used English as well as the L3 answered all of the items in the questionnaire.

The survey was carried out by Rambøll Management AS. It started on 10 August 2009 with a directly addressed letter providing an Internet address and a password. A reminder followed the next week and a telephone reminder the week after that, and the survey was concluded on 30 August. Although July is the main vacation month in Norway, it is possible that some potential respondents were on vacation at the time of the survey.

Out of the initial, randomly selected sample comprising 1551 out of about 4225 ministerial employees, 845 answered. Reply rates ranged from 26% to 18% of ministry employees, the exceptions being the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (12%) and the Office of the Prime minister (6%). This gives a 55% reply rate, and a sample comprising 19% of the ministerial staff. Table 2 provides an overview of the sample according to ministry and language use.

Table 2. Overview of respondents according to ministry and language use from Hellekjær (2010). N=846

Ministry	All	L1 only users	L2 English users	L2 and L3 users
Ministry of Labor	68	8	44	16
Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion	30	3	22	5
Ministry of Finance	59	5	44	10
Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs	21	0	14	7
Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs	35	6	19	10
Ministry of Defense	76	7	49	20
Ministry of Health and Care Services	47	6	35	6
Ministry of Justice	60	11	39	10
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development	43	11	30	2
Ministry of Culture	36	6	23	7
Ministry of Education and Research	81	13	52	16
Ministry of Agriculture and Food	39	4	29	6
Ministry of the Environment	45	2	29	14
Ministry of Trade and Industry	48	3	33	12
Ministry of Petroleum and Energy	25	1	17	7
Ministry of Transport and Communications	33	3	20	10
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	96	5	36	55
The Office of the Prime Minister	4	0	2	2
Total	846	94	537	215*

*one L3 user uses Spanish only, the other 214 use English and an L3 language

As displayed, the sample comprises 214 L3 users who used English and an L3 language, and a single respondent who used Spanish only. In the following analysis the main focus will be on the answers from the 215 L3 users.

It could be mentioned that unlike in the business survey, the ministerial respondents' answers are based on their own, occupational use of the L3. Compared to the business survey, this should enhance the validity of their answers with regard to language use.

The job advertisement study

The third study (Hellekjær & Rage, in progress) is a small scale needs analysis of 237 job advertisements from the Norwegian government ministries from January 1 to June 30, 2012 and the same period in 2013. Its goal was to identify to what extent English and L3 language skills are explicitly requested. All job advertisements from government ministries appearing in *Aftenposten*, Norway's largest newspaper, were collected, and relevant supplementary information downloaded from the online version of the job advertisements (see <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/aktuelt/ledige-stillinger-i-departementene.html?id=451314>). These were coded in SPSS with regard to position, ministry, qualifications, language skills specified, and to what extent international relations were explicitly mentioned in the job descriptions. The coding was sometimes made difficult through vague formulations such as "good communication skills are required", which we consistently interpreted as meaning Norwegian skills. When English or L3 skills were required explicitly this was coded as such. Data from the preliminary analysis are included in the present study.

Results and analysis

With regard to overall language use, English is used by about 94% of the export firms, while only 16% used an L3. In the ministries English was used by 750 (89 %) of the 846 respondents, while 25% used an L3 in combination with English. In the following analysis we focus on L3 use and users.

A ranking over which L3 languages are used in the two sectors is provided in Table 3. It should be kept in mind that the different samples and questionnaire designs make direct comparisons, except for rankings, difficult. While all exporters can be expected to have contacts abroad, this is not the case for the ministry sample, some of which will find foreign language use entirely

irrelevant. Therefore, in the following the 215 employees who indicated that they use the L3 at work comprise the government subsample.

Table 3. Ranking of L3 use in Norwegian export firms and government ministries, from Hellekjær (2007, 2010)

Ranking of L3 use in the business subsample, exporters, N=302	Use in percent	Ranking of L3 use in the government subsample, L3 users, N=215	Use in percent
1. German	16	French	50
2. French	8	German	24
3. Spanish	4	Spanish	3
4. Other*	9	Other*	16

*Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, Greek, Polish, Dutch, Italian, other European and Asian languages

As can be seen from Table 3, only 49 (about 16%) of the 302 exporters use an L3 at all, and the same firms often use more than one. German is the most used L3 in business, probably due to the importance of trade with the German-speaking areas, followed by French and Spanish. In government, however, French is used the most, probably due to its importance in the European Union, followed by German and Spanish. As first mentioned by Lie and Skjoldmo (1982), the L3 languages used are those that are most prevalent in the Norwegian educational system.

Thanks to a survey conducted four decades ago (Norges Handelshøyskole, 1973) we know that the business use of the L3 use has been markedly reduced (Hellekjær, 2007). This decline, however, does not necessarily mean that the L3 languages have lost their importance. A just as plausible explanation may be a lack of employees who are proficient in the L3 languages.

Education and language

International as well as Norwegian NAs show that most occupational L2 and L3 users have professional degrees, such as in engineering, business or public administration, or in law or economics. Such professional degrees might, or might not include language modules; so many employees are often forced to rely on their upper secondary school language courses. To check this, the 2007 and 2010 NAs included questions about the respondents' general education, while

the 2010 study added questions about the respondents' language education. Table 4 below provides an overview of the L3-users' educational backgrounds.

Table 4. Highest level of education among the business and government L3 users, from Hellekjær (2007, 2010)

Education level	Business L3 users	Ministry L3 users
Primary and secondary education	24% (56)	2% (4)
Undergraduate/Graduate courses or degrees	76% (173)	97% (208)
In-service qualifications	0 (0)	1% (3)
Total	100% (229)	100% (215)

This overview shows that 76% of the business, and 97% of ministerial respondents had completed a university-level education. The L3 language qualifications in the ministerial sample are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Overview of the respondents' language qualifications, from Hellekjær (2010). N=215

Language education	Ministry L3 users
Primary education	16% (35)
Secondary education	55% (118)
Undergraduate/Graduate courses or degrees	28.5% (61)
Total	100% (215)

As can be seen, only 28.5 percent of the ministerial L3 users have university level L3 courses, while the great majority, 71% (153) have primary or secondary school qualifications only – although this can also mean attending school in these countries. In addition, many respondents mentioned other, often overlapping L3 backgrounds as displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Other L3 language backgrounds, from Hellekjær (2010). Several answers were possible. N=214

Other L3 backgrounds	Respondents	Percent
In-service courses	42	16
Language courses abroad	64	30
Non-language, university level courses taught in the L3	36	17
6 months or longer stays in countries where the L3 was the first language	110	51
It is my mother tongue (L1)	15	7

The overviews of language backgrounds presented in Tables 5 and 6 show that almost half of the L3 users have had long stays, part of their schooling or education, or language courses in L3-using countries. For a small minority, 7%, it is even their first language (L1). In other words, and keeping in mind that 214 of

215 L3 users also use English, it would seem that many of the L3 users have additional background in the language.

L3 use at work

As displayed in Table 3 above, German is the most used L3 in business, whereas French dominates in government. In both surveys there were additional items designed to measure how important L3 use was considered to be. For the business sample, Table 7 provides an overview of the answers to the question “How important is it that employees can understand and make themselves understood in the L3 for the following tasks? ”

Table 7. How important is it that the employees can perform the following tasks in the L3? From Hellekjær (2007). N= 302

Exporters	Not necessary				Very necessary
	1	2	3	4	5
Negotiations/contracts	10%	12%	14%	25%	39%
Marketing/sales/services	4%	12%	18%	35%	31%
Secretarial tasks	14%	27%	27%	16%	16%
Budget/accounting	37%	39%	12%	6%	6%
Research/development	27%	20%	22%	16%	14%
Manufacturing	39%	27%	20%	6%	8%
Conferences/seminars	18%	20%	22%	20%	18%
Talks/presentations	16%	27%	22%	8%	27%
Customer/user outreach	12%	22%	14%	22%	29%

This overview shows that the more important and linguistically demanding the activities involving contact with customers is, the more important a high level of proficiency in the L3 is considered to be. As can be seen, 39 percent of the exporters think that being able to use the L3 well is “Very necessary”, 31% for negotiations and contract discussions, 31% for marketing and sales, but only 14% in research and development. Next, 27% of the exporters think it very necessary for talks and presentations, 29% for contacting customers necessary, 18 % for attending conferences and seminars, and 16% for secretarial tasks.

For the government sample, the survey used a simplified questionnaire item distinguishing between simple and demanding communication situations with the following question: “To what extent is a high level of proficiency in the

L3 necessary to master the following work related tasks”. The answers are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. To what extent is a high level of proficiency in the L3 necessary in order to master the following work-related tasks? From Hellekjær (2010). N= 215

Government	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Don't know/ Not relevant
Simple spoken communication such as telephoning and conversations	6%	20%	33%	26%	13%	3%
Demanding spoken communication such as making presentations, negotiating, press conferences	13%	23%	19%	16%	22%	8%
Simple written communication such as e-mails, letters, memos	8%	20%	31%	23%	15%	4%
Demanding written communication such as reports, white papers and articles	18%	26%	14%	9%	26%	8%
Reading work-related texts	6%	15%	33%	29%	15%	3%

This overview reflects to a large extent the pattern from business, that high levels of proficiency are considered necessary for demanding oral and writing tasks. However, it was interesting that many felt that simple oral and written communication tasks and situations also required a high level of language proficiency.

Problems encountered

Another crucial question is to what extent the respondents have encountered difficulties due to inadequate L3 proficiency. In Table 9 the answers to the question about to what extent the industry respondents have encountered difficulties are presented. It should be kept in mind that in the business sample the respondents might not have a proper overview of difficulties that others in the firm might have experienced.

Table 9. To what extent have you experienced difficulties due to poor L3 proficiency? From Hellekjær (2007). N=302

Exporters	Yes	No	Don't know
Loss in contract/sales negotiations	18%	41%	41%
Late/incorrect deliveries	27%	47%	27%
Insulted a customer or collaborator	8%	41%	51%
Inability to follow up a network or a collaborator	16%	49%	35%
Isolation at conferences or seminars abroad	4%	61%	35%
Declined to participate at conferences or seminars	10%	59%	31%
Inability to converse or take part in conversations, i.e. during a meal	20%	51%	29%
Avoided outreach to a market or a customer	18%	55%	27%

This overview shows that while some of the respondents have encountered problems due to language issues, these seem relatively few and far between, the most serious being incorrect deliveries. However, it should be kept in mind that it is not always possible to determine whether communication difficulties are due to language - so great uncertainty is only to be expected, as is revealed by the many "Don't know" answers. For instance, while only 8% say they have, or might have insulted a customer, as many as 51% admit to uncertainty about this. I would therefore argue that the "Don't know" answers at least in part might reflect language difficulties - and when seen together the problems do not seem inconsiderable. On the other hand, the few answers with regard to declining conference participation (61% answering no) or with regard to the use of the L3 in social contexts (51% answering no) can indicate that the relatively few who choose to use the L3 are probably reasonably proficient. It should also be kept in mind that for Norwegians, English is almost always a possible alternative, of course depending on their foreign partners.

Table 10 provides an overview of the language difficulties encountered by ministerial staff who answer on the basis of their own experience. The alternative of using English instead of the L3 if this is possible for the foreign partner, is also a possible option in Government ministries, since 214 of the 215 L3 users used English as well.

Table 10. How often have you experienced misunderstandings, difficulties or problems due to poor L3 proficiency? From Hellekjær (2010). N=215

Government	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Don't know/ Not relevant
Simple spoken communication such as telephoning and conversations	50%	24%	16%	2%	0%	9%
Demanding spoken communication such as making presentations, negotiating, press conferences	42%	17%	13%	1%	1%	27%
Simple written communication such as e-mails, letters, memos	49%	26%	13%	2%	1%	11%
Demanding written communication such as reports, white papers and articles	40%	14%	8%	2%	1%	36%
Reading work-related texts	48%	26%	15%	2%	0%	10%

The government respondents seem to encounter L3 language difficulties fairly infrequently, the majority answering seldom, or sometimes. This could well be because those who use the L3 instead of English may do so from choice. It is interesting to note that the number of difficulties experienced, rather unexpectedly, is clearly higher in more simple oral and written communication than in demanding situations, along with a larger number of “Don’t know/Not relevant” answers. A possible explanation is that English is often used instead of the L3 in formal situations such as negotiations or report writing, while the L3 is relegated to more informal, person-to-person communication. Alternatively, some L3 users might not feel themselves sufficiently fluent, and shift to English. Whatever the reason, Table 11 shows that the L3 is used less frequently than English by the 214 respondents who can use both.

Table 11. Comparison of the frequency of L2 and L3 use among the 214 respondents who use both English and an L3, from Hellekjær (2010). N=214

Comparison of the frequency of L2 and L3 use in	Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Very often		Do not Know/not relevant	
	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3
Government	0%	10%	9%	27%	26%	43%	25%	11%	39%	7%	0%	1%
Simple spoken communication such as telephoning and conversations	0%	10%	9%	27%	26%	43%	25%	11%	39%	7%	0%	1%
Demanding spoken communication such as making presentations, negotiating, press conferences	9%	45%	15.5%	28.5%	34%	19%	24%	2%	16%	0.5%	1%	4%
Simple written communication such as e-mails, letters, memos	0%	17%	7.5%	37%	24%	35%	35%	5%	33%	4%	0%	1%
Demanding written communication such as reports, white papers and articles	13%	63%	21%	20%	33%	10%	17%	0.9%	1%	0.5%	1%	5%
Reading work-related texts	0%	8.5%	3%	25%	15%	43%	27%	14%	55%	8%	0%	1%

This comparison of the frequency of use clearly shows that the L3 users shift between using English and their L3, and that the latter is most often used for simple oral and written communication. This is also confirmed by answers to an open question in the online questionnaire in which 77 of the L3 users provided additional comments and information (the quotes below have been translated into English by the authors). One of the respondents mentions that the “L3s such as French or German are mostly used in introductory commentaries, or [informal] conversations”. Another, at a press and communications office, for instance, writes that “L3 [skills] are seldom required on a daily basis, but they are obviously useful and necessary on travels abroad and in the sporadic contact with foreign journalists”. As to the use of the L3 in more formal situations when English is not a viable alternative, such as in international meetings, summits, and delegation visits, one respondent mentions that “in some negotiations [...]

where it is important not to have the disadvantage of speaking an L3 while the other party speaks his/her mother tongue, one can resort to interpreters". Keeping in mind the anecdotal nature of these comments, they also reveal a general consensus that L3 use is important, as are L3 skills, and that increased use would benefit Norway in many contexts.

For which languages is improved proficiency needed?

An indirect way of cross-checking the extent of possible language difficulties/and or perceived needs, and confirming the statements in the open-ended questions quoted above, is by asking in which languages the respondents feel the need for improved competence, or asking for additional staff who are proficient in the language. Both surveys included questions to this effect, and an overview of the languages mentioned in both surveys is provided in Table 12.

Table 12. In which languages do you or other staff need improved proficiency? From Hellekjær (2007, 2010)

Language	Exporters N=302	Government N=215
German*	47%	22%
French*	29%	24%
Spanish*	35%	28%
Russian*	18%	15%
Chinese*	8%	15%

- Languages mentioned in both surveys

In this overview the clearest trend can be found among the business respondents. While only 16% of the firms used German, 47% felt the need for improved proficiency. It would seem that there is need for the other languages such as French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese as well. In the government ministries, while much the same languages were required, the most frequently mentioned was Spanish. A number of other languages were also mentioned. All in all, these answers indicate that the lack of L3 proficiency is felt in business as well as in the government ministries. The question is, however, to what extent this is reflected in current job advertisements.

Language needs in job advertisements

Long (2005), as do Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), argue the need to triangulate NA survey findings with data from other surveys or other kinds of data in a mixed-methods approach. While this was not built into the 2007 business survey (Hellekjær, 2007), a recent study of online job advertisements by Vold and Doetjes (2012) can be used for this purpose. For the ministerial survey, we use data from an ongoing survey of ministerial job advertisements to supplement the survey data (Hellekjær, in progress).

Vold and Doetjes' (2012) study examined job advertisements mentioning foreign languages in Norway's largest online marketplace, www.finn.no, and in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration's job database www.nav.no, every fourth week from April to July in 2010 and again in 2011. While finn.no has a high proportion of advertisements from the private sector, nav.no has far more from the public sector, and the number of vacant jobs varied from 7000 to 10000 each month.

They found that the number of advertisements mentioning English varied from 6-7% on nav.no to 20 to 25% on finn.no. For the L3 languages, however, the numbers on both databases varied from 0.7% to 1.2%, except for an exceptional 1.9% in March 2010. They also found that language skills were almost invariably required in combination with other skills or professional degrees. Furthermore, while employers often mentioned English skills as a requirement in their advertisements, they only cautiously ask for L3 skills, even when such would seem to be highly relevant. One of the examples they mention is an advertisement for a position as an accountant in a firm whose main office is in Leipzig, and one of the main tasks mentioned was to maintain contact with headquarters. Despite the obvious relevance, German was not mentioned.

This leads Vold and Doetjes (2012) to speculate, drawing upon Grin et al., (2010), whether the low demand for L3 skills in job advertisements is because most employers do not expect to get applicants with this qualification.

For the public sector, data from Hellekjær's (2010) survey data can be contrasted with an ongoing analysis of ministerial job advertisements (Hellekjær & Rage, in progress). This analysis examines all government ministry job advertisements, 485 positions altogether, that appeared in Norway's largest

newspaper, *Aftenposten*, from January 1 to June 30, 2012 and in the same period in 2013. Key data such as ministry, types of positions, the level of education specified, whether English or L3 skills are required, and what kind of international contacts the job might involve, were coded in SPSS. It can be mentioned that the often vaguely worded advertisements, in particular with regard to language skills, left room for error. Therefore, it was only when English and L3 skills, or language skills in general were explicitly mentioned that they were registered in SPSS. The preliminary analysis of the data is presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13. Overview of ministerial job advertisements and the mention of English and L3 skills from January 1, 2012 to June 30, 2012 and January 1, 2013 to June 30, 2013. N=485

Number of positions advertised	Positions mentioning English skills	Positions mentioning L3 skills	Positions involving international activities
485 (100%)	152 (31%)	22 (4.5%)	88 (18%)

As can be seen, only 4.5% of the Norwegian ministerial advertisements mention L3 skills, in contrast to the 25% of the respondents who currently use the L3 - see Table 2. Except for two positions as French-Norwegian translators, they invariably mention languages, either English or an L3, in combination with professional degrees ranging from law, economics, political science or biology. Closer examination also shows that 4 (<1%) advertisements require L3 skills, 18 (4%) mention that L3 skills would be desirable, but not required. In comparison, they often require good or excellent English skills. For a number of positions where L3 skills would be a definite advantage but still not mentioned, such as for an industrial attaché located at the Norwegian embassy in Brussels, or for representatives to the European Union, follow-up phone calls to contact persons revealed that this was because they wanted to avoid scaring away potential applicants. Their experience was that a combination of L3 skills and a professional degree were rare indeed. These are issues that merit a systematic follow-up in a separate study.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to identify L3 use across two domains, business and government, and contrast this with the infrequent mention of L3 skills in current job advertisements.

In business, it turned out only 49 (16%) of 302 Norwegian exporters used the L3 while 95% used English. Closer analysis revealed that the firms mentioned using the L3 often used several. They also admitted having experienced problems due to poor L3 skills, and indicate the need for improved proficiency. Despite this, they only rarely ask for L3 proficiency in job advertisements (Vold & Doetjes, 2012). Furthermore, if they venture to do so, it is framed as a cautious request, not a requirement.

The situation is much the same in the Norwegian ministries. While 87% of the respondents regularly use English in occupational contexts, 25% of these again also use the L3 on a regular basis. Furthermore, it seems that the L3 is most often used in informal and personal contexts, while English is used far more frequently, and for the more formal and demanding tasks. Furthermore, both businesses and ministries, in the questionnaire as well as in open-ended questions signal the need for improved L3 skills. Despite the apparent need, L3 skills are only cautiously mentioned in 4.5% of the ministerial job advertisements, compared to 31% for English. Indeed, the L3 is often not mentioned even for positions involving international relations in non-English speaking areas, e.g. representing Norway in the European Union where for instance French could prove quite useful. Telephone interviews revealed that this was because they did not wish to scare away otherwise qualified applicants. In other words, even though L3 skills are considered useful and necessary in business as well as governance, they are rarely mentioned in job advertisements. This was certainly not the case in the early 80s, when Kvam and Schewe's (1984) study showed no such unwillingness.

One reason might be that both sectors need staff with professional degrees in for instance engineering, law, economics, public administration, or the natural sciences. These subjects, at least in Norway, are hardly ever combined with L3 courses, or with English for that matter. It should also be kept in mind that many students have only short, two-year beginner L3 courses from lower

and upper secondary school, courses which can hardly be expected to develop the language proficiency needed for advanced occupational use (e.g. Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2010, pp. 64-69). This means that, of course depending on the nature of the job and the tasks for which the L3 is used, possible applicants with L3 skills would range from those who have in-depth upper-secondary L3 courses in the same language over five years, to those with a professional degree who have studied in an L3-using country, or who have combined an L3 language with their professional degrees. However, the latter will depend on the number of students who have learnt an L3 in school and who are able, and above all willing, to study in an L3 community, to include L3 courses in their professional degrees, or to further develop their L3 through active use and/or in-service courses. In other words, there is reason to ask whether the infrequent mention of L3 skills in current job advertisements, compared to the frequent mention found by Kvam and Schewe (1984), can be explained by the lack of applicants with such qualifications. Kvam and Schewe's study (1984) took place before the above-mentioned 1974 and 1976 reforms had had much effect on L3 skills, so there would still be qualified applicants. However, by 2007, after many years during which L3 courses were low-status, elective lower-secondary school subjects no longer required for admission to upper, the number of secondary school students choosing advanced L3 courses had led to the number of applicants with L3 skills has largely dried up. In *The Economics of the Multilingual Workplace*, Grin et al. argue that when employers decide to specify, or not to specify language skills in a job advertisement, it is a highly conscious decision (2010, pp.123-134). This is because introducing an additional requirement such as an L3 in combination with a professional degree can seriously reduce the number of applicants, and/or increase hiring costs. Consequently, if employers do not expect many applicants with for instance L3 proficiency, they will be reluctant to require it in job advertisements. In contrast, employers were quite willing to do so in the early 1980s (Kvam & Schewe, 1984), since all applicants at that time would have had two compulsory L3 languages when they completed upper secondary school. In other words, there is reason to suspect that it is the limited supply of applicants with L3 skills has led to the low demand in current job advertisements. In fact, this might have forced employers

to make “Anglophone complacency” a virtue of necessity. These issues should definitely be investigated in further detail in a separate study.

An alternative explanation could of course be that the English skills among businessmen and government staff, in Norway and abroad, have improved to a point that L3 use has become superfluous. However, in their large scale study of European business, which included Norway, Hagen et al. (2006) found that while businesses might contact new areas or markets using English, they almost invariably hired linguistically proficient staff to maintain contact using the local language. They also mentioned difficulties caused by UK and Irish firms’ overreliance on English. Furthermore, the findings in the present article show that the L3 is used in business as well as governance, and that respondents in both sectors argue the need for improved L3 skills. Although further studies are needed to confirm this, we draw upon Grin et al. (2010) to argue that the best explanation for Norwegian firms and ministries not mentioning L3 skills in job advertisements is that they do not expect to get applicants with such skills in combination with the professional qualifications needed.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study raise a number of issues that should be further investigated and hopefully explained using qualitative, follow-up studies. Among these could be interview-based investigations of decisions affecting L3 use or non-use in business and in government. Others would involve finding out more about the decisions involved in the mention, or non-mention of language requirements in business and government job advertisements.

In any case, the present study is of importance to educational policy decisions about the teaching and status of different subjects in a country’s school system in relation to subsequent occupational use. It is difficult, if not impossible, to prove that the decline of the status and use of L3s from 1973 to today is first and foremost due to the 1974 and 1976 Educational Reforms. It is also interesting to note that the policy changes that were part of the 2006 Knowledge promotion reform, the most important being that L3 courses are once again to count when applying for upper secondary school, and the granting extra credits

for in-depth courses when applying to higher education, have largely reversed the decline (Rage, 2011). In any case, what happened with the L3 languages following the 1974 reform might serve as a cautionary tale. It provides a practical example of the danger of educational or curriculum reforms that do not take occupational needs, or the need to prepare students for higher education into proper consideration, as Dahllöf (1963) attempts to do. More recently, Grønmo's (2012) has argued that the neglect of algebra in Norwegian mathematics instruction is an important explanation for the high dropout rate among engineering students. For the L3 languages, it remains to be seen whether the 2006 Knowledge Promotion Curriculum's (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006a, b) restoration of the status of the L3 languages as school subjects will lead to lasting improvement, although recent developments seem promising (Rage, 2011). Time will also tell whether this will impact on occupational L3 use, and on hiring practices, or to be more specific, whether increased supply might lead to increased demand for staff with L3 skills.

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