

# Teachers' opinions of the assessment of sequential bilinguals for primary/specific language impairment in the first years of formal education in Norway

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**Teachers' opinions on assessment of the  
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the first years of formal education in  
Norway**

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# Abstract

The study was set to look into teachers' opinions on assessment of specific (primary) language impairment (SLI/PLI) in sequential bilinguals in the first grades of formal schooling in Norway. In order to achieve the main goal of the thesis 3 research questions were posed:

- What are the teachers' experiences with bilingualism in their classroom?
- What are the teachers' experiences with specific (primary) language impairment?
- What are the teachers' opinions on tools and procedures of this assessment?

SLI/PLI is affecting a certain percentage of monolingual as well as bilingual children. In the midst of sequential bilingualism SLI/PLI may be difficult to discover. The study was interested in teachers' perspectives of the issue. Namely, what was to be seen was how teachers cope with this practical matter of every day incidence and what their opinions on the matter were.

The study was conducted by conveying semi-structured interviews with 4 participants in one school in urban Norway. The school was almost entirely bilingual and the interviewees differed in terms of their expertise and experience in teaching. The interviews were conducted in English.

The study had sample too small for any external generalizations to be made, but the goal of the research is to understand particulars rather than making claims of the general.

Consequently findings of the study noted that teachers were preoccupied by semilingualism/emergentism in their classrooms. The difference between simultaneous bilinguals and monolinguals seemed to be obscure in practice. It appeared teachers were not familiar with any formal assessment tools for SLI/PLI, as the system procedures did not require it. Nevertheless, they employed pre-assessment observing phonological and social signs and background data investigations in order to help getting a bigger picture of their students' capabilities. As a tool for assessment of language abilities of all the students NSL (Norsk som læringspråk) test was used.

Further research in the area is needed, especially in the domain of sequential bilingualism at schools. It might be recommendable to use either higher variety in sample or a questionnaire as the method of inquiry.





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# 1 Introduction

The topic of interest covered by this research encompasses teachers' opinions on classroom assessment of sequential bilinguals for specific/primary language impairment. In the anticipation of the research process much of the essence is captured by the quote:

“Doing research is not only a matter of designing a project and collecting, analysing and reporting data – that is the optimism of idealism or ignorance; it is a matter of interpersonal relations, potentially continual negotiation, delicate forging and sustaining of relationships, setback, modification and compromise” (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011, p.166). As far as my experience goes this quote seemed to reveal an underlying schema of the research process I was involved in.

The intention of this research project was to inquire into professionals' views in a qualitative way and explore the voices of the direct “instruments” of education that are still nothing but people involved in their work in a highly personal way. The study sought to explore the views of the teachers on the assessment of specific language impairment in sequential bilinguals in the beginning of the formal education in Norway.

The topic of specific/primary language impairment in sequential bilinguals is important as it is most frequently discovered during the kindergarten age (Tomblin et al., 1997). Regarding the fact kindergarten education is not obligatory in Norway (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007), it can happen that SLI/PLI remains unnoticed until formal education enrollment. Therefore, a diagnostic dilemma is laid down before the educational professionals to discern between the signs of second language acquisition and possible Specific/Primary language impairment (SLI/PLI) signs (Armon-Lotem, 2012).

The importance of the topic I intend to cover is on a causal level, (Maxwell, 2012; Roberts, 2014) closely related to a relatively recent and ongoing demographic change in Norway and Europe (Lorant, 2005). In addition to the global migration phenomena, Norway has seen a recent influx of culturally and geographically diverse net immigration trying to accustom and adapt to the culture and the language of their new home. Consequently, the transition to a new school system might not always be easy nor smooth for the children with Norwegian as an additional language. Together with the adjustment to the schooling system all their peers are undergoing in the first grades of the school, the foreign children have to negotiate language

and cultural relationships as well (Thijs, Westhof & Koomen, 2012; Von Grunigen, Kochenderfer - Ladd, Perren & Alsaker, 2012). Therefore, I sought to explore the teachers' views in the lieu of this phenomenon by connecting it to the practical assessment of SLI in sequential bilinguals.

The other aspect I sought to explore was an epidemic pressure in the Western world over demand on educational staff for high quality education (Ehren, Perryman, & Shackelton, 2014; Gilpin & Kaganovich, 2012). As the Norwegian educational system strives to be the best in the world according to the government document released (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007) a rather unavoidable question of human resources sets itself in. What consequences to the educational staff and their practices this highly ambitious project will have is yet to be seen. Amidst such a demanding framework, it is interesting to see ways teachers cope with things of daily incidence in the classroom.

Under the umbrella of the big picture of the broad topics created above, my intention was to conduct a research on teachers' opinions of a practical matter of their every day practice and thus try to bring a tiny jigsaw piece into the much greater puzzle. My intention is to voice professionals' views on the complex intertwined issues outlined below and bring their perspectives into the foreground. What I inquired into is the understanding of the professionals and the way they handle the three interrelated concepts. So as seen through teachers' lenses I want to see how the concepts of :

- the assessment of
- primary (in literature also specific) language impairment
- in sequential bilinguals

are understood and managed in their everyday practice.

## **1.1 Background and the problem statement : The views of teachers and the process of assessment**

Surprisingly or not, not many studies were done in the area of inquiry. Teachers' views still seem to be a central issue for very few research papers interested in topics of sequential bilingualism and primary language impairment assessment. In addition, majority of the



research in the area covering assessment on specific language impairment in sequential bilinguals is of a quantitative character. The focus in the existing studies lies in the reliability of the assessment by tests (Verhoeven, Steenge, Van Weerdenburg, & Van Balkan, 2011; Helland, Biringer, Helland, & Heimann., 2009; Kapantzoglou, Restrepo, & Thomson, 2012) with a few exceptions interested in teachers' judgments, but mostly the accuracy of the teacher-assessment (Letts & Hall, 2003; Antoniazzi, Snow, & Dickson- Swift ,2010; Botting, Conti-Ramsden, & Crutchley, 1997; Jessup, Ward Cahil, & Keating, 2008; Oritz et al., 2011).

Questions of the assessment of bilinguals for language impairment seem to raise higher concerns overseas in the USA, Canada and Australia with the exception of the UK in Europe given the proportion of the recent literature. This could possibly be due to the volume and size of the countries' bilinguals naturally reflecting the ratio of those possibly affected by the primary language impairment. However, a few studies done on the European grounds (Sadler, 2005; Letts & Hall, 2003; Williams, 2006, etc.) show that Europe is facing the similar challenges.

## **1.2 Why primary language impairment in sequential bilinguals?**

Sequential bilingualism also termed successive means that another language is introduced after 3 or 4 years of age. This age is considered to be a threshold for two main reasons, one is that teaching a child two languages from birth means giving the same or similar input, thus making him/her aware of the linguistic realms of the language and the second reason, that grammar and vocabulary are already well established and discerned at that age, so that, neurocognitively, more maturity allows for the second language learning (Paradis, Genesee & Cargo, 2011).

As for the specific language impairment or more recently termed primary language impairment, it is approximately affecting 7,4 % of the students (Tomblin et al., 1997).It's basic characteristic is that it occurs in a child with otherwise regular developmental pace in all the cognitive and other developmental areas except for the language. (Paradis et al., 2011; Kohnert, 2008; Bishop & Leonard, 2000). Firstly defined by Bishop and Leonard (2000), many researchers consequently agreed that in the case of primary language impairment difficulties are centred in language learning free from motor, sensory, cognitive or

developmental disorders or social factors (Paradis et al, 2011; Ebert et al., 2014; Kohnert, 2010). This makes it a highly complex issue in its own free from bilingualism, but, I am attempting to see through the eyes of the teachers its relation to it in the beginning of the formal education in Norway.

### **1.3 Gap in knowledge**

As the research in the area acknowledges, it is very hard to detect whether there is a language impairment with a student or there is an overlap with slower second language development (Paradis, 2010). Regarding the fact the teachers are the one who are the first professionals in the educational hierarchy system to assess it, it is important to take their views about the assessment on board. However, there are no studies in Norway exploring teachers' views on assessment of sequential bilinguals for primary (specific) language impairment (SLI).

Still, there is a recent increase in interest of the theme of SLI, in Norway. Namely, there are 2 PhD projects at the moment at University of Oslo dealing with SLI (UiO, 2014). In addition to this, Norwegian Institute of Public Health has been currently working on the project Språk-8 dealing with multiple issues regarding language development in students with primary (specific) language impairment (Folkehelseinstituttet, 2014).

### **1.4 Purpose and research questions**

Stemming from the information above, the purpose is to make a study that will look at the issues from the eyes of professionals. The goal is for the teachers' opinions to be heard, taken into consideration and valued. Consequently the study sought to explore teachers' perceptions and practices when it came to assessment of specific/primary language impairment in sequential bilinguals. Consequently the research questions were :

- What are the teachers' experiences with bilingualism in their own classroom?
- What are the teachers' experiences with primary (specific) language impairment?
- What are the teachers' opinions on tools and procedures used?

The research can be of interest to new teachers, students, educational professionals working in multicultural communities, policy makers, head teachers etc.

## **1.5 Research approach**

This study was designed as a critical realism qualitative study. It is a specific critical realism approach developed by Maxwell, (2012). Applied to qualitative research, it has an interpretivist / constructivist epistemology (that we are only able to understand the world through our interpretations) and realist ontology (that reality exists, though our understanding of it is fallible).

The design of the study was qualitative in essence and the method was an interview. As a data collection tool the semi structured interview guide was used (see Appendix 1) and after obtaining access to informants, 4 interviews in total were conducted in a school in Norway during September and October 2014. Prior to the interviews a pilot interview was done to validate the interview protocol and the guide as a tool. The sample was theoretical, but quite small for any generalizations. Such a small sample was partly due to the constraints in terms of resources and partly due to a relatively challenging task of obtaining access to schools.

Interviews were analysed using the thematic analysis approach recommended by (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Ryan,2006; Seale,2012;Braun & Clarke, 2012, Boyatzis, 1998; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The reason for using this approach stems from its accessibility as it can be fitted in diverse approaches to qualitative studies. Moreover, using this method to analyse data seemed a pragmatic and a flexible choice, which is a necessary precondition for an inexperienced researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The research has found the struggle of the educational professionals with sequential bilingualism within their classrooms. It also showed not much of the formal assessment of SLI/PLI was known nor conducted by teachers. However, pre-assessment forms in terms of gathering the data about the student, observations of signs and educational stakeholder cooperation were observed. This could potentially lead to obtaining comprehensive information sets prior to the expert assessment by a speech and language therapist (SLT).

## **1.6 Organisation of the study**

The study is organised into 6 chapters. In the chapter 2 I will show the review of the relevant literature used as a background for the study and the development of the relevant thematic constructs. The chapter 3 is dealing with the methodology used in the study. The analysis of

the data obtained by interviews and verbatim transcribed will be the occupying the chapter 4. In chapter 5 relevant discussions of the findings will be presented. Finally, the study will end with the chapter 6 as the conclusion which will give final remarks with recommendations for the future research. Appendix 1 contains the interview guide. In appendix 2 is the official confirmation obtained by NSD authorities for the study. Appendix 3 consists of information letter that was signed by the participants of the study.

#### Definition of terms and abbreviations

SLI –Specific Language Impairment also acknowledged as Primary Language Impairment (PLI). The concept is the same, but is named in a different way by some authors as abbreviation SLI can create confusion with the term secondary language impairment which is an impairment stemming from a condition or a joint syndrome. In Norwegian SSV Spesifike Språk Svansker

SLT – Speech and language therapist, the term logoped was used in Norwegian

## 2 Literature review

In this chapter, the central issues in the previous research on the topic of assessment of bilingual children on language impairment will be tackled.

As my research has three elements, I will start with an overview of models of bilingualism and its understanding in development with the limits to the domain I am interested in (sequential bilingualism in children) and the implications of these theoretical views for educational practices. From there, I move on to the primary or specific language impairment issue and the research in this area connected to the study inquiry I intend to take up. The chapter's final part will deal with the testing and assessment views. The intention is to bring in all the relevant data to the foreground before seeing the informants.

### 2.1 How did we come to bilingualism?

The increased mobility in the world of today is leading to a higher rate of migrations of the world population. As a part of conventionally identified cultural group of their home countries immigrants tend to bring their own language into the country of arrival (Kohnert, 2008). Consequently, Garcia and Kleifgen (2011) found that “most children in the world are educated in a language other than that of the home” (p.167) thus giving the logical conclusion that there are more bilinguals and multilinguals in the world than monolinguals (Grosjean, 1989). In making such a remark, they were presuming that there are more languages in the world than the states (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2011). For example, only in USA in 2001, the number of emergent bilingual children is estimated around 4.6 million (also termed as English language learners) (Goldstein, 2006).

There is no feasible statistics on the number of bilingual children in Norway, however, the common sense estimation is that the numbers are considerable. This situation is due to the consequent flow of net immigration (of 14,9 % immigrants currently living in Norway) (Statistik Sentralbyrå, 2014).

According to the Education Act 2010, the Norwegian municipality has a responsibility to accommodate to bilingual teaching or the mother tongue instruction “or other instruction adapted to the pupils' abilities” (p.11). It is, however, unclear how many of emergent bilinguals' parents have done or intend to apply for “adapted language education” that is

provided under the section 2.8. and 3.12 of Education Act 2010. Regardless of that the children are legally bound to attend Norwegian schools and are undoubtedly a growing part of Norwegian society.

## **2.2 How does the research see bilingualism?**

However common it may seem to encounter bilinguals in the world of today, a myriad of diverse explanations from scientists arose with the purpose of understanding how bilingualism works. As one of the purposes of this study is to find out about the teachers' experiences of bilingualism, it is useful to see where the research has led us in their perceptions of bilingualism first.

All that the theories below have in common is the aim of supporting child development in such circumstances as bilingual childhood. These differences in scholars' opinions stem from the views on language acquisition and language and up to a point the child development itself.

Emerging in 1950s after the WWII bilingualism saw the first studies. Soon enough the path led to the neuro and psycho linguistic view with Genesee, Hamers, Lambert, Mononen, Seitz and Starck (1978) and Grosejan (1989) who were beginning to make grounds for scientific differences in language processing of bilinguals. A part of the research started off on the pedagogical 'soil' with Cummins's (1979) study and in newer research history explanations followed by Paradis (2010), De Houwer (2009) being just some among numerous others in the domain.

Consequently, their theories brought in the significant changes and the research area of bilingualism encountered divisions.

### **2.2.1 Subtractive vs additive bilingualism**

Apart from marking languages as dominant and nondominant (Kohnert, 2008) or A and Alpha (De Houwer, 2009), as a part of *dual systems model*, where from early development there is a separate lexical, phonological, syntactical system (Goldstein, 2006), Garcia and Kleifgen (2011) note referring to Lambert, that bilingualism can be *subtractive* or *additive*. This will depend on whether the language is deprived of the enrichment during the education cycle due to the second language development. Consequently, the home language can be affected in a

negative way (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2011) by stopping or halting its development. Another way of handling the second language development is the additive theory where the school language is added to their home language from the perspective of the linguistic majority.

### **2.2.2 Simultaneous vs sequential bilingualism**

As Paradis, Genesee and Cargo (2011) see it, bilingualism is simultaneous i.e. the child starts speaking both of the languages at home or sequential (successive) when another language is introduced after 3 or 4 years of age. This age is considered a threshold for two main reasons, one is that teaching a child two languages from birth means giving the same or similar input, thus making him/her aware of the linguistic realms of the language. The second reason is that grammar and vocabulary are already well established and discerned at that age, so that, neurocognitively, more maturity allows for the second language learning (Paradis et al. 2011).

### **2.2.3 Semilingualism vs sequential bilingualism**

As noted above sequential bilingualism means introduction of another language after certain age in childhood. The threshold of 3 to 4 years would mean that basic notion of language is established as well as basic fluency achieved. A study conducted in USA, however, found the great differences in vocabulary of kindergarten children depending on their socio-economic status (Hart & Risley cited in Clinton, Ortiz, & Guilar., 2014). These differences lead us to the phenomenon of semilingualism also termed as limited bilingualism (Cummins, 1979; Macswan, 2000). The term is used for children with limited level of literacy in both their home language and the language of school (Escamilla, 2006). Moreover, its use was to describe bi-illiteracy as a term often connected to children of immigrants with low socio-economic status and low parental levels of education. It does not come as a surprise to assume that if L1 is poorly developed learning the second language will pose a particular challenge. The situation can be exacerbated by socio-economic background, adaptation to schooling environment etc. Therefore, the research shows that children will have issues with mapping from grapheme to phoneme and pronunciation of words. Furthermore, vocabulary seems to be a particular issue due to environmental deprivation the semilingual children are facing (Clinton et al, 2014). To make true sequential bilinguals semilingual children must be carefully assessed and supported throughout their educational cycle.

## **2.2.4 Recursive vs dynamic bilingualism (plurilingualism)**

Another perspective on bilingual development is proposed by Garcia and Kleifgen (2011). These scientists describe two models of bilingualism: recursive and dynamic. This theoretical proposition is suggesting more relational model of the one Lambert had suggested. In the recursive model bilingualism “reaches back in order to move forward” (p.169) recovering data from previous existing language practices (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2011). By contrast, their dynamic model, although different in underlying understanding of bilingual, seems closer in function to Kohnert’s (2008) perception of functional or needs based bilingualism. This perception goes in line with the contemporary view point of the Council of Europe, where schools aim at developing functional bilinguals (Woolfolk, Hughes, & Walkup, 2013). To sum up, their theory relates to the concept of plurilingualism. In plurilingualism languages are not seen as singular systems working independently, quite the opposite, they are represented as a relational system full of dynamism where the proficiencies mutually interact creating a scheme or a net of multilingual language practice that the theory tried to capture (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2011).

## **2.2.5 Cummins’s contribution to the debate (language proficiency)**

Following the similar logic in theories developed a bit before him, in his early works Cummins (1984) introduced the term of *linguistic interdependence* as a principle central to bilingual education. Complimenting *common underlying proficiency* that depicts transferable linguistic knowledge across languages as a base or a depo from which and into which a particular language or languages flow (Cummins & Swain, 1986) the two built a new perspective. Thus, with the fresh view of bilingualism, Cummins proved a relative independence of general linguistic knowledge on proficiency or, on different terms, on relational proficiencies of a language transfer (also in Verhoeven, Steenge, & Van Balkom, 2012). This view was based in cognition comprising of tasks, abilities and awareness and by linguists termed as a metalinguistic awareness (Smith, 1991). Developing on his theories many years later, Kohnert (2008) terms it a general proficiency, the “ability to efficiently map form to meaning in conventional and efficient ways, for meaningful communication” (pp.22). In this respect, regarding proficiency, Cummins went further in explaining differences in language acquisition by proposing a model of BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) as a “surface fluency” or everyday speech. This was an opposite concept to CALP



(cognitive academic language proficiency) conceptualized as “manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations” (Cummins, 1984, pp.137). Consequently, this gave a different perspective on to the language learning and the dichotomy of languages.

Nevertheless, this theory came under attack from linguists and critics considering it elitist and untrue (Petrovic & Olmstead, 2010). For Cummins, CALP is more than native language proficiency, it is education bred and thus depends on the content of input in order to develop. This model has some ideological approval in Goldstein (2006), Kohnert (2010), Paradis et al. (2011). However, to understand Cummins’s critics one has to consider the fact that linguists consider first language competence as a standard for the ideal speaker/hearer (Grosjean, 1989) where input flows from one language only, when there are two channels for it, a certain different situation might occur. Therefore, even though Paradis (2011) and De Houwer (2009) with Grosjean (1989) rather preferred dual model of language development, they warned that bilinguals shouldn’t be assessed at monolingual standards because of their different use in different social functions as Cummins (1984) attempted to explain.

In an attempt to provide a theoretical reconciliation of linguistics (concerned with the very creation of proficiency, LAD (language acquisition device) and ideal speaker/ hearer) and pedagogy (focused on the experiences, context and communication) Kohnert (2008) came up with the theory of language acquisition that takes cognitive mechanisms to be an integral part of language acquisition and use called General Interactive Processing Theory seeing bilingualism, as well as monolingualism “a product of individual experiences interacting with general cognitive processing mechanisms” (Kohnert, 2008, pp.6). From there, a view point that differentiates the two is whether we want to measure *a* language proficiency or language proficiency (Kohnert, 2008) even though the very term of “language proficiency” is disputable for later works of Cummins (Petrovic & Olmstead, 2001).

Hence, the task of defining a standard bilingual language development before the consequent irregularities in it or impairments seems a daunting task, as for the reasons noted above, many of the researchers would agree that there are many variables to it (Paradis, 2011; Kohert, 2008; Cummins,1984; Garcia, 2008; De Houwer, 2009, Antoniazzi, Snow, & Dickson-Swift, 2010) leading to a highly abstract individual standard of development.

In such a disagreement over language proficiency, bilingual language acquisition and theories trying to keep the essence of it, it would be highly interesting to note the teachers’ opinions of

bilingualism in their classrooms and capture their experiences and views on it that my project attempts to do.

## **2.3 Specific/ primary language impairment**

Moving onto the another aspectual focus of the research, in defining language impairments there is a mostly acknowledged division in primary (more recent term) or specific language impairment (PLI/ SLI) that occurs in a child with otherwise regular developmental pace in all the cognitive and other developmental areas except for the language. (Paradis et al., 2011; Kohnert, 2008; Bishop & Leonard, 2000). Secondary language impairment, on the other hand, is a consequence of a condition (autism, Down's syndrome) or a part of the clinical manifestation of another impairment or disease (Norwegian Institute for Public Health, 2014). Starting from Bishop and Leonard (2000), many researchers consequently agree that in the case of primary language impairment difficulties are centred in language learning free from motor, sensory, cognitive or developmental disorders or social factors (Paradis et al, 2011; Ebert et al., 2014; Kohnert, 2010).

When it comes to the origin of PLI, for years it was believed it was a result of poor parenting or subtle brain damage (Bishop, 2006). Nevertheless, a novel research in this area linked it to a genetic factor strongly related to environmental influences (Bishop, 2006), shifting the focus from genetics to multiple risk factors.

### **2.3.1 Identifying specific/primary language impairment**

In such a disadvantageous situation when language development can be only be tested using language tools unlike assessing other developmental disorders where the researchers have multiple tools for diagnosis at their disposal outside the language itself, it is clear that PLI/SLI has a great potential for over, under and misidentification in bilinguals (Paradis et al.2011; Bedore & Pena, 2008; Yxquierdo, Blalock, & Torres-Velasquez, 2004; De Lamo White & Jin, 2011). This misidentification comes from the similarities in mistakes that emerging bilinguals and bilinguals with SLI/PLI will be making at a certain stage (Paradis, 2010, Verhoeven et al., 2011). However, the research has shown that after presumable exposure to language longer than 3 years, cumulative effect of SLI/PLI in bilinguals is annulled and

reaches the point of monolingual peers (Paradis, 2010). However, the research acknowledges a lack of tests measuring the exposure to L2, so it is hard to make a clear cut.

According to the research conducted by Tomblin et al. (1997) PLI affects approximately 7,4% of all children. Goodyer (2000), on the other hand, claims that by early adolescence this prevalence is reduced to 3-6 % (Goodyer in Bishop, 2000). One or the other, this ratio makes a considerable number of children at risk due to the undue recognition of the (un)specificity of their language development. Kohnert (2010) gives 3 characteristics of typical language development with sequential (and simultaneous) bilinguals which may prove diagnosis a challenging task : “1) uneven ability or distributed skills within or across linguistic domains 2) variable presence and nature of cross language associations 3) individual variations in language performance even in response to relatively similar circumstances” (pp.458). In such circumstances it is hard for teachers and health professionals to refer to a specialist without knowing the ropes of language development including code mixing, interference, silent period, etc. (De Lamo White & Jin, 2011). Just as an example Letts and Hall (2003) conducted a case study, as a part of their research in which they gave 3 descriptions of child’s language “issues”. Disappointingly, only a quarter of the early years’ professionals got all the 3 replies, regarding typical language development, right (Letts & Hall, 2003).

Nevertheless, the research has equipped professionals, especially speech and language therapists among others, with numerous tools for assessment of primary language impairment. What is recommended by Goldstein, as a way of assessment to work, is a comprehensive assessment of both languages and considering sociolinguistic variables and their influence on language skills (2006). The professional assessment itself, however, should comprise of three aims according to Kohnert (2010): 1) determining whether language abilities of the child are substantially below the level of his/her peers’ 2) determining the nature of the language disorder 3) plan a course of action that will maximize child’s learning and social outcomes (Kohnert, 2010). However, to achieve the diagnosis professionals must resort to the assessment approaches, which in the current research include five basic types: norm-referenced standardized measures, criterion-referenced (CR) measures, language processing measures, dynamic assessment (DA) and a sociocultural approach (De Lamo White & Jin, 2011). It would be interesting to get to know which ones are preferred in Norwegian context.

## **2.4 What do the tests say?**

The following section will look the findings researchers made using 5 basic types of testing, but focusing on the potentially affected area in SLI/PLI. The goal is to find out in practice what the signs the teachers will observe first are.

### **2.4.1 Phonological issues**

Verhoeven, Steenge, Van Weerdenburg and Van Balkom (2011) used a norm-referenced standardized test in Dutch in a cross sectional study to inquire into the cumulative effect of bilingualism in specific language impaired (SLI) children. What he found was that in the age of 6, no significant disadvantage was found in bilinguals with SLI whereas in the age 8 it was significant. Also, the fields of disadvantage were lexical and morphosyntactic areas whereas in domain of phonology and sentence repetition no significant disadvantage for the group of bilingual children with SLI was measured (Verhoeven et al., 2011) which aligns with the research of Goldstein and Washington (cited in Goldstein, 2006) in 4 year old simultaneous bilinguals where frequency and types of phonological errors were similar in bilinguals compared to monolingual peers (Goldstein, 2006).

Calling for the development of language tests in Swedish, Hansson and Nettelbladt (2002) were identifying by testing specific language impairment in 42 children 2 to 6 years of age and where the differences between the groups would appear. They found out that the biggest vulnerability the group with SLI was in phonological area. Naturally, with children with SLI lower scores were measured in syntax, pragmatics and other areas of language production, as well, while language comprehension was not affected (Hansson & Nettelbladt, 2002; Katsos, Roqueta, Clemente Estevan, & Cummins, 2011).

By contrast a study by Ramus, Marshall, Rosen and van der Lely (2013) found phonology of SLI children intact but drew the attention to the non-word repetition where children's with SLI/PLI score was indicative of impairment. The difference in the two studies' findings could stem from the different methodologies employed but also from the difference in the language of the research, as Hansson and Nettelbladt conducted the research in Swedish.

Joanisse and Seidenberg (2003), however, mention that poorer phonological information in working memory that affects SLI/PLI children leads to poorer syntactic performance, as well. Meanwhile, Paradis, 2010; Katsos et al. 2011; Verhoeven et al., 2011; Verhoeven et al., 2012

found phonological awareness, phonological processing and phonological working memory area affected in children with SLI/PLI .

### **2.4.2 Morpho-syntactic issues**

From a language processing prospective Hakkasson (1997) was trying to prove that morpho-syntactic difficulties in SLI stem from the specific processing of language comparing Swedish and English children in plural forms, present/past marker. During this research she found out that SLI children will have difficulties with perfective auxiliary verb, inversion and complementiser in a sentence comparing to unimpaired children. Her conclusion is that, depending on a language, grammatical information between constituents does not follow the same pattern as in English and is not necessarily past tense marker. She also noted considerable individual variability in SLI group calling it systematic but placed on a continuum of processing complexity (Hakkasson, 1997).

Pointing to language differences, Paradis, 2010 found that much of a morphosyntax in French e.g. direct object clitics considered to be clinical markers for SLI turned out actually to be common among L2 learners. In her consequent study comparing the mistakes of bilinguals and SLI, she found that morphosyntactic structures in domain of past tense marker, plural –s, verb be etc were the same among the two groups. The results in the research drawing information from 2 case studies of bilingual children with and without SLI followed that after approximately 2 to 3 years of exposure to English, there was a considerable difference in emerging bilingual and SLI child. Paradis (2010) also proved here limited processing capacity (LPC) theory (the theory that claims that protracted time for language development stems from the deficit in general cognitive and perceptual mechanisms) inaccurate when taking exposure time into account with the assessment.

### **2.4.3 Pragmatic issues**

Developing CCC (Children Communication Checklist) testing method, Bishop (2000) was trying to get more qualitative picture of the language impairment as PLI children would rarely be a homogenous group. She also wanted to discover whether among the children there would be substantial number affected in semantic pragmatic disorder and how to distinguish this degree between PLI children with semantic pragmatic disorder that are yet not classified as autistic (they only fulfill one out of three criteria for autism classification)(Bishop, 2000). The

reliability of the Norwegian adaptation of the same test CCC2 was used in Bergen. The sample consisted of children 6-12 years old in order to discern between language impaired and typical development monolingual children. The tool proved to be reliable, with a great potential in Norway, although the authors in the very end admit that usually with language impairment comes a certain either social or functional disability that should be taken into account during assessment (Helland, Biringer, Helland & Heimann, 2009).

Even though the body of research in the area is constantly growing, Kohnert (2010) claims that majority of children is still identified for PLI/SLI on the basis of behavioural data. Moreover, the group of the children with SLI/PLI less apparent until the school age shows deficits in social communication rather than phonological or syntactic difficulties. Most likely they would fail to understand the perspective of other person in the conversation and would be showing inability to engage in an ordinary dialogue (Goodyer, 2000).

Goodyer's chapter in Bishop's book (2000) draws on a study of Haynes & Naidoo to report that subtle emotional difficulties like low self-confidence and social withdrawal remained or developed during the schooling. However, comparing to other types of language impairment SLI/PLI children were found to be expected to have fewer concurrent or long-term emotional and behavioural problems.

The same author also reports on three longitudinal studies that found that SLI/PLI children had high rates of later behavioural problems, social withdrawal and emotional symptoms five years after the initial referral. Further studies also showed that girls with SLI are more at the risk of emotional problems due to the negative effect of social cognitive development, even though majority of children at any age with SLI are boys (Goodyer, 2000).

#### **2.4.4 Non-standardised assessment**

##### **Dynamic assessment (DA)**

Conducting a DA of word learning skills Kapantzoglou, Restrepo & Thomson (2012) managed to assess children with PLI as correct as to 80%. The authors were testing Spanish English bilinguals on novel word processing and discovered lower degree of fast mapping in PLI children. Even though the DA method takes place over time as assumes pretest-teach- test

cycle and ensures no test stress, a critique of DA is that besides of being subjective, it measures a potential for learning responsiveness for intervention and that some cultural issues that may prevent child from benefiting from mediation phase (not looking in the eyes, unaccustomed to take turns in replying) (Kapantzoglou et al., 2012).

### **Socio-cultural approach**

De Lamo White & Jin (2011) seem to be in favour of socio-cultural approach in assessment parts of which should be made in integration with criterion referenced measures and dynamic assessment. The researchers believe socio cultural approach is the most culture sensitive one and leaves space for the professional to plan activities that are language and culture specific. They mention RIOT procedure that falls under this (Review documents, Interview everyone around, Observe the child in multiple settings, Test all languages) that will be successful in reducing risks of misdiagnosis. However, the authors are aware of the costly, time consuming and intensive procedure as drawbacks of the method (De Lamo White & Jin, 2011).

Moreover, the non-standardised assessment beside the high professional competency and knowledge of the subject requires familiarity with the child's background, socio-economic awareness and cultural sensitivity or the assessor (Kohert, 2008, Goldstein, 2006). This comprehensive assessment, however, does not have to come from bilingual professionals themselves, sometimes, just taking into account the linguistic complexity and structure of the two languages, sociolinguistic factors, age and amount of exposure to the languages, ability to use language and communicate as well as taking into consideration individual variations can lead to proper analysis of the skills (Goldstein, 2006).

## **2.5 How does it look like in practice?**

Although, impairments are traditionally assessed by speech and language pathologists/therapists, in order to reach the expert assessment concerns must become significant enough to be apparent to someone from the child's environment - frequently parents or teachers. Some of these "referral concerns are: inability to follow oral directions, disorganisation, difficulties completing tasks, the inability to understand information read aloud on developmentally appropriate level, difficulties writing and or speaking in short

utterances, confusing speech production, the inability to answer questions, and difficulties retaining information ” (Robillard, 2014, p.63).

There is, however, a growing responsibility resting on mainstream teachers in many countries with an obligation to assess children and be the first and the last reference point when it comes to majority of issues including SEN and language needs (Lebeer et al., 2011). In a study in USA conducted by interviews and observations on teachers’ perspectives on literacy assessment and instruction with minority language students there was no favourable view on bilingualism as well as no single view on instruction or assessment which brings us to the conclusion that there is no “typical” belief or attitude among professionals (Rueda & Garcia, 1996).

### **2.5.1 Good or bad bilingualism in classrooms**

A conflicting way about the polarisation of the whole theme of bilingualism in practice is seen around for years. Even though much of the research proved multiple cognitive advantages of being bilingual (Diaz & Klingler, 1991; Bialystok, 2011; Harlin & Paneque, 2006) it is still a part of an ongoing debate about the practice. Following the thread of MacSwan (2000) who argues that without proper support in both languages semilingual children will have adverse effects of their ‘bilingualism’ just a few days ago, a blog of an associate professor of linguistics at Yale appeared. It dealt with the theme of bilingualism being good for rich children but being bad for the poor ones. The article showed that bilingualism enriches conceptual frameworks, cultural understanding among others in an environment of an affluent family of a French-English speaking child, for example. However, in a socially disadvantaged family of illiterate immigrant parents, bilingualism is a ‘crutch’ that if used can create difficulty in grasping concepts in either of the languages according to Strauss (2014). For other scientists, however, circumstances and environment influence is an important condition for example, De Houwer (2009) named as her role “to find out in what circumstances a bilingual upbringing turns out well for all involved, and in what circumstances it might cause problems (p.68).

### **2.5.2 Teachers’ role**

In the European research project DAFFODIL (Dynamic Assessment of Functioning and Oriented at Development and Inclusive Learning) Norway (together with Italy) mostly stood



out as a country with the fullest commitment for inclusive schools and mainstreaming established since 1977. However, teachers had mostly worked with child and intervention focused assessments still lacking familiarity of different methods (Lebeer et al, 2011). 39% of early years' professionals in UK would use two or more strategies in language assessment. Checklists would be used by 11% whereas comparison and observation is used by 30% of the staff (Letts & Hall, 2003).

Norwegian Education Act (2010) however, under section 5 includes right to special education by assuming municipal authorities are obliged to provide for the child namely in: expert assessment (section 5-4), reporting on individual curricula outcomes (section 5-5) and providing the counselling service to those in need (section 5-6).

Looking deeper into professionals' practice, as a basis for proper referral to assessment procedures and beyond, an early identification of oral (and other) language difficulties by teachers may influence not only literacy but also the children's overall psycho-social development (Antoniazzi et al.2010). Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to the occurrence of this assessment and the circumstances of it.

Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase & Kaplan (1998) conducted a longitudinal study of 71 preschoolers with SLI/PLI. The study found out that if the difficulties are present at 5/6 years the prognosis is poor and the child is at risk for literacy, language and educational difficulties throughout life. By contrast, if the difficulties are resolved, the outlook for the language and cognitive outcomes is far better. Therefore, a need for prompt and timely diagnose can be crucial in determining the child's future developmental path.

Even though the criteria for research sampling excluded bilingual children, Australian researchers were investigating the accuracy of teachers' referral for monolingual children with a suspected SLI. Surprisingly or not, a considerable amount of misidentification occurred as "21-50% of the students not considered to be at-risk by teachers did in fact have a LI, whereas 59% of the students identified at-risk on formal screening were missed by teachers" (Antoniazzi et al. 2010, p.249).

A Botting et al. (1997) study in 242 already language impaired monolingual children in Manchester was aimed to investigate teachers'/therapists' opinions and formal assessment scores of SLI children. However, they found no strong agreement in the area of language

impairment between the two groups of professionals, even though on articulation and phonology this agreement reached up to 66%, on semantic/pragmatic impairment was very low.

Another Australian study in 2008 conducted by Jessup, Ward, Cahill & Keating showed a considerable misdiagnosis in language impairment in monolingual children in 286 student population of the grade 1(4-5 year olds) using Kindergarten Development Check (KDC). In this study 6,3% of children was reported false positive by the teachers i.e. were referred for provision unnecessarily, whereas 7,3 % of students (out of the whole number) were not identified at all, which is a high concern not only for the validity of the tool but also for the teachers' competences (Jessup et al. 2008).

However, venturing further into classroom practices, a quantitative questionnaire research done in the UK on knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of 89 teachers teaching PLI children (grade 1 and 2) during 2 school years showed positive attitude to educational inclusion of these students. Still, there was a considerable lack of knowledge as most teachers relied on "hands on" experience and books with some attending in service courses. (Sadler, 2005)

On the other hand a research by Letts and Hall (2003) in early years professionals, also done in UK, shows that confidence in diagnosis of language impairment (of monolinguals) is negatively related to the actual experience on the field. Teachers with no or 1 child identified (per class) were having more confidence in diagnosis compared to 5 or 6 identified children teachers had in class (Letts & Hall, 2003) where confidence level considerably fell. In addition to the poor use of information obtained by parents, there was a significant lack of information share among the teachers themselves as among teachers and speech therapists (Sadler, 2005).

All this above together poses the significant complexity teachers are facing on a daily basis when working with children. Therefore, Oritz et al. (2011) in the result of their study call for more careful referral by bilingual teachers for special education programmes. Even though, Norwegian school system differs considerably from USA's one, a common role teachers have in screening, assessment, and progress monitoring in order to prevent misdiagnosis and support struggling learners in their classroom is critical for education (Oritz et al., 2011).

And, in the light of the international research I am committed to understand how Norwegian teachers respond to such a challenge. I am committed to find out what is their opinion and use of tools and procedures leading to assessment.

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 The research problem recap

As my intention is to look into teachers' opinions on assessment for specific (primary) language impairment of bilingual children in the beginning of formal schooling, I chose qualitative perspective as it is more interested in understanding individuals' perceptions of the world (Bell, 2010). Therefore, interviews that offer indirect representations of people's experiences seem like a proper method of enquiry to achieve it (Silverman, 2006).

Consequently, stemming from my literature review the main research question is:

What are the teachers' opinions on assessment of sequential bilingual children for (specific) primary language impairment in early stage of formal schooling in Norway?

The following research subquestions will help me answer the main one:

- What are the teachers' experiences with bilingualism in their classroom?
- What are the teachers' experiences with SLI/PLI?
- What are the teachers' opinions on tools and procedures of this assessment?

## 3.2 Approach, methodology, method

### 3.2.1 Approach and methodology

To obtain such answers, I chose qualitative research but just as a starting point. Even though, it is widely believed such a research requires a constructivist and relativist ontology, I chose a realist one and epistemology that claims that reality is a social construction (Maxwell, 2012). Thus, my ontological approach will be a realist one, applied to qualitative research from what Maxwell termed as critical realism (2012). The choice stemmed from a remark that in critical realism, knowledge is gained by a process of explanation of the phenomena at deeper levels (Hartas, 2011) and the goal of the study is to achieve it. Therefore, a kind of qualitative

inquiry is used here as the exploration is needed and deep and complex understanding of the issue is required.

Also, as the research is highly context bound it is related to Creswell's claim that qualitative research is conducted when we want "to understand the *contexts* or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue." (2013, p.48) The context, in this research is given special attention, as very broadly Norwegian context is specific in its own cultural milieu due to a high recent immigration rate and still unassimilated immigrant community. For example, number of immigrants and Norwegian born with immigrant parents in 2004 was about 350.000 people, showing a steep progress that reached 750.000 people in 2014. (Statistik sentralbyrå, 2014). This is one of the reasons Norwegian schooling context with more recent immigration differs greatly from other multicultural countries as most of the parents of the sequential bilinguals hardly speak any Norwegian. This altogether creates a special cultural milieu that is to be explored. In a more narrow meaning of the contexts please refer below to Sampling, selecting participants and settings.

### **3.2.2 Method**

Interview was favoured as a specific form of conversation (Seidman, 2006; Kvale, 1996) in order to get information about the details of teachers' experiences on the topic of bilingualism, language impairment assessment and their views. Therefore, the lines of Seidman (2006) were followed that interviewing would be necessary if not sufficient, in case the goal of the research would be to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience. The attempt is to understand these intricate and complex questions of sequential bilingualism and primary language impairment in the light of assessment from teachers' point of view. Aiming to unfold the meaning of teachers' experiences (Kvale, 1996) in the intertwined areas of sequential bilingualism and primary language impairment I took heed about interviewing professional informants. As the researchers warned, even though the participants agree to participate in an interview they might not know or they might not be allowed to tell (f.e.g. due to the ethical confidentiality or voluntary self-censorship) the whole story (Cohen et al. 2011).

However, the choice of semistructured interview makes it twofold: focused on the subjective experience of the people involved in the situation; and the interviews that can be in part process oriented i.e. attempting to reconstruct the actions of participants (Witzel cited in

Cohen, Mannion, Morrison, 2011). Also, the interviews are specific, as it will require informants to describe specific situations and actions from their realities (Kvale, 1996). What I expect to produce by semi structured interviewing are representations or accounts of teachers' views or opinions not their direct 'experiences' but indirect representations of them (Byrne in Silverman, 2006).

One might say that it is possible to inquire into the same topic with questionnaires. However, interviews were chosen because beside of better response rates, in this way, by personal contact, (because all the people like their opinions being considered) the researcher is able to: a) explain the meaning of any terms that need clarification, b) to probe participants responses in order to gain more detailed data, c) to look for more details in ambiguous or unclear replies (Hartas, 2011) and d) to develop more details or clarify expressions (Bell, 2010). It is undoubtedly a time consuming technique, but regarding the fact Norwegian teachers are approached in English, it is essential that the tools are adaptable and flexible to ensure understanding. In addition, in semi structured interviews wording and order of questions can be substantially modified on the basis of the flow of the interview adding additional unplanned questions to follow up what interviewee says in greater depth which one cannot achieve by a questionnaire (Robson, 2011). However, to make use of this flexibility, one needs to be a skillful and experienced researcher (Robson, 2011) which is problematic here.

Being a novice researcher, I was aware of the fact that this flexibility could be my greatest friend, but also the biggest foe, as wording of the questions and phrasing should be careful to avoid suggesting answers. To reduce this, a practice of rephrasing the questions as well as a list of probing questions were made. However, reliance on personal spontaneity and communication skills was required because the interview takes advantage of the human characteristics of the interviewer (Hartas, 2011). On the other side of the coin of the direct interaction with participants, is the interviewer as a research instrument and "the quality of the knowledge produced in an interview depends on the skills, the sensitivity and the subject matter knowledge of the interviewer" (Kvale, 2007, p.49). Therefore, as the qualitative research is "participatory" it is necessary for the researcher and for the participants to engage and generate knowledge that is useful (Maxwell, 2012).

Another advantage of semistructured interviews over questionnaires is higher participant involvement and motivation from respondents as the interviews enable more to be said about

the research. Also, as mentioned above the interviews are better in tackling open ended and more difficult questions (Cohen et al. 2011).

### **3.3 Similar research**

The biggest amount of the research in the area of specific/primary language impairment assessment of bilinguals dwelled on the accuracy of teachers' judgements measuring it by statistical analysis. That means that majority of researchers in this area, most of whom used quantitative approaches often in a form of a questionnaire (Letts & Hall,2003; Williams, 2006; Antoniazzi et al., 2010; Verhoeven et al., 2011) inquired into the accuracy of the teachers' assessment.

Jessup, Ward, Cahill and Keating's (2008) longitudinal study on 286 children was again, concerned with the accuracy of language impairment assessment of teachers. Similar study, also from Australia, looking to explore the accuracy of teacher judgements of early oral language skills of children in first years of formal schooling (excluding bilinguals) used statistical analysis. This study showed a poor sensitivity of teachers and called for closer cooperation with speech and language therapists (Antoniazzi et al., 2010).

Rueda & Garcia (1996) inquired into teachers' perspectives on literacy assessment and instruction with minority students by using focus group interviews and observations in Californian schools in the USA. Of course, their sample was 54 teachers and their informants faced mostly Spanish as second language, but the authors acknowledge that there is a lack of studies on teacher's views on linguistic diversity in their classrooms (Rueda & Garcia, 1996).

Williams (2006) research in Australian teacher judgements of the students' language ability and phonological awareness in early years of schooling was conducted as a part of an action research. This research beside of the focus on the proper teacher referral for primary language impairment, used questionnaires on teachers as a way to rate their own knowledge of components of language and understanding of the relationship between language and literacy and confidence of identifying children at risk of difficulties. The sample thus encompassed was greater, but as mentioned earlier, I was more interested in qualitative component of the teachers' professional judgements.

Nevertheless, Jane Sadler (2005) from University of Sheffield conducted a 3 year long longitudinal study using a questionnaire on the topic of teachers' views regarding language impairment in monolingual children. However, except for inquiring into the degree of confidence in catering for different needs and knowledge of language impairment her research questions encompassed expectations of educational performance of children with language impairment and overall SEN provision. My research is more concerned with diagnosing language impairment when it appears in bilingual child and teachers' ways of discerning and coping with the joint two.

Letts and Hall (2003) conducted a research, in England, exploring early years' professionals' knowledge about speech and language development and impairment. The questionnaire consisted of general information of the participants and the formal knowledge obtained on language impairment as well as confidence in assessment and strategies the professionals deployed in their practice. In the last part of the questionnaire certain 'case studies' were used to grasp on the accuracy of the assessment.

Contrary to this research, I am not interested in assessing objective knowledge of the professionals and the accuracy, I am more interested in eliciting their familiarity with the primary language impairment manifestation when it is joint with bilingualism. And I am eager to explore what would in teachers' do and would it cause doubt or confusion in referral of such children.

If such an inquiry was conducted by questionnaires it would be difficult to anticipate the possible ranges or types of replies participants might have (Hartas, 2011). This must be taken into account due to a specific instance of a foreign student conducting a research in the Norwegian context. Moreover, the fact that because of the scope and budget of the project respondents used foreign language to answer the interview questions must be acknowledged. This possibly lead to many nuances of the meaning and comprehension of subtleness of expression to be irretrievably lost. This, however, would have made the research even less credible if such an issue had been addressed by a questionnaire.

### **3.4 Sampling, selecting participants and settings**

The sampling in the study was purposive sampling as specific contexts and needs of the study needed to be addressed in small samples (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2014; Robson, 2011).



Therefore, as the small samples are needed, we can rather talk about selection of participants and settings (Maxwell, 2012). In order to achieve this, as recommended, a guiding principle was used in selecting participants as identification of groups, settings and individuals that the best describe phenomenon of my interest. Next, I had to align to the most accessible and conducive environment to gaining understandings sought after (Maxwell, 2012). Moreover, with the term “theoretical sampling” some researchers describe that the theory read will also influence sampling technique, as it gives grounds to research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Maxwell, 2012). Also, what is important to acknowledge is that the sample influenced the data obtained, and through it the overall understanding of the phenomena studied. So, one has to make sure that variation in the phenomena of interest in the setting has been adequately understood (Maxwell, 2012).

The following criteria was included in research information letter and sent out to schools:

- That the teachers are willing to participate in an interview conducted in English
- That they teach or have recently taught 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- That there are/were at least 5 bilingual students in the teacher’s classroom (preferably more)
- That the teachers teaches or has taught a student/students with a language impairment or that they have had any encounter with it

The “participatory” engagement of the researcher includes negotiating relationships with gatekeepers, participants, and other stakeholders before the data collection (Maxwell, 2012). These processes are crucial for successful data collection.

### **3.5 Negotiating access**

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the sample was also a convenience sample, as access to schools proved to be a bit challenging. As many new researchers (myself included) fondly imagine they will be granted access to institutions, teachers, parents, it showed that this is usually NOT the case. Gaining access to people in institutions is one of the most difficult tasks (Cohen et al. 2011). With that in mind, negotiation access started with a contact to a potential gatekeeper to schools in August but the assistance was denied after a period of

silence, so the settings were approached individually and personally. The supervisor and the coordinator of the study programme helped in choosing schools to approach. Consequently, negotiating access started with a delay. The words of Cohen et al. (2011) that access can even prevent the research or “distort or change the original plans for the research” (2011, p.108) were of little comfort. Luckily, this method of guided personal inquiry and visits was successful as it seemed to be harder for the school managers to deny assistance in person than over the phone or email. Another issue that could be of importance was that a school year started with teachers’ strike due to the workload teachers were facing. In addition to that, there was an upcoming city election which stirred political influences in Norwegian urban area.

The research was conducted in a single school in the Norwegian urban area. Originally, there should have been 6 participants from 2 schools, but access to schools turned out to be a challenging as described above. However, access was obtained to one school and 4 informants. The informants varied in terms of teaching experience, educational background, and knowledge of the research concepts. Such a situation showed an advantage in achieving a valuable sample of the educational professionals, but made me stay quite alert to adapt with flexibility throughout the interview as to the particular situation of the context. An important thing to mention is the knowledge of English of the participants, as to none of them English was the first language. Occasionally there were instances where the language barrier influenced the information. Still, it is a great denominator of the findings in terms of hindering a lot of potential information.

See ethical considerations for more detailed discussion.

### **3.6 Data collection**

I feel obliged to start with a quote that describes the initial expectations of the data collection: “In an ideal world educational researchers would be able to plan and conduct their studies untrammelled; however the ideal world, in the poet Yeats’ words is ‘an image of air’” (Cohen et al. 2011, p.166). Therefore, the reality of data collection seemed considerably different from the ideal.

Starting with the philosophical stance, on the practical level, the main implication of critical realism is that data collected are seen as evidence for real phenomena and practices that are

unavailable for direct observation. So, the data obtained was in service to help in making inferences about the teachers' views on bilingualism and language impairment assessment.

### **3.6.1 Tool - Interview guide**

In order to achieve insight into teachers' opinions on language impairment of bilingual students the tool was devised, namely, the interview guide, see Appendix 1.

The interview guide was structured to encompass themes that were to be investigated. As Maxwell (2012) recommended, pure "translation" of the research questions into the guide was not attempted. Therefore, the interview guide was considered as a tool or means that will help in achieving greater insight into themes explored in the literature review. As it is a semi structured interview, there was no hesitation in asking questions related to the themes of the research that occurred during the interviews. The list of probing questions was made in addition, but later on it was incorporated into the guide. Still, the research was not tightly strict in terms of protocols and the situations often required immediate response during the interview.

As the questions were simplified in the guide, as suggested by the supervisor, the information letter (appendix 3) and the guide (appendix 1) were free from many of the technical terms, for example, the word bilingualism was used for sequential bilingualism, term language impairment was used for SLI/PLI. However, I attempted to make the terms clear during the interview. Only one interviewee was up front familiar with the terms of sequential bilingualism and specific (primary) language impairment. With one interviewee, however, such negotiation was skipped. The results obtained from this interview were carefully considered. Finally, I had to make a huge deal of compromise doing the field research. These compromises undoubtedly led to skewed results. In order to still keep a track of what has been done the research log was kept with alterations and observations.

### **3.6.2 Piloting the interview**

As a means to validate my interview guide (appendix 1) a pilot interview was conducted on September, 22. The pilot was conducted with a teacher from another cultural setting over skype. The interviewee was a teacher in a school that is mostly bilingual in Serbia. She is a native Serbian speaker and the interview was conducted in English. It was a different cultural

and socio-economic context and it was not a naturally occurring situation, but it generated valuable insights that lead of improvement of the questionnaire.

As Coar & Sim (2006) noted there was a power relation in the interview. Even though my pilot respondent was my close friend, she did consider it as a way of professional testing and analysis, as admitted in her feedback after the interview.

During the interview it happened that there was no knowledge of classroom assessment and a considerable part of the guiding questions were reduced and skipped. In the moment it was happening, it was not expected and it lead to the insecurity about what to do. It proved to be extremely difficult to devise new questions on the spot. Other insights include:

Phrasing of one of the questions caused defending position from the interviewee as she misheard a part of the question. It was observed it as a crucial miscommunication and the question was rephrased after the pilot.

Listening to the pilot interview afterwards, 2 opportunities to improvise and make a further inquiry into the statement were missed. Active listening was underlined as crucial.

The whole interview took about 20 minutes which was surprisingly short ; even though the assessment part was skipped.

As a consequence some probing questions were added and some of the complex questions offered rephrasing.

### **3.6.3 Interviewing actually**

Before leaving home, on the first day of interviewing, I did my best to keep in mind practical considerations in conducting interviews I got from Hartas (2011) in terms of interview protocol. Since the first two interviews were made on the same day subsequently, 22.09.2014, there was no time to reflect between them as they occurred together. As Bell (2010) noticed and I experienced it, it is difficult to strike the proper “balance between complete objectivity and trying to put interviewees on ease” (p.171). However, after the completion of the first two interviews, there were 2 weeks to reflect and further improve certain aspects of the interview guide. Kvale’s (2007) advice was used together with Arksey and Knight’s (1999) box of evaluating interview practices (p.108) to think about the interviews and find solutions to the

issues that occurred. As a result the interview guide was revised again, but this time with minimum alterations, with the purpose of clarifying some concepts in English in a greater detail and finding the corresponding Norwegian words.

To transcribe interviews I used Silverman (2006) simplified transcription symbols.

After the transcription of the first interview it was observed that many things were done wrong. I was nervous during the interview and it was reflected in the impatience to wait for the answers. Unfortunately the pilot interview was of much better quality than the actual first interview. Also, at some points too many questions were made at the same time. At one occasion, I even managed to misguide the participant by using the wrong word for specific language impairment in Norwegian to help him understand the crucial part of the research.

Luckily, my following interviews were of much better quality. In 2 cases, however, informants had limited time at their disposal, so I had to compromise and fit in their schedule.

The memos in terms of field notes were kept during and after the interviews, as (Bell, 2010; Maxwell 2012; Robson, 2011) recommended. They were very valuable during the analysis. It was very challenging to take longer notes than a word or two during the interviews as one has to focus on interviewee all the time as well. However, directly after three of the interviews a few observations were written. Memos were also kept during the transcription of the interviews, as well, which helped throughout the analysis.

I offered to interviewees to send them to check analysis if they wanted to. By doing so I wanted to establish inter-rater reliability as I knew I could hardly expect all of them to reply. Still, all the participants agreed and left me their email addresses. Unfortunately, even though some of them might have wanted to participate in triangulation of data, there was no time to invite their comprehensive feedback. The analysis was sent and asked only for objections. Since no objections were made the original analysis was kept achieving descriptive validity.

Regarding the interviewees, to the best of my knowledge, a nice rapport was achieved with all of them. I do believe they were relaxed and they seemed natural. However, in one of the interviews I think there was a power relation Coar & Sim (2007) mentioned earlier as the interviewee was showing signs of being nervous and uncomfortable. I recognised it and I tried to be more informal, relaxed and friendly.

### 3.7 Data analysis

To increase the reliability the log was kept with the notes following the every interview and they were verbatim transcribed by myself.

While transcribing, the note of any additional records was kept, in the sense of ideas or thoughts that occurred in order to help with the analysis. I listened the interviews many times and read the written data in the stage of immersion. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. I used categorizing and connecting strategies in coding as proposed in Maxwell (2012). It included segmenting the data in a form of abstracting or ‘conceptualizing’. It started from segments (as the smallest unit) moved to concepts defining categories by making comparisons among thus created segments (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). To create codes I used Boyatzis (1998) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996). Initial coding was done following the principle of inclusivity (Braun and Clarke, 2012) and combined coding (Seal, 2012). This seemed a good idea but left me with too many codes to sift through. So, I had to rephrase my research questions again, stick them on the wall and resifted the data with spider web diagrams creating preliminary themes and thinking about their relevance for my research questions. The research questions were rephrased a couple of times during the study, but they kept the original focus, however they had to adapt to the alterations the data brought in.

Different colours were used to mark different preliminary themes as recommended by (Braun & Clarke, 2012, Ryan, 2006). During the analysis the advice of Cleave (2012) was followed and some concept maps were made. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) proposed analysis in terms of matrices and network displays which were very practical to create an overview of themes and categories. The data was kept together, as I believed the themes came from the contexts of narratives. Taking some excerpts out of the context seemed hard enough, as the purpose of the study is to voice the teachers’ opinions in a credible and honest way. Some themes appeared in the data, like the teacher’s role and experience share, institutional structure in assessment. The themes were grouped in operational categories that were established by the researcher, therefore they were etic (Maxwell, 2003). In order to establish inter-rater reliability, I intended to send the preliminary analysis to the informants for triangulation. However, only descriptive and interpretive validity was established by asking for objections of analysis via email.

## **3.8 Validity and generalization**

### **3.8.1 Assessment of the method**

The lack of standardisation in interviewing and biases that are difficult to rule out can pose significant questions of reliability. As a highly subjective technique, individual researchers comparing to research team have a constant bias. It depends on personal convictions and it can occur in many ways deliberately and unwittingly (Bell,2010). That is why she recommends being conscious of it, keeping it in mind, reflect and constantly question oneself in a critical way. Moreover, to enhance my validity I tried to build rapport with interviewees and to establish trust and openness with them (Arksey and Knight, 1999).

However, the conception of an interview resting in constructivism is endorsed where interviewer and interviewee construct the interview together in the event of a social encounter (Cohen et al., 2011). Social distance, mutual trust and interviewer's control varied in a certain degree in every interview as a way of power relations (Maxwell,2012). Moreover, feeling of uneasiness and some communication issues are inevitable to occur: "many of the meanings which are clear to one will be relatively opaque to the other, even when the intention is genuine communication" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.410). It is also necessary to acknowledge the impossibility to bring all aspects of encounter within the rational control. Our understanding is inevitably incomplete and fallible and shaped by particular assumptions and perspective we bring into the research as 'lenses' through which we see the world (Maxwell, 2012).

As advised by Bell(2010), and Arksey and Knight (1999), I also attempted to create the set of questions that will cover my research topic and address my research questions in the best possible way using probing and feedback from my pilot interview and using the answers obtained for improvement.

### **3.8.2 Assessment of the research**

#### **Validity or trustworthiness**

Validity in this research pertains to the accounts or conclusions reached by using particular method(semi-structured interview) in a particular context (a Norwegian school) for a particular purpose (To find out the teachers' opinions on bilingualism and assessment on language impairment) (Maxwell, 2012). So, this research can only be seen as an 'exemplar' of the quality research. In realism there is no definite measure of validity of any study. There is only a possibility left to test one's conclusions against both existing and potential evidence with the aim to find alternative interpretations or validity threats. So validity rests in the evaluations of conclusions, accounts and inferences as a consequence of interaction of the procedures with the phenomena being studied.

### **Descriptive validity**

Rests in account of literal sequence of events and does not depend on the view point. It deals only with facts and does not involve any inferences to phenomena studied. It is theory laden but free from disagreement. In this case it would be words of the informants from the interview (Maxwell, 2012). They were verbatim transcribed by myself and any significant stress or change is marked in the transcripts consequently.

### **Interpretative validity**

Here, the aspect of understanding is central to interpretative research. This approach seeks to understand phenomena from an emic perspective. So, the interpretative account rests on language and thought of the people studied and relies as much on their words and concepts. It makes inferences by the researcher on participants' accounts. It also includes beliefs, unconscious intentions and values of the participants (Maxwell, 2012).

This validity was established by sending the preliminary analysis data to participants of the study. No objections to interpretations were made.

### **Theoretical validity**

Addresses theoretical perspective and construction the researcher develops during the study. The distinction between theoretical and interpretative validity is not clear and is based on the presence or absence of agreement within the inquirers about descriptive or interpretative



terms used. Any disagreement will shift validity from descriptive or interpretative to theoretical (Maxwell, 2012).

This validity was attempted to be established but it is on the behalf of the reader to test this validity.

### **Generalizability or fittingness or contextualization**

Generalization in qualitative research takes place through developing a theory that has sense only of the particular persons studied, and also shows that the same processes in different situations can lead to a completely different result (Maxwell, 2012).

Maxwell (2012) talks about internal and external generalizability where internal one sets an illumination on the setting and the population studied. This one was attempted to be established, but has to be noted that as interview is a social situation and depends on the interviewer oneself and it may miss other perspectives not expressed in an interview.

External generalizability to other contexts and settings cannot be claimed as the study is a small scale one with only 4 participants.

### **Evaluative validity**

As highly disputable issue in qualitative research it is hard to make any claim about evaluative validity in this research. However, as critics of the evaluative validity will raise the question of evaluative validity of their account, and no view is immune to that.

## **3.9 Ethical considerations**

As Kvale (1996) points out, “an interview inquiry is a moral enterprise”(p.109). He goes on further into the interaction of the interviewer and interviewee as the knowledge thus produced “affects our understanding of the human situation” (p.109). He gives account of 3 ethical theories namely: consent, confidentiality and consequences.

### **3.9.1 Consent**

Respecting authorities provision, NSD application was made in July, see Appendix 2. After the initial contact with gate keepers, research information letter (Appendix 3) was sent to schools during the negotiation for access. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. They were required to read and sign information letter and they were also explained verbally in short about the research, and its aims. They were also asked for the permission to audiotape the interview with mention that only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the material and that after transcription it will be destroyed. They were also told that their names will not be used and that their identity won't be recognisable in the outcome of the research. They were also informed that they can decide to withdraw from the research anytime.

### **3.9.2 Confidentiality**

Next, the confidentiality of the participants is assured giving them pseudonyms that do not reveal their true identity. In addition to that recorded interviews and transcripts are available only to the researcher and her supervisor, they are safely stored and protected and will be destroyed after the completion of the research. Any private data identifying either subjects or school as a place of the research will not be reported.

### **3.9.3 Consequences**

It is not necessary to say that true reporting is one of the issues that is at the very core of interviewing, as the researcher is to be truthful and just towards the informants. This poses a serious question and may lead the researcher into extremes. One way is that I found it hard to resist was that the researcher starts to be mechanically reproducing data afraid to make any analysis on it. Another way is to invite informants and analyze data with them asking for clarification and interpretation, which is a good way of doing, and it was planned here but due to constraints in time and other sources it was not conducted. The third option is analyzing data with the value judgments and the perspective of the researcher. If the third way is chosen, the researcher needs a considerable reflexivity on his/her own behalf (Alvesson, 2011). This was attempted by logs and memos during the interviews, transcription and analysis. However, it proved a lot of work and hard to incorporate in greater deal.

## 4 Data analysis

I used the thematic analysis to analyse the data (Ryan, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). My coding was combined, as major codes and categories were theoretically developed but some originated within the data set (Seal, 2012).

The central or grouping themes were identified from the literature:

- Experiencing sequential bilingualism as a teacher
- Noticing a primary (specific) language impairment in children
- Assessing bilinguals

During the analysis of the data other majority of the subthemes were data driven:

- Teachers' individual role and cooperation in assessment
- Institutional structure and administrative procedures

These subthemes will be introduced respectively under the main themes' section.

Before moving to the themes, it might be necessary to reiterate once again, that the major issue in the data collection was the language of the data collection. This was affecting the data obtained in two ways:

Informants were not native English speakers and neither was the researcher. Much of the information lies in the subtleties of expression that therefore couldn't be properly captured.

The very scope of the research included 'technical' terms or professional jargon which to all but one informant was unfamiliar. The expressions like sequential bilingualism and specific language impairment were formally avoided in the protocol and the interview guide, but the terms were negotiated in the conversation before the beginning of the interview as a way of introducing the project. Nevertheless, this procedure was followed with all but one participant, so a particularly careful and conscious analysis of the data obtained in this interview was made.

## 4.1 Experiencing bilingualism from teachers' point of view

This theme shows teachers' experiences of bilingualism, as the school the interviews were conducted in was almost bilingual in its entirety. Therefore, during the interviews many of the teachers focused on their experience of bilingualism and the issues that accompanied it. The theme captures teachers' experiences and negotiations of the concepts of bilingualism in their classrooms as well as exploration of the understandings valid for their teaching practice.

### 4.1.1 Bilingualism vs/and monolingualism

For teachers, in practice, it seemed hard to draw the line between the sequential and simultaneous bilingualism which they would often consider close to monolingualism. As Madeline observed: *"if they speak same language at home and the school so it would be the same as a child who speaks only one language."* Mark's description captured the description of the one of such students:

*"I have one his mother is from the Philippines (0.3) but I do believe he doesn't speak that language they only speak Norwegian (.) at home and that is what she says(.) so (.) but I am not quite sure. Because his father is Norwegian, so:: (.) well I do believe it when she says it. But he has, he is used to different languages as well because (.) when they often go to holidays. That is the only one who is close to having just one language at home."*

However, seems that in practice, facing a great variety of sequential bilinguals' language skills in the classroom narrows the difference observed between simultaneous bilinguals and monolinguals as seen by teachers. In this excerpt we can also see that the parent was a source of confirmation of the language use within a family.

This narrowness of the perception of such difference is also reflected in the comment on the bilingualism in Toril's own child:

*"I have bilingual children coming in who were quite able, speak well, have good system of concepts. And than you have others who don't speak a word can't use it, can't use Norwegian to learn new things so it is quite varied but it with all bilingual children more or less you have to have the knowledge that they are bilingual and that when you go into new topics in the education you have to make sure that they have the basic understanding, the basic concepts*

*before you move on. That is one thing I think it is very important. But, say that, my child is bilingual, for example Norwegian English and I don't think she and her teachers have you know taught her differently than Norwegian students, so:::*"

In addition to the subtheme explained above, in the excerpt we can observe another category, that the language competence in Norwegian in early grades obviously varies greatly from student to student. However, the most important part outlined in the excerpt is the professionals' preparedness to act as a facilitator of positive educational experience on a practical level "to make sure they have basic understanding", as Toril puts it.

#### **4.1.2 Language competence variations among bilinguals**

For example, another informant, Axel, confirming Toril's part of the narrative about variety of language competence noticed:

*"But (0.1) it <language competence> ranges from like adekvat or (nodding as a sign of understanding) yeah, adekvat competency to really low::: I would say."*

A very resourceful insight dealing with variations in language competence but also about the theory and practice comes from an insightful professional who tackles sensitive topics of semilingualism and emergentism through her narrative.

*"(.) many says that I read in books that it is very good for children to have diff., two languages because it gives them a bigger vocabulary, or they can connect the one of the languages to the other one and that is like a plus for the kids who has these two languages (.) Amm.. and so in theory one should think it is (.) good to have two languages and (.)instead of just one(0.2)yeah But (.)from what I see I think from what I see is that (2) the potential hasn't been used, at least not for my children, the children in my class the potential that is there has never been fully used, so I would imagine that it is more confusing for them to have two languages than just one. (0.4)Because what I think when the two languages go together from they're babies to they start school that would be very positive. But for many of these children they have only one language until they start the school and then (.) they just have some Norwegian in the kindergarten and ahh then(.) it is just more confusing than helpful (.)"*

Consequently the data shows discrepancy between a theoretical knowledge according to which the bilingualism is beneficial for the development of children and the reality that

teachers experience every day. In the daily practice shortcomings outweigh the benefits and children are left in the limbo between potentially acquiring two but practically neither of the languages. So, even though in theory fostering sequential bilingualism is good what it leads to in practice, in Mark’s view is a confusion for the child with the potential wasted.

Overall attitudes towards bilingualism are given in the table 1 below.

Interview participant	Attitude towards bilingualism
Axel	Implied bad
Mark	Theoretically good but practically bad
Toril	Good, teachers should adapt
Madeline	Ambiguous, but implied bad

Table 1.

The differences in the attitude could come from their experiences, as some of the informants were young teachers and they were facing such a challenge of teaching in almost completely bilingual school for the first time.

Nevertheless not much enthusiasm was captured in the interviews, overall feeling was that it is seen as a difficulty to be overcome.

## 4.2 Noticing primary (specific) language impairment (PLI/SLI) in children

The theme deals with noticing PLI/SLI in the classroom. It encompasses two subthemes that emerged from the interview data. All the procedures and resources a teacher passively employs to be able to spot a potential PLI/SLI with a student. The information thus obtained is not by intervention but only as a way of background data collection. The theme is divided in the two subthemes using the quotes from the interviews as markers.

“Uncovering” of the PLI/ SLI is related to the external sources. It includes the background information the teachers make use of in relation to their students. It also incorporates the ways

and methods teachers used in order to obtain such information as well as the available sources like inter institutional cooperation.

“What signs to look for” includes signs teachers got mostly by observing a student. It includes social problems, phonetic problems etc. that students demonstrated in the class. It is mainly focused on the student and the inferences obtained in working directly with each other.

### **“Uncovering”**

As explored in a greater extent in two of my interviews “uncovering” is an essential part of the assessment. The absence of it may lead to misidentification or setting the wrong expectations. The best results are achieved with information share among institutions and parent cooperation.

In a few cases, as Toril observes, kindergartens already raised the issues: “*as I said 2 or 3 <out of 5> were discovered in the kindergarten so we did not do the uncovering*” she goes on to explain how the “uncovering” process works, how it can be a challenge for early grades and how it just recently improved:

*“We’ve seen increasingly in the last few years that children with SSV (SLI) that kindergartens were starting to notice. I have never seen it before but in the last five or six years we had 2 or cases from kindergarten. They were already noticed about language impairment at an early age which was wonderful because it was never before, we had to slowly discover it ourselves. It is very hard to tell whether that it is just a second language slow development whether they have general language impairment or whether it’s a SLI. It is very hard to judge. But we try to use the parents as a resource when it comes to that. Because we noticed that a lot of parents they have had worries about children’s language development and with SSV it is quite often from an early age on, they don’t babble as much other kids do or in normal language development. So we try to use, when we suspect something we try to talk a lot to the parents”*

Here, we can see what kind of difficulties can appear in SLI assessment. What was described by other informants as well as a common practice is interviewing parents. So, we can see how parent cooperation can prove a valuable resource in order to prevent misidentification in case kindergartens do not make a referral.

In reinforcing the idea of importance of the background information for the proper “uncovering” Madeleine said:

*“So, for my experience the first thing I used to do is get the information from parents, from the kindergarten if the child has that problem before or the child has learnt the language before. If they speak at home that language...”*

It is very important to point out that the data shows the the need to include multiple stakeholders in order to bring all the necessary information about the child into the foreground before the preliminary assessment. However, it seems that teachers are directly involved in voicing this need of information exchange between the stakeholders.

### **“What signs to look for”**

This subtheme as mentioned before is characterised by the signs teachers find in a child passively, usually by observation. What Toril observed as indicators of drawing the attention to SLI seemed to be:

*“ social signs, no friends, difficulties in interaction with other children for example also language when it comes to giving a message for example they cannot deal with messages with 2 or 3 <actions>”*

Mark described one of the students indicating the problem more implicitly:

*“ He speaks very, (.) the sound, he speaks very unclear it is very difficult to hear what he says. And it’s obvious that he has something, there is something wrong with the sounds that he makes, some of the words he says, there is something wrong.”*

So consequently, findings are that teachers developed a sensitivity in observation of their students on different levels. Sensing that there is something wrong, teachers are observant and they tend to look for some of the passive signs before they take action.

The theme actually shows that a crucial portion of the information obtained comes from sources that are not necessarily in class. Teachers proactively seek additional information available in order to incorporate it and create a bigger picture out of the puzzle. In doing so, they depend a lot on the cooperation from external sources.



### 4.3 Assessing bilinguals theme

This theme is a central theme to the research. It is also closely related to the previous two ones. The theme includes the procedures conducted in order to assess a bilingual for PLI/SLI. It encompasses tools and ways such an assessment is made in an active way. Subthemes (subcategories) include:

- Teachers' role and experience share
- Tests and NSL test
- Institutional structure and bureaucracy

Teachers' role in assessment has been crucial for early discovery of PLI/SLI. All the interviewees acknowledged the importance of the individual experience of the teacher and team work for assessment of sequential bilinguals for SLI/PLI. Although all the teachers, first and foremost, rely on their assigned class teams for help, seems that more experienced teachers were readier to explore intervention techniques drawing from their own expertise as Madleine observes:

*“I think I have a good experience because now I was teaching for the last 12 years, so I know what is the problem, what kind of problem they have, how to assist them how to help them and how to give advice for the parent who have that kind of children. Because of, because my experience, I have meet a lot of children who has a different kind of problems affecting their ability to learn. So I have good you know...”*

Whereas not so experienced teachers would rather consult colleagues prior to some concrete steps. School ethos facilitated this experience exchange as Mark explains:

*“we have a close relationship between all we (.) all the people we work with, so it is very natural for us to go to (.)each other if we have problems so very fast if we detect there is something we talk to each other we consult each other about it Not really (2) formal but during the cup of coffee or over lunch like ok, I have this can you help me and I have very problem, so it is very easy to contact others.”*

So findings imply that cooperation and information share and experience share lead to less anxiety and stress and possibility of error when it comes to assessment of SLI/PLI in

bilinguals. However, data showed that new teachers were more ready to endorse and seek the council of their colleagues than some of the experienced professionals. This could be due to the system that reinforces the individual responsibility of the teacher that in experienced professionals was taken for granted and accepted, whereas in novice teachers was not yet instilled, so they were more flexible and ready to explore alternative paths. As Mark depicted: *“then my profession would have been to teach and to make room for teaching and not, you know, not test.”*

### **4.3.1 Tests and NSL (Norsk som læringspråk) test evaluation**

All the teachers mentioned NSL test when asked about formal testing of sequential bilinguals for SLI/PLI. Even though they all noted that NSL is a test with the main focus on testing the children’s knowledge of Norwegian, most of the teachers considered it as an indispensable tool in assessment of children’s overall abilities in language. Toril said it *“gives us a::: broad view on how the child a::: masters for example words, ...”* Mark noted it *“gives us an indication on how good they are in Norwegian”*.

However, the teachers were also critical towards the test. One of them noticed that some pictures were ambiguous and another one considered a child’s socio-economic background can be a reason of a poor performance. Madeline provided an example:

*“if they never go to the mountain and don’t know what the tent is you can’t test them. You can’t ask what is this if the child says I don’t know it, you can’t say the child has a problem, because they haven’t never seen it.”*

Moreover, most of the teachers were aware of other tests (Carlsten and Arbeitsproven), but usually they haven’t had any experience with them they just had to rely on their creativity or *“use my own system trying to figure out”*. Another teacher noted:

*“These are tests I can do, but there are NO tests good enough to uncover SSV(SLI/PLI) for bilingual children. There aren’t any. SO you have to use your, you have to uncover as much as you can by using various methods and that includes also interviewing parents, I think, very important.”*

In this excerpt she shows awareness of the lack of proper tests for the assessment, but she goes beyond. She reinforces the responsibility and creativity that is upon the teacher when it

comes to the assessment of children, and the indispensability of the cooperation of the multiple stakeholders which was discussed in the previous section.

Consequently, it is shown that there was no experience with SLI/PLI tests and that the only test used to test language in general was NSL. However, teachers showed a critical stance towards the test as well as sense of personal responsibility and creativity to find methods (including intervention) that could lead to appropriate assessment.

#### **4.4.3. Institutional structure and bureaucracy**

The assessment, as revealed during the data collection process, is a part of a bureaucratic procedure in part. Much of the assessment must be done using certain procedures and following them. These rules and procedures are slow as Mark commented but need to be followed as Toril suggested: *“I write reports which I send to resource team that send to PPT”*. Resource team (resurssteamet) is a school team that consists of a SENCO, a school leader and a member of a PPT it is a team within the school that deals with the SEN provision and support. A level higher in hierarchy is a PPT (Pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste/Pedagogical-psychological service) that is a service on the level of the local authority (kommune) with the aim of counselling and expert advisory. The team consists of the professionals in the field of pedagogy and psychology and can include speech and language therapist (logoped) and a social worker (Hjukse, 2012; Pettersen, 2010).

Even though it seemed that experienced teachers were more into the ropes of the customary procedures of the system they were in a way used to it. They were not critically examining it but what is more, they took the procedures for granted, probably internalising the structure. For the new teachers, on the other hand, the processes seemed slow, intricate and daunting:

*“You know if I could wish it I would say that (.) if someone professional could have like evaluated situation right away it would be much easier than to go through the whole process because last year I was completely new I didn’t know what to look for at all. This year I have some more grip what can I do how do I do it. It would have been much easier if we could just say hey (.) you are professional, can you test this? And they would say sure, no problem. Because(.) yeah(.) it is difficult when as a teacher you are supposed to do so many things and know so many different things.”*

This excerpt from Mark's interview shows the new teacher's perspective onto the assessment processes. It also proves that a greater accessibility and flexibility of the pool of experts is needed to help with the assessment of children. This flexibility is obstructed by administrative and bureaucratic processes that delay the assessment of children and impose more responsibilities on teachers. The excerpt also reveals the burden of responsibility the teachers face on a daily basis and the myriad of the tasks and accountability they face.

### **4.3.2 Conclusion**

Finally, the analysis of the themes showed that on a practical level teachers proved to be highly interested in the assessment, in general. However, what they were having in mind most of the time during the data collection seemed to be more oriented to the overcoming bilingualism as an obstacle in the assessment. In this meaning the assessment is not only encompassing SLI/PLI assessment because teachers were rarely involved in it, as the data showed. Rather, the assessment in their sense was broader term encompassing language (NSL), skills and development. Thus, the variety of home languages, and constant encounter with different kinds of bilingualism including semilingualism, created the necessity and inevitability of the assessment of the developmental potential and language use.

Next, even though overburdened with daily responsibilities teachers showed preparedness to act as individuals and teams. They demonstrated readiness to actively seek cooperation from other stakeholders in children's lives (kindergartens, parents etc) with the aim of improved assessment. Even though the creativity in their approaches and methods showed greater sensitivity for individual students, the demand for easily accessible professional service was articulated.

In the end it finally seemed that when it came to the formal official assessment of their students for SLI, teachers had neither the experience nor the knowledge of it. At the very bottom, their role is crucial in pre-assessment (identification) and their knowledge and skills will be discussed in this light. Therefore, socio-economic and cultural sensitivity proved to be a useful partner in such an assessment. In order to seek a professional expertise from a SLT they are obliged to resort to the intricate and time-consuming bureaucratic and administrative procedures.

# 5 Discussion

The research objective was to voice the teachers' opinions on the assessment for SLI/PLI for sequential bilinguals.

## 5.1 Theme experiencing bilingualism from teachers' point of view

This theme was aiming to capture research subquestion 1: What are the teachers' experiences with bilingualism in their classroom?

### 5.1.1 Bilingualism, monolingualism, semilingualism as seen by teachers

#### Attitudes and beliefs

The study found that teachers' overall attitude towards bilingualism was not openly negative, but quite implied a negative tone. They mostly appeared to speak about bilingualism as a problem to be overcome and during the interviews they mostly focused on this part. The data also showed that teachers were facing different levels of language use in their classrooms and that children they taught were on a different level in the language domain. This difference in language and cognition levels of the students reflected itself in the teachers' attitude towards bilingualism. However, there was no unanimous overall either positive or negative feeling towards bilingualism among the professionals, because one of them actually thought it was beneficial, as presented in table 1 in the analysis chapter. The attitude differences in the study may stem from experiential encounter and personal belief, as well, because the sample was rather small.

The similar conclusion of incoherence of teachers' attitudes was reached in a study by Rueda and Garcia (1996). This quantitative study found no congruence in teachers' views on bilingualism/biliteracy. However, they tended to be less than positive with a wide variation in beliefs.

Nevertheless, reasons for such a situation in this study can be other and numerous. One of them might be that the school was in an immigrant area and that since it was almost bilingual

in its entirety it was a pressing issue for the professionals. Moreover, their attitudes could be on a higher level influenced by growing general rightist mood in Europe. This can also make political grounds for a touchy debate of white flight and ‘immigrant only’ suburbs in Norway.

### **Semilingualism**

Further into the politically sensitive area, teachers’ opinions on the comparisons between abilities and understanding of variations among bilinguals are likely to be explained by semilingualism or ‘limited bilingualism’ hypothesis (Cummins, 1979). According to the findings of the study teachers had issues with children grasping the concepts. As one of the teachers reported they potentially had two but practically couldn’t use either of the languages. Given the fact the school was in an immigrant area with low socio-economic status it can happen that children were rather semilingual than bilingual as they most likely displayed limited level of literacy in both, their native language (of home) and second language (of school).

As Clinton, Oritz and La Serna Guilar (2014) reported semilingual children have the biggest issue with vocabulary, pronunciation and mapping phoneme to grapheme due to the environmental deprivation they are facing. In addition to this, Hart & Risley (cited in Clinton et al., 2014) measured the differences in vocabulary between children of low-socio economic status and middle-class. They found out that the difference was considerable amounting in thousands of words. On the other hand, MacSwan (2000) was pretty harsh in his claims saying that some children have no language. As a consequence of his semilingualism hypothesis in 1991 many Spanish children in the USA were tested on Spanish knowledge prior to the school entrance. Still, Escamilla (2006) found that even in older grades in schools bi-illiteracy (as she termed it) is still a burning issue.

To conclude with, implications of semilingualism for the educational cycle are considerable. They can prevent child of having proper support in both languages and can lead to poor educational performance that leaves the children in a vicious circle. A proper assessment is needed in both languages in order to respond properly to the challenge of potentially acquiring two, but practically neither of the languages.

### **Bilingualism (additive, recursive, CUP)**

The potential knowledge of the two languages of able bilinguals who have the concepts and can grasp the meaning (as an informant said) could be seen in lieu of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). CUP or the “dual iceberg” principle implies that experience in either of languages can promote underlying proficiency in both. Thus the two languages are seen as tips of the dual iceberg, whereas CUP stays “underwater” (Cummins, 1989).

This theoretical concept, though wonderfully conceived, would hardly be of any use in this situation, as children in the school were mostly immigrant and parents of some of them could neither read nor write. As the analysis of the data showed it was hard for teachers to see cognitive advantages of bilingualism in such a situation. Instead, they experienced that it brought confusion to children, as the interview data revealed and set them far from the standard of CUP (common underlying proficiency) and dual iceberg model. Unfortunately, it seems that the linguistic situation of the children rather led to subtractive, maybe sometimes even recursive bilingualism than additive one depriving them of both fluency and grammatical basis in both languages (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2011). Thus, leaving the speakers without BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) in any language by the school age makes the process very hard for educational professionals. Furthermore, in this position, Cummins complementary concept of CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) seems even further away, almost unattainable for the children and the teachers.

In the midst of such an affluent society as Norwegian it goes without doubt that the balance of bilingualism in the end would come out as beneficial. Knowing two cultures, being better at performance of cognitive tasks (Bialystok, 2011; Harlin & Paneque, 2006) etc. would be only some out of numerous developmental advantages of bilinguals. The knowledge that it might not work for everyone is not comforting at all.

### **Bilingualism, good or bad?**

Unfortunately, the experiences of the teachers had reaffirmed the polarisation of the elitist debate on bilingualism. In the interviews of this study, one of the teachers, being a parent of the bilingual child and equalising him/her to monolingual, even reinforces the gap of social class, social circumstances and adequate parental support the children of the school might lack. The debate the recent blog about bilingualism raised in which being bilingual was being good for the rich, but bad for the poor may be an attempt to depict the situation (Strauss, 2014). This article sees bilingualism as enriching only in the context of a middle class French-

English bilingual, but as a detrimental factor when it is about a low-class immigrant child. Regardless of the material wealth, it is educational, literacy assets and invaluable guidance from middle class parents that seem to be unreachable to illiterate immigrants fleeing war and extreme poverty. Luckily, this is not on teachers to leverage, but as people involved in such a system and fighting its implications how far can they really go then?

Actually, as the teachers acknowledged the language variations in their classes were huge. All of them witnessed individual differences in abilities, cognition, language skills and they were ready to mediate them. This eagerness of teachers to help their students in every possible way is beneficial to overall educational attainment (Escamilla, 2006). In addition to this, as De Houwer (2009) wrote, bilingualism is not a choice and therefore, what is needed is to find in what conditions and circumstances bilingual children thrive. Nevertheless, as we could see so far, it is hardly a homogenous group we are talking about and much of the focus must go to the assessment of the individual differences in terms of social, contextual and educational factors before any referral is made (Bialystok and Cummins, 1991).

Contrasting the sequential bilingualism stories simultaneous bilingualism is seen in a different way. In view of the above, it comes as no surprise that the teachers compared simultaneous bilingualism to monolingualism as to educational practices it has no direct implications. According to Paradis et al. (2011) for simultaneous bilinguals the similar input in both languages would have already occurred by the school age and grammar and vocabulary of the both languages would be already well established. Even though they might not be considered as two monolinguals in one (De Houwer, 2009), but as the data showed “close to”, using the monolingual standards in their assessments might be overreaching (Grosjean, 1989). Still, it comes as no surprise for professionals to see no conspicuous implications of such bilingualism at school as the child is able to grasp the concepts in either of the languages. The only difference is that the languages would be called dominant and non-dominant (Kohnert, 2008) or A and Alpha (De Houwer, 2009).

As seen above the difference between the theory and the reality seems considerable and significant. There seems to be little of sequential bilingualism’s positive sides in school environment. Or, on the contrary, perhaps, what preoccupied informants’ and the researcher’s mind were extreme instances. Whichever of the interpretations you may deem correct, careful assessment of the circumstances of the child’s overall upbringing must be taken into the account in order to give a fair start and proper support to everyone. It must be done



regardless of their background but with regard to their environment that needs to foster the overall development.

## **5.2 Primary (specific) language impairment (PLI/SLI) in children**

What dominated the teachers' narratives of suspicion or early diagnosis of SLI/PLI in children could be divided in two categories.

- Social signs
- Phonological signs

### **Social signs**

The data showed teachers were receptive of social and behavioural signs their students may display regarding the assessment of SLI/PLI. As one of the interviewees noted no friends and low level of communication with mates could give the hints of difficulties. As another participant experienced, a behavioural problem can also stem from SLI/PLI impairment. According to Kohnert (2010) much of the children are still diagnosed on the basis of behavioural data. Goodyer (2000) would connect it to showing inability to communicate or failure to understand another person's perspective. Low levels of socialisations of SLI/PLI affected children could also stem from subtle emotional difficulties like low confidence and social withdrawal (Goodyer, 2000). Therefore, it is good that teachers are observant to their students' behaviour as a process of non-standardised assessment. Goodyer (2000), also, mentions the risk of emotional problems due to negative effects of social cognitive development in SLI/PLI affected children that may lead to behavioural problems.

It seems that teachers were observant and following their students. Their commitment to resolving their students' difficulties was apparently considerable. However, their agility in observation hopefully helped the students get the expertise assessment duly.

### **Phonological signs**

Another group of signs, relatively more expected and more conspicuous are phonological signs. In accordance with the Swedish study of Hansson and Nettelbladt (2002) teachers

spotted vulnerability in phonology of their students. One of the informants in the study noted of just having something wrong with the student's pronunciation. Another teacher underlined the importance of dynamic assessment and response to intervention in her case as she was working with the student directly in instructing him/her. In addition to that, not all the teachers seemed very confident in their judgement of phonological issues. One of them was referred back and forth by the administration asking for help from a speech and language therapist (SLT). As the official procedure seemed long and bureaucratic the informant thought it unnecessary, being ready to abolish formalities.

The research showed that difficulty of using the phonological signs when diagnosing SLI/PLI in bilinguals was expected as it would stem from similarities of mistakes that could be made during learning a language and in SLI/PLI manifestation. However, we must keep in mind that the theory of the double negative influence (limited processing capacity) was proved inaccurate by Paradis (2010) and therefore no accumulated disadvantage could be spotted in bilinguals with SLI/PLI. Moreover, Paradis (2010), Katsos et al. (2011), Verhoeven et al. (2012) found phonological awareness, phonological processing and phonological working memory affected in SLI/PLI children.

Even though it might seem hard to accept from a non-teacher stance, teachers are not experts for everything. Although the general public likes to hold them accountable for occurrences in the school and sometimes the society, as a whole, many admitted they had to read a lot on numerous issues. They seemed to be burdened with responsibilities other professionals could have solved more effectively. Unfortunately, that is a common trend in Europe where teacher responsibility and accountability is growing (Lebeer et al., 2011).

## **5.3 Tools and procedures of assessment**

### **NSL test**

As the analysis showed the NSL test was the only tool in wide use in the school. Every class and every student was tested. The testing was done in 3 main areas as concept formation/development, word processing and grammar (Frøyen, 2012). Teachers were satisfied with NSL test as, it seemed to be a popular one. Nevertheless, teachers were aware NSL was not a tool for SLI/PLI diagnosis. Regardless of that, they were in favour of it as they

reported it gave them a clearer picture of what child's language like. Another teacher mentioned that it gave indication of how the students do.

It should be stated again that NSL is not a SLI/PLI test. It was created by PPT to test language skills of the students, in order to show if they can use Norwegian as a language of instruction in learning. In case of poor performance they would need special provisions under 2-8 paragraph. This provision would give access to additional language training (Norwegian Education Act 2010). Apparently, NSL can help in diagnosis of overall language abilities of students, but is far from a reliable tool for assessment of specific/primary language impairment.

This proved to be an interesting finding as NSL uses pictures as a basis for testing. All the standardised assessment in SLI/PLI was pretty much unknown to the teachers, even though certain tests like CCC2 were adapted for the Norwegian market (Helland et al., 2009).

It was hard to get any critical or detailed information on NSL test in English. Even though testing seemed to be beneficial as overall assessment of abilities, it is questionable what an indicative score of NSL can tell about potential for SLI/PLI impairment.

### **Other tests**

What was remarkable were the comments of my informants when asked about the tests. As analysis showed one of them confirmed that there is *“no test good enough to uncover SSV(SLI) for bilingual children”* so she proposed uncovering by using various methods which was impressive. Another teacher commenting on NSL showed the inclination towards socio-cultural approach as she mentioned the influence of extra-linguistic reality the child is facing and how background could be a reason for poor performance.

In contrast, as the literature review revealed there was a myriad of standardised assessments for SLI/PLI on the market. However, it seemed that teachers are slightly unaware of it. However, they showed inclination towards non-standardised forms of assessment rather than normative, standardised tests when it came to SLI/PLI assessment. This brought into foreground all the methods of dynamic assessment DA (Kapanntzoglou et al., 2012) that are actually according to the scientists expensive and time consuming but have highest percentage of reliability. The pretest- teach- test cycle could in greater percentage abolish the risk of such shortcomings as misdiagnosis. The socio-cultural approach, on the other hand, was recognised

as one of the most sensitive ones for SLI/PLI assessment, especially in bilinguals. It is a culture specific assessment including RIOT procedure that includes interviewing and testing all the languages (De Lamo White & Jin, 2011). This test allowed professionals to plan activities that are culture specific and also showed low risk of misdiagnosis.

Consequently, it is evident that, the teachers resorted to the highest quality assessment choices. Although, their unfamiliarity with other standardised tools might have enhanced that choice. The reason of the low knowledge of assessment tests and tools for SLI/PLI could lie in the fact that they do not conduct the assessment themselves, but SLTs (logopeds) do. Therefore, their official task is to raise concerns for a child to be assessed. However, it is comforting to know that even though the most time consuming, the most accurate way of assessment can be deployed in the pre-assessment cycle.

Finally, what findings on such a small sample in one school seem to imply seems that overall opinion among teachers regarding assessment of SLI/PLI in sequential bilinguals opened the Pandora box of semilingualism. Throughout the inquiry this disproportionately took a considerable part of the interviews due to the specific educational environment. As speculated above, numerous reasons could be underneath it, but such focus on bilingualism and semilingualism in practice might push other more serious but less conspicuous problems under the carpet. This might be a reason of a slight concern, at least.

Next, the low familiarity of formal assessment tools created a big gap between the theory and practice. In literature, teachers' (in)formal assessment of SLI/PLI was judged, measured, evaluated. In practice, it seemed that mostly pre-assessment was taking place. Therefore, the low familiarity of tools went hand in hand with the removal of responsibility for SLI/PLI diagnosis due to the systemic administration obstacles. Consequently, teachers are highly likely to be left to their own devices in motivating themselves to get to know all the peculiarities of the scope of work awarded to them.

# 6 Conclusion

## 6.1 Summary of the findings

The study set out to explore teachers' opinions on assessment of SLI/PLI in sequential bilinguals in the first grades of formal schooling in Norway. As a means of achieving this three research questions were posed:

- What are the teachers' experiences with bilingualism in their classroom?
- What are the teachers' experiences with specific (primary) language impairment?
- What are the teachers' opinions on tools and procedures of this assessment?

The study was created to bring the significance of the voices of the teachers into the foreground. As majority of the data connecting these issues was of quantitative nature in the previous research, the study goal was to voice the experiences of the teachers in a context.

Consequently, the study showed that teachers' understanding of bilingualism in their classroom is at least complex. They focused on semilingualism and emergentism issues and were attentive to overcome those in their teaching practice. This posed questions of semilingualism that is a highly sensitive topic in a political sense. The receptiveness to other issues their students could potentially face was another issue raised and it can have implications to teaching practice.

When it comes to SLI/PLI it is likely that in such an environment of sequential bilingualism there was not much focus on SLI/PLI in the school. However, again, the focus on semilingualism might have put that to the second place. Most of the experience was drawn from passive forms of assessment (gathering of background data) and pre-assessment methods that included observation. In pre-assessment teachers used non-standardised culture sensitive methods which have great sensitivity and the least misdiagnosis.

Opinions on tools and procedures revealed that except for pre-assessment, teachers did not participate in any other forms of assessment. Basic familiarity with tests seemed to have existed, but not much of it was SLI/PLI oriented. As the research findings implied it is

unlikely that any teacher would use any form of formal assessment due to administrative and bureaucratic rules and procedures.

Consequently, the cause of the pressuring theme of bilingualism appeared to be a central topic for the informants of the study. Immigration and consequent emerging school bilingualism or rather semilingualism seemed to pressure teachers on a causal level and they dedicated considerable resources in coping with it.

## **6.2 Implications of findings**

Even though the study was done on a small sample of only 4 informants in one school, a considerable emphasis on experience of bilingualism could be spotted in interviews with the professionals. That could imply that other potential language issues could be secondary to assess or diagnose.

Nevertheless, the teachers were observant to the students' behavior and this was beneficial to the overview of following the child development and potential areas of support or difficulty.

Still, the substantial understanding of SLI/PLI assessment procedure lacked and the study indicates that more familiarity with the process of assessment could be required among the teaching professionals.

## **6.3 Limitations of the research**

Limitations in this research stem from:

### **6.3.1 Methodological limitations**

The research was construed as a qualitative critical realism study. However, inter-rater reliability was not established due to the time constraints and triangulation of data was abandoned for the same reasons. Therefore, no external reliability is established.

### **6.3.2 Limitations stemming from the scope of the study and the sample size**

The study was done in one school with 4 teacher informants. Thus, such a small sample can only speak about itself. According to the scope of study no external generalizations, or claims of representation are allowed.

Practical realities (limited time frame, challenging access to schools, language barrier between the researcher and the informants)

The study was undertaken as a master thesis project and was conducted within a limited time frame with limited resources.

Access to schools seemed harder than expected. The study initially started during the summer months and access was negotiated in the late beginning of the school year. This brought to the more limited time frame than expected.

The working language during the interviews was English and it was not the mother tongue of neither the researcher nor the informants. Thus, it is natural to expect that a myriad of nuances in meanings and descriptions is irretrievably lost due to the language barrier.

## **6.4 Recommendations for future study**

The study here explored the teachers opinions on their practice. It would be interesting to see how this practice is conveyed, to complement the study in a way. Therefore, some classroom observations would be desirable as a way of completing the picture.

Moreover, it might have been useful if a questionnaire study as a preparation was conveyed on a larger population sample prior to the interviewing teachers. It would have brought a better focus in qualitative data collection.

Two of the themes are specially interesting from the scientific point of view and these are semilingualism and its implications for testing and teaching and responsibility of the teachers. The first one may be politically touchy but a burning issue among educational professionals and the second one, venturing rather into psychology, could bring into foreground motivational factors of work.





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# Appendices

# Appendix 1

## Interview guide

### Background information and introduction

-What is your educational background?

-How long have you been teaching? Which grades?

### Bilingualism

1. How many bilingual children do you have in your classroom?  
(OPTIONAL How do you identify bilinguals in your classroom?)
2. In your view, is there a difference between a bilingual and monolingual child in the language development? (probing: Are there some specifics of bilingual language development? Is it different from monolingual language development? How? What is the difference? )

### Language impairment

3. What was your experience with language impaired students, in general?  
(probing: Did you have any language impaired student? When? What happened? Tell me more...)
4. What would make you think there is a language impairment with a monolingual (regular) student? (probing: How would you identify the language impairment? What would such student have?)
5. Would it make any difference in your observation if a student is a monolingual? And bilingual? Why? How?

### Bilingual children and language impairment

6. How many bilingual children with language impairment have you encountered in your professional practice? (Probing: If any, can you tell me about it?)
7. Do you think there might be any challenges or issues in the first assessment of bilingual children? (What could they be? Any ideas of dealing with it? FOR language impairment!!!)
8. If you would suspect a bilingual child has a language impairment in your class, what kind of assistance (cooperation) would you need to

confirm/diagnose it? Would you do it? Why? (Rephrasing: If you would have a child in class with a language issue that you sort of noticed already and you suspect it is language impairment, what would you do next?)

8.a. Would you consult someone from your teaching team on the topic of assessment? (Whom and when? Why? What about parents, PPT, teaching team? Logoped? )

9. How confident would you feel about your referral to a speech and language therapist (logoped) for a language impairment in a bilingual student? Why?
10. Are you familiar with any tools or tests for assessment of language impairment in bilinguals? (Probing: Would you use them? Which ones? Do you think they are good? How do you use them? How they function?)
11. Is there a focus on language impairment in this school, in your view?
12. Do you think there is enough knowledge and information on language impairment assessment at your work? During your studies?
13. Do you have something to add about the topic of bilingual children and language impairment assessment? Or something you would like to say related to the topic?

# Appendix 2



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Vår dato: 15.08.2014

Vår ref: 39372 / 3 / KH

Deres dato:

Deres ref.

## TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 01.08.2014. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

<i>39372</i>	<i>Teachers opinions on assessment of bilingual children for language impairment</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Ivar Morken</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>Ivana Randjic</i>

Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>.

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Haugstvedt tlf: 55 58 29 53

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

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*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

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## Personvernombudet for forskning



### Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 39372

Based on the information we have received about the project, the Data Protection Official cannot see that the project will entail a processing of personal data by electronic means, or an establishment of a manual personal data filing system containing sensitive data. The project will therefore not be subject to notification according to the Personal Data Act.

The Data Protection Official presupposes that all information processed using electronic equipment in the project is anonymous.

Anonymous information is defined as information that cannot identify individuals in the data set in any of the following ways:

- directly, through uniquely identifiable characteristic (such as name, social security number, email address, etc.)
- indirectly, through a combination of background variables (such as residence/institution, gender, age, etc.)
- through a list of names referring to an encryption formula or code

# Appendix 3

## Request for participation in the research project

### "Teachers' opinions on assessment of bilingual children for language impairment"

#### Background and Purpose

The project is conducted for the purpose of master's thesis paper of the student Ivana Randjic (the researcher) at the University of Oslo, department of Special Education, as a part of Erasmus Mundus degree course. The research will inquire into teachers' views and opinions of bilingual children's assessment for language impairment.

I would use snowball technique in sampling to find informants according to the criteria:

- That the teachers are willing to participate in an interview conducted in English
- That they teach or have recently taught 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- That there are/were at least 5 bilingual students in the teacher's classroom (preferably more)
- That the teachers teaches or has taught a student/students with a language impairment or that they have had any encounter with it

#### What does participation in the project imply?

Data collection convened by semi structured interviews with 5 to 7 participants. Duration of the interview can be estimated up to approximately 1 hour. Questions will concern professional practice of the teacher and the opinions regarding the assessment of bilinguals for language impairment. Data will be audio recorded with the informants' permission due to the easier transcription of the interviews.

#### What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to data and the list of the names of the participants will be stored separately from the data collected.

Participants will not be recognizable in the research outcome.

The project is scheduled for completion by 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2014. The audio recordings of the interviews will be destroyed after the transcription. No identifiable personal data will be used in the research outcome, as the names of the informants will be substituted by other names and their identities kept confidential.

#### Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your



consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact the student researcher Ivana Randjic, mobile: +4796756030, or the project leader and her supervisor Ivar Morken, telephone number: +4722858123, University of Oslo, Department of Special Needs Education; P.O.Box 1140 Blindern, 0318 Oslo

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

## **Consent for participation in the study**

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate in an interview

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(Signed by participant, date)