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## 10 From tool to target language: Arguing the need to enhance language learning in English-medium instruction courses and programs

**Abstract:** The findings from the studies reported here suggest that Nordic institutions of higher education need to pay greater attention to improving their students' English skills, in part by enhancing language learning in English-Medium courses, and in part by offering occupationally relevant language and communication courses. These arguments draw upon analyses from a study of English use and needs in Norwegian government ministries and of how these are reflected in ministerial job advertisements. The former builds on a survey of 846 ministerial staff by Hellekjær (2010), and the latter on a follow-up survey of 485 ministerial job advertisements. They examine general education levels, degrees and backgrounds in English and compare these to the kinds of general education and English qualifications the advertisements require. The first survey shows that staff are highly educated, 95% with graduate or undergraduate degrees, and that 89% of these use English regularly at work. However, only 18% of the English users have followed courses or taken degrees in English in higher education. The advertisements examined invariably asked for staff with professional degrees, often in combination with English skills, but only 31% of the advertisements explicitly require such skills. Whether this is because English skills are taken for granted, or because few institutions of higher education offer relevant English courses in combination with professional degrees, is a central point in the discussion. The authors argue that the lack of provision of such courses amounts to a failure to adequately prepare students for future careers.

**Keywords:** English-Medium Instruction, needs analysis, higher education, occupational English, job advertisements

## 1 Introduction

Due to the Bologna agreement, as well as increasing outside competition, Nordic universities have a strong focus on internationalization. This involves research

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cooperation, international staff and student recruitment, and the offering of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) courses and programs to foreign and domestic students (Marjinson 2006: 21). However, in the Nordic as well as other European countries, to the extent there has been a focus on using EMI for language learning purposes at all, this has at best been of "secondary importance" (Smit and Dafouz 2012: 3). Indeed, as Airy (2012: 64) puts it, the predominant attitude among for instance Swedish EMI content lecturers is that, "I don't teach language".

In a study of EMI lecture comprehension, Hellekjær (2010) argues that paying systematic attention to language, to the learning of key terms and concepts in particular, is important for content learning. By focusing on language aspects of EMI programs, as well as by supplementing these with communication courses, one will also prepare students for future careers. This is the focus of the present study, in which we draw upon data from recent needs analysis studies (NAs) of foreign language use and needs in Norwegian business (Hellekjær 2007, 2012), in government ministries (Hellekjær 2010), and of the language skills required in job advertisements.

These NAs of foreign language use and needs in Norwegian business and government, as well as a recent study of language skills required in job advertisements (Vold and Doetjes 2012), have led to increased focus on the use of, and need for occupationally relevant language skills. One salient issue has been the under-use of second foreign languages such as German, French or Spanish (L3), which is examined in greater detail elsewhere by Hellekjær and Hellekjær (2015). The NAs also confirm that English has become indispensable for business managers and government bureaucrats. They also reveal the uneven level of Norwegians' occupational English second language (L2) skills, here understood as the knowledge of English special terminology and domain-specific genres required in different professions. The lack of these, and of the more general communication skills needed in for instance negotiations or sales, can explain why many have to rely on upper secondary school English in occupational contexts. Of course staff may also have improved their skills through in-service courses, or by having studied or worked in English speaking countries (Hellekjær 2010). Still, this is a clear indication of occupationally relevant English courses not being given priority in Norwegian institutions of higher education.

One reason for this neglect might be the very success of Norwegian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction (Simensen 2010), supported as it has been by extensive media exposure to English (Rindal 2010). This success may well have led institutions of higher education, in the face of crowded study programs and limited resources; to decide that additional, occupationally relevant language courses are not necessary.

Indeed, international comparisons show that Norwegians, as well as Swedes, Danes and Finns, who have comparable educational systems, have become quite proficient in English in comparison to other countries (Bonnet 2004; Education First 2013). In fact, the position of English in Norway and the other Nordic countries is so strong that Graddol (2007) argues that it is close to becoming a second language. In other words, current high levels of English proficiency may well have led to such skills being taken for granted, which can be one explanation the fairly infrequent mention of English skills in job advertisements (Vold and Doetjes 2012). It might also explain the neglect of occupational English courses in higher education.

Alternatively, the infrequent mention of English skills in job advertisements may have a quite different explanation, since the above-mentioned NA studies showed that inadequate language skills cause problems in business as well as governance. Duchêne and Heller (2012: 333) argue that current managerial approaches to language vary between making explicit requirements, which may induce higher costs, and on the other hand, offering them minimal recognition, in practice taking them for "granted by constructing them as 'natural'". Another view is that the neglect of advanced occupational English skills in higher education may simply lead to employers not expecting applicants with relevant English skills. In such a situation, Grin, Sfreddo, and Vaillancourt (2010) point out that employers tend to avoid complicating the hiring process and increasing costs by explicitly requiring English skills. In other words, low supply may well lead to low demand and to a situation in which well-educated employees must rely on upper secondary school English.

This brings us to the present study, where the aim was to investigate the gap between the occupational use of English, staff education in English and the mention of English in job advertisements, and thereby highlight the unmet need for occupationally relevant English courses in higher education. To be more precise, the aim is to:

- compare general educational backgrounds, reported English use, and English qualifications among current ministry staff
- compare this with to what extent, and how, English is required in the job advertisements and
- discuss possible reasons for lack of present and required English qualifications and the implications this can have for higher education, including the use of EMI courses for language learning purposes.

We start by presenting key data on staff education and language use in government ministries from Hellekjær (2010), and compare these with a follow-up study comprising 448 ministerial job advertisements during the 1 January to

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31 June periods of 2012 and 2013. The second collection period was added to enlarge the study. Then we examine in which contexts English is mentioned, and the frequency of mention. The study goes on to discuss possible explanations for the patterns found and the implications for institutions of higher education with regard to providing occupational English courses. It concludes with a brief indication of the role EMI might play in meeting student needs for occupational English skills.

## 2 Needs analyses and relevant studies

For the present study we define NAs as “the processes involved in gathering information about the needs of a particular client group in industry or education” (Brown 2009: 269; see also West 1994). The first NAs investigating language needs focused on “discrete language items of grammar and vocabulary” (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998: 122). Starting with Munby (1978), Richterich and Chancerel (1978) and Richterich (1983), NAs have used performance-oriented analyses to identify language functions and situations for language use (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998; Huhta et al. 2013; Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Long 2005).

More recently there has been an increased focus on enhancing the validity of NA data in order to ensure that these are reliable decision-making tools (e.g. Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998; Long 2005). Long (2005) argues for the use of a mixed-methods research design (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009) that utilizes multiple sources and methods to provide better quality data (e.g. Jasso-Aguilar 2005).

### 2.1 Business NAs

There are a number of NA studies that examine the role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF), e.g. Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011), or English for Business Communication (Bhatia and Bremner 2012), or in engineering Huhta (2010). The BELF NAs for the most part examine the use of English for business communication purposes by non-native speakers (see Charles 2006; Ehrenreich 2010; Jenkins et al. 2011; Kankaaranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010; Kankaaranta and Planken 2010; Lehtonen and Karjalainen 2008; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaaranta 2005; Nickerson 2005; Rogerson-Revell 2007, 2010; Sweeney and Hua 2010).

These NAs are more or less unanimous about English – in combination with first language (L1) skills – being an absolute *must* in business (Charles 2006; Ehrenreich 2010; Rogerson-Revell 2007). Furthermore, the language skills needed must be in combination with a professional degree: “language skills without the necessary professional profile are not sufficient” (Ehrenreich 2010: 417).

Most of the Norwegian NAs that have been carried out since 1973 have been quantitative surveys of language needs in business (e.g. Hellekjær 2007; Hellum and Dypedahl 1998; Norges Handelshøyskole 1973; Lie and Skjoldmo 1982). Two studies, by Kvam and Schewe (1984) and Vold and Doetjes (2012) have examined job advertisements. There has also been a qualitative study from Norwegian subsidiaries in Belgium (Gundersen 2009). These studies show a strong decline in the overall use of the L3 languages since the 70s, and a strong and increasing reliance on English exclusively. The job advertisement NAs show much the same development. Vold and Doetjes (2012) found that employers frequently specify English skills when advertising positions, although less frequently than it might have been expected given the nature of the jobs described. In accordance with earlier research by Kvam and Schewe (1984), these recent studies have found that English and/or L3 skills are invariably required in combination with a professional degree such as engineering, business administration, economics or law.

### 2.2 Public sector NAs

There are few international NA studies from the public sector, and those from the US often focus on the needs for languages other than English (e.g. Brecht and Rivers 2005; Clifford and Fischer 1990; Lett 2005; Winn 2005). A few more recent studies examine language needs in a post 9/11 security perspective (e.g. Herzog 2003; Tare 2006).

In addition to the present study there have been two public sector NAs in Norway: Hellekjær's (2010) quantitative survey from government ministries and Fairway's (2011) qualitative follow-up study from government directorates. They show that ministries and directorates, as well as businesses, also lack staff with the advanced English proficiency needed to master many demanding communication situations such as negotiations, meetings, and press conferences. Conversely, Fairway's (2011) study includes interviews with two respondents whose careers had benefited from their advanced English skills.

A recent Danish study by Andersen and Verstraete-Hansen (2013) used the same questionnaire as Hellekjær (2010), and surveyed the same kind of respondents, i.e. 675 of 1,217 staff in Danish government ministries (a 56% response rate). Its findings were also largely comparable to those of Hellekjær (2010).

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### 3 Method

The present study draws upon data from two quantitative NA studies that are triangulated. The first, Hellekjær (2010) used a quasi-experimental, one-group, post-test research design (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2002: 106–107). It was an online survey of 845 employees in 18 government ministries and the Prime Minister's office. The questionnaire comprised 76 items about educational and language backgrounds, reported language use, and any difficulties encountered when using English in work-related situations. There was also a final open-ended question. Out of the initial, randomly selected, sample comprising 1,551 of about 4,225 ministerial employees, 845 answered the online survey. This gave a 55% response rate, and a sample comprising 19% of the ministerial employees. Table 1 provides an overview of the sample according to ministry and language use.

This overview shows the distribution of the sample according to ministry, and includes information on language use that we return to below.

The second and main study was designed as a follow-up of Hellekjær (2010), a study that was to examine which categories of jobs were advertised and whether English skills were specified or required. It was based on 485 job advertisements from the Norwegian government ministries advertised between two 1 January to 31 June periods, in 2012 and 2013. These were almost all of the job advertisements from government ministries that first appeared in *Aftenposten*, Norway's largest newspaper. Relevant supplementary information was then downloaded from the online version of the job advertisements (see <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/aktuelt/ledige-stillinger-i-departementene.html?id=451314>).

The resulting 485 advertisements comprise slightly more than 10% of approximately 4,225 ministry positions. An overview of the advertisements according to the ministry is provided in Table 2.

The 262 positions advertised in 2012 represent about 6% of the total staff, and the 233 in 2013 about 5%. Key data, such as position, ministry, qualifications, inclusion of languages skills specifications, and the degree of international relations were coded in SPSS. For language in particular the coding was sometimes difficult due to the prevalence of somewhat vague formulations referring to communication skills or language skills in general. Only when English skills were explicitly required was this coded as such. At times the advertisements could also be somewhat ambiguous with regard to the qualifications needed, sometimes even mentioning alternative areas or degrees, which meant using rather wide categories, such as Economics, that subsume various specialties.

With the above-mentioned coding difficulties in mind, we would argue that a sample representing almost all of the ministerial positions advertised over two

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Table 1: Overview of respondents according to ministry and language use (N = 846) (Hellekjær 2010)

Ministry	All	Users of Norwegian only	English users
Ministry of Labor	68	8	60
Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion	30	3	27
Ministry of Finance	59	5	54
Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs	21	0	21
Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs	35	6	29
Ministry of Defense	76	7	69
Ministry of Health and Care Services	47	6	41
Ministry of Justice	60	11	49
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development	43	11	32
Ministry of Culture	36	6	30
Ministry of Education and Research	81	13	68
Ministry of Agriculture and Food	39	4	35
Ministry of the Environment	45	2	43
Ministry of Trade and Industry	48	3	45
Ministry of Petroleum and Energy	25	1	24
Ministry of Transport and Communications	33	3	30
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	96	5	91
The Office of the Prime Minister	4	0	4
Total	846 (100%)	94 (11%)	752 (89%)

six-month periods should be able to provide useful information in relation to the types of positions advertised, and about the main trends in how and to what extent English skills are, or are not specified. In combination, the intention is to use these studies to compare general educational backgrounds with reported English use and English qualifications, compare this with to what extent English is required in the job advertisements, and use this data to discuss possible reasons for lack of mention of English qualifications. It will also discuss possible implications for higher education, one of which being the use of EMI courses for language learning purposes.

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**Table 2:** Overview of positions advertised from 1 January to 30 June in 2012 and 2013, according to ministry (*N* = 485)

Ministries	Number of positions advertised		Total and percent
	2012	2013	
Ministry of Labor	11	18	29 (6%)
Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion	14	9	23 (5%)
Ministry of Finance	10	5	15 (3%)
Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs	11	5	16 (3%)
Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs	24	18	42 (9%)
Ministry of Defense	11	18	29 (6%)
Ministry of Health and Care Services	12	8	20 (4%)
Ministry of Justice	33	30	63 (13%)
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development	20	20	40 (8%)
Ministry of Culture	7	8	15 (3%)
Ministry of Education and Research	23	9	32 (7%)
Ministry of Agriculture and Food	8	8	16 (3%)
Ministry of the Environment	16	27	43 (9%)
Ministry of Trade and Industry	28	9	37 (8%)
Ministry of Petroleum and Energy	7	10	17 (3.5%)
Ministry of Transport and Communications	13	3	16 (3%)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	10	14	24 (5%)
The Office of the Prime Minister	4	4	8 (2%)
Total	262	233	485 (100%)

## 4 Results

In this section we start by presenting key findings from Norwegian government ministries from Hellekjær (2010), followed by the job-advertisement data.

### 4.1 The ministerial data

Table 1 above provides an overview of the respondents according to department along with data on language use. The latter shows that 751 (89%) of the respondents used English at work while 94 (11%) used Norwegian (L1) only.

One of the latter respondents mentioned in response to the open-ended question that while English was irrelevant for his or her current position, it might be necessary to use English in a different job. Nevertheless, in the following analysis we decided to focus on the 751 English-using respondents. Table 3 below provides an overview of their educational backgrounds.

**Table 3:** General level of education among the English-using ministerial respondents (*N* = 751) (Hellekjær 2010)

General education	Respondents	In percent
Primary and secondary education	25	3
Undergraduate courses or degrees	92	12
Graduate courses or degrees	621	83
In-service education	13	2
Total	751	100

As can be seen, 95% of the English-using ministerial respondents have university or college degrees, the great majority (83%) at the graduate level.

With regard to language skills and education, business NAs found that professional degrees often do not include English modules, so employees are often forced to rely on their upper secondary school language courses. To elicit more information about this Hellekjær (2010) included items about formal and informal English qualifications, and the answers about English qualifications are provided in Tables 4 and 5.

**Table 4:** An overview of the respondents' formal qualifications in English (*N* = 751) (Hellekjær 2010)

English qualifications/ education	Respondents	In percent
Primary education	7	1
Upper secondary education	599	80.5
Undergraduate/Graduate courses or degrees	138	18.5
Missing	7	1
Total	744	100

Table 4 shows that the great majority of the ministerial respondents who use English at work, 80.5%, do so on the basis of their upper secondary school English courses. Only 18.5% have formal qualifications from higher education. However, table 5 shows that quite many respondents may also have in-service courses, or for example have studied in English speaking countries.

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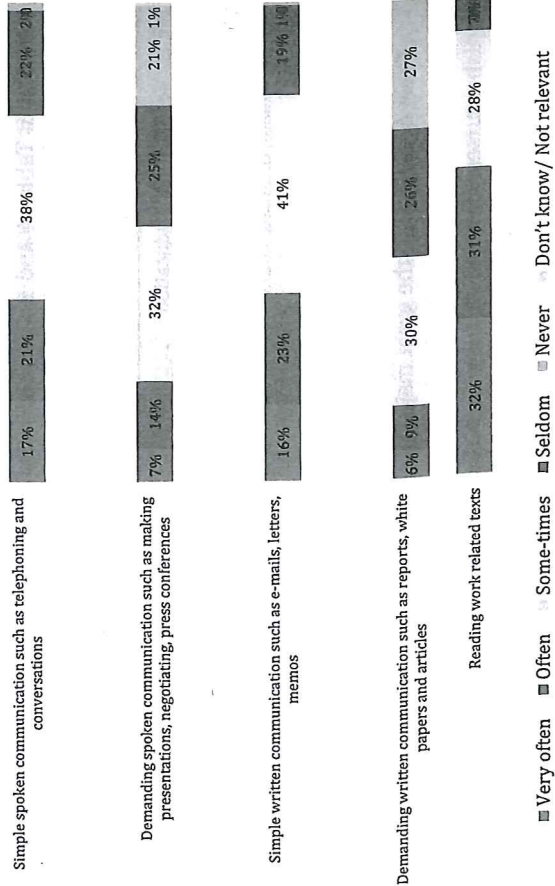
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**Table 5: Other qualifications in English (N = 751) (Hellekjær 2010)**

Other qualifications in English	Respondents	In percent
In-service courses	201	27
Language courses abroad	132	18
Non-language, university level courses taught in English	223	30
6 months or longer stays in English speaking countries	257	34
English is my mother tongue (L1)	4	<1

Formal degrees or not, the data in Table 5 shows that many of the respondents may have in-service courses, and/or stays and studies in English speaking countries to supplement their upper-secondary school courses. The main conclusion that can be drawn from Table 4 is that the great majority of respondents lack English courses from higher education.

With regard to language use, the respondents used English in a variety of work-related situations and tasks, from informal situations such as telephone calls, conversations or e-mails, to formal, specialized and linguistically challenging tasks such as negotiations, presentations, discussions and press conferences. Figure 1 provides a more detailed overview.



**Figure 1: How often do you use English, orally or in writing, for the following situations and tasks? (N = 751) (Hellekjær 2010)**

This overview clearly shows that the respondents use English regularly and frequently. Reading work-related English texts is by far the most frequent activity, followed by simple oral communication. The more formal and demanding communication situations and tasks occur less frequently and involve fewer persons. Indeed, some respondents only rarely or never take part in such communication or tasks – either for language reasons or because it is not part of their purviews. Still, the overall impression is that many of the respondents use English for demanding work-related situations and tasks. A number of comments in the open-ended questions in this study, as with some of Fairway's (2011) informants, mentioned that the respondents all-too-often lack the English skills needed to master many of these situations. They specifically mention the need for knowledge of relevant domain-specific vocabulary and texts, and the advanced proficiency and knowledge needed to handle more general but still demanding communication situations such as meetings and negotiations. Some also mention cultural knowledge, as issue that for reasons of scope might be better addressed in a separate study.

## 4.2 The job advertisements study

The study of ministerial job advertisements that is presented below was designed to examine what backgrounds are required, to what extent English is explicitly required, and, if possible, if there is a systematic pattern in such requirements. An example of the latter would be the consistent mention of language skills for jobs involving international relations.

The first step in the analysis of the 485 job advertisements was to see the levels of education they required, and whether these reflected the pattern found in Hellekjær (2010), or if there had been any changes. An overview of the levels of education required in the government ministries is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: General level of education required in government ministry job advertisements (N = 485)**

Level of education required	Advertisements	In percent
High school diploma	8	2
Undergraduate courses or degrees	31	6
Graduate courses or professional degrees/PhD	418	86
Not specified	24	5
Missing	4	1
Total	751	100

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The overview shows that the overwhelming majority of positions, 92%, require a degree from higher education, 86% at the graduate level or in one case a PhD degree. This is more or less comparable to the levels of education for the ministerial respondents presented in Table 3.

One of the key questions in this advertisement study was about which areas of expertise that were required. That is to say, whether language degrees are mentioned, or whether they focus on non-language or professional degrees, as has been found in BELF studies and in Norway by Kvam and Schewe (1984). As already mentioned, the advertisements could at times be vaguely worded, or indicate alternative qualifications. At times we therefore had to use best judgment within the team when categorizing and grouping the answers.

As can be seen in Table 7, the pattern is quite clear in that the ministerial advertisements consistently ask for professional degrees, in for instance Economics, Law, or Administration. These are degrees in which the institutions in question may or may not decide to include English modules. Judging by the 80.5% of the English-using respondents in Hellekjær (2010) who only had formal English qualifications from upper secondary school, the majority of these do not.

Table 7: Overview of advertisements according to area of expertise, and of those mentioning English skills (N = 485)

Area of expertise	Advertisements	Number of advertisements mentioning		Percent of advertisements mentioning English
		English	English	
Computing	33	10	2	2
Communications	23	9	2	2
Economics	60	19	4	4
Social sciences	19	5	1	1
Languages	4	3	<1	<1
Law	104	34	7	7
Natural sciences	11	6	2	2
Technical	5	1	<1	<1
Administration	63	24	5	5
Leadership	98	29	6	6
Research/information	4	2	<1	<1
Human resources	19	0	0	0
Education	2	0	0	0
Security	2	2	<1	<1
Other areas	23	5	1	1
Not specified	15	3	<1	<1
Total	485	152	31	31

The next issue was to find out to what extent and how language skills are specified in the advertisements. Coding for this caused difficulties, since the advertisement format seemed to vary from ministry to ministry, and there was great variation in how language skills were specified. For example, 197 (68%) advertisements simply mentioned communication skills without specifying language, while 16 (3%) simply mentioned language skills in general, which could mean Norwegian, English and/or L3 skills. Just 152 (31%) of the advertisements mention English skills explicitly. Of these, 112 (24%) specified good English skills, while 37 (8%) required particularly good English skills. Since we have not been able to find any systematic definition of these two categories, we have chosen to merge them into one single category. The number of advertisements mentioning of English skills are displayed in the second and third columns in Table 7.

Table 7 shows that government ministries almost without exception require language in combination with a professional degree, as is also the case in BELF studies that almost invariably show that "language skills without the necessary professional profile are not sufficient" (Ehrenreich 2010: 417).

It also reveals the gap between the 89% of the respondents who use English on a regular basis found in Hellekjær (2010) compared to the 31% of the advertisements that explicitly request language skills. That English skills can be subsumed under communication skills or general language skills should be kept in mind. It can be mentioned that it was almost unexpected that it is in "Law" (traditionally a national area) where one finds the highest percentage and total number of advertisements mentioning English. This might well have to do with the need to relate to international law, or international organizations, but we find this an interesting issue for a separate, follow-up study.

One way of investigating how systematically the requests for English are made was by examining whether the advertisements that specified taking part in international activities or organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union, the United Nations or the European Economic Area were more explicit with regard to language skills. Our expectation was that for such positions advanced English skills would be consistently required.

However, a comparison of the requirement for English with the mention of international activities only partially confirmed the expectation that English skills would be mentioned when it considered particularly necessary. It showed that English was explicitly required for 56 (64%) of these positions. Of these 37 (42%) of the 88 specified good skills and 17 (19%) particularly good skills. Still, there were 32 (36%) positions for which English skills were not specified. The main trend, however, seems that English is usually, but not invariably, mentioned when considered particularly important for the job in question.

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## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Main findings

From a language as well as educational perspective, perhaps the most important finding from the job advertisement data is that English skills are, almost without exception, required in combination with a non-language, professional degree (see Table 7). This finding is also evident in international and Norwegian NAs.

The next finding is that 80.5% of the 751 English users surveyed in Hellekjær (2010) had no formal English qualifications beyond upper secondary school courses. Given that the ministries almost without exception require language skills in combination with a professional degree, the most direct interpretation is that few Norwegian institutions include such modules in their programs.

Third, the comparison of the two studies shows that the need for English skills is not made clear enough in job advertisements. This is apparent in the gap between 89% of the ministry staff using English at work compared to English being requested in only 31% of the job advertisements. The same pattern of under-communication was also found in Vold and Doetjes' (2012) large-scale advertisement study. This finding gives rise to questions about the extent of which this is a problem, why it happens, and whether there are any practical implications.

### 5.2 English needs and mention in job advertisements

One of the main findings of the present study is, as already noted, the gap between actual English use (see Table 1 and Figure 1) and its mention in job advertisements. While 89% percent of ministerial staff use the language at work on a regular basis, only 31% of advertisements explicitly mention English (see Table 7). While the percentage rises to 64% for positions that involve extensive international activities, this means that English skills are still not mentioned for the remaining 36%. The low priority given to language skills in the advertisements stands in contrast to the numerous comments in the open-ended questions in Hellekjær (2010). In addition, Fairway's (2011) interview study from Norwegian state directorates also gives a number of unfortunate examples of inadequate English and cultural skills making it difficult to safeguard and promote Norwegian interests. This in turn makes the question as to why English skills are under-communicated in job advertisements even more salient.

Of course, one explanation might be that such instances of miscommunication are few and far between. In fact, the respondents in Fairway's study all

mentioned that they for the most part "managed" to communicate in English, with non-native speakers of English in particular. Communicating with native speakers could be more problematic, however, since they often used their linguistic and cultural knowledge to dominate.

Another reason for the lack of mention might well be that there are enough applicants who have lived, worked or studied in English speaking countries (e.g. Table 5) to meet the needs for advanced skills. Yet another possibility is that employers simply take English skills for granted, and if necessary, send staff to in-service courses. Indeed, this is a view argued by Duchêne and Heller (2012). Their point is that "... workers' communicative competences are always valued in the light of what they offer companies. Their skills are only minimally recognized and mostly companies take these skills for granted by constructing them as 'natural'" (Duchêne and Heller 2012: 333).

As a corollary, management will tend to avoid emphasizing language skills because this will "induce more cost", for instance because it could lead to higher wages.

Duchêne and Heller's arguments dovetail with those of Grin et al., who claim that when employers decide to specify, or not to specify language skills in a job advertisement, this is a highly conscious decision (2010: 123–134). Just like Duchêne and Heller they argue that this is because introducing an additional requirement when hiring, such as English skills in combination with a professional degree, can reduce the number of applicants, and/or increase hiring costs. Consequently, if employers do not expect many applicants with advanced proficiency or formal qualifications, as is indicated by the 80% of English users with upper secondary school English courses only in Table 4, they will not require it in job advertisements unless it is absolutely necessary. This can probably explain why only 31% of the 485 ministerial job advertisements require English, and why English skills are not mentioned for 36% of the positions involving international activities and institutions. In other words, the data supports the contention that employers tend not to specify language skills in advertisements to avoid increasing hiring costs, most probably because they expect the supply of skilled English users with relevant qualifications to be quite limited. This in turn puts the focus on Norwegian higher education.

As can be seen in Table 7, the overwhelming majority of positions advertised in the Norwegian ministries require professional degrees, in for instance in Law, Computer Science, Economics or Administration. Furthermore, it also shows that when English skills are required, this is invariably in combination with such a degree, as has also been found in other Norwegian and international studies. It is our impression that few Norwegian institutions of higher educations include

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relevant English modules in professional degrees, since as mentioned, upper secondary school English courses are by many considered sufficient. In any case, that few offer English modules is supported by the data in Table 4, which shows that 80.5% of the ministry staff has upper secondary school courses as their highest formal qualification in English. We would contend that upper secondary school General English courses, even in Norway, cannot provide adequate preparation for linguistically and culturally demanding, high-stakes situations in occupational contexts. These situations require knowledge of relevant specialized terminology and texts along with knowledge of, and training in handling the most common professional communications situations, and such courses belong in higher education. To be polemic, to the extent Norwegian institutions of higher education are failing to provide courses or modules in their professional degrees, they are also failing to adequately prepare their students for future careers in which English is a vital tool.

### 5.3 Validity

Before continuing, the validity of the findings and conclusions of the present study needs to be addressed. The main sources of data come from two fairly large-scale surveys. The first comprises about 19% of the staff, 846 randomly selected employees in Norwegian government ministries (with a 55% response rate). The second is a follow-up study with 485 job advertisements, almost all the ministerial job advertisements from the first six months of 2012 and 2013. With the caveat that the survey is to some extent based on self-reported data only, we would therefore argue that these provide useful and reasonably valid information on staff qualifications, about the use of and need for English in Norwegian ministries, and about how these are reflected in job advertisements.

Next, the main findings are likely to be relevant for other sectors as well, this because they reflect those found in other studies, first and foremost from business. In Norway, the most important would be Hellekjær's (2007) survey of language use and needs in business, and Vold and Doetjé's (2012) large-scale study of job advertisements. The international studies mentioned above also show the same trends.

We would therefore argue that our findings are highly relevant to Norwegian as well as other European institutions of higher education outside English speaking areas, that is to say, for those who are presently neglecting to take their students' need for occupational English proficiency into consideration.

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## 6 Conclusions

### 6.1 Further research

A number of questions arise from the present analysis. One is the need to find out more about the underlying reasons and decisions behind the mention, or non-mention of English skills in job advertisements, and on how language issues impact on hiring decisions.

Another project would be to expand on Fairway's (2011) study with interviews about English use with respondents in government ministries, if possible supplemented by observation. This should include ascertaining what communication skills and kinds of English that are needed, and the extent to which the lack of cultural is a source of difficulty.

Finally, a study of which Norwegian, and perhaps Scandinavian institutions offer relevant English modules or communication courses could also prove useful.

### 6.2 Implications and ways forward

The most important implication of the present NA study is that Norwegian institutions of higher education need to actively cater to their students' need for adequate occupational English and communication courses in combination with professional degrees.

For the institutions of higher education, this means that time and resources will have to be devoted to occupational English courses, as well as to more generic communication courses such as making presentations, running meetings and handling negotiations. This will of course have to come at the expense of the content subjects, and will for that very reason probably prove controversial in the face of crowded timetables and limited resources. A perhaps less controversial solution could therefore be to systematically utilize the language learning potential of the many EMI courses in higher education.

Using EMI courses for language learning would offer the opportunity to integrate the teaching of learning of a subject with a focus on its special terminology and knowledge of domain-specific texts without a major diversion of time and resources. Still, this would require going beyond incidental language learning through exposure to English by making the language aspect a far more salient part of the course. An example of this would be requiring the students to use the language actively as part of the course, for instance to make presentations and write papers in English. Part of the process could also be to offer support

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and instruction from language as well as content specialists, and language learning could be made even more salient by requiring tasks and examinations to be graded for language quality as well as for content.

The more generic English communication courses could then be offered to students independent of department and faculty, for instance by a language center. For oral communication these could comprise training in tasks and situations such as meetings, negotiations, giving talks, and debating. With regard to writing these could comprise learning to write the most common documents as well as bringing in translation and terminology.

How to best integrate language learning goals into EMI courses would of course be one issue in need of further development, as well as further research on how to best enhance language learning as part of such courses. But, the most difficult and most important decisions will have to be made in the different departments and faculties concerning the integration of English modules into professional degrees, at least if the institutions of higher education, in Norway as well as in other countries, consider it their responsibility to adequately prepare their students for future careers.

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