

Teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and a multilingual pedagogical approach

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Knowledge of teachers' beliefs is central to understanding teachers' decision-making in the classroom. The present study explores Norwegian language teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and the use of a multilingual pedagogical approach in the third-language (L3) classroom. This study analysed data collected via focus group discussions with 12 teachers of French ($N = 4$), German ($N = 2$) and Spanish ($N = 6$) using qualitative content analysis. Three main themes emerged from the analysis. (1) The teachers view multilingualism as a potentially positive asset. Although they think that multilingualism has benefited their own language learning, they do not conclude that multilingualism is automatically an asset to students. (2) The teachers claim to make frequent use of their students' linguistic knowledge of Norwegian and English when teaching the L3. However, the teachers rarely focus on the transfer of learning strategies because they believe that learning an L3 is completely different from learning the second language L2 English. (3) The teachers think that collaboration across languages could enhance students' language learning; however, no such collaboration currently exists.

Keywords: multilingualism; third-language learning; teachers' beliefs; multilingual pedagogy; language awareness; language learning strategies

Introduction

Multilinguals differ from bilinguals and monolinguals in several respects. Research has shown, for example, that multilinguals demonstrate superior metalinguistic and metacognitive abilities, such as the ability to draw comparisons between different languages and to reflect on and employ appropriate learning strategies (for reviews, see Cenoz, 2003; De Angelis, 2007; Jessner, 2008). However, a number of researchers (e.g. Bono & Stratilaki, 2009; De Angelis, 2011; Hufeisen & Marx, 2007; Moore, 2006; Singleton & Aronin, 2007; Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, & Hart, 1990) emphasise that multilingualism does not automatically enhance further language learning; for example, when learners are not literate in their home language, when learners are not aware of the benefits of multilingualism and 'when children are not encouraged in the school situation to rely on their different languages and language knowledge as positive resources' (Moore, 2006, p. 136), multilingualism may not provide an advantage. In fact, the general view within the field seems to be that learning multiple languages is best enhanced when learners are encouraged to become aware of and use their pre-existing linguistic and

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language learning knowledge. Moreover, in the school setting, the language teacher is the key facilitator of learners' multilingualism.

Given the important role of the language teacher in promoting learners' multilingualism, research focused on teachers' knowledge and beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual pedagogical approaches is surprisingly scarce. The present research project aims to gain further insight into these issues. This study explores L3 foreign language teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and the use of a multilingual pedagogical approach in a lower secondary school setting (years 8–10) in Norway. The first part of the theoretical section discusses the main principles of a multilingual pedagogy. The second part presents the previous literature regarding teachers' beliefs about multilingualism. The third part provides central background information on language learning in the Norwegian school context from a multilingualism perspective.

In this paper, 'L3 learning' and 'multilingualism' are used as synonyms and are defined as 'the acquisition of a non-native language by learners who have previously acquired or are acquiring two other languages' (Cenoz, 2003, p. 71). In Norwegian schools, learning English and German is an example of what Cenoz calls simultaneous acquisition of L2/L3. Norwegian students begin by learning English, and this instruction continues when the L3 is introduced in year 8. The L3 learners in this study are regarded as multilinguals and are proficient in varying degrees in their languages: L1 Norwegian, L2 English and L3 French/German/Spanish. Learners with a home language other than Norwegian are also referred to as L3 learners in this study, although French, German or Spanish may actually be their L4 or L5 (see Hammarberg [2010] and Kemp [2009] for discussions of the various concepts and definitions in the research field).

Multilingual pedagogy

A multilingual pedagogy should be regarded not as a unified methodology but as a set of principles that are used to varying degrees in different approaches depending on the teaching context, curriculum and learners (Neuner, 2004, p. 27). Examples of multilingual approaches include tertiary language didactics with a primary emphasis on the learning of a third language after English (Hufeisen & Neuner, 2004); the intercomprehension of related languages, such as EuroComGerm (Hufeisen & Marx, 2007), awakening to languages (Candelier, 2004) and approaches that propose a common language curriculum (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2015; Hufeisen, 2011; Hufeisen & Lutjeharms, 2005). Despite some differences, one principle that is central to all these approaches is that they draw on insights from research on multilingualism and closely related disciplines. First, languages are not stored separately in the brain; they are connected in multiple ways and influence one another in a dynamic system (Bialystok, 2001; Cook, 1992; Herdina & Jessner, 2002). Thus, rather than attempting to maintain learners' languages in isolation, teachers should help learners to become aware of and draw on their existing knowledge. Second, learners should draw on experiences from previous language learning when learning a new language. Learners should become aware of which learning strategies they have used previously as well as reflect on, test, and evaluate the extent to which those strategies can be transferred to a new language learning context (Neuner, 2004).

Clearly, a multilingual pedagogical approach in the classroom requires competent teachers. Based on the discussions in De Angelis (2011), Hufeisen (2011) and Otwinowska (2014), language teachers should ideally be able to meet several, if not all, of the following requirements:

- They should be multilingual themselves and serve as models for their learners.
- They should have a highly developed cross-linguistic and metalinguistic awareness.
- They should be familiar with research on multilingualism.
- They should know how to foster learners' multilingualism.
- They should be sensitive to learners' individual cognitive and affective differences.
- They should be willing to collaborate with other (language) teachers to enhance learners' multilingualism.

Language teachers' beliefs

Teachers' beliefs strongly influence their pedagogical decisions, and such beliefs are typically resistant to change (Borg, 2006; Pajares, 1992). In this particular study, teachers' beliefs refer to 'a complex, inter-related system of often tacitly held theories, values and assumptions that the teacher deems to be true, and which serve as cognitive filters that interpret new experiences and guide the teacher's thoughts and behavior' (Mohamed, 2006, p. 21). Because teachers' beliefs are such a strong predictor of what occurs in the classroom, researchers in the field argue that insight into teachers' beliefs is necessary to understand and improve language teaching and students' learning (Borg, 2006). To the best of my knowledge, only a handful of studies have explored language teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy (De Angelis, 2011; Heyder & Schädlich, 2014; Jakisch; 2014, Otwinowska, 2014¹). The following section briefly presents the general results of these studies.

In her questionnaire study, De Angelis (2011) investigated 176 secondary school teachers' beliefs about the role of prior language knowledge and the promotion of multilingualism in enhancing immigrant children's language learning. The teachers included in that study taught various subjects in schools in Austria, Great Britain and Italy. Some of De Angelis' main findings include the following: teachers in all three countries generally encourage learners to use their home languages, but not in the classroom; they believe that using home languages in class can delay and even impair the learning of the majority language. Many teachers claim that they never refer to learners' home language and culture in class. This finding may be linked to the prevalent belief that teachers must be familiar with learners' language to be able to help them. Heyder and Schädlich (2014) also used a questionnaire in their study of multilingualism beliefs among secondary foreign language teachers in Germany ($n = 297$). In contrast with the study of De Angelis (2011), nearly all the teachers included in the study by Heyder and Schädlich (2014) were positive about the benefits of comparing languages in the classroom. These contrasting findings may indicate that language teachers have a higher awareness of multilingualism than teachers of other subjects do. Most of the teachers in the study by Heyder and Schädlich made frequent use of a contrastive approach, largely between German and the foreign language that they were teaching. Such contrasting activities typically occurred spontaneously and were rarely supported by teaching materials. Furthermore, as in the De Angelis' study, the majority of teachers were hesitant to bring other languages into the classroom unless they were familiar with them. The teachers were overly positive about activities that had the potential to promote multilingualism. However, when asked whether they actually make use of these activities, fewer than one-third of the teachers claimed to do so. Otwinowska (2014) discusses the results of two studies that aimed to investigate Polish pre-service and in-service English teachers' multilingual awareness and practices. The first study employed a quantitative

design and included 233 participants (pre-service and in-service teachers) who responded to questions and statements in a questionnaire. The second study was a qualitative focus group discussion with five secondary school teachers. The main results from these studies indicate that experienced in-service teachers have greater multilingual awareness than pre-service teachers do. In addition, teachers who are multilinguals themselves appear to be more multilingually aware than teachers who have less language learning experience. What is more, the teachers' proficiency in the L3 seems to correlate with the level of awareness. Similar to the findings of De Angelis, the teachers were reluctant to refer to other languages when teaching English. Furthermore, teacher education programmes in Poland rarely seem to advocate the potential benefits of employing a multilingual pedagogical approach.

Whereas the studies discussed above investigated teachers' beliefs about multilingualism in general, Jakisch (2014) conducted an interview study to explore the specific beliefs of three English teachers regarding the potential benefit of using L2 English as a door opener to learners' multilingualism. Her results indicate that the teachers in the study had not spent a significant amount of time reflecting on the issue. Nevertheless, the teachers have a positive attitude towards the idea and appear to believe that L2 English knowledge can motivate further language learning. However, the teachers were uncertain that L2 English knowledge could facilitate the learning of all languages; instead, they appear to believe that a 'prototype language' is required. The teachers are also unwilling to believe that English is the only door opener to further language learning, fearing that their subject might be reduced to an instrument for enhancing multilingualism. Except for lexical comparisons, the teachers are sceptical about contrasting English with other languages and believe that only advanced students would benefit from such activities.

The studies discussed above were conducted in various countries with different learning contexts and with different constellations of languages taught in schools. Nevertheless, their results are quite similar in many respects: teachers in all countries have positive beliefs about multilingualism and think that multilingualism should be promoted, but they do not often foster multilingualism (i.e. make use of learners' previous linguistic knowledge) in their own classrooms. Teachers do not feel competent at doing so, and many are concerned that it could disrupt further language learning. However, two important aspects of multilingualism were not discussed in any of these studies: teachers' beliefs about the awareness and transfer of previous language learning strategies to enhance multilingualism and their beliefs about cross-curricular collaboration among language teachers.

Multilingualism in Norwegian language curricula

Norwegians start school in August of the year in which they turn six. Children learn their L1, Norwegian, and the L2, English, throughout all 10 years of compulsory education. A third optional language can be chosen beginning in the first year of lower secondary school (year 8), when the learners are 13 years old; approximately 75% of students choose to study an L3. Spanish is the most popular choice, followed by German and French. The curricula for L1 Norwegian, L2 English and the L3 (Directorate for Education and Training, 2006) are strongly influenced by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), which emphasises the value of multilingualism.

The curriculum for L1 Norwegian is the first stepping stone for developing learners' multilingualism. Norway has two official written languages, Nynorsk and Bokmål, and a

rich spectrum of dialects that students encounter in written and oral texts beginning in their first school year.² Receptive multilingualism is further encouraged through exposure to texts written in two other Scandinavian languages, Danish and Swedish. Thus, a major aim of L1 Norwegian instruction is to promote awareness of linguistic diversity. In L1 Norwegian, learners are also expected to learn grammatical terminology and to reflect on learning strategies. In L2 English, the main subject area Language learning ‘focuses on what is involved in learning a new language and seeing relationships between English, one’s native language and other languages’. For example, in lower secondary school, learners should be able to note the linguistic similarities and differences between English and their native language and to use this knowledge in their own language learning. The curriculum for foreign languages (L3) is explicit in its multilingualism goals in several respects. The curriculum states, for example, that ‘learning a new foreign language builds on experience from previous language learning’ and that ‘competence in foreign languages shall ... contribute to multilingual skills and provide an important basis for lifelong learning’. Two competence aims are linked to these general statements about multilingualism. After completing lower secondary school (year 10), each student should be able to do the following:

- ‘exploit his or her own experience of language learning in learning the new language’.
- ‘examine similarities and differences between the native language and the new language and exploit this in his or her language learning’.

In summary, Norwegian language curricula include competence aims with the potential to enhance learners’ multilingualism. However, no study has yet explored Norwegian language teachers’ beliefs about multilingualism and the extent to which teachers have actually implemented a multilingual pedagogy in their classrooms.

Research questions

Given the issues raised in the literature review above, a study was designed to explore the following research questions:

- What are L3 language teachers’ beliefs about multilingualism as an asset to language learning?
- To what extent do L3 language teachers draw on L3 learners’ previous linguistic knowledge?
- To what extent do L3 language teachers draw on learners’ previous language learning knowledge?
- To what extent do L3 teachers collaborate with other language teachers to enhance learners’ multilingualism?

Method

Participants

L3 teachers at four suburban lower secondary schools (with students in years 8–10) in similar socio-economic areas near one of Norway’s biggest cities were contacted by email and invited to participate in this study. In addition to having similar student populations, these schools were chosen because their L3 teachers had not previously collaborated with the present researcher as supervisors in the university’s teacher training. It was reasonable to believe that these teachers could express themselves more freely than if they had been

involved with the present researcher as teacher trainers, in which case they might have felt pressured to express certain views. Each school had four L3 teachers: two Spanish teachers and one each for French and German. Three L3 teachers from each of the four schools consented to participate in the project; the fourth teacher was unable to attend in each case due to time constraints. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants, and their anonymity was secured by using pseudonyms and codes for the schools. [Table 1](#) provides an overview of the 12 teachers' profiles in terms of the L3 that each taught, their qualifications in the L3 [as measured in points according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)], the extent of their teaching competence in other languages and their L3 teaching experience.

Table 1. Participants' names, language teaching competences and teaching experience.

Name	School	L3	ECTS points in the L3	Teaching competence in other languages	L3 teaching experience (<i>n</i> = years)
Anna	1	French	210	English	11
Ellen	1	Spanish	150	Norwegian	4
Bengt	1	Spanish	90	English	4
Dina	2	French	60	English	4
Jan	2	German	210	English, Spanish	3
Mette	2	Spanish	60	Norwegian	8
Vilde	3	French	210	English, Norwegian	7
Rita	3	Spanish	60	None	7
Guro	3	Spanish	210	Norwegian	9
Hanne	4	French	60	Norwegian	2
Torill	4	German	90	English	38
Camilla	4	Spanish	90	English	8

As [Table 1](#) demonstrates, there is considerable variation among the teachers regarding subject knowledge in the L3 when measured in ECTS points. Four teachers have only the minimum educational requirements regarding what is required to teach a foreign language in a Norwegian secondary school (60 ECTS points), four teachers have a master's degree (210 ECTS points) and the remaining four teachers have qualifications between the minimum and a master's degree (between 60 and 210 ECTS points). All teachers except Rita also have experience teaching other languages. Apart from Torill, who has taught L3 German for 38 years, the other teachers are relatively new members of the profession with 2–11 years of teaching experience.

Procedure

The L3 teachers at the four schools were invited to take part in a focus group discussion exploring their beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning. A focus group can be defined as 'an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics relevant to the situation at hand' (Beck, Trombetta, & Share, 1986, p. 73). Typically, focus groups are small and consist of participants who share certain characteristics or experiences. Of primary importance is the emphasis on group interaction in a friendly environment. The participants are encouraged to speak freely with one another, to ask questions, to exchange classroom experiences and to comment on one another's experiences. In this manner, the participants often play a more active role than they would in one-on-one interviews (Litosseliti, 2003).

The focus group discussions were conducted in April and May 2014 in the teachers' respective schools to allow the participants to express their views in a familiar atmosphere. The group discussions were led by a moderator (the present researcher), and the discussions were in Norwegian. At the beginning of each session, the moderator read aloud from an information sheet about the project and purpose of the group discussion. The teachers were asked to concentrate on the part of the curriculum that focuses on students' language learning process. Furthermore, the teachers were informed that they should feel free to express both their positive and their negative beliefs about teaching French, German and Spanish, that a variety of opinions was welcome, that there are no correct or incorrect opinions and that the objective of the group did not include reaching a consensus about any topic. They were encouraged to be open about topics they had little knowledge of and experience with because it might provide important information to the research project. The participants were also given some practical guidelines regarding how to act during the discussion, such as making sure that everyone is given the chance to speak freely without being interrupted. The participants were informed that the moderator's opinions and knowledge would not be verbalised during the discussion but were told that they could ask more about the project after the group discussion had concluded. The moderator had previously worked as a language teacher of L1 Norwegian, L2 English and L3 German in secondary school. This experience was believed to be an advantage during the interview sessions because the teachers could expect the moderator to understand their perspectives better than an individual might with no such teaching experience. Nevertheless, after each main topic and at the end of the discussion, the moderator summarised the participants' various views to check whether they had been correctly understood.

The research questions and previous theory informed the development of the topic guide. Thirteen open-ended questions were developed to explore the participating teachers' beliefs regarding the following main topics: the emphasis on language learning in the L3 curriculum, the potential benefits of multilingualism, the influence of previous linguistic and language learning knowledge in an L3 learning context and cross-curricular collaboration among language teachers (see [Appendix 1](#)). However, questions were not always formulated by the moderator because the topics were initiated by the teachers themselves at several points during the discussions. As a consequence, the research topics were not addressed in the same order in each group but instead followed the natural development of the discussions. As a warm-up activity, each discussion began with a presentation round that included questions regarding the teachers' language learning profiles, their teaching experiences and their reasons for becoming language teachers. At the end of each discussion, the teachers were encouraged to suggest and reflect upon topics related to L3 teaching and learning that had not been touched upon earlier.

Analysis

With the participants' consent, the discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed. The average duration of the discussions was 1 h 30 min. In accordance with Flick (1998, p. 175), parts of the discussions that were unrelated to the research topics were not fully transcribed; instead, these parts were summarised in writing. The transcribed material consisted of approximately 40,000 words.

The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, which can be defined as a research method used for 'the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or

patterns' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). In the preparation phase, the transcripts were first read several times to become well acquainted with the data, to obtain an overview of the main themes and to determine the units of analysis. In this study, the selected units of analysis were theme based and could therefore consist of a single word, a phrase, a sentence or several sentences. One unit could contain one or more themes. Additionally, it was determined to only analyse manifest content because of the difficulties of analysing latent data, such as pauses, sighs and laughter, in focus group discussions without video recordings. A primarily deductive approach to content analysis was adopted, and the focus group topics and relevant theory regarding multilingualism were used as guidance in forming the initial categories. Subsequently, the participants' statements were coded consistent with the initial categories. The qualitative data analysis software NVivo 10 was used to make the coding process more systematic and to provide a better overview of the data during analysis. For statements that could not be fitted into the initial categories, new categories were created, which were classified as sub-categories of previously defined categories or which formed new main categories. Intra-rater coding consistency was checked through a second coding of a sample of the data one month after the first coding. The inconsistencies that were identified largely stemmed from the fact that some categories had overlapping content. Consequently, some categories were collapsed, and others were renamed.

The following major themes emerged from the final round of data analysis, in which categories belonging to a common theme were clustered together: the potential of multilingualism for teachers, the potential of multilingualism for learners, the importance of previous linguistic knowledge, the importance of previous strategy knowledge, desired knowledge from previous language learning, language teacher collaboration, L3 motivation and contextual factors. An overview of the subcategories belonging to each major theme can be found in [Appendix 2](#). The final step of the analysis involved identifying quotes that might illuminate both overall beliefs and beliefs that contrasted with the general group agreement.

Results

The analysis of the focus group transcriptions provided rich insight into the teachers' beliefs. However, because of space constraints, only the results belonging to the themes that are most closely linked to the research questions will be presented here. Thus, teachers' beliefs regarding L3 motivation and contextual factors will be reported elsewhere. Following the recommendations for thick description in Davis (1995), the reporting of the results includes representative examples from the data and a description of the general patterns for each major theme. The findings are summarised and discussed in light of previous theory in the final section of the paper.

The potential of multilingualism for teachers: 'It is easier to learn new languages because you see connections' (Mette)

During the group discussions, the teachers were asked to reflect on the following statement: 'The more languages you know, the easier it is to learn new languages'. All the teachers regarded this statement as true when thinking about their own history of language learning. Bengt, for example, had recently begun learning Portuguese and thought that his previous linguistic knowledge was quite useful for understanding Portuguese and had accelerated his learning process. In another example, Torill had

previously learned Latin, English, French and German. Now, approaching her retirement, she had begun studying Spanish and described it as unproblematic: 'I'm doing just fine. It's easy'. Four other teachers provided anecdotes about how they actively used their linguistic repertoires to make sense of unknown languages, such as when travelling abroad on holiday.

The potential of multilingualism for learners: 'They have to be able to take a step back and explore the languages they know' (Hanne)

Notably, whereas all teachers considered multilingualism to be an asset to their own language learning, they could not identify a clear advantage of multilingualism among their students – even among those students for whom French, German or Spanish was their L4 or L5. The teachers reported that these learners' achievements were as heterogeneous as those of the other students. The only exception was Anna, who believed that students who had Arabic and Asian language backgrounds were clearly better learners than the others, particularly in tasks involving recognising linguistic patterns and learning vocabulary. Eight teachers emphasised that multilingualism as an asset was dependent on learners' awareness of their own knowledge. Mette described an L1 Polish student in the following way: 'He speaks Norwegian, is learning Spanish and thinks in English. He juggles all these language balls in the air at the same time and is very aware of what he is doing'. Mette also described the language learning process of two siblings in her Spanish classroom. While having the same linguistic backgrounds and education, the siblings had very different approaches, and the sister was much more active in using her previous knowledge to enhance how she learned Spanish than her brother. Bengt further indicated that learners must be motivated to be willing to activate what they know from their previous experiences and apply that knowledge in further language learning.

However, although the teachers believed that multilingualism as an asset depended on the awareness of learners, only three teachers seemed to explicitly encourage and help their students become aware of and use linguistic resources other than Norwegian and English (see below). Dina, for example, admitted that she had never spoken with her minority students about their home languages and what they knew, whereas Ellen, Anna and Vilde had sometimes encouraged their students to rely on all their language resources. Ellen indicated that she did not provide such encouragement often because she felt it was difficult to do so when she was not familiar with her students' home languages.

The importance of previous linguistic knowledge: 'Think English, think Norwegian! Think about what you know from before' (Dina)

All the teachers claimed that they made frequent use of their learners' previously acquired linguistic knowledge of L1 Norwegian and L2 English in their L3 classrooms. Anna explained as follows: 'Because it is very important that they can use the other languages they have available to understand an oral or written text. So I do that all the time. In every lesson'. Ellen explained as follows:

I remember clearly from the two most recent Spanish classes that I used some examples with grammar that you can link to English. They don't remember Norwegian grammar very well, but they know, for example, about *I am, you are, he/she/it is*, and then they can ... 'Oh yes, that's how it is in Spanish as well!' Or there are words that are quite similar. (Ellen)

All teachers provided examples of how they used learners' knowledge of L1 Norwegian and L2 English to enhance the L3 language learning process. Depending on the learning aim(s) of a particular lesson, the teachers drew on learners' knowledge of either L1 Norwegian or L2 English, depending on which was most appropriate. However, the teachers found little or no support for such activities in the L3 textbooks, which had no or, at best, very few activities encouraging learners to use their L1 and L2 knowledge. This was particularly true for L2 English. Nevertheless, the great majority of the teachers ($n = 10$) appear to have referred to L2 English quite frequently when making comparisons. Mette even stated that the inclusion of English was necessary for learners to understand certain L3 Spanish structures. Only the teachers of L3 German, Jan and Torill, were somewhat hesitant to make frequent use of L2 English in their classrooms. Both these teachers found it more natural to compare German with L1 Norwegian, which they perceived as being more similar to German than English. Jan feared that a focus on L2 English in L3 German class might lead to more language mistakes. He had noticed that some students unconsciously transferred linguistic patterns from L2 English, which led to what he called bad German. 'Things just get more right if they think in Norwegian', Jan stated.

The importance of previous strategy knowledge: 'Learning French is completely different from learning English' (Hanne)

Whereas all the teachers made frequent linguistic comparisons between L1 Norwegian and L2 English and encouraged the learners to identify similar linguistic patterns, the situation was quite different in reflecting on previous language learning experiences from L2 English and the extent to which these experiences can and should be transferred to the L3 learning context. The following statement from Hanne represents the beliefs of the teachers: 'Learning French is completely different from learning English. I tell my students that this is their first foreign language'. The teachers listed a number of reasons that learning strategies cannot easily be transferred from L2 English to an L3. First, English is learned beginning in the first year of primary school, whereas the L3 is introduced seven years later. Thus, the teachers commonly assumed that learners have forgotten how they learned L2 English. Second, the different ages at which students first learn L2 and L3 imply a need for different teaching approaches: 'They have sung and played in English and learned it that way, but now they have to learn Spanish almost like adults' (Camilla). Rita suggests the following, to general group agreement:

I feel that not everyone understands what it means to learn a foreign language. They think it will be a lot of fun, think that things will come automatically. They aren't prepared that they have to work to learn this language. And that we have to make the children understand. This is actually a subject where you have to work hard.

Third, all the teachers noted that learners are surrounded by English in their daily lives: they are likely to spend several hours every day processing input from English-language popular culture, whereas their exposure to input from the L3 is limited to two hours a week in school in addition to some homework assignments. Although L3 input is also easily available on the Internet, Vilde noted that only the most dedicated students take advantage of this resource to enhance their language learning. However, Ellen seemed to reflect with her students about how they learned English and what strategies could be helpful in learning L3 Spanish:

We have talked about this now in year 8. Many of them say, for example, that this is how I do it when I learn new vocabulary in English. This works for me, so this is the way I want to do it in Spanish as well. (Ellen)

Desired knowledge from previous language learning: ‘I wish they knew more about grammar’ (Ellen)

When the teachers were asked to describe what knowledge of learners would be ideally transferred from previous language learning, all but Mette stated that more knowledge of grammar and terminology would be useful. The teachers complained that they typically must start from scratch with their students and teach them essentials, such as the definitions of verbs and nouns or verb tenses. As Ellen noted, ‘I wish they knew more about grammar. I wish they knew the concepts, what perfect is, present tense, infinitive, future tense. I really wish they knew all this’. However, in contrast to the other teachers, Mette viewed her students’ lack of linguistic knowledge as an advantage:

Do you know what? I think it is really lovely that they start from zero. Because then I can just take them and say: This is the way I want you to do it! I think that is really nice. Nothing that gets in the way. (Mette)

None of the teachers mentioned learners’ knowledge of language learning strategies as a competence that they wished their learners could bring to the L3 classroom. However, Bengt wished that learners could transfer the self-confidence that they show in the L2 English classroom to the L3 learning context.

In English, they can easily write a page or more without complaining and without having a good command of the language. I get texts in English at a lower level than what I get in Spanish. But still, those who wrote the Spanish texts will expect lower grades than those who wrote the English texts. (Bengt)

Language teacher collaboration: ‘It doesn’t exist’ (Torill)

When asked whether there is any collaboration across the language subjects L1 Norwegian, L2 English and the various L3s, Torill promptly answered that ‘it doesn’t exist’. In fact, none of the teachers had ever collaborated with the teachers of other languages. ‘But it is a good idea, though’, Anna stated, indicating that the idea of collaboration was quite new to her. Whereas teachers from schools 1, 2 and 4 only thought about collaborating across the language curricula on grammar and grammar terminology, Rita, Guro and Vilde from school 3 also suggested other topics for collaboration, such as the training of communication skills, poetry reading, genre studies and various cross-cultural issues.

Teachers from all four schools reported time constraints as the main reason for their lack of collaboration. In particular, the teachers from school 3 wished that they had time for joint projects with all language teachers, such as grammar-focused projects. Vilde wished that the teachers could meet and discuss more often and on a regular basis to ensure that they all knew what the others were doing in their classrooms. ‘This would make it much easier to know which knowledge we can activate and draw on in our subjects’, she explained. Vilde further emphasised how important it is for students to realise that what they learn does not belong to a particular classroom or a particular

subject: ‘An important aim is that learners should see how knowledge relates to other knowledge and how it can be used outside the classroom’.

Nevertheless, for collaboration between languages to occur, the teachers of L1 Norwegian and L2 English should recognise the benefits of collaboration with L3 teachers. This recognition was not necessarily found, however. Mette, who also teaches L1 Norwegian, thought that L3 knowledge was of no value in Norwegian classes and that collaboration would therefore be unappealing to L1 teachers:

We don't do language instruction in that way in Norwegian, you know. That is something they did in primary school in the second grade, to learn a word, to spell it correctly, to form a sentence. So when I teach Norwegian in year 10 now, there is nothing from Spanish that is useful. (Mette)

By contrast, Rita noted that teaching Spanish also means teaching Norwegian because her contrastive approach involves the repetition of Norwegian grammar. ‘We give as much to them as they can give to us’, she explained.

Discussion

Knowledge of teachers' beliefs is central to understanding their decision-making in the classroom. This qualitative study explored L3 teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy in a Norwegian school context. A multilingual pedagogy is a learner-centred approach that aims to develop students' language awareness and language learning awareness across the languages that students know (Neuner, 2004). Twelve teachers of French, German and Spanish shared and discussed their beliefs in focus groups at their respective schools. The transcribed data were subjected to qualitative content analysis. The main research findings are discussed in the following section.

The teachers believed that their own multilingualism had been beneficial to their language learning, but they did not come to the same conclusion regarding their students. The teachers believed that this difference could be explained by differences in awareness: the teachers were aware of how to use their previous knowledge in further language learning, whereas their learners may not be equally aware. This belief seems to parallel and support the conclusions of several researchers that awareness is necessary for multilingualism to be an asset (e.g. Bono & Stratilaki, 2009; De Angelis, 2011; Hufeisen & Marx, 2007; Moore, 2006; Singleton & Aronin, 2007).

In contrast with the studies referenced above (De Angelis, 2011; Jakisch, 2014; Otwinowska, 2014), the teachers in this study were actively involved in helping learners become aware and make use of previous linguistic knowledge. However, awareness-raising activities were largely restricted to the use of knowledge from Norwegian and English while excluding students' knowledge of other languages. Similar to previous findings, the teachers believed they would need to know students' other languages well before they could encourage learners to draw on those languages in their classes. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that the teachers claimed to make frequent use of the two languages that all students had in common, Norwegian and English. Given the theory that L2 English may open doors for further language learning (Hufeisen & Neuner, 2004), it is also promising that English was used frequently for language comparisons in the classrooms.

However, the results regarding the use of previous language learning experiences were quite different. Generally, the teachers thought that learning an L3 differs so much

from learning L2 English that transferring strategies makes little sense. Hence, the teachers seemed to imply that L2 English is largely learned implicitly through exposure to large amounts of input, whereas an L3 must be learned through an explicit approach. The teachers also claimed that their students are not aware of the strategies that they used to learn L2 English because they began learning it so many years earlier. Such statements indicate that reflections on language learning strategies may be neglected in the L2 English secondary school classroom, despite a strong emphasis on learning strategies in the L2 English curriculum. This possibility is also suggested by Hellekjær (2005) in his study of Norwegian students' reading comprehension and is documented in Haukås (2012). In the latter study, the majority of the sample of 145 teachers of L2 English and various L3s reported that their students were rarely given the chance to reflect on, experiment with and evaluate their own strategy use. Thus, the observation that the teachers in the current study do not demand more knowledge of appropriate learning strategies may indicate that teachers generally place little emphasis on learning strategies in their language classrooms.

The L3 teachers in this study had never collaborated with teachers of other languages. When asked about the topics on which they might collaborate, most teachers suggested working together on grammar and grammar terminology; only a few teachers mentioned other topics. This lack of collaboration has several likely explanations. First, in relation to the beliefs discussed above, language teachers may view the learning of the various languages so differently that they may see little value in using a cross-curricular approach; second, time constraints make collaboration difficult; and third, all language teachers (L1, L2 and L3) must recognise the benefits of collaboration for it to occur. Clearly, if teachers believe that their subject has been reduced to an instrument for enhancing multilingualism, they are likely to be uninterested in collaboration (Jakisch, 2014).

We know from research that changes in teachers' beliefs and teaching approaches take time and depend on various factors. According to Neuner (2009), school reform can succeed only if the following three conditions are met: (1) teachers are convinced that curriculum changes will lead to more efficient and motivated learning, (2) teachers receive sufficient training in the new approach and (3) teachers have access to teaching materials that facilitate their work. A central aim of multilingual pedagogy is to increase the efficiency of language learning (Hufeisen, 2011), but if teachers lack the time to collaborate or lack the recognition that a multilingual pedagogy may be more efficient, then these teachers will – not surprisingly – be resistant to implementing yet another approach (Jakisch, 2014). Furthermore, teachers clearly need sufficient training in a new approach before they can see how such an approach can enhance their students' learning. Language teacher education plays a key role in training future teachers to implement a multilingual pedagogy. To date, education for language teachers seems to devote an insufficient amount of time to enhancing language teachers' multilingual awareness and practices (De Angelis, 2011; Otwinowska, 2014).

Regarding Neuner's third point, various teaching materials can assist teachers in enhancing students' multilingual awareness. The most well-known tool is likely the European Language Portfolio (ELP)³ which encourages learners to document their linguistic resources for all the languages that they know and are learning and to reflect on their language learning in a systematic manner. Nonetheless, despite efforts to implement the ELP in the language learning classroom, it is rarely used and remains unknown to many teachers (Heyder & Schädlich, 2014; Larssen & Høie, 2012; Mikalsen & Sørheim, 2012). During a hectic workweek that allows little time for exploring new approaches and

materials, teachers primarily rely on course textbooks. Indeed, teachers often seem to view the textbook as the curriculum rather than planning their teaching according to the curriculum itself (Bachmann, 2004; Talmage, 1972). In light of this tendency among teachers, it is vital for language textbooks to implement a multilingual pedagogical approach. To the best of my knowledge, no studies have investigated the extent to which L3 foreign language textbooks in Norway and elsewhere have implemented a multilingual approach.

In conclusion, the teachers participating in this study appear to have progressed several steps on the path to implementing a multilingual pedagogy: teachers regard multilingualism not only as positive for learners but also as a tool to help learners find linguistic links between the L3 and previously learned languages (primarily L1 Norwegian and L2 English). For most teachers, however, the use of the multilingual pedagogical approach stops there because they tend not to reflect on previous language learning experiences with their students. Furthermore, there is no collaboration between language teachers to increase the strength of learners' multilingualism.

This study featured a qualitative design that focused on a small number of participants in a Norwegian setting. Therefore, future research should investigate whether the findings of this study are representative not only of Norwegian L3 teachers in general but also of L3 teachers in other countries. Furthermore, international comparative studies should examine the role of language typology, i.e. to what extent and how the constellations of languages taught in schools influence teachers' beliefs. In addition, to gain broader insight into fostering multilingualism in school settings, the beliefs of L1 and L2 teachers should also be examined.

However, it is naive to believe that a teacher's reported beliefs accurately reflect what occurs in the classroom. First, when answering questions, the respondents might be eager to please the researcher and the other participants and might thus provide overly positive reports. This problem is most likely particularly difficult to avoid when researchers ask for specific teaching practices, for example, the question 'To what extent do you think students' knowledge of other languages is useful when learning French/German/Spanish?' in this study. Second, contextual factors such as economics, group size, expectations from students and/or parents of students, the curriculum, or time pressure may influence or even force teachers not to act according to their own beliefs (Johnson, 1996; Lee, 2009). Third, teachers are not always aware that their stated beliefs do not correspond to their actual behaviour (Lee, 2009). An examination of in-class interaction was beyond the scope of this exploratory study; therefore, it is essential that future research on teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual pedagogical approaches is based on both the stated beliefs and observed behaviour of teachers. Controlled intervention studies are also strongly needed in this research field. Such studies should explore how and to what extent multilingualism can be enhanced by implementing a multilingual pedagogical approach.

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Notes

1. The author was only aware of the De Angelis (2011) paper when this study was designed. Data collection began in the same month that the three other studies were published.
2. Sami is also an official language. Sami is primarily taught in the northern parts of Norway, but all Norwegian children are expected to have some knowledge of Sami.
3. <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/>.

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Appendix 1. Topic guide for the focus group discussions

Note: The guide for the focus group discussions was initially written in Norwegian. The central questions below were frequently followed up by sub-questions asking the teachers to explain their views, or to provide examples of pedagogical activities from their L3 classrooms. Typical sub-questions included ‘Could you elaborate or give an example?’, ‘Could you explain what you mean?’, ‘Do you have anything more to add?’ and ‘Can you explain how you do this in your classroom?’.

Presentation of the teachers

Names

What subjects do you teach?

Educational background in foreign languages and other subjects

Teaching experience in foreign languages

Experiences from abroad

Reasons for becoming foreign language teachers

Assets of multilingualism

It is often said that the more languages one knows, the easier it is to learn new languages. What are your views about this statement?

Students' previous linguistic knowledge

To what extent do you think students' knowledge of other languages is useful when learning French/German/Spanish?

To what extent do you draw on your students' knowledge of Norwegian when teaching French/German/Spanish?

To what extent do you draw on your students' knowledge of English when teaching French/German/Spanish?

Is there knowledge from Norwegian and English instruction that you would have liked learners to bring into the French/German/Spanish classroom.

To what extent and how do you draw on your students' potential knowledge of languages other than Norwegian and English when you teach?

Students' language learning knowledge

What do you think about the fact that language learning, learning how to learn, is such a central part of the curriculum?

To what extent do you spend time on learning how to learn (learning strategies) in the foreign language classroom?

As you know, your students have learned a foreign language before beginning to learn French, German or Spanish. To what extent do you think it is useful to draw on students' language learning experiences from English when learning French/German/Spanish?

Language teacher collaboration

To what extent do the school's language teachers collaborate across the subjects Norwegian, English and German/French/Spanish?

Do you have any suggestions regarding what topics language teachers might collaborate on across subjects?

Learning materials

Have you noticed whether the textbooks you use include activities in which students are required to draw on what they know from before, such as by exploring similarities and differences between languages or reflecting on which learning strategies can be transferred from English to French/German/Spanish?

Other topics related to L3 learning and teaching

Are there other topics you want to discuss or reflect on in the group that you find important or relevant for learning and teaching French/German/Spanish and that have not been mentioned earlier today?

Appendix 2

The table below provides an overview of the major themes that emerged from the final data analysis (left column). It also shows the categories that were used during the earlier stages of the coding process and how these relate to the major themes (right column). The theme and category names are translated from Norwegian.

Major themes	Categories
The potential of multilingualism for teachers	The potential of multilingualism for teachers
The potential of multilingualism for learners	Awareness of multilingualism as a prerequisite Differences among students Motivation and effort
The importance of previous linguistic knowledge	Perceived importance of previous linguistic knowledge Drawing on L1 Norwegian linguistic knowledge Drawing on L2 English linguistic knowledge Drawing on linguistic knowledge from other languages Desired linguistic knowledge from previous languages Transfer of linguistic knowledge in L3 textbooks
The importance of previous strategy knowledge	Perceived usefulness of learning strategies in general Drawing on L2 English strategy knowledge Drawing on learning strategies from other acquired languages Desired strategic knowledge from previous language learning Transfer of strategic knowledge in L3 textbooks
Language teacher collaboration	Language teacher collaboration Suggestions for collaboration
L3 motivation	Perceived usefulness of learning an L3 Learner disappointment
Contextual factors	Need for more instruction Need for more support from school leaders and colleagues Need to change the status of the L3 Need for more information before deciding to study an L3 Need an earlier starting age