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SHORT VERSION

The 16th Nordic conference on basic literacy for adult immigrants

Second Language Learning (in the Classroom and) Outside the Classroom for Newly Arrived Adults

Marianne Eek, Sandefjord, April 23–25, 2025

Background for the focus on work-oriented language training

- An **increased focus** on work-oriented language training across the Nordic countries.
- An aim for **early qualification** of newly arrived immigrants, so that 'immigrants are integrated into Norwegian society at an early stage and become financially independent' (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021).
- The justifications can be **democratic, integrative/inclusive, and economic** in nature (Cochran-Smith, 2013, p. 123; Nordberg, 2010)

Integreringsloven (2022) § 1:

«The purpose of the law is for immigrants to be integrated into the Norwegian society at an early stage and become financially independent. The law aims to ensure that immigrants acquire strong Norwegian language skills, knowledge of Norwegian society, formal qualifications, and a lasting connection to the workforce.» (my translation)

Different structures and varying goals

Language Practice

-aims to improve Norwegian language skills in an authentic work environment.



Work Placement/ Work practice

-aims to improve Norwegian language skills, but also to provide relevant work experiences and language competence within a specific profession.



Specialized Language Learning Courses

-specialized language learning courses for employees in specific professions (e.g., “Barnehaugenorsk”).



- **Tailored Language Practice, Language Cafés, Hiking Groups, etc.**
-collaboration with volunteer organizations to offer supplementary integration and language learning opportunities for adult newcomers.



The importance of second language learning in both formal and “informal” contexts

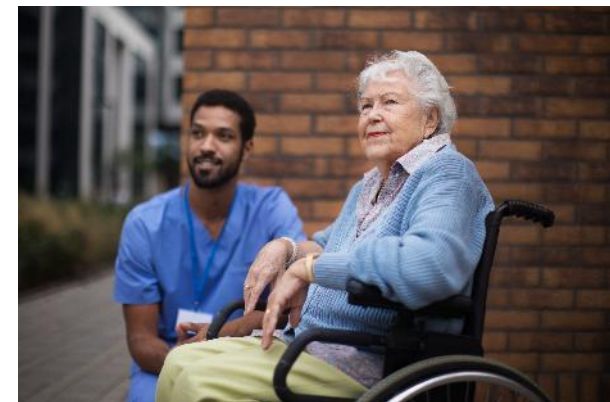
(e.g. Schumann, 1976; Spolsky, 1989)

- **Learning in formal learning environments such as the classroom**
 - language use is *controlled and simplified*
 - provides opportunities to *focus on smaller linguistic units*
- **Learning outside the classroom (“natural language learning”)**
 - language use is “free and normal”, or “free and not bookish” (Spolsky, 1989, p. 171 and 172)
 - provides contextual cues (s. 171 og 172)



➡ Practice in both environments is considered necessary

«The language at school is not the same as street language. They are two different languages» (Eek, 2021, my translation)



Some insights from earlier research

- Language learning is a **key factor** for social inclusion and citizenship, and participation in the workforce (Kunitz, 2022).
- Adult refugees' **individual experiences of learning** and their **linguistic repertoires** affect their language learning (e.g. Steien, 2022).
- **Challenges in accessing** language-learning contexts outside the classroom (e.g., Sandwall, 2010; 2013; Eek, 2021).
- The activities, internships, or jobs offered **do not necessarily match** the newcomers' needs and competencies (Abdulla, 2017, p. 161).
- Different learning spaces, such as the workplace and the classroom, need to be connected - **creating a learning loop** (Pedersen, 2018).
- **Active support** in the learning process (Hållsten, 2020).
- **Inclusion** should not be reduced to language learning and labor market policies alone, but also conceptualized in terms of **belonging** and **participation** (Eriksson, 2019).



“That adult immigrants can **easily learn Swedish in the workplace** and that “workplace Swedish” and a work placement lead to both faster labor market entry and more effective second language development are **assumptions** that frequently recur in public debate”

(Sandwall, 2013, s. 725, my translation)

Participant voices, Ph.d.-study

«I have **always worked**. It's all I know in life, I have to work all the time, but here I am disappointed in a way [because] the language was very difficult for me to learn, and the chance of finding a job is limited» *Abbas*

«I had a course, but [...] it was only people from Lithuania. [...] **I couldn't learn the language ...** or learn anything new» *Abbas*

«I have attended an agriculture course **for a few hours**, not full days» *Abbas*

Marianne Do you use more Norwegian now? Or still like ... not much?

Abbas It's still the same, there's no contact with anyone [...] The information we get here at school stays here at school, there's no one out there I can talk to [...]

Marianne So, you don't have any Norwegian neighbors or friends you feel comfortable practicing and speaking with?

Abbas No, I actually haven't [...]

Marianne But, is it difficult to make contact?

Abbas I try to talk to them from time to time, and some answer you, and others just turn away.

Two research projects on language learning beyond the classroom

Aim: To contribute insights to enhance *language learning outside the classroom / workplace-related contexts*




- Two teachers' engagement in **work-oriented language training**
- **Language learning outside the classroom** in two municipalities



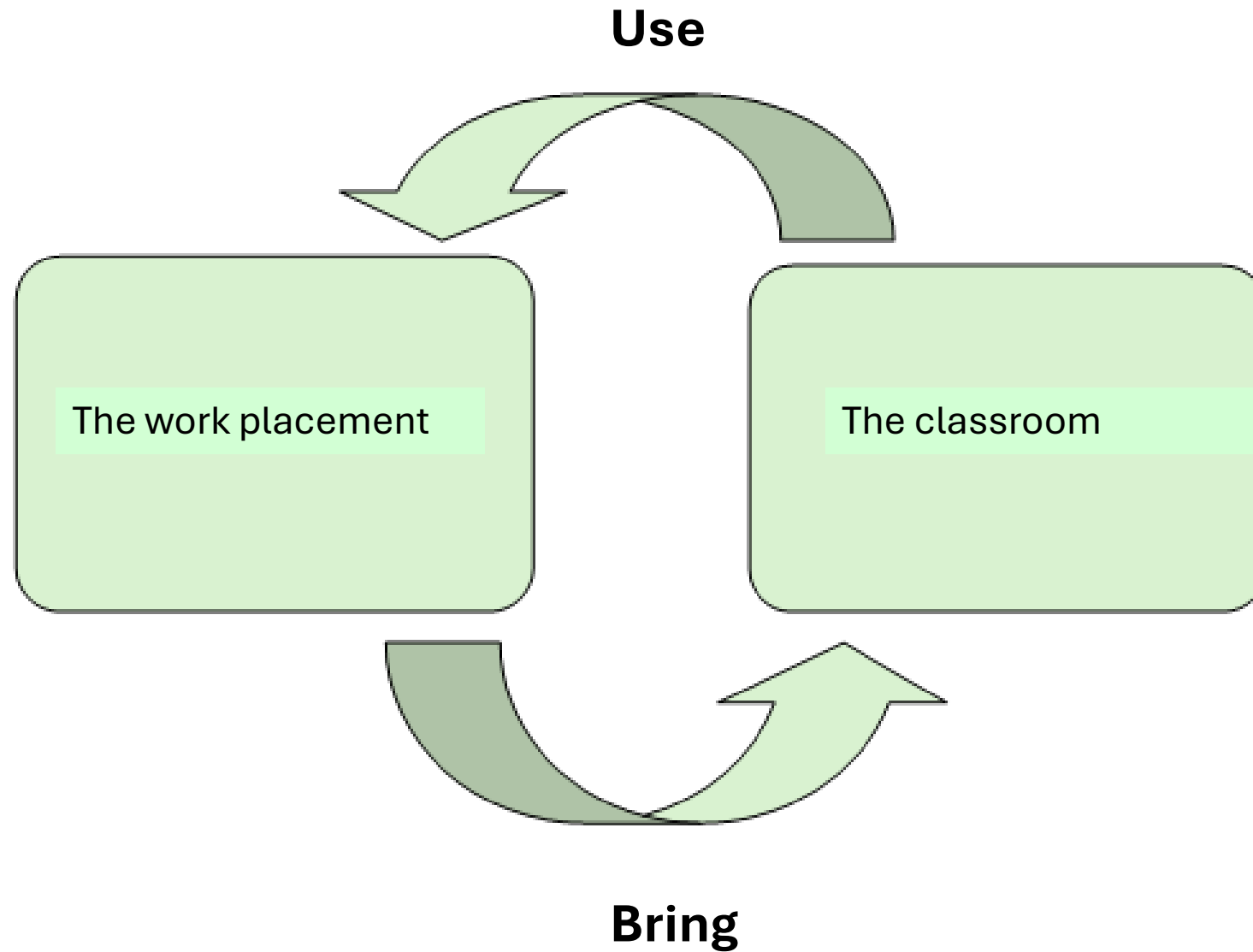
Language learning opportunities organized by **volunteer organizations**

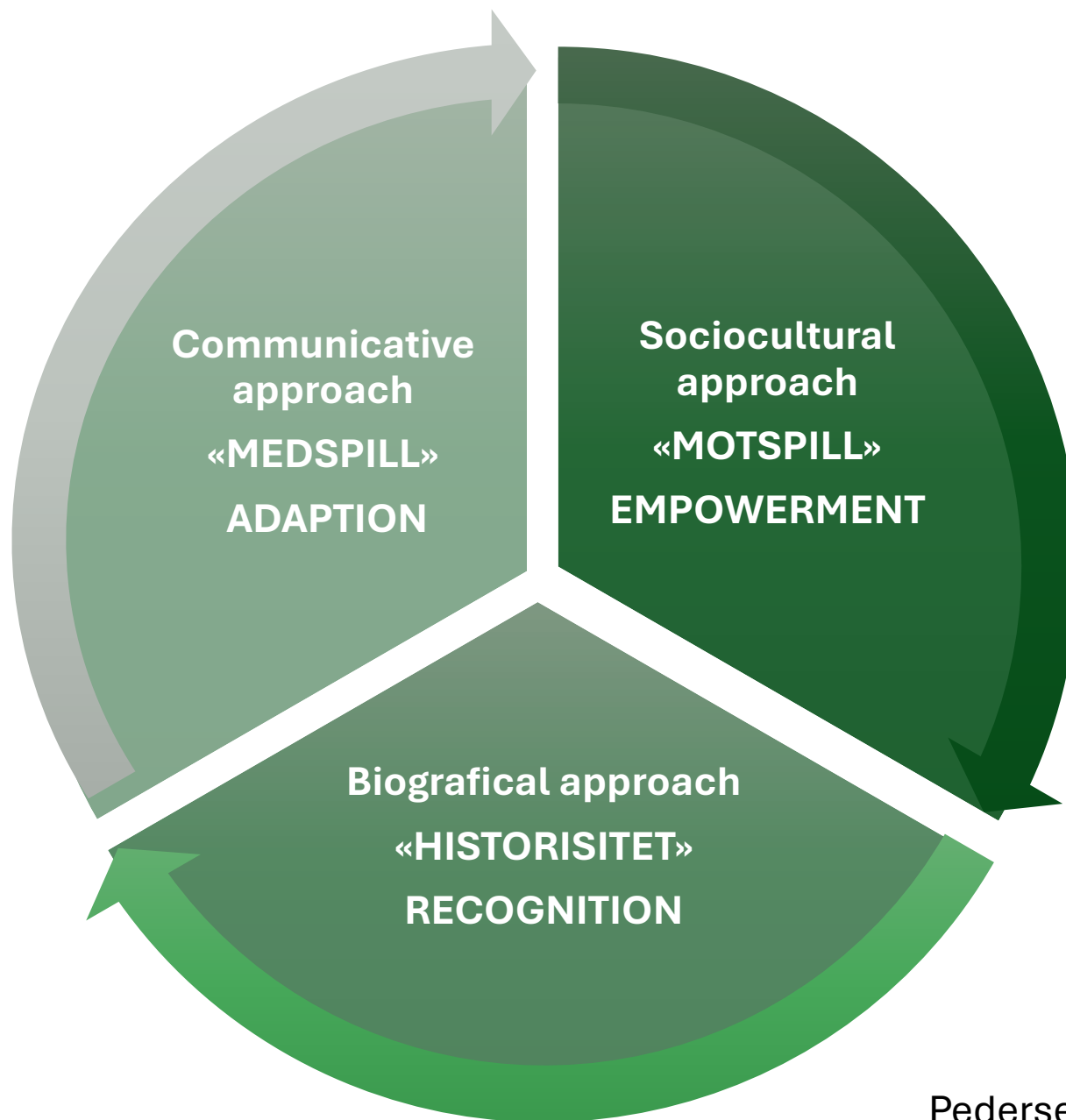
- **Tailored language practice** in a café (private foundation)



	BERG MUNICIPALITY	LUN MUNICIPALITY	SOL MUNICIPALITY
TYPE OF SERVICES/ ACTIVITIES	<p>Investigate a work-oriented language training program</p> 	<p>Explore needs and possibilities for language training activities for different groups</p>	<p>Investigate a tailored language training program</p> <p>-prior to the regular language training and work placement</p>
ORGANIZED BY	<p>Two teachers at the adult learning centre in collaboration with three companies</p>	<p>Volunteers (Røde Kors, Rotary, Sanitetsforeningen ...) and «the program advisor»</p> 	<p>Leaders and employees in a private foundation and volunteers</p> 
PARTICIPANTS	<p>Participants in the introduction program</p>	<p>Adult newcomers with limited possibilities for language training</p>	<p>Participants in the introduction programme in need of a tailored program</p>
DATA COLLECTION	<p>Observation, reflective discussions, interviews</p>	<p>Observation, reflective discussions, interviews</p>	<p>Observation, reflective discussions, interviews (e.g. walking dialogues), linguagrams</p>

Work-oriented language training – the extended classroom





Theoretical approaches

- What **characterizes the language** used at the work placement? (spoken, written, texts, digital)
- What **vocabulary** and **phrases** are necessary to acquire?
- What **language actions** are typical for the job to be done?

Communicative approach
«MEDSPILL»
ADAPTION

Sociocultural approach
«MOTSPILL»
EMPOWERMENT

Biographical approach
«HISTORISITET»
RECOGNITION

- What **work experience** do you have?
- What are your **goals**?
- What can **help you reach your goals** (e.g. inner motivation and other factors)?
- Which (available) work placements might be **relevant** for you?
- Can a language or work placement that is not your first choice still be used as **a step** toward reaching your goals?

What can you do in a similar situation in the future?

What happened?

What did you think and feel?

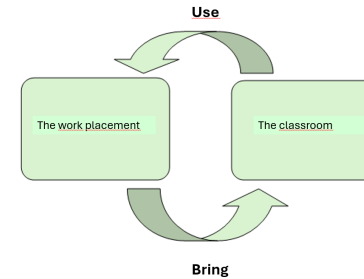
What could have been done differently?

What worked well?
What resources did you use? (tools, knowledge, support from others)?

Pedersen (2018)

Insights from the projects

- Strengthening **the learning loop**
 - the importance of **the teachers**
 - collaboration with **leaders or supervisor** in the company
 - the importance of **mentors**
- Strengthening **collaboration**
 - building **collaborative cultures**, shared values/mindsets
 - the importance of collaboration **over time**
- **Tailored** language learning opportunities for participants with diverse background
 - Different **learning profiles**
 - The importance of **resonance** – connection, recognition, “bridging”, a resource perspective



More immigrants are to enter the workforce – changes to the integration law

Press release | Date: 08.04.2025



The government proposes several changes to the integration law...

- Our goal is clear: More immigrants should enter the workforce and become self-sufficient. Therefore, the introduction program must become even **more relevant to the labor market**, says Minister of Labor and Inclusion Tonje Brenna.
- The changes are intended to help more participants in the introduction program gain **early experience from Norwegian working life**.
... we propose **more work-oriented content early** in the introduction program ..., says Brenna.

- It is also proposed to clarify that the municipality is responsible for coordinating the content of the program – **in collaboration with other stakeholders**.
- ... should contribute to **more cohesive and tailored pathways**.

Reflection around the tables

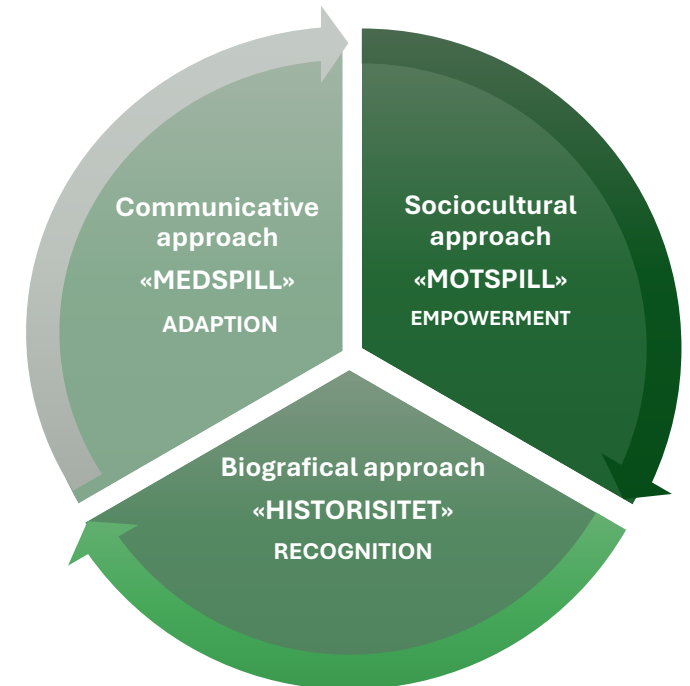
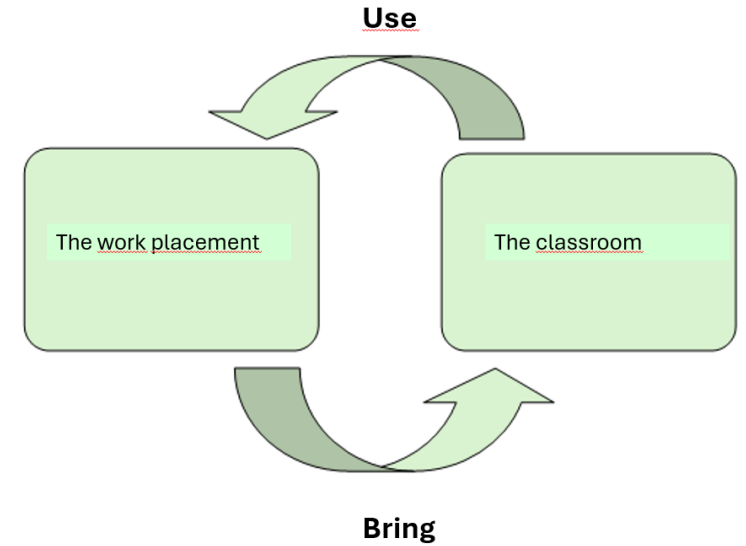
How does your workplace approach language practice and work practice/work placement?

1. How does the **learning loop** work?
2. Are we focused on all **three approaches**?
(*communicative, sociocultural, and biographical*)
3. Where is the potential for **improvement**?

How does the collaboration with volunteer organizations and NAV work?

(NAV - The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration)

4. Are there **certain groups** that need additional language learning opportunities but do not have access to them?
5. How can we **strengthen collaboration** across the municipality?



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