

## **Multilinguals and extensive reading: Two multilinguality portraits of learners of Norwegian**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents an exploratory-interpretive study of two multilingual adults acquiring Norwegian through extensive reading. The study examined social and cognitive aspects of language acquisition, and individual factors, such as the language learning behaviors, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. The data were collected using background self-reports, diaries in which the participants recorded their extensive reading and related language learning experiences, and semi-structured interviews. To represent adult language learning from a multilingual perspective, the data were analyzed qualitatively using a priori themes derived from the ecological model of multilinguality (Aronin, 2016; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Aronin & Singleton, 2012). The findings suggest that environment, previous education, reasons for learning a language, and previous knowledge of other languages affect how multilingual learners approach language learning and how they use a new language.

**Keywords:** multilingual learners, ecological model, diary study, individual learner differences, Norwegian, dominant language constellation

The majority of studies on multilingual language acquisition and extensive reading to date have focused on quantifiable measures and benefits (e.g., Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Nation, 2015; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). However, qualitative data about individuals is also a valuable source of information (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). The present study explored the benefits of extensive reading to adult multilingual language learners, the researcher-diarists, with the goal of capturing their perspectives on their language learning behaviors, attitudes, and preferences related to extensive reading. Results are interpreted through the lens of the ecological model of multilinguality and the notion of Dominant Language Constellations (Aronin, 2016; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Aronin & Singleton, 2012).

The term *multilingualism* refers to the process of acquiring languages beyond a second language and the ability to use more than two languages (Cenoz, 2000). Multilingualism has become ubiquitous, as the majority of the world's population is multilingual (Aronin & Jessner, 2014; Cenoz & Jessner, 2009). Multilinguals' language acquisition differs from second language acquisition (Cook, 2013; Herdina & Jessner, 2002) because multilinguals display more diversity in the order of acquisition, greater complexity in cross-linguistic influences, and more variation in individual development (Jessner, 2008). Research suggests that multilinguals are capable of greater communicative sensitivity (Baker, 2006) and use more learning strategies than monolinguals and bilinguals (e.g., Cenoz, Hufeisen, & Jessner, 2001; Jessner, 2006; Kemp, 2007).

Researchers such as de Bot (2008), Herdina and Jessner (2002), Jessner (2008), and Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) extended the notion of dynamic systems theory (DST) to the study of multilingualism. DST suggests multilingualism is dynamic, diverse, and complex, as well as dependent on social, psycholinguistic, and individual factors. In their ecological model, Aronin and Ó Laoire (2004) proposed the notion of *multilinguality*, which allows a qualitative exploration of the complexity of individual multilingual language learners' language knowledge. The model accounts for individuals' knowledge and approaches to learning; their behaviors, experiences, and abilities; and their social backgrounds, interactions, and statuses, amongst other things (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004, pp. 17–19). The framework of multilinguality enables a more pronounced focus on individual experiences. Multilinguality is a holistic portrait of individuals extending beyond linguistic repertoire to incorporate language users' abilities, resources, and “aspects of identity—for example, emotions, attitudes, preferences, anxiety, cognitive aspect, personality type, social ties and influences, and reference groups” (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004, p. 18)—in addition to learners' social milieus.

According to Aronin and Ó Laoire (2004), multilinguality can display any of the following features: “complexity,” “interrelatedness,” “fluctuation,” “variation and inconsistency,” “multifunctionality,” “inequality of function,” “self-balance,” “self-extension,” and “non-replication” (p. 20). *Complexity* refers to the various constituents of multilingualism, e.g., languages in one's linguistic repertoire and a range of competencies. *Interrelatedness* denotes interactions that occur among the various components of a multilingual system. *Fluctuation* is defined as “changes [over time] in the level of mastery of every language involved in the system” (p. 21). *Variation* and *inconsistency* take into account the varying levels of proficiency in a multilingual's different languages. *Multifunctionality* refers to the different functions of language, such as oral and written communication, as well as negotiation of identity. It is related to inequality of function, which means that different languages in one's repertoire are used for different goals and purposes. *Self-balance* refers to deterioration and development of language skills, while *self-extension* is defined as the use of “knowledge of a new language (e.g., register) by using aspects and items from another, as well as by applying language knowledge to extend to other language domains” (p. 24). Finally, *non-replication* denotes the overlap and interaction of the various attributes in a multilingual person.

Dominant Language Constellation (DLC), which is one of the main concepts comprising the model of multilinguality, is particularly applicable to the study of multilingualism from an individual perspective (Aronin, 2016; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Aronin & Singleton, 2012).

One's DLC is "the group of [an individual's] most important languages that, functioning as an entire unit, enable him/her to act in a multilingual environment in such a way as to meet all of his/her needs" (Aronin & Singleton, 2012, p. 58). It incorporates languages in a linguistic repertoire that are perceived as necessary and important for a range of social, cognitive, and emotional needs. However, as the DLC leaves out languages that may be familiar or present in the community but are usually unused, languages included within the DLC are referred to as "spoken" rather than "known" (p. 63).

### **Extensive Reading and Second Language Acquisition**

To *read extensively* means to read many texts on a wide range of topics with the aims of obtaining information, general understanding, and pleasure (Day & Bamford, 2002). Extensive reading is an efficient way to expose language learners to comprehensible input. Most extensive reading programs stress the individual nature of reading and the importance of self-selection of linguistically accessible, interesting texts (Stoller, 2015). Previous research has distinguished the following characteristics of extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998; Leung, 2002; Walker, 1997):

1. Language learners read as much as possible.
2. They read a variety of materials that are interesting to them.
3. Reading materials are within learners' linguistic competence.
4. Learners choose what they want to read, and the purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
5. There are no follow-up tasks related to the readings.

Research suggests that extensive reading can lead to gains in reading and listening comprehension, spoken language, reading and writing ability, reading rate, and overall language proficiency (e.g., Belgar & Hunt, 2014; Green & Oxford, 1995; Huffman, 2014; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). Studies have found a positive association between extensive reading and incidental vocabulary learning (e.g., Nation, 2015; Pitts, White, & Krashen, 1989). Extensive reading in a foreign language has also been correlated with increased learner motivation and decreased anxiety, and found to improve learner engagement and attitudes towards reading (e.g., Judge, 2011; Ro & Chen, 2014; Stoller, 2015; Yamashita, 2013). Some studies have suggested that these particular benefits are associated with attaining the state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) while reading extensively for pleasure (Judge, 2011; Kirchhoff, 2013).

The majority of research on extensive reading has focused on examining measurable, quantifiable gains in language development. However, some qualitative research on extensive reading provided useful models for the present study. Leung (2002) explored the impact of extensive reading on a self-study of a foreign language, and Nishino (2007) examined the role of motivation and individual variation in reading strategies. However, both focused on second language acquisition rather than the acquisition of further languages by multilinguals, and both focused on beginner learners. The present study aims to contribute to the existing body of research by approaching individual extensive reading from a multilingual perspective and with a focus on intermediate language learners.

## Diary Studies

In second language acquisition research, diary studies belong to the exploratory-interpretive design type (Bailey, 1991), as they aim to investigate the subjective perspectives of language learners. Learner diaries provide ungeneralizable data yet constitute a source of in-depth information from the learner's perspective that is inaccessible through direct observation (Bailey, 1991). Diary studies provide insight into affective, psychological, and social factors in language acquisition; learning strategies and material preferences; and the role of noticing and interaction. Diary keeping is considered beneficial for language learners because "the act of recording aspects of learning behavior will raise consciousness of that behavior and may change it" (Fry, 1988, p. 161). Due to their introspective nature, diaries offer a window into language learners' multilinguality.

Diary studies include participant studies, or researcher-as-diarist studies, and non-participant studies, in which diaries kept by other language learners are the source of data (Fry, 1988). Schumann and Schumann's (1977), Bailey's (1980), Danielson's (1981), Schmidt and Frota's (1986), Leung's (2002), and Carson and Longhini's (2002) studies all fall within the first category. Examples of the second category include Bailey (1983) and Ellis (1989). From these studies, several important themes have emerged, such as the role of language learning materials, learning strategy preferences, the importance of the learning environment and feedback, learner motivation and anxiety, and instructed versus naturalistic language acquisition. To date, however, few studies (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010; Leung, 2002; Taguchi, Gorsuch, Takayasu-Maass, & Snipp, 2012) have employed diaries to investigate learner perspectives on reading, and as far as we know, no study has adopted a multilingual perspective.

## The Present Study

### *Background*

This study of two researcher-diarists' multilinguality and DLCs examines perspectives on extensive reading and other language learning strategies, as well as individual factors such as learning attitudes; preferences and beliefs about language learning; and self-image. To our knowledge, only one previous study employed an exploratory-interpretive design to examine extensive reading from the learner perspective (Leung, 2002). While Leung's study focused on a beginning learner and thus a limited range of reading materials, the present study investigated intermediate language learners who could access various texts, including those written for native-speaker audiences.

The present study was also novel because it approached language learning from a multilingual perspective, employing the concept of DLCs to describe the participants' linguistic backgrounds (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Aronin & Singleton, 2012). To examine the uniqueness of the participants' language learning behaviors, attitudes, and preferences, as well as individual learning factors, such as motivation, metalinguistic awareness, and the role of social factors, such as family and work activities, the study utilized the notion of multilinguality (Aronin & Ó Laoire,

2004; Aronin & Singleton, 2012). The qualitative research process began with the following research questions:

- (a) Do learners' DLCs affect language learning behaviors, attitudes, and preferences?
- (b) Is there a relationship between learners' motivation to learn a language and their engagement in extensive reading?
- (c) Can features of multilinguality be captured through diary keeping?
- (d) Are learners' approaches to extensive reading affected by various aspects of their multilinguality?

### *Data Collection*

The findings presented here constitute part of a larger project examining the role of extensive reading and diary keeping in multilingual adults' Norwegian language acquisition. Data were collected through diaries, semi-structured interviews, and background self-reports. The diaries and interviews focused on the efficacy and role of extensive reading in the participants' Norwegian acquisition. The background report collected demographic information and asked questions about participants' formal Norwegian training, self-study of Norwegian, reading habits, preferred reading materials, motivation to learn Norwegian, and perceived progress in Norwegian.

The participants committed to reading extensively in Norwegian as often and as widely as they felt comfortable and to keeping diaries related to their reading between October 2015 and March 2016. They recorded what materials they read; how many pages, chapters, articles, or paragraphs they read; and how much time they spent reading. They also agreed in advance to reflect on how the reading process affected their language learning, following general guidelines in their reflections (e.g., how they interacted with texts; whether they felt they made vocabulary and fluency gains; how their previous linguistic knowledge impacted their approaches to newly encountered words and phrases; what they enjoyed or disliked about extensive reading; and how effective they felt extensive reading was as compared to other language learning practices). They also commented upon their language learning more generally and compare Norwegian to other languages they knew.

To supplement diary reflections, the researcher-diarists interviewed each other. The interview questions were created after a preliminary analysis of the diary entries to follow up and expand upon the themes identified in the written data. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes and included questions about language learning styles and preferences, motivation to learn Norwegian, the perceived usefulness of the specific materials selected for self-study, opinions and reflections on extensive reading, and the process of diary keeping.

### *Participants*

The two subjects in this case study are the authors of this paper, referred to by their real initials: JD and AK. Both are adult multilinguals and language teacher trainers. Their proficiency in the languages they speak is described using the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2014). At the commencement of this study, both JD and AK had resided in

Norway for approximately 2.5 years. JD was 27 years old at the time of the study. She teaches English language and literature in a teacher education program at a university in Mid-Norway. She was born in Canada and speaks a mix of British and Canadian English as her first language. She knows German (B1) and French (B1); Norwegian is her third consecutive foreign language. AK, then 36 years old, teaches English language and applied linguistics at the same institution as JD. Her language of inheritance (Rampton, 1990) is Polish. English, which she has spoken since she was seven, is her language of expertise and affiliation (Rampton, 1990). She also knows German (B1) and Russian (B1), and has studied French and Spanish in adulthood.

Both JD and AK arrived in Norway in July of 2013 with no prior knowledge of Norwegian. Before the study, JD had mostly learned Norwegian through self-study, including the use of subtitled television programs, and limited immersion, i.e., interactions with her Norwegian husband, his family, and friends in social settings. She also undertook two sessions with a private tutor. AK had attended three Norwegian courses offered through a local community college up to and including level B1–2. She had continued to study Norwegian with a private tutor and through self-study.

The participants' proficiency level in Norwegian prior to and post diary keeping was not measured using objective measures. However, both participants reported self-use of instructional materials at level B2 at the beginning of the study. They also provided a written self-report regarding the improvement of their language skills following the study. AK felt that her reading ability improved a lot; her writing, listening, and grammar improved somewhat, while her speaking improved a little. JD stated that her reading and writing improved a little, in particular her fluency, vocabulary, and syntax. She was not certain whether her other language skills improved.

AK's diary contained entries from October 27, 2015 to March 5, 2016. It comprised 39 individual entries and 6,060 words. JD kept her diary from November 26, 2015 until March 1, 2016. The diary contained 27 individual entries and was 1,515 words in length. AK reported that she read for a total of 1,760 minutes during the period of the study, which corresponds to about 13 minutes a day, whereas JD reported a total of 920 minutes, or about 9 minutes a day. It is important to note that not all entries included the duration of reading, and it is thus possible that the participants read more.

### *Data Analysis*

The data in this study were analyzed qualitatively. All diary entries and the interview transcripts were coded using a priori themes derived from Aronin and Ó Laoire's (2004) ecological model: DLCs and multilinguality (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Aronin & Singleton, 2012). In addition, the examination and thematic analysis of the data led to the emergence of the following keywords, discussed as sub-topics: *DLC and social milieu; learning behavior, attitudes, and preferences; and self-image and cognitive aspects*. The researchers coded each other's and their own diaries and interviews, compared the codes, and resolved any discrepancies together. The keywords were gathered into three headings in the profiles of the researcher-diarists below: DLC and social milieu; learning behavior, attitudes, and preferences; and self-image and cognitive aspects.

## Results

### *Data about AK*

*DLC and social milieu.* Of the seven languages in AK's language inventory, only four are referred to in the data collected in the study: English, Polish, Norwegian, and German. Because of the roles these languages play in AK's life, it can be concluded that they constituted her DLC at the time of the study.

The background report provides information about the complexity, multifunctionality, and inequality of function of languages in AK's linguistic repertoire. AK listed both Polish and English as her mother tongues, indicating that Polish is her language of inheritance and English is her language of expertise. She uses English at home, at work, and with friends; she reads and writes in English extensively; and English is the language in which she wrote her diary. Thus, English appears to be "a fundamental defining constituent" (Aronin & Singleton, 2012, p. 61) of AK's identity. Polish, on the other hand, is her inheritance language. She uses it mainly to communicate with her family members. Her literacy activities in Polish are limited to reading one to two books a year and interacting on social media.

Two foreign languages AK has been acquiring in adulthood, German and Norwegian, fulfill quite different functions. German plays some role as a language of interaction with her husband's family and friends in Austria. It also appears to be at the core of her language learner profile, as she makes frequent references to it in her diary and reports that studying German is a life-long endeavor.

Norwegian, AK's most recent language, is important to her as the language of her country of residence and administrative language of her place of work. While Norwegian clearly belongs to the inner circle of AK's DLC, she does not identify with the Norwegian community, and to her, the Norwegian language has a purely instrumental value. Even though, at the time of this study, she read regularly in Norwegian and used it to communicate with Norwegian friends and neighbors, she chose English in situations in which she wanted to place herself in a position of power, as documented in her diary: "I often choose English, especially when I have a specific goal, e.g., as a customer. I feel that using English then puts me at an advantage and I can get what I want easily." Due to the important status of English in Norway, AK acknowledged that she can use it in most daily situations. In the interview, she noted that she actually finds it difficult to practice her language skills with Norwegians, because "as soon as you mispronounce a word, they just switch to English [. . .] instead of helping you."

In her diary, AK commented on whether she perceived the languages of her DLC as helping or hindering the process of acquiring Norwegian. References to German were the most frequent, and usually pointed to lexical similarities between German and Norwegian, which AK exploited to help her learn, evidencing the importance of linguistic interrelatedness. Nevertheless, she also perceived certain grammatical features of German as a hindrance, as evident in the following excerpt:

I pay a lot of attention to the definite articles (marked as suffixes) but I don't always get them right [ . . . ]. I am particularly confused by “-en,” perhaps because of German, and sometimes still interpret it as plural, not definite masculine.

AK perceived the typological closeness of English and Norwegian as a potential source of challenge when learning the latter because it could lead to negative transfer. She wrote, “Norwegian is so similar to English, so I am really worried that I do a lot of direct translations which are not correct.” She also stated that she paid attention to any syntactic or morphological differences between English and Norwegian that she noticed in the input.

AK also commented on her use of the various languages in her DLC, and the difficulty and ease she experienced when reading in them:

That day [ . . . ], I read in four languages: English, Norwegian, German, and Polish. German was the most challenging, but a parallel text in English helped. Norwegian is still quite cumbersome; I know my reading rate is much slower than in English or Polish, but I get through it. It just feels like I need to focus much more.

Thus, in learning Norwegian, AK extended her knowledge of the three languages of her DLC that she had acquired previously, a property referred to as self-extension (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004). While English was useful to her because of its typological closeness to Norwegian, her language of inheritance, Polish, seemed to dominate in certain situations, such as when she could not recall a term in English. For instance, she noted, “I couldn't remember a precise English term for ‘likestilling.’ It's ‘równouprawienie’ in Polish, but what is it in English? Just ‘equality’... ‘Equal rights’... ‘women's rights’?” German, on the other hand, was mostly helpful when guessing the meaning of new words in Norwegian.

*Learning behavior, attitudes, and preferences.* AK's diary indicated that she is a self-directed, motivated language learner. Following the principles of extensive reading, she selected a wide range of materials that matched her proficiency level. She also used books that she had read in English, for example *Anne Frank's Diaries* and *Hunger Games*. AK also reported reading various Norwegian newspapers, such as *Adresseavisen* and *Dagbladet*. This is how AK commented on her selection of texts during the interview:

I need to choose materials that match my level [ . . . ]. I often choose children's books because I like children's books in general. I also choose books that I am already familiar with in English [ . . . ] If you don't understand a passage, you can just remember what you already know about it from reading it in English [ . . . ]. If I'm to read in Norwegian, it has to be compelling [ . . . ] at [my] level, or slightly beyond.

AK also admitted to having tried more advanced materials and given up because the process was too daunting, as illustrated in this interview excerpt:



I tried some more difficult materials and then if it's too difficult, it gets too frustrating, and I just give up [. . .]. I tried *Munch* [by Steffen Kverneland]. That didn't go so well [. . .]. If it's too difficult, and if it's not interesting, I will just not [read].

Similarly, in her diary, AK noted that her motivation to read decreased when the reading material was beyond her proficiency level: "Some articles are hard because of a lot of discipline-specific words that I don't know. So, I'm not very patient with it."

AK also commented on the difficulty of reading materials in Nynorsk, a written variety of Norwegian used less commonly than the majority written variety, Bokmål: "I've been reading some documents written in Nynorsk [. . .]. I can recognize most words, but the different spelling is just annoying and discourages me from reading."

Despite these difficulties, AK consciously sought opportunities to frequently engage in language learning. In her diary, she noted:

So, now I have an [*Adresseavisen*] app on my phone [. . .]. I thought that if I have access to Norwegian material, I will read [it]. It still takes a conscious effort to do that, but I've succeeded a couple of times.

AK also sought sources of input that would provide her with language models she perceived as important. In the interview, she stated that she started to read news articles because she felt that she was "not really enriching [. . .] vocabulary on a range of topics to, say, talk about pollution or to talk about current events" by reading fiction. She made a similar remark in her diary: "I got a trial 4-week subscription to *Adresseavisen*. I just feel like reading only books does not provide me with a full range of words and topics."

These excerpts suggest that AK made conscious decisions in seeking opportunities to expand her Norwegian vocabulary. For her, two qualities of reading materials were important when engaging in language learning opportunities: the materials had to be both compelling (Krashen, 2011) and comprehensible, i.e., at her level of proficiency or slightly beyond (Krashen, 1988). Nevertheless, she expressed a need to engage in communicative language learning opportunities with other speakers of Norwegian in order to improve her linguistic development.

*Self-image and cognitive aspects.* AK described herself as an efficient language learner aware of learning processes and strategies; however, she did not suggest that a natural ability to learn languages is one of her strengths. In the interview, she explained: "I've developed a lot of good language learning habits and strategies [. . .], but I don't think I have a lot of language aptitude [. . .] so I need to work hard."

AK reflected on the changes in her individual approach to language learning. She noted that her preference evolved from a focus on form and production-based approaches to a focus on meaning and input-based approaches. This is evident in the following statement from the interview:

I used to like rewriting sentences, [. . .] repetitions, [grammar exercises]. But [. . .] with Norwegian, I switched to the natural approach. I find it [. . .] more effective to read for pleasure or read for information, participate in tasks such as email exchanges at work that actually are meaningful and have a purpose rather than doing drills that don't.

The themes related to cognition that AK explored in her diary include motivation, attention, learning strategies, and the perceived insufficiency of input. She reflected on faltering motivation, for example: "I need to read *på norsk* (in Norwegian) more often, but lately I'm out of the rhythm and unmotivated [. . .]. I need to get back on track. I feel I'm forgetting words." In another entry, she commented on language attrition: "I feel like my Norwegian hasn't been improving [. . .]. It's fossilizing or even regressing [. . .]. Motivation is fairly low." And she was cognizant of her limitations and abilities as a language learner: "I will not remember this word yet as it's too long, but I guessed the meaning from context."

In addition, AK displayed awareness of her own language learning needs. For instance, she noted, "I need so many repetitions before I can use a word actively," and she reflected on the insufficiency of the input she received during the extensive reading project:

Whereas it feels like repeated exposure to the same words helps me with my reading comprehension, I don't seem to improve my active vocabulary. I forget even basic things when I have to speak [. . .]. Input alone is not enough. Input and noticing [are] not enough either. What I need is interaction with proficient speakers and opportunities for output [. . .]. I need to enroll in a [content] class taught in Norwegian.

In sum, AK's interview and diary provide information about several aspects of her multilinguality, including her language learning attitudes and preferences, social and cognitive aspects, self-image as a language learner, abilities and resources, and the role of the languages of her DLC in learning another language in adulthood. She is a motivated language learner who extends her knowledge of language learning, linguistics, and other languages to enhance her learning of Norwegian. However, her language skills appear to fluctuate (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004): Norwegian competes with German for her time and attention, as evidenced by her references to German in her diary. This is likely because Norwegian plays an instrumental role in her life, related to work, while German is more important for her social and family life.

#### *Data about JD*

*DLC and social milieu.* JD's linguistic repertoire at the time of the study consisted of English, Norwegian, French, and German. English and Norwegian played the most prominent roles in her individual, family, and community lives. French continued to be useful during her travels, but while she had used German extensively when she lived in Germany from 2012 to 2013, she had not recently traveled to Germany. She also reported occasionally reading in both these languages. She used German less at the time of this study because, as she stated in her self-report, "it confuses Norwegian," which suggested the complexity of language interrelatedness. Thus, JD's

languages “of the inner circle” (Aronin & Singleton, 2012, p. 61) were English and Norwegian, with French and German being more fluid, only used when required by, e.g., travel.

JD’s DLC is characterized by multifunctionality, inequality of function, and a great level of complexity (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004). She reported her mother tongue to be English, but stated that she used both Norwegian and English at home and at work. About one-third of JD’s diary entries were written in Norwegian. She perceived her level of Norwegian to be advanced, and explained that she participated in a range of activities to improve her proficiency, including engaging in family and social events, watching films and television, listening to radio broadcasts, and participating in a college-level content course taught in Norwegian. JD also indicated that she was planning to remain in Norway for many years. In her interview, she said, “I want to learn Norwegian because my husband is Norwegian, I live in Norway, and I work in Norway.” She also displayed a positive attitude towards Norwegian and perceived it as “musical.” She stated that she wished “to become better than the average Norwegian” at using Norwegian. It can therefore be concluded that JD’s desire to learn Norwegian is driven by integrative motivation and reflects a competitive approach to language learning and usage; in addition, it is clear that she views Norwegian as an integral component of her DLC.

Nevertheless, there are also factors present in JD’s social milieu that have limited her ability to develop proficiency in Norwegian, namely work and health. She noted in her diary that her “very stressful job” made it difficult to find time to study Norwegian and her participation in the study was interrupted due to hospitalization.

*Learning behavior, attitudes, and preferences.* One of the facets of JD’s language learning behavior was her conscious selection of reading materials. Like AK, JD chose a range of texts that were appropriate for her proficiency level. These included news articles on two public news websites, nrk.no and vg.no; Norwegian translations of familiar children’s literature, such as J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series; unfamiliar children’s and young adult literature, like John Green’s *An Abundance of Katherines*; Norwegian literature, including graphic novels such as Steffen Kverneland’s *Munch*; and a Norwegian academic textbook.

JD commented on both the relative ease and difficulty of the materials she used in her self-study and reflected on her attitudes and preferences. She appeared to prefer texts that were just slightly beyond her proficiency level but were accessible enough for her to read fluently. She made the following comment during her interview: “I tend to pick something that I can read fluently because I want to get lost in the Norwegian texts when I read them.” She also mentioned that texts that she had previously read in English or French were easier to understand in Norwegian because she was already familiar with the texts. She observed that knowing a story helped her to “*får [ord] fra kontekst*” (get words from context).

Although JD commented that rarely used words and texts in a non-standard dialect are more challenging and take more effort to understand, she was usually able to do so and dismissed any difficulties she experienced, commenting, “*Noe setninger må jeg lese 2–3 ganger pga. de bruker ord som er ikke vanlig, som ‘biller’ (beetles) [. . .], men man kan jo forstå fra konteksten hvis man prøver*” (I must read some sentences 2–3 times because they use words that aren’t usual, like beetles, but one can certainly understand them from the context if one tries). She further

illustrated with the following example, commenting on the Norwegian translation of *Harry Potter*: “Hagrid’s accent [. . .] takes a few minutes to get used to each time I read it, but it isn’t too bad.”

JD suggested during her interview that she enjoyed the challenge posed by difficult materials. AK mentioned that she did not like the graphic novel *Munch* because it was “actually very difficult [. . .] too much Danish [. . .] and old language,” while JD felt challenging vocabulary and being forced to work words out from context was a positive aspect of the text, stating, “I like that. It’s a challenge, like a puzzle.” Clearly, then, JD enjoyed employing self-extension as a language learning tactic and viewed it as a useful tool when deciphering different dialects of Norwegian as well as related Scandinavian languages.

In addition to the level of difficulty and the general enjoyment of reading, the aesthetic qualities of texts were important criteria by which JD selected and evaluated her reading materials, as evident in the following comment from her interview: “Books are often [written] in literary or beautiful language, and I quite enjoy that.” On the contrary, she found other materials, in particular the required readings in the academic course she took, with which she compared her extensive reading materials, “terribly written, just awful to read. Awful semi-colloquial, semi-academic, repetitive language and just badly put together [. . .], kind of plagiarized.” She also commented that she found the language of Norwegian newspaper articles to be “a little bit choppy.” In her diary, JD wrote that she experienced poorly written texts as “annoying” and “horrendous,” and described her experience reading them as “miserable.” Similarly, she stressed that “a lot of what’s available in Norway has been translated rather badly from English, and so, there’s just these moments when you’re sort of jolted out of the text by the language itself.” In the interview, she noted that texts translated from another Scandinavian language were easier to read, because they had a “beautiful [syntactic] structure” and allowed her to “sometimes forget that I’m reading in Norwegian” because of the “quite nicely written, flowing language” of these books. This indicated her explicit awareness, when reading, of the differences between English and Norwegian syntax and her internalization of common Norwegian syntactic structures.

In her diary, JD reflected on some language learning strategies that she used in the process of extensive reading. She frequently relied on context to deduce the meaning of unknown words, and she jotted down examples of sentences from the books she read to illustrate this strategy. In addition, she consciously analyzed the meaning of cognates in Norwegian and English: “*De fleste ord kan jeg forstå fra konteksten, f.eks. ‘provianten’ = provisions; ‘provianten onkel Wiktør hadde snakket om, viste seg å være en pose potetgull til hver og fire bananer*” (I can understand most words from the context, e.g., “*provianten*” = provisions; “The provisions Uncle Vernon’s had talked about turned out to be a packet of potato chips each and four bananas.”) Another strategy she employed was re-reading sentences that she found difficult to understand. She also commented on the usefulness of diary keeping in acquiring proficiency in Norwegian:

[The diary] reminded me to prioritize reading in Norwegian [. . .] to keep track of my reading, and what I’ve noticed about reading [. . .]. I think it’s quite helpful from a language-learning perspective.

*Self-image and cognitive aspects.* In her interview, JD commented on how she perceived her personal development as a language learner:

I was [. . .] a really bad language learner when I was younger, and then—because I had a very mathematical mindset— [. . .] I discovered grammatical structure, and I started to become a good language learner [. . .]. With Norwegian, I’ve sort of moved away from that, and I’m learning it much more organically, which means I have these big gaps in grammar and [syntax] [. . .]. But I think that I’ve acquired the language itself quite quickly in terms of vocabulary and being able to communicate.

JD set clear goals for herself as a learner of Norwegian, but admitted that she could also be somewhat “snobbish” or competitive about linguistic ability, as can be seen in the following reflection:

I want to become better than the average Norwegian [. . .]. A lot of them can’t read classic literature in Norwegian, and they can’t write a decent academic paper [. . .]. I’d really like to become a sort of specialist in [Norwegian].

JD perceived reading as a good language learning opportunity because, as she commented in the interview, she “just love[s] reading [. . .] especially if you find a good book, or something you can lose yourself in.” JD admitted that she was an early reader, and then went on to add, “I’ve always been an enthusiastic reader [. . .]. I think pretty much anything you want to know you can learn from a book.” She stated that the value of reading was multifaceted, as evidenced by the following comments: “You can learn so much through reading [. . .]. You can learn language! You can actually read about the language, or you can just read in the language” and “It’s a really good way to relax.”

JD also commented on how different types of texts contributed to her language development. In the interview, she said that she read newspaper articles because they contained “a slightly wider variety of vocabulary than you might [find] in a book.” On the other hand, to her, books were valuable for lexical gain because of “a lot of repetition of new terms.” JD also reflected on the importance of “getting in the rhythm” and “getting lost in a book” when reading in Norwegian, which for her was only possible when she was not tired and could read fluently. She stated that, overall, participation in the diary project increased how much she read in Norwegian because it “reminded [her] to prioritize reading in Norwegian.” She found both reading and diary keeping “helpful from a language-learning perspective, but also [motivating].”

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The goal of this paper was to offer a case study of two adult multilinguals, the researcher-diarists, learning Norwegian as an additional language. We presented the findings and discussed the observations collected through participants’ diaries, written self-reports, and semi-structured interviews, which were interpreted and coded using Aronin’s (2016) notions of multilinguality and DLC. Selecting this framework for our analysis enabled us to emphasize “the relationship

between multilingualism and the unique, manifold and dynamic traits of personality” (Aronin & Singleton, 2012, p. 97). We hypothesized that learners’ DLCs can affect language learning behaviors, attitudes, and preferences; that there is a relationship between participants’ motivation to learn Norwegian and their engagement in extensive reading; that features of multilinguality (e.g., complexity, fluctuation, variation and inconsistency, and self-extension) can be captured through diary keeping; that the benefits of extensive reading are influenced by language learners’ learning preferences; and that language learners’ approaches to extensive reading are influenced by a great number of factors, such as reasons for learning a language, personal preferences in book choice, and learners’ DLCs. These two intermediate language learner portraits display several complexities relating to these hypotheses, specifically regarding DLC and social milieu; learning behavior, attitudes, and preferences; and self-image and cognitive aspects.

The participants’ DLCs affected the ways in which they approached learning Norwegian through extensive reading. Norwegian plays an essential role in JD’s personal and work lives, which is visible in her use of this language to record some of her diary entries. She aims to attain high levels of mastery in Norwegian, and it can be speculated that it is becoming an important component of her multilingual identity and thus attaining a more prominent role in her DLC. In AK’s DLC, on the other hand, English maintained the dominant role throughout the study. Thus, inequality of function, which is one of the properties of multilinguality, is reflected in the DLCs of both AK and JD.

The purposes for which the learners use the different languages in their DLCs also vary. JD displays integrative motivation for learning Norwegian and uses this language to communicate with her husband’s family and friends, in addition to using it in a professional setting. She also used it to write her diary, belying a motivation to practice using the language for professional purposes. Conversely, for AK, English is clearly her key language in most domains, and she uses it instead of Norwegian to maintain a position of power. Her motivation to learn Norwegian appears to be purely instrumental.

Both multilinguals in the study showed evidence of reliance on their knowledge of other language systems as a valuable resource in the acquisition of Norwegian, a property referred to as self-extension (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004). AK used aspects of German morphology and lexical items as points of reference; she drew comparisons between English and Norwegian, and linked new Norwegian words to Polish equivalents. JD relied on her background knowledge of the books she had previously read to help her understand the same texts in Norwegian, and consciously compared the meaning of cognates in Norwegian and English. She purposefully avoided thinking about German to prevent confusing the two languages. AK also commented that knowledge of German sometimes resulted in negative transfer.

According to Schmidt (2010), “motivated learners may try harder and more persistently to understand the significance of noticed language, achieving higher levels of awareness and enhanced learning as a result” (p. 732). The participants’ relatively high motivation to learn Norwegian may have influenced their determination to read extensively and record their thoughts in their diaries. This, as well as their training and employment as language teacher trainers, likely also influenced their reflections regarding language and linguistic cognates across known languages. However, we can observe some differences between the two language learners’ levels

of motivation, related to the domains in which they use Norwegian and their intended length of stay in Norway. As JD expects to remain in Norway and has Norwegian family members, her motivation is more integrative than AK's.

Two other features of multilinguality, namely self-balance and fluctuation (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004), are evident in AK's comments on attrition and fossilization of her Norwegian during the periods when she did not have sufficient time to devote to extensive reading. Similarly, self-balance is manifested in the diminishing role of German in JD's DLC, as she decided to prioritize Norwegian. Both participants also mentioned changes in their level of motivation and engagement with Norwegian depending on a range of factors, such as the texts they were reading, tiredness, stress, and health. The texts themselves played a large role in motivation. Whereas well-written and compelling texts engaged and led to the state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), poorly written texts caused annoyance and decreased motivation. We can also observe differences in the texts selected by each participant, due largely to the participants' personal preferences, focus in learning (e.g., flow vs. vocabulary gain), and subjective judgements of a text's usefulness or aesthetic appeal. Similarly, tiredness, poor health, and stress were perceived as limiting factors.

This study was not without limitations. The number of subjects, the personal characteristics of the subjects (language teachers who may therefore be better language learners or better able to articulate reflections about language learning processes), and the introspective data collection methods rule out the generalizability of the findings. However, these limitations can be used as a point of departure for further research (Fry, 1988), along with the findings themselves. The ecological model of multilinguality can be applied in future studies to examine larger groups of learners with similar DLCs who engage in extensive reading using an empirical design. As Cohen and Hosenfeld (1981) argued, "a combination of both empirical and mentalistic approaches may well provide a more complete picture of what it means to learn a language" (p. 312).

From a multilingual perspective, diary studies have merit: they afford insights into individual, social, and cognitive aspects of multilingualism. Applying an exploratory-interpretive design creates opportunities to "re-examine language acquisition and languages in contact from the perspective of identity" (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004, p. 12), which is an important goal of research on multilingualism.

The findings of the present study indicate that social, cognitive, and individual aspects of language acquisition in multilinguals are complex phenomena, and that these phenomena affect how learners approach extensive reading. Parameters such as individuals' DLCs, personal life experiences, and learning styles, attitudes, and preferences can impact the extent to which individuals engage in language learning and language use, as well as the methods they use to acquire a language. Both participants in this study indicated that they plan to continue to read extensively in Norwegian to attain higher proficiency levels. As "the essence of the multilinguality fluctuates and changes depending on the changes in [the multilingual's] life" (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004, p. 21), it may be worth revisiting the participants' outlooks and opinions in the future.

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