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Article

Literacy Domains in Reception Education: Institutional, Instructional and Temporal Conditions for Academic Participation

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Abstract

Drawing on a social literacy perspective, this article investigates how literacy domains in Danish as a second language (basic) are constituted through institutional, instructional, and temporal arrangements in primary education in Denmark. Using a qualitative ethnographic research design, the study examines three organisational configurations of reception education: a traditional reception class, a direct enrolment model with supplementary language support and a reception class established under temporary protection legislation for displaced Ukrainian students. Comparison is used heuristically to explore how literacy domains and academic participation opportunities are constituted across these organisational arrangements. Across models, opportunities to engage with academic work were shaped not only by students' linguistic proficiency but also by how access to subject-related literacies was organised through classroom practices and broader institutional arrangements. By conceptualising literacy domains as constituted through institutional, instructional and temporal conditions, the article contributes a framework for analysing how these conditions shape academic participation opportunities in linguistically diverse educational settings. Through its comparison of organisational configurations within a Nordic educational context, the study connects local instructional practices with wider debates on how policy and organisational conditions shape teaching and learning in diverse societies.

Keywords: reception education, literacy domains, newly arrived students, academic participation opportunities

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Introduction

Despite the increasing permanence of newly arrived students in Nordic educational systems, research on this demographic remains limited (Dewilde & Kulbrandstad, 2016; Helakorpi et al., 2023; Norozi, 2019; Veum et al., 2020). Although the Nordic countries share comparable welfare state structures and educational frameworks, research documents substantial variation in how newly arrived students are integrated into national curricula and legislative systems, both across and within national education systems. Existing research highlights differences in the organisation of reception education, particularly in pedagogical and didactic practices (Hilt, 2017; Tørslev & Børsch, 2017). The provision of second-language education is shaped by institutional arrangements within welfare state structures (Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023; Harju-Autti & Mäkinen, 2022; Tajic & Bunar, 2023) and intersects with migration policies and residency regulations that influence students' educational pathways (Bunar & Juvonen, 2022; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Rydell et al., 2023; Wigg & Ehrlin, 2022).

This study focuses on Danish as a second language (basic), the statutory reception provision for newly arrived students in Danish primary schools, characterised by flexible and locally negotiated organisational arrangements. Drawing on social literacy theory, this article conceptualises schooling as an overarching literacy domain in which access to subject-related literacies is configured through organisational arrangements, policy frameworks and instructional practices. Reception education is therefore approached not as a uniform instructional setting, but as a range of internally differentiated literacy domains shaped by the conditions under which teaching and participation are organised.

Nordic research has shown that policy changes in reception education often occur in response to shifting migration patterns (Gunnþórsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2020; Koehler & Schneider, 2019; Ringrose et al., 2023). Newly arrived students are frequently insufficiently embedded in institutional and regulatory frameworks, affecting their responsibility, recognition and equitable educational access (Helakorpi et al., 2023; Aarsæther, 2021). Reception provisions are decentralised and locally negotiated, resulting in considerable variation in organisational models (Skiveren et al., 2024; Tørslev & Børsch, 2017). This variability can intensify when migration-related "tipping points", such as sudden increases in arrivals or emergency legislation, prompt rapid political or administrative adjustments (McAdam, 2014). In Denmark, temporary special legislation for children and young people from Ukraine created significant vertical and horizontal disparities in how reception models were interpreted and implemented across state, municipal and school levels (Jensen et al., 2026). These developments point to the temporal dimensions of reception education, as organisational arrangements are not only differentiated across contexts but may also be unstable and subject to rapid change. Although Nordic research on reception education draws on diverse theoretical traditions, the literature points to a recurring analytical issue: how organisational models and

pedagogical priorities structure students' access to subject-related literacies and the academic participation opportunities made possible through them. Existing studies have primarily examined reception education in relation to organisation, inclusion, professional responsibility and language development at institutional and policy levels (Bunar & Juvonen, 2022; Crul et al., 2019; Helakorpi et al., 2023; Tajic & Bunar, 2023), while participation has predominantly been approached through its social dimensions, with less attention paid to its academic dimensions (Martinsen, 2021). Less well understood, however, is how institutional, instructional and temporal conditions shape literacy domains and thereby opportunities for academic participation in everyday educational practice.

To address this gap, this study examines the following research question: How are literacy domains within Danish as a second language (basic) constituted through institutional, instructional and temporal arrangements in Danish primary education?

Academic participation opportunities are conceptualised not as observable activities but as institutionally and pedagogically structured conditions enabling access to subject-related content, legitimate forms of contribution and recognised academic positioning within specific literacy domains (Hummelmose, 2025). This conceptualisation aligns with social literacy theories that view literacy as situated, ideological and embedded in institutional practices rather than as an individual skill (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; 2012). By foregrounding the institutional, instructional and temporal structuring of access, rather than students' linguistic proficiency alone, this study contributes to Nordic debates on second language and reception education by showing how literacy domains shape opportunities for academic participation within everyday instructional practice.

The institutional context

Reception education in Denmark is embedded in the highly regulated Danish public school system (Folkeskolen), which is governed by the Danish Public School Act (Folkeskoleloven, 2025), yet remains comparatively loosely standardised and locally enacted. The combination of national legislation, municipal responsibility and school-level autonomy creates substantial variation in how reception education is organised and, consequently, in how access to subject-related literacies is structured. While the overall framework is defined through national legislation, municipalities and schools retain considerable discretion over the organisation and pedagogical enactment of reception provision. This framework is further shaped by national regulations governing Danish as a second language instruction, including provisions that allow newly arrived students to receive up to two years of reception-class instruction before transitioning to mainstream education (Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog, 2016, § 4, stk. 7). Within these regulatory frameworks, municipalities may organise reception education through

separate reception classes, centre-based language support, supplementary Danish as a second language provision integrated into mainstream teaching, or direct enrolment with language-targeted support.

Research documents substantial variation in how these models are interpreted and enacted across schools (EVA, 2016; 2019; Helakorpi et al., 2023; Skiveren et al., 2024; Tørslev & Børsch, 2017). Although placement is typically informed by assessments of students' age, educational background, prior schooling and literacy experiences (EVA, 2016; 2019; Skiveren et al., 2024), local interpretations of these assessments shape students' access to reception models, support provision and literacy domains. Students' entry into the school system is therefore mediated through locally produced institutional arrangements and pedagogical routines that shape academic participation opportunities. Within this national school context, Danish as a second language (basic) often constitutes students' first institutional encounter with the literacy practices and subject-related literacies through which participation in Danish primary education is organised (EVA, 2016; 2019). While the subject is often associated with language acquisition, its formal purpose emphasises access to participation in school and society (Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog, 2016). These institutional arrangements are further conditioned by language ideologies and expectations surrounding appropriate linguistic performance, which shape participation within classrooms and across literacy domains (Gilliam, 2009; 2018; Holm & Laursen, 2011; Holmen, 2019; Kristjánsdóttir, 2018; 2020). In practice, local enactments of Danish as a second language (basic) tend to prioritise measurable linguistic progression, as documented in national evaluations of reception education (EVA, 2016; 2019). While such progression-oriented approaches frame access primarily in terms of language proficiency development, the analysis below examines how institutional, pedagogical and temporal conditions shape opportunities for academic participation within subject-related literacies.

Migration- and residence-related frameworks add a further institutional dimension by defining the legal rights, temporal expectations and organisational conditions structuring educational provision. In addition to newly arrived students enrolled through standard reception provisions, Danish primary schools have recently accommodated displaced Ukrainian students under temporary protection pursuant to the Act on Temporary Residence Permits for Persons Displaced from Ukraine (Lov om midlertidig opholdstilladelse til personer, der er fordrevet fra Ukraine, 2022). This emergency legislation facilitated expedited enrolment procedures, flexible placement options and locally determined instructional provisions, thereby influencing school-level interpretations of reception responsibilities and instructional arrangements (Lindholm & Al-Sami, 2022; Lov om midlertidig opholdstilladelse til personer, der er fordrevet fra Ukraine, 2022; Regeringen & KL, 2022). Such legal categorisations are not merely administrative: they shape how reception education is organised, how literacy practices are pedagogically enacted and what temporal horizons frame students' participation in school literacy domains. Although the empirical focus of this study is Denmark, these developments reflect a broader Nordic governance pattern in which national frameworks

combine with strong local responsibility, resulting in decentralised dynamics in second-language and reception education (Andreassen, 2024; Helakorpi et al., 2023; Paul, 2023). The institutional configurations examined here are situated within a wider Nordic context while reflecting distinctive national policy histories and organisational traditions. Recent migration-related "tipping points" (McAdam, 2014; Skiveren et al., 2024) have reshaped the organisational landscape of Danish primary schools through the establishment of new reception structures, re-designation of student categories and the introduction of temporary protection regimes (Kristjánsdóttir, 2022; Kristjánsdóttir & Pérez, 2016). Together, legal categorisations, decentralised governance structures and migration- and residence-related frameworks constitute the institutional conditions through which access to school-based literacy domains is configured, while shaping the pedagogical arrangements and temporal horizons through which these domains are constituted and transformed within reception education.

Theoretical framework

This study draws on a social and ecological perspective on literacy to investigate the structuring of academic participation opportunities within Danish as a second language (basic). An ecological perspective on literacy emphasises the interaction between individuals and their environments, conceptualising literacy as situated, relational and dynamically influenced by institutional conditions (Barton, 2007). Within the social literacy tradition, literacy is understood as text-mediated social practice, in which engagement with written, visual, material and multimodal texts is socially and institutionally organised through norms, values and expectations (Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Bloome & Green, 2015; Gee, 2015). Thus, an ecological lens facilitates analytical connections between classroom-level interactions and the broader structural and political arrangements that configure students' opportunities for academic participation.

A central concept in the analysis is literacy domains, understood as institutionally constituted social spaces characterised by specific configurations of texts, activities, norms and legitimate forms of participation (Barton & Hamilton, 2012). Danish primary education is conceptualised as an overarching literacy domain shaped by legislation, institutional norms and shared understandings of meaningful participation. School subjects constitute differentiated sub-domains, each framed by expectations for engagement with subject-related literacies and recognised academic contributions. Danish as a second language (basic) is treated as a distinct literacy domain that introduces newly arrived students to the literacy practices of Danish schooling while intersecting with other subject domains depending on local organisational provisions (Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog, 2016; Bekendtgørelse om visse regler om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog af fordrevne børn og unge fra Ukraine, 2022; Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, 2022). Variation in organisational arrangements produces variation in the literacy domains students encounter and, consequently, in the forms of academic work, positions and academic

participation opportunities made available within them. The configurations of these literacy domains are analytically identified through the institutional, instructional and temporal organisation of reception education rather than treated as predefined categories.

To examine how these literacy domains are enacted in practice, the analysis draws on the concepts of literacy events and literacy practices. Literacy events are defined as observable instances in classroom instruction where individuals engage with texts in ways that are contextually and institutionally structured (Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Maybin, 2000; Street, 1995). They provide empirical entry points into how texts, tasks, artefacts and participation norms are organised in instructional situations. In contrast, literacy practices encompass broader, socially and institutionally organised patterns of meaning that structure these events, which are reproduced through pedagogical routines, curricular expectations and culturally embedded norms (Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Gee, 2001). Students contribute to the ongoing constitution of these practices as they negotiate participation norms and occasionally reshape them.

To explore how students orient themselves towards literacy domains, the analysis incorporates Bonny Norton's concept of investment. Initially developed in second language research, investment emphasises that learners' participation is influenced by social and institutional arrangements rather than solely by individual motivation (Darvin & Norton, 2023; Norton Peirce, 1995;). Investment is used to analyse how organisational arrangements and pedagogical structures shape opportunities for participation within literacy domains, and whether such participation is positioned as recognisable, legitimate and worthwhile in specific instructional situations.

The framework also integrates a temporal dimension, recognising that literacy practices and participation opportunities evolve over time and are influenced by institutional expectations related to transitions, progression and future schooling (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Tusting, 2000). Temporality is particularly significant in reception education, where provisions are frequently formally time-bound and associated with assumptions regarding students' transitions into mainstream classes. Temporality is used analytically to examine whether access to literacy domains is stabilised, sustained, fragmented or repeatedly reconfigured across instructional trajectories.

In this context, academic participation opportunities are conceptualised as institutionally, pedagogically and temporally structured conditions constituted through literacy domains that organise access to academic work (Hummelmose, 2025). Rather than describing observable participation or engagement, the concept pertains to the availability of access to academic work, legitimate modes of contribution and recognition within a specific literacy domain. Building on this perspective, academic participation opportunities in Danish as a second language (basic) are defined as possibilities situated within an

ecological continuum between participation and non-participation. These possibilities are shaped by the interplay of curricular frameworks, organisational arrangements, instructional practices and temporal conditions. Academic participation opportunities are understood as conditions made available or constrained through the structuring of literacy domains and text-mediated practices rather than as individual capacities negotiated solely by students. The absence of participation does not merely indicate physical non-presence, as students may be present in instruction while being positioned in ways that restrict or suspend access to academic work. Conversely, students may be positioned as participants in classroom activities without gaining access to the subject-related literacies through which academic participation becomes possible. Academic participation opportunities must thus be understood as situated, dynamic and relationally constituted through the institutional, instructional and temporal organisation of subject-related literacies.

Research design and analytical orientation

This study adopts a qualitative ethnographic research design and employs a case study methodology with an analytical focus (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). Rather than treating schools as bounded units of comparison, the analysis focuses on reception models as organisational configurations within which subject-related literacy domains are constituted and enacted in Danish as a second language (basic). These models provide analytical entry points for examining how organisational arrangements influence opportunities for academic participation. The analysis integrates inductive pattern recognition with policy-informed analytical categories, enabling interpretation of empirical patterns in relation to institutional structures. Drawing on a comparative case study approach (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017), comparison is used heuristically to trace how literacy domains and academic participation opportunities are constituted across organisational configurations of reception education. Rather than comparing reception models as bounded cases to identify similarities and differences between them, the analysis adopts a phenomenon-centred logic in which literacy domains and academic participation opportunities are examined across different reception arrangements. Attention is given to the institutional, instructional and temporal conditions through which these domains are constituted. In this way, comparison serves as an analytical strategy for illuminating variation in the conditions under which academic participation opportunities are made available rather than for evaluating organisational models against one another.

Case selection was informed by three organisational forms recognised in national policy documents regulating reception education: reception classes, direct enrolment with supplementary Danish as a second language support and direct enrolment in mainstream education (Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog, 2016). These forms provided an analytical framework for identifying institutional variation rather than categories to be empirically represented in full.

The study therefore examines three analytically salient configurations: a traditional reception class, a direct enrolment model with supplementary language support and a reception class established for displaced Ukrainian students under the exceptional legislation adopted in 2022. This selection enables examination of how organisational variation shapes access to literacy domains and the academic participation opportunities structured through them. While the first two configurations reflect organisational forms recognised in national policy documents, the Ukrainian reception class was included as an analytically significant variation because the emergency legislation of 2022 introduced a substantial organisational reconfiguration of reception education. This configuration represents a migration-related tipping point that produced substantial changes in the institutional, instructional and temporal conditions through which literacy domains were constituted.

Students from the middle grades were included, as this period has been identified by international research as characterised by a shift in literacy demands, commonly referred to as the "fourth grade slump" (Chall et al., 1990; Horst, 2017). The middle grades therefore provide a relevant analytical site for examining how institutional and instructional arrangements reconfigure literacy domains and access to subject-related academic work. Across the three organisational configurations, group composition varied both across and within observation periods due to the continuous enrolment and transition structures characteristic of reception education. In the direct enrolment model, observations included both mainstream and supplementary language-support settings, while attendance in the Ukrainian reception class fluctuated during the first observation period due to students' participation in Ukrainian online schooling. The analytical focus was not individual students or group size but the organisational, instructional and temporal conditions through which literacy domains and academic participation opportunities were constituted.

The empirical data comprised ethnographically informed classroom observations documented through field notes describing instructional activities, student and teacher participation and instructional artefacts. Audio recordings supplemented field notes by capturing classroom discussions and supporting the analysis of selected literacy events. At each site, two week-long observation periods separated by approximately six months were conducted to examine stability and change in organisational and instructional practices. Consistent with Bartlett and Vavrus' (2017) processual logic of tracing across time periods, this design made it possible to examine not only variation across organisational models but also the stability, continuity and reconfiguration of literacy domains over time. The observations focused on everyday instructional situations in Danish as a second language (basic) and related instructional contexts in which students engaged with texts and subject-related literacy events.

In the direct enrolment model, observations included both supplementary Danish as a second language instruction and mainstream classroom teaching. Field notes were the primary documentation method,

capturing interactions, task structures, spatial arrangements and the use of text and materials. Relevant instructional artefacts, such as worksheets, textbooks and visual resources, were collected as part of the observed literacy events. Audio recordings supported the analysis of selected literacy events but did not constitute an independent source of analysis.

The analysis involved iterative coding and abductive movement between theory and data. Initial coding was informed by the competence areas of Danish as a second language (basic), including reading, writing, speaking and listening (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, 2019). Within these competence areas, recurring literacy events, organisational patterns and subject-related literacy practices were identified and analysed in relation to the constitution of literacy domains. Literacy domains were identified inductively through patterns in organisational structuring, recurring literacy events and the integration of subject-specific literacy practices within each reception model. Literacy events were empirical entry points for identifying recurring patterns through which literacy domains were constituted and enacted in practice. The analysis subsequently examined how the identified literacy domains structured opportunities for academic participation across the different organisational configurations. Observational data were analysed with particular attention to how organisational arrangements, task design and instructional framing enabled or constrained access to subject-related content, legitimate forms of contribution and academic recognition.

The analysis is organised thematically by examining how organisational arrangements, instructional practices and temporal conditions shaped literacy domains and opportunities for academic participation across the three reception models. These themes emerged through iterative data review and theory-informed interpretation, facilitating the development of analytical categories that addressed both empirical complexities and the conceptual concerns guiding the study.

Throughout fieldwork and analysis, reflexivity regarding the researcher's role and presence was maintained, recognising that ethnographic knowledge is produced through situated interaction with the field (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). Rather than striving for neutrality, the study acknowledges the researcher's position as part of the research context and treats observational data as relational and context dependent. All participating schools, teachers and students were anonymised.

Analytic entry points: Case descriptions

Before turning to the analysis, the organisational characteristics of the three reception models are outlined (Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog, 2016; Bekendtgørelse om visse regler om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog af fordrevne børn og unge fra Ukraine, 2022).

Traditional Reception Class

This model is the classic form of reception provision in Danish primary education, with local adaptations (EVA, 2019; Skiveren et al., 2024). The class typically includes students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and enrolment is characterised by continuous turnover, as students may remain for up to two years before transitioning to mainstream classes. Instruction is organised as a separate unit, with Danish as a second language (basic) structuring most of the school day. The organisational structure is stable, with recurring activity formats and routines that sustain instructional continuity despite student turnover and changing group composition.

Direct Enrolment

In this model, a newly arrived student was integrated into a mainstream class while attending scheduled Danish as a second language support. Language support was primarily scheduled during Danish lessons, initially emphasising practical and aesthetic subjects in the mainstream context. Instructional conditions differed across settings: language support involved targeted vocabulary work and teacher-developed scaffolding, whereas mainstream lessons positioned the student under the same conditions as peers, without specific consideration of Danish as a second language. Coordination between mainstream and language support was locally determined, resulting in movement between instructional settings characterised by different expectations and forms of linguistic support.

Reception Class for Displaced Ukrainian Students

This model was established as a separate reception class for displaced Ukrainian students under temporary protection. Students shared a common migration-related legal category, but the model was locally organised through temporary institutional arrangements. Instruction was provided within a separate class structure and centred on Danish as a second language (basic), incorporating subject-related content, shared texts, vocabulary work and multimodal resources. Unlike the traditional reception class, this model was shaped by a more provisional organisational frame connected to temporary protection and locally determined reception responsibilities. The instructional structure included whole-class teaching, shared tasks and teacher-led scaffolding. Its organisation was marked by uncertainty concerning duration, transition and future schooling, reflecting the temporary legal and institutional conditions under which the model was established.

Institutional configurations of literacy domains

Across the three reception models, Danish as a second language (basic) is enacted through markedly different organisational configurations. Although the subject serves as a shared curricular framework across

the models, access to subject-related literacies is organised in different ways, thereby constituting distinct configurations of literacy domains and academic participation opportunities (Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog, 2016; Bekendtgørelse om visse regler om folkeskolens undervisning i dansk som andetsprog af fordrevne børn og unge fra Ukraine, 2022; Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet, 2022; Folkeskoleloven, 2025). This section synthesises the institutional configurations of the three reception models. The following sections examine how these configurations were enacted in instructional practice and sustained or reconfigured over time.

In the traditional reception class, continuous enrolment and heterogeneous student composition created a literacy domain characterised by a relatively stable organisational frame and recurring instructional formats. Although Danish as a second language (basic) was oriented towards Danish as the target language, access to subject-related literacies was not made dependent on already established Danish proficiency alone. In the observed reception class, multilingual and multimodal resources were institutionally available as part of the literacy domain. This configuration therefore combined an institutionally stable reception-class structure with instructional practices that could be adapted to a changing student group.

By contrast, the Ukrainian reception class constitutes a literacy domain marked by temporal provisionality, explicitly inscribed in the legislative framework governing the reception of displaced Ukrainian students. This framework introduces distinct rights and organisational conditions, including the possibility of instruction in Ukrainian, Russian or English and participation in Ukrainian online schooling. Within the observed configuration, Danish-medium subject teaching was structurally less central than in the traditional reception class, and Danish as a second language (basic) was enacted under more provisional and locally negotiated conditions. The possibility of participating in Ukrainian online education also affected the temporal organisation of local instruction, as students could move in and out of classroom activities during the school day. These conditions contributed to a literacy domain organised around multiple instructional trajectories. In this configuration, the legislative framing of temporary protection contributed to a literacy domain influenced by both local institutional arrangements and transnational educational obligations.

In the direct enrolment model, literacy domains are constituted and organised across multiple instructional contexts as the observed student moved between mainstream teaching and supplementary language support. This organisational configuration distributed access to subject-related literacies across different educational settings. Consistent with previous research showing that support for newly arrived students is often organised across different educational contexts (Bunar & Juvonen, 2022; Harju-Autti & Mäkinen, 2022; Tajic & Bunar, 2023), Danish as a second language (basic) remained present as a support function but was not consistently embedded in mainstream subject teaching. This configuration formed part of a literacy

domain spanning multiple instructional contexts.

The three configurations show that literacy domains in Danish as a second language (basic) are not established by the curricular framework alone. They are constituted through the institutional organisation of access to subject teaching, the instructional practices through which literacy events are enacted and the temporal conditions under which participation can be sustained. Variation across the models therefore shapes not only how Danish as a second language (basic) is organised, but also which forms of academic work become accessible within each configuration and how opportunities for academic participation are structured.

Enactments of literacy domains in instructional practice

Building on the preceding characterisation of institutional configurations, this section examines how literacy domains were enacted in instructional practice through selected literacy events, understood as observable instances of text-mediated practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2012). The focus is on how task design, texts, material resources, language use and participation norms shaped access to subject-related literacies and academic participation opportunities within the three reception models. The traditional and Ukrainian reception classes exemplify two contrasting approaches in which institutional organisation, task design and linguistic expectations influenced the conditions under which students could access subject-related literacies.

In the traditional reception class, continuous enrolment and heterogeneous student composition were accommodated within a relatively stable organisational frame, configuring a literacy domain in which recurring instructional formats could be maintained and adapted to a changing student group. Although Danish as a second language (basic) was oriented towards Danish as the target language, access to subject-related literacies was not made dependent on already established Danish proficiency alone. In the observed reception class, task organisation, students' first languages, visual resources and other semiotic resources served as mediating resources for access to subject-related academic work.

These institutional conditions were evident in a lesson on animals, where the teacher organised the activity around naming animals and deliberately invited contributions in the students' first languages. When introducing the topic, a student responded with "insects". As another student mentioned "horse", the teacher displayed an image on the smartboard and requested the term in Italian, English, Romanian and Farsi. Students provided translations such as "cavallo", "asb", "horse" and "cal", which the teacher repeated to highlight cross-linguistic similarities. The animal-naming activity illustrates how the institutional organisation of the traditional reception class was enacted through a task design in which multilingual meanings became a legitimate pathway into subject-related content, allowing students to contribute

through existing linguistic knowledge while Danish remained the target language of instruction. The teacher's orientation towards multilingual contributions constituted the literacy event as a text-mediated practice in which images, oral language, translation and shared comparison supported access to the content. Academic participation opportunities were therefore structured through the combination of institutional conditions, task design and the teacher's framing of students' first languages as legitimate resources for subject-related meaning-making.

While the animal-naming activity demonstrated how the institutional configuration of the traditional reception class could expand access to subject-related literacy practices, the organisation of content in the Ukrainian reception class revealed a different pattern. This classroom was established under emergency legislation, and its institutional configuration was marked by temporal provisionality, a linguistically homogeneous student group and limited access to Danish-medium subject instruction. In the observed literacy event discussed below, these conditions were reflected in an activity where students could participate socially, while access to Danish as subject-related linguistic content remained less explicitly structured.

The dynamics of a bingo activity, where students were seated around a table as the teacher announced numbers in Danish, highlighted this distinction. The activity was organised as a competitive game, with prizes functioning as an external incentive for participation, but access to the task depended on students' ability to recognise Danish number words. Students who were familiar with these terms could follow the sequence of the game, while others observed their peers and missed some numbers. Despite active interaction among students in Ukrainian, this interaction did not in itself provide access to the Danish numerical terms that organised the activity. Here, Danish functioned as an implicit entry condition. The bingo format positioned students as participants in the classroom activity, but the Danish numerical language through which the activity was organised remained implicit rather than being made an explicit object of learning or didactically developed as subject-related content. The event therefore illustrates the distinction between visible participation in a classroom activity and access to the subject-related literacies that make academic participation possible. However, these conditions did not in themselves make Danish numerical language a recognisable, legitimate and worthwhile object of investment within the literacy event. Students were therefore positioned primarily as players in the activity rather than as learners explicitly supported in accessing and practising Danish number words. The activity foregrounded participation in the game, while access to Danish-medium subject-related content remained weakly scaffolded. Although classroom participation was possible, the activity did not establish equivalent academic participation opportunities in Danish as a second language (basic), because the linguistic content of the task was not explicitly developed as subject-related learning.

The animal-naming and bingo activities illustrate how literacy domains in Danish as a second language (basic) are shaped by the interplay between organisational models, task design and language expectations. The traditional reception class organised multilingual resources as pathways into subject-related content, whereas the Ukrainian reception class organised a classroom activity in which social participation was possible without equivalent structured access to Danish-medium academic work. These contrasting literacy events show how different institutional and instructional configurations shaped the academic participation opportunities made available within Danish primary education.

While the two reception models exemplify contrasting institutional configurations, the direct enrolment model introduces a third configuration in which access is organised through mainstream subject practices. In the direct enrolment model, Danish as a second language (basic) was not confined to supplementary language support but was also enacted as a dimension of mainstream subject teaching. This was evident in a crafts and design lesson, where the organisation of content created a literacy event that differed from instructional situations primarily organised through verbal explanation or written subject terminology. In this event, the multimodal organisation of the task made it possible for the observed student to access the academic work of the lesson despite limited Danish proficiency.

The teacher prepared written and visual instructions on the board, supplemented by illustrations detailing each step in the process of decorating a wooden bird. She began the lesson by demonstrating the task to the class, showing her completed bird and illustrating the application of colours. The students gathered around the demonstration table and observed the teacher's movements and the sequence of actions. Meaning-making was facilitated through written text, visual imagery, material artefacts and embodied demonstration rather than through verbal explanation alone. These conditions enabled the observed student to access the task without relying solely on Danish proficiency. When he read the word "avis" (newspaper) from the board and appeared uncertain, it became evident that this lexical item constituted a potential barrier. The multimodal structure of the activity allowed him to continue. He located a newspaper with assistance from an adult in the classroom and subsequently relied on visual cues, material resources and peer interaction to proceed. When he requested a "pensel" (paintbrush) by repeating the word aloud, a classmate directed him to the appropriate materials and explained the steps that needed to be completed before painting. These interactions did not remove the linguistic demands of the activity, but they provided alternative semiotic and social pathways into the task. The literacy event therefore illustrates how access to the subject-related literacy practices of the lesson was mediated through multiple modes of meaning-making rather than through Danish verbal proficiency alone. Physical action, visual instructions, material artefacts, peer support, the shared activity structure and the teacher's demonstration functioned together as scaffolds through which the student could access and participate in the academic work of the lesson. At the same time, the literacy event also reveals linguistic boundaries within the literacy domain.

His uncertainty about the word “avis” indicates that Danish still served as an implicit gateway to certain aspects of the task. However, because the activity was organised multimodally, this linguistic barrier did not suspend his access to the task as a whole. His access to the task therefore depended on interpreting the sequence of actions, locating and using the relevant materials and drawing on the teacher’s and peers’ demonstrations, while still encountering Danish lexical items as part of the literacy event.

This literacy event exemplifies how the organisational and instructional conditions of the crafts and design classroom made academic participation opportunities available across multiple modes. The activity-based structure, multimodal task design and peer-mediated support expanded the observed student’s access to the academic work of the lesson. At the same time, the student’s uncertainty about “avis” shows that linguistic demands remained present and required support. Access to the academic work of the lesson was therefore constituted through the organisation of the literacy domain and the resources made available within it rather than through Danish proficiency alone.

Temporal configurations of literacy domains

This section builds on the preceding analyses of institutional configurations and instructional enactments by examining how literacy domains are further shaped by temporal conditions that influence the continuity and durability of access to subject-related literacies (Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Tusting, 2000). Across the three models, these temporal dimensions shape whether access to subject-related literacies can be sustained, fragmented or repeatedly reconfigured over time. Because literacy domains are constituted through recurring events, practices, texts, routines and participation norms, their continuity depends not only on how instruction is organised in specific situations but also on whether these arrangements can be sustained across instructional sequences.

In the traditional reception class, relatively stable instructional arrangements were accompanied by recurring classroom routines. Although student composition changed through continuous enrolment and transitions to mainstream schooling, the reception-class model provided a formally time-limited but comparatively stable institutional frame, as students may receive reception-class instruction for up to two years before transition. This temporal frame made it possible to maintain recurring instructional formats while adapting them to a changing student group. This temporal stability was visible in the animal-naming activity, where multilingual resources could be integrated into a familiar instructional format that supported access to subject-related content. Under these conditions, literacy domains could be sustained as recognisable instructional contexts in which access to subject-related literacies could be revisited and maintained across changing student groups.

Conversely, the Ukrainian reception class was characterised by temporal provisionality, in which

instructional trajectories were shaped by short-term planning horizons, shifting attendance patterns and ongoing institutional adjustments. The option of Ukrainian online schooling formed part of this temporal configuration, as it introduced an additional instructional trajectory alongside local classroom activities. In practice, this meant that students could move in and out of Danish-medium classroom activities during the school day. The bingo activity illustrates how continuity could become difficult to establish when access depended on recognising specific Danish lexical items at the moment they were introduced. Participation in the game was possible, but because the activity relied on students' immediate recognition of Danish number words, those who were partially absent or unfamiliar with the terms had limited access to the linguistic content of the task.

In the direct enrolment model, temporal organisation was distributed across multiple instructional sites as the observed student moved between mainstream lessons and supplementary Danish as a second language support while remaining formally positioned within Danish as a second language (basic). This configuration showed limited temporal alignment between mainstream lessons and supplementary Danish as a second language support, as content progression, linguistic scaffolding, pedagogical pacing and text-mediated practices were distributed across the two instructional contexts rather than coordinated within a single Danish as a second language trajectory. This produced a form of sustained provisionality in which academic participation opportunities could be established within specific activities, while broader access to subject-related literacies remained dependent on shifting and only partially coordinated instructional contexts.

Temporal conditions therefore shape whether access to literacy domains can be stabilised, fragmented or repeatedly reconfigured. Variations in temporal organisation influence the extent to which literacy practices are established as enduring domains of instruction or remain contingent on specific activities and contexts. Taken together, the three models show that Danish as a second language (basic) is not only organised differently across institutional and instructional settings but also sustained differently over time. The temporal organisation of reception education therefore contributes to how literacy domains are constituted, how subject-related literacy practices are sustained or interrupted, and which academic participation opportunities become available, stabilised, or constrained within each configuration.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that literacy domains within Danish primary education, particularly in the context of Danish as a second language (basic), are not predetermined but are constituted through institutional, instructional and temporal conditions. Across the three reception models, this constitution was made visible through analysed literacy events, which showed how organisational, instructional and temporal conditions were associated with different configurations of access to subject-related literacies and

academic participation opportunities. These configurations were neither stable nor uniform in nature. Rather, they were contingent and unevenly sustained, which underscores that access to subject-related literacies cannot be understood as a direct function of students' linguistic proficiency. This does not imply that target-language development is unimportant. Rather, the analysis demonstrates that opportunities to engage with subject-related literacies through the target language are shaped by the institutional, instructional and temporal conditions through which access to academic work is organised.

By complementing existing research on language development with an analysis of the institutional, instructional and temporal conditions through which academic participation becomes possible, this study extends Nordic research on reception education. While previous studies have documented variations in governance, policy, organisation, language support provision and the positioning of newly arrived students across educational systems (Andreassen, 2024; Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023; Helakorpi et al., 2023; Paul, 2023), the present analysis specifies how such macro-level arrangements take concrete form as distinct literacy domains within classroom practice. In doing so, analyses of organisational models are extended to the literacy domains constituted through them and the different conditions for academic participation that emerge within these domains. This shifts attention from organisational variation as a structural or policy-related phenomenon towards the ways in which such variation shapes access to subject-related literacies and academic work in everyday educational practice. The findings suggest that differences between reception models are not only reflected in how support is organised, but also in the forms of academic work that become available, the participation opportunities afforded to students, and the conditions under which subject-related literacies can be accessed and sustained. The findings further demonstrate how variation across decentralised and locally negotiated reception systems becomes consequential through the literacy domains constituted within different reception models, as organisational arrangements, pedagogical priorities and changing institutional conditions shape students' access to subject-related literacies and academic participation opportunities in everyday educational practice.

The study furthermore highlights the significance of temporality in understanding variation across reception models. While Nordic research has documented organisational diversity, decentralised governance structures and changing policy conditions, the findings show that organisational arrangements do not shape access to subject-related literacies in the same way over time. Across the three reception models, literacy domains were sustained, fragmented or repeatedly reconfigured through different temporal conditions, resulting in different possibilities for maintaining access to subject-related literacies and academic work. Organisational variation is therefore also temporal: it concerns not only the existence of different reception models, but also whether access to subject-related literacies can be sustained over time. This was evident in the relatively stable instructional trajectory of the traditional reception class, the provisional and discontinuous conditions characterising the Ukrainian reception class, and the sustained

provisionality associated with movement between mainstream and support settings in the direct enrolment model. These findings suggest that organisational models should not only be examined in terms of their structure and stated purpose, but also in relation to the temporal conditions through which participation becomes possible and through which access to academic work is maintained, interrupted or redistributed over time. The analysis therefore extends existing understandings of reception education by showing that temporal conditions are central to understanding how literacy domains and academic participation opportunities are constituted, sustained, interrupted and reorganised over time.

By foregrounding literacy domains as an analytical lens, the article demonstrates how academic participation opportunities are constituted through institutional, instructional and temporal conditions rather than through individual linguistic proficiency alone. The findings extend existing understandings of variation in reception education by showing how organisational differences become visible as distinct literacy domains and conditions for access to subject-related academic work within classroom practice. This provides a basis for future research examining how literacy domains and academic participation opportunities are sustained, disrupted or reconfigured across educational trajectories, subject areas and policy contexts. Such questions are particularly relevant in educational systems characterised by decentralised governance and increasing linguistic diversity in schools, where the organisation of reception education continues to evolve.

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