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Editorial

Nordic Languages as Second Languages: Comparative Perspectives on Second Language Teaching and Learning in the Nordic Countries

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Editorial

The Nordic welfare societies share several unique traits regarding societal and educational structures. Over recent decades, linguistic and cultural diversity has increased significantly in the Nordic countries, and consequently, the educational systems need to adapt continually to increasingly more diverse student populations (Rydell et al., 2023). The Nordic countries can be said to share an educational ambition to build democratic and inclusive societies, and to achieve this goal, the successful teaching and learning of the Nordic languages as second languages is a key component (Pinson et al., 2023). But there are also differences in how the national educational systems have organized education for multilingual students (Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023). Differences in how second-language education is organized may reflect societal norms and values regarding students with migrant backgrounds and issues related to learning a second language (Cummins, 2021). Recent global developments, such as conflicts in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine, have highlighted the need for closer analysis of how Nordic education systems receive and support students with migrant backgroundsin general and the conditions for second language teaching

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and learning in particular.

In this special issue researchers from all Nordic countries present research from the field of second language teaching and learning in the Nordic contexts. The overall aim of the issue is to analyse educational discourse, policy, and practice and their implications for teaching and learning concerning Nordic languages as second languages through transnational, interdisciplinary and multi-theoretical perspectives. The focus is on second language teaching and learning specifically, but also on broader issues such as organization, policy issues and inclusion related to second language teaching and learning.

The special issue is intended for schools, teachers, teacher educators and teacher students, but also constitutes a resource for further research. The articles collectively offer comparative analytical perspectives contributing knowledge that can help educational systems prepare for the future in the Nordic countries and beyond. Although the outlook is Nordic, the comparative approaches create possibilities for new educational knowledge and practice development across national borders.

This editorial should be read alongside the issue's Forum piece written by Angela de Britos and Clare Mouat from the University of Strathclyde in Scotland. The Forum piece introduces the articles included in this special issue and summarizes the main takeaways from each of them. Further, the authors of the Forum piece synthesize the results and frame the synthesis in an international perspective on second language teaching and learning. The Forum piece serves both to highlight the individual contributions and to extend the discussion beyond the Nordic setting.

Research on Nordic languages as second languages remains an important factor for schools and societies to adapt to and successfully handle the ongoing changes to educational systems and conditions. This special issue aims to contribute deeper understanding and possibly new ways forward for second language teaching and learning in the Nordic countries and beyond.

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