Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies
Vol. 18, 2, 2024, 7–20

Teaching literacy to adult migrants in Norway. An interview study exploring teachers' reflections on professional practices

Lise Iversen Kulbrandstad & Anne Marit Vesteraas Danbolt,
Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

Through an interview study, this article explores teachers' reflections on professional practices when teaching Norwegian and literacy to adult migrants with little or no previous formal education. Data were collected from ten experienced teachers at three learning centers. The interviews were individual, based on a semi-structured interview guide and conducted on Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic 2021–2022.

The study builds on sociological and pedagogical theories of professional practices in which teaching is seen as a profession between macro and micro challenges. The curriculum for teaching Norwegian to adults is a regulation to the Integration Act, which requires teachers to contribute to an "early integration" and "a lasting connection to working life" in addition to transforming the subject content into forms that works for their group of students. Specific language requirements (CEFR B2 level) to obtain Norwegian citizenship add pressure to the teaching situation.

The interview study made it possible to explore professional practices as described by the teachers themselves, from within the profession. The analysis uses Biesta's (2015) three purposes of education as a lens: qualification, socialization and subjectification. All teachers describe their practices as a matter of balancing between choosing and transforming content and caring for their students. They also act as bridge-builders between the adult migrants in their situation as newcomers and their situation as future citizens of Norway, thus reflecting a strong dedication to their students' lives as adults in Norway and combining all three of Biesta's purposes of education in their professional practices.

Keywords: teacher profession, LESLLA learners, basic literacy, oral second language teaching, linguistic repertoire as teaching resource, educational purposes

1 Introduction

Already when the first literacy classes for adult migrants were established in Norway in the mid-1970s, the complexity of this teaching-learning situation received attention, among politicians (KAD, 1980, p. 105), teachers (Manne et al., 1981), as well as researchers (Bjørkavåg, 1986). At the time, the double task of parallel learning of a new language and literacy was addressed both by exploring different linguistic challenges of breaking the alphabetic code in an unfamiliar versus a familiar language (Hyltenstam, 1979), and by constructing a model describing alternative paths to literacy in multilingual contexts (Gudschinsky, 1977). The most efficient way, according to Gudschinsky, and UNESCO (2016), is using a familiar language. When that is not possible, the second

Corresponding author's email: lise.kulbrandstad@inn.no
eISSN: 1457-9863
Publisher: University of Jyväskylä, Language Campus

https://apples.journal.fi
https://doi.org/10.47862/apples.130467

VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
PEER-REVIEWED
www.tsv.fi/tunnus

option is building oral competence in the new language as a foundation for second language literacy teaching. The following decades, this alternative path developed into a norm within the Norwegian system. However, along the way there have been several initiatives to use the students' linguistic repertoire as a resource (e.g. Hvenekilde et al., 1996; Monsen & Eek, 2022).

In addition to the parallel learning of a second language and literacy, other aspects add to the complexity of this specific teaching-learning situation. The large variation in learners' backgrounds and the lack of qualified teachers are often emphasized (Monsen, 2015). Societal changes may also cause challenges. For example, in the 2020s, the Norwegian society is highly digitalized. Authorities, schools, the health services, and the business sector expect citizens to communicate digitally: to read, write, search, and find information. Political decisions may also more directly change the context of classroom teaching. An illustration of the latter is the current national curriculum which is adopted as a regulation to the Norwegian Integration Act (HK, 2021, p. 3), and as such forms a central part of the full-time compulsory introduction program with overall aim of contributing to "an early integration", "financial independence" and a "lasting connection to working life" (Lovdata, 2020a). This context requires teachers to collaborate with work-life and have work-life in mind when planning their teaching. Another recent political decision that adds to the complexity is the decision made by the Norwegian Parliament to raise language requirements to obtain Norwegian citizenship. From 2022 on, the B1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2018) is required for oral language proficiency (AID, 2022).

This article concentrates on the teachers and thus on the teaching part of what we have characterized as a complex teaching-learning situation. Building on an interview study, we focus on teachers' reflections on professional practices when teaching literacy to adult migrants with little or no earlier formal schooling. In these practices the acts of teaching are of course fundamental. However, our interest is also in the teachers' other ways of being professionals: the way they understand their mission from society and use their professional discretion, which are two main characteristics of professional practices (Molander & Terum, 2008, p. 20).

Studies on teachers' own views on basic literacy teaching to adult migrants are scarce, both in Norway (Randen et al., 2018), and internationally (Nordanger et al., 2023). However, there are some recent studies shedding light on the complex double teaching challenges from teachers' point of view. Vinogradov (2013, p. 10) discusses the knowledge base required. At the core is knowledge about early literacy instruction, and four other areas: teaching, the immigrant and refugee experience, language and language acquisition, and adult learning. Also Colliander (2018) discusses core competences in her study on the professional identity of Swedish teachers of migrants with low literacy skills. In addition to teacher qualifications and subject specific knowledge in Swedish as a second language, she finds that the teachers were characterized by the ability to adjust to learners' needs, care for the learners and act as "bridge-builder between the learner and society" (p. 87). The role of bridge-builder, Colliander primarily attributes to bilingual migrant teachers who share with the adult students both language and experiences of being new to Sweden. Furthermore, teacher practices to other groups of adult migrants have been studied. Kristiansen (2022) for example focuses on teacher's professional responsibility, Lønsmann (2022) on teachers roles as integration workers, enforcers, helpers and cheerleaders, while Guribye and Hidle (2013) find that teachers of Norwegian to adults take on a helping role.

We will explore characteristics of professional teaching practices as they are expressed by teachers of Norwegian and basic literacy to adult migrants with little or no formal schooling by analyzing ten teachers' own reported experiences and reflections. Our analysis is guided by the following question: How do teachers of adult migrants with little or no formal schooling reflect on macro and micro challenges characterizing this

teaching-learning situation in general, and more specifically on ways to handle the double task of teaching Norwegian and literacy at the same time?

Our analysis builds on sociological and pedagogical theories of professional practices as well as social theories of literacy. We will introduce them in part 2, before we present the context of the study in part 3, the methods used in part 4, discuss the findings in part 5, and give concluding remarks in part 6.

2 Teaching as a profession between macro and micro challenges

Evetts (2003) analyses professions through the concepts of professionalism from above and from within. In light of the role of teachers, Evetts' distinction can be understood as the tension between demands and expectations from society and politicians in particular (macro level) and teacher's own understanding of how to practice professional work in their daily lives (micro level) (Dahl et al., 2016). Our primary focus is to explore professional practices as described by teachers themselves – from within the profession. Since teaching as part of the educational system inevitably means handling expectations and regulations from the macro level as well, several researchers point to the tension between macro and micro levels as the context that frames teachers' practices. Johnson and Golombek (2020, p. 120) for example argue that it is necessary for second language teachers to "scrutinize and navigate the consequences that broader macrostructures, such as educational policies and curricular mandates, have on their daily classroom practices", while Kubanyiova (2020, p. 53) argues the need for second language teachers to be "responsive meaning makers in the world". Although teachers should build strong connections with students and their lived experiences, they should not "shy away from the politics of the social worlds in which their practices are located".

Biesta (2015) brings focus on teachers and teaching in another way, namely by discussing three partly overlapping purposes of education: qualification ("transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions"), socialization ("representing and initiating students in traditions and ways of being and doing"), and subjectification ("impact on students as persons") (Biesta, 2015, p. 77–78). Although Biesta has compulsory school in mind, the purposes are also relevant for teachers of adult migrants (cf. Kristiansen, 2022; Lønsmann, 2022), but with other aspects of socialization and subjectification in the foreground. For adult migrants in a new country, socialization can be understood as ways of living, working and becoming a citizen in the new society, while subjectification can be understood as pertaining to questions on well-being, self-esteem and autonomy. One aspect of adopting Biesta's model that is particularly relevant when adapted to studies of professional practices is that it puts teacher judgement in the foreground. The teacher always needs to balance between the different purposes, and sometimes choose to focus more on one of them. Teachers also need to be aware of the possible conflicts between the three purposes, and the possible mismatch between macro expectations and what teachers themselves, based on their professional judgement, want to give priority in a specific situation.

As mentioned in the introduction, autonomy to act based on professional judgement is regarded as one of the main characteristics of professions (Molander & Terum, 2008). While such judgements mostly are enacted on the micro level, they depend on two of the other characteristics of professional practices: the mission from society (macro level) as well as the knowledge base teachers have acquired through higher education and experience. Reviewing research on teacher knowledge, Bransford et al. (2005, p. 11) developed a framework consisting of three interacting areas that build the foundation for professional practices: knowledge about teaching and the teaching context, about learners and their background, and about subject matter and curriculum. Shulman's (1987/2004) concept of pedagogical content knowledge also includes a combination of different forms of knowledge:

> The key to distinguishing the knowledge base for teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variation in ability and background presented by the students. (Shulman, 1987/2004, p. 237)

In our study, teaching practices of Norwegian and basic literacy represent the content of the transformation processes, or what the teachers teach for qualification purposes, to use Biesta's (2015) words. According to social theories of literacy, literacy practices combine reading, writing and talking about text. As part of a teaching-learning situation, the practices are embedded in the power of societies' dominant literacies since educational institutions themselves are powerful societal contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 11–12). In our case, the power of dominant literacies is highlighted by the role given to Norwegian in the teaching of basic literacy in the national curriculum as well as the use of tests to move students from one level to another and to attain Norwegian citizenship.

3 The Norwegian context

In 2022, 19% of the Norwegian population were immigrants to Norway or children of two parents with immigrant background. Among adult migrant language learners, defined as those who are currently enrolled in a language program, 67 % were women. The language learners originated from 137 countries, of which these six countries covered half of the learners: Syria, Eritrea, Thailand, Philippines, Afghanistan and Turkey (Statistics Norway, 2022a; 2022b). The adults are divided into proficiency levels in line with CEFR where A1 is the lowest. They are required to take language tests in spoken and written Norwegian to pass the different levels (HK, 2021). For refugees, the programs are fulltime, compulsory and often combined with some sort of work practice. The participants receive an economic compensation and can be enrolled in the program for three years, or longer if needed. For adults with low educational background, the curriculum includes guidelines for "Basic training in reading and writing". Since the 1980s, the curriculum has had an opening towards using the students' multilingualism as a resource, last acknowledged in the curriculum introduced in 2021: "Languages that participants have experience with must […] be used actively in the training" (HK, 2021, p. 9). A new part of the curriculum is the introduction of the interdisciplinary topics of health and life skills and democracy and citizenship, which are to "provide a general thematic framework" for all language courses (p. 6).

For teachers, a supplementary course of 30 ECTS in Norwegian as a second language is required in addition to general teacher qualifications to teach Norwegian to adults (Lovdata, 2020b). When it comes to teaching literacy to adults with no or little formal schooling, the authorities recommend a specialization beyond the 30 ECTS, but it is not required (Kompetanse Norge, 2021, p. 1). This means that there is still a way to go to tailor qualifications for these teaching practices.

4 Research design and ways of analyzing

Ten teachers were recruited through their school principals from three language introduction centers in three municipalities in eastern Norway. All centers were located in small towns. The interviews took place in 2021–2022 at a time characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic with more digital teaching, periodically closed schools and restrictions on physical contact. When possible, the centers prioritized students with low educational background for physical classroom teaching. The interviews were conducted digitally with the use of Zoom. They were individual with both researchers present and based on a semi-structured interview guide. Each interview lasted around one hour, was recorded via an app (Diktafon), and later transcribed by the researchers using normal orthography. Both researchers checked all transcriptions against the audio

recordings. The quotes used in this article are translated into English by the authors.

The study follows the ethical guidelines of NESH (2021). The way of handling personal data during all phases of the research process was approved by NSD (Norwegian center for research data, ref. 728957). Informed written consent was gathered from the participating teachers, and they were informed that they could withdraw at any time. The teachers and the schools are anonymized.

All teachers taught or had recently taught level A1 and A2 courses. They also had experience with offering work placement as part of the language courses. On average, they had worked 10.7 years in adult migrant education, spanning from 5 to 19 years. Their pseudonyms are presented in table 1. In all, there are eight women and two men (Aram and Svein). The youngest teachers are in their forties and the oldest have passed sixty. Two have a refugee background themselves (Aram and Samira). Most have a four-year general teacher education for compulsory school. The most common earlier teacher experience is from teaching in elementary school. Six have passed the 30 ECTS exam in Norwegian as a second language. The teachers have a broad range of additional qualifications, e.g. in special education, multicultural education, sociology, Norwegian, drama, and religion.

Table 1. Teachers interviewed (pseudonyms and age group)

	Age group		**Age group**
Aram	60+	Nina	50+
Helene	40+	Samira	60+
Ingelin	50+	Sissel	40+
Kari	50+	Svein	60+
Lillian	40+	Tora	40+

We used a qualitative data analysis inspired by Braun and Clarke's (2006, pp. 87) procedures for thematic analysis through different phases going from an overall familiarizing with the data, through coding, searching for and reviewing themes. Another inspiration was Boeije's (2010, pp. 93) more general approach of qualitative data analysis using segmenting and reassembling data in a spiral of analysis. Our process of analysis started with our transcriptions of the audio-taped interviews and the following re-listening while checking the transcriptions. This process gave an overview of the data set as a whole. The interviews were then segmented into smaller pieces by reading, making notes, interpreting and discussing what we found interesting in light of the research questions. Searching for topics and broader themes, we worked both inductively and deductively. First we used a more open inductive procedure searching for topics that were repeated across the data set. In this process, we found for example that *care*, in different forms, was a label that characterized the accounts of this special type of professional practices. Then we used our interview questions and theoretical lens to an additional explicit deductive search for what the interviews revealed. We once more selected extracts from all over the interviews, gathered them in separate files, attached and discussed similarities and differences, and reassembled the topics in broader themes.

5 Findings

In the following presentation of the analysis, we use Biesta's three purposes of education as a lens. First, we present the analysis of professional practices to enhance qualification (5.1), and then the analysis of professional practices in light of the educational purposes of socialization and subjectification (5.2).

5.1 Professional practices to enhance the qualification purpose of education

The findings concerning the teachers' reflections on teaching Norwegian and basic literacy to learners with little school background will be presented in four themes: adjusting to the teaching context, the use of multilingualism as a resource, building oral second language proficiency, and developing literacy through digital tools. Taken together these themes answer the question on how the teachers reflect on ways to handle the double task of learning Norwegian and literacy at the same time. When reflecting on challenges of this double task, the teachers were very much concerned with the local context of their teaching situation, like the learners' diverse backgrounds, and the size of classes. Reflections on more content specific issues first came up when the teachers were asked explicit questions about it, e.g. how digitalization challenges or supports the teaching of literacy. We understand this result as the teachers being in a situation where the circumstances around teaching and learning occupy a prominent place in their thinking about professional work.

5.1.1 Adjusting to the teaching context

To be able to shape teaching into what Shulman (1987/2004) calls "pedagogically powerful forms" the teachers must take the learners' backgrounds and the variation in the group into consideration in the process of transforming content. Across the interviews, the ten teachers all express concerns about the special conditions for the adult migrant students, and how it frames the teaching context in different ways. They bring up the situation as refugees, poor health, lack of motivation for learning a new language, and lack of a network for support. Aram for example points out that the fact that the language learners are adults with many challenges outside school often leads to a lack of concentration in class: "Their body sits here, but their thoughts; I do not know where they are". Another challenge is the lack of experiences with formal learning that is typical for the adults with little or no earlier schooling. The teachers mention for instance difficulties in remembering content from one day to the other, or how students struggle to adapt something they have learnt to a new context: "I think if I do it like this or this, then it might be transferred to the next project. Unfortunately, it does not always work that way. In fact, it is rather seldom," Kari reflects.

The teaching situation is also considered challenging because the groups are large, consisting of learners with different needs and are constantly changing, with new students joining the group while others are leaving. At one of the schools, the classes are reorganized every month. Health problems frequently cause absence. Tora brings this up: "We never know how the days will go along. Nevertheless, we try to keep a kind of continuity in class".

Because there are few higher-level groups available, some learners have to stay in the group even though they have progressed sufficiently to proceed to the next level. This unstable situation creates lack of predictability and a great need for differentiating.

Although considering the local context and students' background of course is part of professional practices for all kinds of teaching (cf. Bransford et al., 2005), the teachers in this study very quickly start talking about such special challenges. This might be due to more unstable and heterogeneous classes than they are used to from other teaching situations. Perhaps they also expected that this is different from the interviewers' experiences. As for the current situation, we interpret their worries and at the same time the commitment they show by bringing these aspects up so clearly in the conversations as a sign of their ambitions to establish what Shulman names pedagogical powerful practices that respond to learners' backgrounds.

5.1.2 Using multilingualism as a resource

The attention towards using languages already known by the learners as a resource has increased in the teaching of Norwegian in recent years (Monsen & Eek, 2022). Samira, one of the multilingual teachers, has personal experiences with this change. When she began teaching adults fifteen years ago, she spoke Arabic when she found it useful, but stopped when she received a complaint; the students expected her to speak Norwegian in class. However, more recently the use of Arabic for explanation when teaching Norwegian is recognized. Samira also speaks Arabic to establish meta-communication about the learning situation, a communication she argues is especially important for adults with low educational background: "Because they need to know: Why do we have to learn Norwegian? How are we going to learn, and what are we going to learn?".

At all three schools, the learners represent several first languages, and the teaching staff only covers a few of these. That of course is a challenge. At one of the schools, it is an explicit policy to hire bilingual teachers, at another they used to hire bilingual assistants, but when the budget decreased, it was not prioritized anymore. This exemplifies how local politics create a clear framework for how teachers can use their professional discretion.

Regardless of their own knowledge of languages, all the teachers comment that they open up for the use of the learners' language resources in the classroom. In this way, we can ascertain that they, in their own ways, follow up on the multilingual turn in second language teaching, but to different extent and for different reasons. A common effort is to help students understand the content of the lessons. During the interviews, the teachers share several ways of doing this. Working in groups composed of students with same languages and using peers as interpreters are often mentioned. In some situations, the use of other languages than Norwegian causes special concerns, for example when there are few speakers of the same language. This is exemplified by Kari's reflections: "Sometimes they are the only one to speak a language. That is a sensitive situation, it feels difficult".

As mentioned, the teachers' reflections on multilingualism as a resource most often is about facilitating classroom work. Explicit use of other languages in literacy teaching is not brought up during the interviews. However, the teachers' reflections include valorizing the adult students' identity as multilingual language users, thus acknowledging their competence and their resources. In this way, supporting the language learners' identity and self-esteem comes to the forefront. As such, the teachers' arguments for multilingual practices within the classroom are not only for qualification purposes but also to strengthen the purpose of subjectification (cf. Biesta, 2015). One of the teachers states this attitude very explicitly: "Valorizing their languages, it does something with their sense of pride and their identity. It is important to them" (Lillian).

5.1.3 Building second language oral proficiency

The teachers express great commitment in working on oral Norwegian. However, when the teachers argue for their choice of focus, the recent introduction of the language test for citizenship seems to be more prevalent in their argumentation than the importance of oral language as a foundation for the teaching of literacy (cf. Gudschinsky, 1977). Another observation is that the teachers seem to have put the debate on the controversial political issue of test for citizenship behind them and focus on how to handle the situation in the best possible ways to help their students succeed. "It is the most important test in the country," as Kari puts it: "It is about getting settled or not, getting a passport or not". The demand that is put on oral language in this test clearly affects the teaching practices and the teachers' reflections on their choice of content. Both Helene and Nina tell that they spend time with the students focusing on what level A1 requires: "How do you write? And how do you speak?". In the months before the test, Helene admits that she devotes

very much time practicing for the test: "It is a new everyday life". During this period, the focus in her work is more on grammar and vocabulary than on communication. She uses her experience with the test to argue for this focus and quotes what she tells the students: "When you take the test, we listen to how many words you are able to use, and how you use Norwegian grammar".

The others do not mention grammar but are very engaged in how to create interactive spaces for practicing oral Norwegian in communicative situations. Aram, for example, works on different ways to make the language learners active:

> The main thing in my classroom is to talk and communicate orally. Talk in groups after listening to a text. Role-play, for example in a shop or visiting the doctor. They need language. To learn a language we begin with oral skills and then we continue to the other skills. First station is oral.

However, Aram also reflects on obstacles. Many of the learners are afraid of talking in Norwegian. They have never experienced a situation "where they have to speak Norwegian to many people". Aram thus puts a lot of effort in creating spaces for talking in the classroom, for building their confidence and self-esteem. Ingelin shares similar experiences. When she focuses on how to raise students' voices, she is inspired by her own music teacher education: "Several come from cultures where they are not supposed to speak out loud. Girls who cannot use their voice. [I] can help them to challenge themselves, to cry out loud". When the teachers in this way make connections between working on oral language and building self-esteem by rising voices, they again extend the arguments for focusing on content (here oral language) beyond qualification (like passing the tests or learning to read and write) to subjectification, arguing for teaching practices that are important for the students as persons (cf. Biesta, 2015).

Activities that need cooperation is another key when it comes to working on oral language. Kari's experience is that trying to make the students active partners in cooperation requires patience. One challenge is the adult learners' expectations of classroom teaching: "To them the teacher is the hero, and real teaching is when the teacher writes on the blackboard". Thus, motivating students for spending time on oral language activities is often hard and requires what Samira termed meta-communication on the learning processes.

The balance between oral and written language is also a topic for reflection. As we have seen, Aram sums up that "first station is oral", while Kari wonders whether the learning of written language starts too early for this group of adult students. This is a dilemma for her, as she would prefer taking more time to work with oral language, while at the same time she argues that written language competence in Norwegian is important to get a job and to pass the language tests.

5.1.4 Developing literacy through digital tools

Digital tools were brought to the forefront during the pandemic, and the development of digital literacy got a boost. The teachers exemplify by oral reading, which improved quicker than normal since the learners were asked to send sound files regularly to their teachers. Consequently, they trained more themselves and received more individual feedback from the teachers. According to the teachers, this mainly positive experience of the situation caused by the pandemic would not have been possible without the digital tools already being available through the language learning program and the students being familiar with using them for learning purposes.

Interestingly, the teachers experience success with tablets, while there are several obstacles in using computers for the emergent readers and writers. Kari, for example, explains that when she used computers for a period, she started counting and found out that the learners needed more than 30 clicks from the point where they opened the computer

until they could send a text they had already written. Tora reflects on similar difficulties in using computers: "It is a challenge. We have been working the whole semester on opening the weekly plan". All the same, she is clear that since Norway is a highly technological society, the learners need to understand a computer: "You have to understand what you see on the screen".

The many advantages in using tablets over computers in the teaching of literacy are expressed in various ways. In addition to being easier to log on to and use, learners can transfer their skills in using a smartphone to the tablets, as Aram states: "All learners already have a smart phone. This makes it easier to use tablets". The programs offered on the tablets also facilitate two-way communication. For instance, Ingelin tells that she can write an exercise to a picture in the app Showbie, and the learner can answer by writing in his/her own app. The learners can also easily read and store sound files. They can even make multimodal texts and digital books with videos and sound files. Lillian explains how the learners edited and adapted books made in the app Book Creator to their own needs. Such books have appeal to the learners: "They often sit and flip though these old books". This is beneficial since learning material for this group of students is scarce.

5.2 Professional practices in light of the educational purposes of socialization and subjectification

As we already have seen, the teachers are engaged in more than transforming and adapting subject content (the double task of teaching Norwegian and literacy) to the adult learners. This engagement exceeds concerns of adjusting to the specific teaching context (cf. 5.1.1). In our analysis of the more general aspects of the professional practices, we have found that bridge-building practices (cf. Colliander, 2018) cover the teachers' effort in making connections between classroom work and the Norwegian society. We see these practices in light of Biesta's (2015) description of socialization as one purpose of education (5.2.1). When it comes to the purpose of subjectification, which we elaborate on in 5.2.2, the focus is on the teachers' accounts of the ways they are caring for their adult students as persons.

5.2.1 Bridge-building practices to enhance the purpose of socialization

As noted in the introduction, the national curriculum that regulates the teachers' work is part of the Norwegian Integration Act, which aims at an early integration of the migrants. The ten teachers describe practices showing that they are very much aware of the extended teacher role these policies imply, and that this professional mission from society impacts on their priorities in classroom work. We have already touched upon some ways in which the teachers bridge classroom teaching and the students' lives outside school, for example when the teachers attach importance to developing oral proficiency as a way to prepare for the requirement of citizenship or when they point to the need of developing digital competence when living in the highly digitalized Norwegian society. Such practices characterize the work of all the teachers, not primarily those who have a migrant background themselves, as was the case in Colliander's (2018) study.

Of special focus is the teachers' willingness to help students entering work-life to gain independence. Ingelin and Tora for example both emphasize the importance of using work-related content in their teaching, as well as following the students when they have work-practice. Ingelin is concerned with the situation for men who have worked all their lives, and then are placed in a classroom to learn Norwegian through topics about "kitchen, hobbies, and leisure time". This is not motivating because "all they can think about is 'how can I support my family in this new country?'". Thus, Ingelin alters her teaching, for example, by introducing workplace terminology and changing the context:

"Instead of learning about kitchenware from a home, they can as easily learn about it from a workplace". Tora describes how she visits the students at their different workplaces: "I take pictures, I meet their leaders and colleagues, and this makes it possible for me to bring these experiences into the classroom". The learners themselves are activated and have to report: "They are so proud when pictures from their workplace are shown, and they stand up and tell about their work".

The teachers are willing to go some extra miles to help the students in their integration into work-life. Kari for example tried hard to find ways to help a student reading diagrams, which was necessary for getting a permanent position in a grocery store. She tried out different digital devices but could not help. This frustrated her: "Learning to read as well as is actually required to master a working life, is a long way to go," she concludes. Another example of how much extra work a teacher takes on to help, comes from Ingelin. One of her students had serious communication problems with his employer. Ingelin worked on this by filming different sequences of communication between the two, transcribing them, and then used the film and the transcription to work with the student's understanding: "It was an awful lot of work, but it was very, very useful to make this detailed analysis".

Another way of working in a bridge-building way is to use the local community. At one of the learning centers, the teachers told about a project with the public library where a group of students one day a week ran a café and invited people to coffee, waffles, and a chat. At another learning center, they were frustrated by the Corona situation because of the loss of possibilities to use the local community. Sissel comments:

> We want to do different things, have different activities, be around the local environment a bit, go to the store, shop for food, be in the canteen, go to the library, go to the furniture store, the second-hand shop, to use the local community as a learning environment, a place to learn. When the Corona came, it suddenly came to a standstill. We have missed it very much.

Being part of a network is a way to succeed with socialization into the Norwegian society. This is however often challenging. "I am their network in Norway," Svein for example declares. Taking part in work-life gives opportunities for building network. Another possibility is engagement in activities after school. Here, the teachers try to help by giving information. At the same time, they admit that for many there is little time and energy left since the language program is considered full-time work.

The many different ways in which the teachers' practices can be described as bridge-building, reflect the importance of being aware of the local context (Kubanyiova, 2020) and that their classroom practices answer to a span between macro and micro challenges. This means that they at the same time are navigating between educational policy and the needs of their students in their particular local setting. In describing their practices, and their professional judgements in different situations, the teachers show a strong connection to their adult students' current and future lives in the Norwegian context. This applies both to their choice of content and to their description of how they adapt their teaching, two important characteristics of professional teaching practices combining content and pedagogy (cf. Shulman, 1987/2004).

5.2.2 Practices of caring as a way to subjectification

Through the analysis of the ten interviews, we have found that these teachers all describe their practices as being a matter of balancing between choosing content and caring for the adult migrants. Here they are in line with a common understanding of teaching in compulsory school, where it is said that good teaching requires care and commitment for both the students and the subject (Dahl et al., 2016, p. 207). Thus, caring might be seen as a way teachers in general work on the educational purposes of subjectification. However,

the ways care and commitment are dealt with differ when the students are adults and newcomers to Norway. The teachers in our study show care by being engaged in the adults' challenges and possibilities of achieving a good life in Norway. They care about their students' special situation when they choose subject content and ways of working within the classroom, as well as when they arrange for activities to obtain autonomy and independence outside of the classroom.

We have already implicitly touched upon the ways the teachers care for their students. For example when they argue for the importance of strengthening the learners' voice or building their self-confidence. Samira gives another example of the ways care and content are intertwined in her teaching. A key for her is "help to move on" – both when it comes to taking an education and to getting a job, Samira supervises her adult students: "I help them to move on, so they do not remain waiting for a public officer to find them a job". An eye-opener was when she once discovered that some earlier students just stayed in their homes: "I wondered: What did we do wrong?". For Samira, one important answer to help her students to move on was to show more interest in their earlier experiences and use that as a point of departure in the teaching.

According to Svein's experiences, quite a few enter the classroom with a fear for teachers. Thus, he focuses on care, listening and helping: "I become their grandfather in Norway. The classroom is the only place where they can come and ask about things". Many questions are about opportunities for work, showing the short way between the educational purposes of socialization and subjectification when it comes to adult refugees. The issue of work, causes Svein a dilemma: How to motivate for language learning when job possibilities seem far away? His experience is that it is easy to feel powerless when the students learn about competence requirements for Norwegian work-life: "That you have to spend three years in upper secondary to cut hair, and that you have to have a certificate to clean floors".

Aram reflects on the situation for some of the female students. He is worried that some spend too much time indoors. They have to move, he says, and to be out in the sun to avoid health problems. Some years ago, the learning center integrated sport and activities in the students' weekly plans. Some of the students went to a fitness center, others went walking. According to Aram, this helped preventing health problems and created a good and relaxing learning environment. Aram is also engaged in sharing reflections about values: "I speak about the democratic values which open the way for all, like equality, non-violence and the freedom of speech". Here Aram touches upon two of the interdisciplinary topics introduced in the new curriculum in 2021: health and life skills and democracy and citizenship.

6 Concluding remarks

In this article, our aim has been to explore characteristics of professional teaching practices as expressed by teachers of Norwegian and basic literacy to adult migrants with little or no formal schooling. Through the analysis, we have seen that the teachers combine subject content, care and adapting the teaching to the adult students and their background. They also act as bridge-builders between the adult migrants in their current situation as newcomers, and their situation as future citizens of Norway. In this way, the teachers' professional practices cover the three educational purposes outlined by Biesta (2015).

The teachers' focus on the students' social contexts of being adult migrants is an important background for the ways they report on arranging for the double task of learning Norwegian and basic literacy at the same time. To be able to do this is a core competence in these teachers' professionalism. When the teachers reflect on the challenges, it is however not different reading methods or teaching materials that are addressed. Their focus is on the consequences of the social reality in which their teaching takes place. At first, this lack of focus on literacy teaching itself surprised us, but through the inter-

views and the later analysis, we learned to understand how the teachers' accounts of their professional practices can be understood as occupying a span between macro and micro challenges (cf. Johnson & Golombek, 2020). The teachers try to balance the macro challenges from society and the micro challenges emerging from their commitment of adapting their teaching to their local group of learners and their needs. The macro challenges experienced by the teachers become visible both in their general emphasis on oral language development and in the importance attributed to digital skills. Both are considered essential for life in Norway. More taken for granted and thus, less explicit in their accounts, is second language oral competence as a key in literacy teaching in this context (cf. Gudschinsky, 1977).

The teachers' responses during the interviews are examples of professional practices described from within the profession (cf. Evetts, 2003). The teachers are very much aware of the mission from society, coming from the rather new introduction program. The practices described are in accordance with the national regulations of the teaching program when it comes to bringing focus on seeing language teaching as a contribution to integration and preparation for work-life (Lovdata, 2020a). The new interdisciplinary topics, health and life skills as well as democracy and citizenship, are also reflected in the described practices, as is the use of the learners' linguistic repertoire as a resource, a practice acknowledged in the curriculum (HK, 2021). More controversial are the new language test requirements introduced by Parliament. They are controversial not only due to the impact on the adult migrants' lives, but also because of the wash-back effect on teaching, for example on how the teachers choose content. The importance of the oral test for achieving citizenship is mirrored in an increased focus on oral language. For some of the teachers the whole battery of tests, which includes tests of reading and writing, also leads to more focus on formal language. Listening to all the teachers, we have learned how the existence of the tests stresses them on behalf of their learners, and that the teachers are very much aware of the social realities as well as the power of such dominant literacies (cf. Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

The analysis of the teachers' reflections shows how the purposes of qualification, socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2015) often are combined. The already complex situation of teaching Norwegian and basic literacy at the same time turns out to be even more complex through the teachers' accounts. The teachers are deeply engaged in both acting as bridge-builders and caring for their students as part of their professional practices. This illustrates that knowledge of the immigrant and refugee experience is a necessary part of the knowledge base of teachers to adult migrants with little formal schooling (cf. Vinogradov, 2013).

An afterthought concerns our choice of research method. Reflecting on possible differences between what we have heard in the interviews and what we would have seen in observations, we expect that observations probably would have brought us closer to the teaching content and the teaching approaches, both when it comes to literacy teaching and the teaching of communication. On the other hand, an important contribution of the interview study is the visualization of the teachers' accounts of care and bridge-building as significant parts of their professional literacy teaching practices.

References

AID [Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion] (2022). *Rundskriv A-3/2022. Ikrafttredelse av endringer i statsborgerforskriften – endringer i språkkrav.* [Circular A-3/2022. Entry into operation of changes to the citizenship regulations – changes to language requirements]. Read December 17 2022 on www.regjeringen.no

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies. Reading and writing in context* (p. 7–15). Routledge.

Biesta, G. (2015). What is education for? On good education, teacher judgement, and educational professionalism. *European Journal of Education, 50*(1), 75–87. https://doi.org/10/1111/ejed.12109

Bjørkavåg, L. I. (1986). Grunnleggende lese- og skriveopplæring for voksne innvandrere belyst ved en analyse av språket i abc-en Første bok på norsk. [Basic teaching of reading and writing to adult immigrants studied by an analysis of the language in the abc Første bok på norsk]. *NOA Norsk som andrespråk, 2*(2).

Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in qualitative research*. Sage.

Bransford, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & LePage, P. (2005). Introduction. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world* (p. 1–39). Jossey-Bass.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Colliander, H. (2018). *Being and becoming a teacher in initial literacy and second language education for adults*. Doctoral dissertation. Linköping Studies in Behavioral Science No. 205. Linköping University.

Council of Europe (2018). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume with new descriptors.* Read January 3 2023 at www.cor.int/lang-cefr

Dahl, T., Askling, B., Heggen, K., Kulbrandstad, L. I., Lauvdal, T., Qvortrup, L., Salvanes, K. G., Skagen, K., Skrøvset, S., Thue, F., & Mausethagen S. (2016). *Om lærerrollen. Et kunnskapsgrunnlag.* [About the role of the teacher. A knowledge base]. Fagbokforlaget.

Evetts, J. (2003). The sociological analysis of professionalism. Occupational change in the modern world. *International Sociology, 18*(2), 395–415. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580903018002005

Gudschinsky, S. C. (1977). Techniques for Functional Literacy in Indigenous Languages and the National Language. In T. P. Gorman (Ed.), *Language and literacy: Current issues and research*, (p. 65–69). Iran International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods.

Guribye, E., & Hidle, K. (2013). *Læreres hjelperoller i voksenopplæringen.* [Teachers' auxiliary roles in adult education]. FoU-rapport 5/2013. Agderforskning.

HK [Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills] (2021). *Curriculum for Norwegian language training for adult migrants.*

Hvenekilde, A., Alver, V., Bergander, E., Lahaug, V., & Midttun, K. (1996). *Alfa og omega. Om alfabetiseringsundervisning for voksne fra språklige minoriteter.* [Alfa and omega. About basic literacy teaching for adults from language minorities]. Novus forlag.

Hyltenstam, K. (1979). Alfabetisering bland invandrare – på modersmålet eller på svenska? [Basic literacy teaching among immigrants – in the mother tongue or in Swedish?] In K. Hyltenstam (Ed.), *Svenska i invandrarperspektiv.* [Swedish in an immigrant perspective]. Liber Läromedel.

Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2020). Informing and transforming language teacher education pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research, 24*(1), 116–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818777539

KAD [Ministry of local government and labour] (1980). St.meld.nr.74 *(1979–80). Om innvandrere i Norge.* [White paper 74 (1979–80). About immigrants in Norway]. KAD.

Kompetanse Norge (2021). *Ny integreringslov gir nye kompetansekrav for lærere.* [New integration law causes new competence requirements for teachers]. Read November 16 2022 on www.kompetansenorge.no

Kristiansen, A. (2022). On teachers' interpretations of responsibility in a Norwegian language training programme. *Nordic Studies in Education, 42*(2), 143–157. https://doi.org/10.23865/nse.v42.3246

Kubanyiova, M. (2020). Language teacher education in the age of ambiguity: Educating responsive meaning makers in the world. *Language Teaching Research, 24*(1), 49–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818777533

Lovdata (2020a). *Lov om integrering gjennom opplæring, utdanning og arbeid.* [Act on integration through education and work]. Read January 3 2023 on www.lovdata.no

Lovdata (2020b). *Forskrift til integreringsloven.* [Regulations to the integration act]. Read January 3 2023 on www.lovdata.no

Lønsmann, D. (2022). Beyond Language: The complex positioning work by language teachers in an integration classroom. *Applied Linguistics.* https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amac053

Manne, G., Engh, L., & Mollestad, B. (1981). *Lærerveiledning til Første bok på norsk.* [Teacher guidelines to Første bok på norsk]. Cappelen.

Molander, A., & Terum, L. (2008) (Eds.). *Profesjonsstudier.* [Studies on professions]. Universitetsforlaget.

Monsen, M. (2015). Andrespråksdidaktisk forskning på voksenopplæring i Norge. En oversikt fra 1985 til i dag. [Research on second language teaching and learning within adult education in Norway from 1985 to the present]. *NOA norsk som andrespråk, 30*(1–2), 373–392. https://ojs.novus.no/index.php/NOA/article/view/1194/1184

Monsen, M., & Eek, M. (2022). 'Because I was the only one who dared': Approaches to multilingual repertoires in adult language training. In G. B. Steien & M. Monsen (Eds.), *Language and forced migration,* chapter 5. Multilingual Matters.

NESH [The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities] (2021). *Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences and the humanities*. Read September 2, 2023 on https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/

Nordanger, M., Carlsen, C. H., & Bugge, E. (2023). Forskning på samtidig andrespråks- og litterasitetstilegnelse hos voksne. [Research on contemporary second language and basic literacy acquisition in adults]. In E. Bugge & C. H. Carlsen (Eds.), *Norsk som andrespråk – voksne innvandrere som utvikler skriftkyndighet på et andrespråk,* [Norwegian as a second language – adult immigrants who develop literacy in a second language] (p. 23–48). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Randen, G., Monsen, M., Steien, G. B., Hagen, K., & Pajaro, V. A. (2018). *Norskopplæring for voksne innvandrere – en kunnskapsoppsummering.* [Norwegian language training for adult immigrants – a summary of knowledge]. Kompetanse Norge.

Shulman, L. S. (1987/2004). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. In S. M. Wilson (Ed.), *The wisdom of practice. Essays on teaching, learning and learning to teach. Lee S. Shulman* (p. 217–248). Jossey-Bass.

Statistics Norway (2022a). *Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents*. Read December 17 2022 on www.ssb.no

Statistics Norway (2022b). *Norwegian for adult immigrants.* Read December 17 2022 on www.ssb.no

UNESCO (2016). If you don't understand, how can you learn? *Policy Paper 24. Global education monitoring report.* Read January 31 2023 on www.unesco.org

Vinogradov, P. (2013). Defining the LESLLA teacher knowledge base. In T. Tammelin-Laine, L. Nieminen & M. Martin (Eds.), *Low-educated second language and literacy acquisition. Proceedings of the 8th symposium* (p. 9–24). Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 208. https://lesllasp.journals.publicknowledgeproject.org/index.php/lesllasp/article/view/6141

Received May 30, 2023
Revision received October 23, 2023
Accepted February 22, 2024