

# **In the shadow of Anglobalization**

National tests in English in Norway and the making of a new English underclass

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## **Abstract**

This study argues that the recent “English revolution” in Norway conflates with the growing standardization of education in the European Union (e.g. the 1999 Bologna Treaty). This proliferation of English at the supranational level has knock-on-effects at the national level. Using documents from Statistics Norway, The Directorate of Education and interviews with teachers and students, it argues that the lack of a robust rationale for high-stakes testing in English must be seen in light of what is called the Anglobalization of education. Findings indicate that the ascendancy of English in Norway may serve to further disadvantage the increasing number of students from immigrant backgrounds (particularly from Asia, Africa and South America) and privilege their counterparts who hail from the “Anglosphere” and EU. Following Bourdieu, it is argued that officialdom commits symbolic violence by disguising its role as a vital catalyst of the economic field.

**Key words:** anglobalization; English testing; Norway; National tests; Bourdieu; documentary analysis

## **Introduction**

This study asks the question: what do national tests in English in Norway say about the performance of students with immigrant backgrounds and how does this inform an educational future where what is dubbed the “Anglobalization of Education” looms large? This is done on 3 levels that dovetail: on a macro-level attention is drawn to the mandate and machinations of the official Norwegian statistics bureau. Secondly, the rationale for English testing introduced in 2004 is queried and, finally, on a micro-level, a small-scale study focusing on English capital among Norwegian students from immigrant backgrounds is explored. It is argued that the Anglobalization of education, spurred on by the Europe-wide commodification of education in English, is creating a new underclass of Norwegians who stand to lose in the rush to “Anglicize” higher education, as the national tests indicate.

We argue that insufficient attention has been paid to the impact of the proliferation of English on minority educational attainment and what this portends for their future. Given the relatively modest numbers of immigrants in Norway in the past, and the concomitant power asymmetry, this is perhaps understandable. However, the current reconfiguration of the majority-minority taxonomy in several schools in Oslo, for instance, warrants closer study. For example figures for 2013 from the Municipality of Oslo indicate that 54 of Oslo's 125 primary and lower secondary schools (compulsory 10-year schooling) now have a majority of students from minority/immigrant backgrounds (mainly from developing countries in the Global South). 16 of these have over 80 per cent students from minority/immigrant backgrounds. It is this lacuna in the literature this study seeks to fill.

The local practical significance of this research, it is argued, is twofold: firstly, it calls for the jettisoning of high-stakes English national testing with the concomitant freed up resources better spent on shoring up the persistently deficient Norwegian competence among students from immigrant backgrounds. Secondly, to sensitize curriculum designers to the need for a more localized English syllabus – one which takes cognizance of the rise of a new demography that no longer resonates with a narrative rooted in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon heritage. As stakeholders embedded in and benefitting from the proliferation of English in Norway, there rests a particular burden of responsibility in considering English's "differential impact across racial and ethnic groups", and "contest policies and practices that perpetuate social inequities" (Wiley and Lukes 1996, 530). Studies in Norway have demonstrated that there exists an achievement gap between Norwegians and language minorities who experience considerable difficulties in the system (Øzerk 2014). In 2004, the total number of upper secondary students with an immigrant background in Norway was 13,800 (8 per cent nationally). Last year (2013), this student cohort stood at 22,300 comprising a 52 per cent increase over the course of just 4 years (2009-2013). On a national basis, Statistics Norway predicts, based on the figures for 2010, that 22-28 per cent of the population of Norway will be from immigrant backgrounds in 2060 (Statistics Norway 2010). The majority of the 14.9 per cent of immigrants have roots in Africa and Asia (8.5 per cent).

### **The rise of an English global consciousness**

Quoting from a textbook about the status of English in Norway in 1844, Ockenden and Sirevaag (1949: 156) wrote:

Only the merchant, the sailor and the mechanic study this language, on account of its practical utility... English is, as it were, banished from all the learned, that is, all public schools... However, there is some reason to hope that a change for the better may be expected.

The anonymous author would have been astounded by the advances English has made in Norway over the last 170 years. Owing to the efforts of, among others, the Norwegian school reformer, Hartvig Nissen, English was introduced into secondary schools in 1869 and became a compulsory subject in secondary schools in 1896 (Ockenden and Sirevaag 1949, 156).

While the subject was taught in the last two years of primary (ages 12 to 16) when Ockenden and Sirevaag (1949) wrote, today pupils are instructed in English as a core subject from the first year.

What is called the “Anglobalization of education” in this paper obviously did not arise in a vacuum but in a symbiotic relationship with the emergence of a global English consciousness. For instance, one of Norway’s most influential national newspapers, *Aftenposten*, recently ran an article with the title, *The Triumph of English: English proliferates in European universities, but is it just a good thing?* (Doumayrou, 2014; all translation ours). The newspaper reports that the EU’s Bologna Declaration, intended to streamline educational standards in Europe, had the unintended consequence of pitting European languages against each other. According to Luc Soete, the Rector of Maastricht University, “National languages were perceived as a hindrance for student mobility akin to customs barriers, so the creation of an open market in English is another way for them to sell their educational products”.

Furthermore, according to the newspaper:

Anglicization makes it easier to fulfill the expectations of international research networks, and it emphasizes the feeling of belonging to a global, mobile knowledge elite. Since knowledge of the classics has declined, the mastery of English, even an imperfect “globish”, has become a fundamental criterion in distinguishing oneself culturally.

### **Broader context**

This study contributes to the prodigious pedigree of research conducted in the field of language policy in education and related fields such as linguistic diversity and multilingual studies (Mahboob 2009; Tollefson 1991; Phillipson 1998; Watson 2007; Neville 2012; Holmarsdottir 2005; Brock-Utne 2009). In particular, the machinations of the centrifugal

forces of globalization, with English in the driving seat, and its implications for the viability and functionality of national and local languages are salient. Brock-Utne (2009; 2010) and Holmarsdottir (2005), among others, have shed light on the discursive and, ultimately, pernicious use of English in education in several African contexts so much so that Prah (2012) considers the asymmetric conditions created by the colonial languages, a chief component undermining the edifice of development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Breidlid's (2003) fieldwork in Western and Eastern Cape of South Africa highlights the castigation of mother-tongue instruction in favor of the perceived superiority of English (what he calls "folk wisdom") and Mahboob (2009) considers the localization of English in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The ethos underpinning this study is commensurate with the concerns guiding the Journal of Multicultural Discourses. In particular, the focus on the differential impact of English in Norway buoyed by the discourse of Anglobalization. Shi-xu (2015) highlights two areas that preoccupy Cultural Discourse Studies: on the one hand, what is referred to as "globalism in society" takes cognizance of the diminishing power of developing nations in the face of an expanding American/Western propelled globalization. Secondly, the need to deconstruct the taken-for-granted hegemony held by "universalizing western norms and knowledge...rendering non-Western scholars and students intellectually dependent and deprived of cultural identity and voice" (Shi-xu 2015, 2). Shi-xu's (2015) concern, we believe, is addressed in this study by putting the spotlight on the manner in which the rise of English perpetuates educational inequality by disadvantaging students with immigrant backgrounds (Asia, Africa and South America).

The growing proliferation of English in academia in the Scandinavian context has exercised several academics. Schwach (2009) reports that 19 per cent of Masters Programs in Norway are offered in English and comprise 27 per cent of the student cohort (85 per cent are Norwegian citizens). Ljosland's (2011) study concerns itself with one university department in Norway (Master of Science program in Industrial Ecology, offered by the Norwegian University of Technology and Science in Trondheim, Norway) which employs English as the medium of instruction and concludes using Bourdieu's (1977b) theory of linguistic capital:

Within the case department investigated in the present paper, academic English, including expert terminology of the field, is the hegemonic language, which holds this function. This is shown, for instance, in the interviews where staff from the case department express that it felt "natural" to make English the language of instruction (Ljosland 2011, 996).

In Sweden, Berg et al. (2001: 315) stop short of characterizing the linguistic landscape as diglossic, but nevertheless conclude that the “prestige and visibility of English...and entrenched use of English in Sweden’s elite domains...might be important in shaping the climate for language shift and hence in influencing language patterns of the coming decades”.

### **Research design and methodological issues**

A qualitative, interpretive lens using documentary analysis and interviews was employed. Given that education is a highly centralized affair in Norway, official documents, regularly secreted into the public domain, provide researchers with ample material for analysis. As Cohen et al. (2007: 202-203) argue, official documents pose questions of reliability and validity: “What does the document both include and exclude? ...How close to, or detached from, the participants was/is the researcher? ...What alternative interpretations of the document are possible and tenable? How is the chosen interpretation justified?” Most important of all, we interrogate the *prima facie* “innocuous” act of selecting English national results in Norway for international publication asking: for whom and for what purpose are these results disseminated and what critical inferences can be made from the factual assertions (Platt 1981)?

### ***Documentary analysis***

The use of documentary analysis in education is well established. The corpus of research literature abounds with studies which explore the assumptions and ideology underpinning official documents (Maxwell and Granlund 2011; Davis 2012; Halabia et al. 2012 and Fimyar 2008, to name a few). The national test score results in English as a subject in Norwegian schools were sourced by searching pertinent government agency websites. At issue were not only the numbers crunched and percentages obtaining for immigrants, but the kind of pronouncements and interpretations imbricated. Selection criteria included, but were not limited, to the following: What is the official discourse guiding the discussion of national test scores in English? What does the explicit or implicit discourse reveal about the manner in which the government broaches the status of English in education?

The critique that documentary analysis is a secondary source is ameliorated by the contention that research that involves directly affected stakeholders ought to be considered a primary source (Finnegan 1996). The authors have experience teaching English at the secondary and university levels in Norway. It is argued that experience at the “chalkface level” in, among

others, predominantly “immigrant” upper secondary schools in conjunction with university level courses in Multicultural, Comparative and International Education (undergraduate and postgraduate levels), where a multinational array of students struggle with academic English, furnishes a vantage point

### ***Interviews***

The interviews were designed to explore some of the questions raised above. It is argued that such an approach does justice to the questions under investigation first and foremost because any attempt at understanding documents becomes a hermeneutic exertion. Interviews were conducted with 17 students from 3 English lesson classes on the upper secondary level between August and November 2014. In addition, 7 English teachers were interviewed. Both served as “auxiliary methods” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 117) and had the effect of further fleshing out findings from the documents. Rather than talk of “triangulation”, Denzini’s (1970) “facilitation” more aptly approximates this methodology. Such an amalgamation, it is argued, better approximates the challenges related to the enterprise of teaching, learning and human interaction (Cohen et al. 2007, 11).

The views of three English teachers were also solicited during the annual workshop for the evaluation of English upper secondary schools grades, hosted by the Department of Education (April 2014). Students were, as mentioned, randomly selected among a cohort of roughly 60 students from three classrooms in the first-year compulsory English subject lessons. Commensurate with standards stipulated by international ethical committees, before participation, the project was carefully explained to each teacher and student. They were also made to understand that the information they volunteered would be anonymized; that they were free to withdraw from the study without providing any reason and that they could request the withdrawal of their data at any time up to the point of publication.

Students are used to questionnaires asking for feedback on ways to improve teaching and raise diverse concerns they may have once or twice a year. They were informed that this study feeds into a much larger picture that explores the challenges faced by students from minority backgrounds and the increasing use of English in higher education worldwide. Among the aims of the research project, the students were told that this was an opportunity for them as learners of English to weigh in on the subject. The interviews were transcribed and explored using QSR Nvivo 8 software where the text was coded descriptively, topically and analytically (Richards 2009, 92-114). Elwood and Martin (2000: 653) draw attention to the

“micro-geographies of interview locations”. Power asymmetries arise in an interview situation involving teacher and student in a school milieu. In this regard, interview sites were negotiated with Muslim female students, for example.

Prior to 1997, the school where the research was conducted catered mainly for a Norwegian, “white” intake of students but, due to settlement patterns among others, the tables were turned with an overwhelming 98 per cent of the intake comprising students from an ethnic minority background currently. 75 per cent identify as Muslims. This increasingly segregated pattern of schooling, which is an anomaly given Norway’s traditionally egalitarian ethos, has led some politicians to suggest “forced busing” of students from minority-concentrated areas to less-concentrated ones, following the example of Denmark.

### **Theoretical framework**

Unpacking the concept of “Anglosphere” as a first step would facilitate the task of grappling with “Anglobalization”. “Anglosphere” (Vucetic 2010) refers to a conglomeration of states, nations and communities whose historical and cultural experience is grounded in Britain and its empire. Hannan (2013), in his book with the telling title *Inventing Freedom: How the English Speaking Peoples Made the Modern World* (2013: 8-9), pulls no punches when he writes:

The triumph of the West was in practical terms, a series of military successes by the English-speaking peoples. It is, of course undiplomatic to say so, which is why writers and politicians are so much more comfortable using the term, Western than Anglosphere.

The exclusive and pigmentocratic undertones of the Anglosphere are evident in that only 5 countries form the “core”: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the United States. There is some reticence in extending this neologism to Singapore, Hong Kong and Britain’s colonial archipelago (Bermuda, the Falkland Islands). Anglosphere bifurcates from the generic “West” in its Protestant and neoliberal coloration as opposed to the Catholic “Other”. Undoubtedly, English is the cornerstone in the edifice of the Anglosphere. Hannan (2013: 26) provocatively interprets Rwanda’s decision to displace French with English and join the commonwealth as evidence of “its commitment to liberty”, keeping readers in the dark about the political and not least epistemological consequences of the language policy shift. English is the language of Rwanda’s elite – especially the RPF leadership of Paul Kagame and other Tutsi returnees from Anglophone countries (Izabela 2012). The former British Prime Minister

Gordon Brown's op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* demonstrates what he considers the indispensable role of English in defining the "special" Anglo-American relationship.

So, finally, I propose that together Britain and America strive to make the international language that happens to be our own far more freely available across the world. I am today asking the British Council to develop a new initiative with private-sector and NGO partners in America, to offer anyone in any part of the world help to learn English (Brown 2008, *The Wall Street Journal*).

For Bourdieu, cultural capital inflicts symbolic violence in that it has the power to impose meanings as legitimate while concealing the power relations (epistemological colonization) which underpins this force (pedagogic authority). Furthermore, culture is arbitrary in that its contents are essentially vacuous. In other words, a different power, under different circumstances, would have evolved an entirely different culture and the mechanisms for its propagation and regulation. This is what is meant by the statement, "All pedagogic action is objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 5). This arbitrary power gives expression to "the objective interests (material and symbolic) of the dominant groups or classes" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 5). Crucially, and as Bourdieu (1988) notes, the nexus between the cultural and economic field is not ostensible because of the illusion of autonomy attributed to the implicated agents (e.g. Gordon Brown's call for making English freely available). The misrecognition of symbolic violence is achieved through the "delegation of authority" and the "ideology of disinterestedness" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 25). Thus, as is argued in this study, when the task of Anglicizing education is zealously championed by national educational boards (such as that of Norway) without a rigorous rationale underpinning the zeal, we are speaking about a misrecognition of symbolic violence.

Another proponent who extolls the virtue of the "Anglosphere", Andrew Roberts (2007: 394), in stating that the English-speaking peoples are "unromantic and literal-minded, and do not dream of future utopias like French or Russian revolutionaries; instead, they root their hopes in what is tangible and tested", essentializes and confers an "innately determined" quality on the "English-speaking peoples". The preoccupation with the triumphalist march of the "English speaking peoples" and the corollary denigration of all others punctuates the text. With respect to the future of French, he writes, "In a couple of hundred years, the French language might well have to be protected as a linguistic curio, like Manx or Cornish" (Roberts 2007, 389). Germany is described as a "pacifist husk" (2007: 395) after "two lunatic

attempts” and Al-Qaeda described as “fanatical malcontents from the former Ottoman Empire” (2007: 395). In his estimation, and quoting Churchill, the world is fortunate that the English peoples, who almost alone keep alive the torch of freedom, occupy a hegemonic place. Obviously, like King Herod, always uneasy on the throne, tidings from the East (the rise of China) is a problem:

The English-speaking peoples, by total contrast, today know no rival in might, wealth or prestige. The most likely future challenger on the far horizon is China - not a contender in 1901 - which still has very far to go before she can threaten to supplant them (Roberts 2007, 395).

Like Gordon Brown, Roberts (2007) reiterates the indispensable role of English to the project of “Anglobalization”, which he attributes to Niall Ferguson, admittedly a coinage which has yet to gain traction in academia: “Nothing has advanced what Harvard historian Niall Ferguson has dubbed ‘Anglobalization’ faster than the adoption of English as the second tongue of many countries around the world” (Roberts 2007, 389). The idea of the “Anglosphere” cannot be extricated from the unsavory facts of Empire, slavery and race. Vucetic (2010) traces this historical trajectory which distilled a habitus of “superiority and responsibility of the Anglo-Saxon race” and concludes, “In the 20th century, and culminating in the immediate post-1945 period, this imperial condominium gained authority and capacity to steer the world in such significant ways that it is both possible and necessary to speak of the concept of Anglobal governance” (Vucetic 2010, 469).

When globalization is driven by a distinctly “Anglospheric”, neoliberal agenda, we are speaking about “Anglobalization”. This is evidenced inter alia in the coopting of national and supranational institutions in the dissemination of values and norms amenable to what Vucetic (2010) characterizes as “Anglobal governance”. Mahbubani (2013) prefers the phrase, “The Great Convergence” in the book by the same title, but it essentially reads as a polemic for the more precise “Anglobalization”. In “reassuring” the West in regards to the rise of China and South-Asian nations, he quotes figures to the effect that these students from Asia will return home and “want to recreate the ‘American dream’ of a stable and prosperous middle-class society” (Mahbubani 2013, 12).

The numbers are staggering: the International Institute of Education (IIE) in New York has documented that in the year 2011, 723,277 foreign students studied in North American universities. This number included 157,558 from China, 103,895 from India, and 73,351 from South Korea (Mahbubani 2013, 26).

Nowhere does he state that the “American dream” must be dreamed in English and that the “Great global convergence” further cements the advantages accrued to the “Anglosphere”. For Bourdieu, the enterprise of education, and schools in particular, exert pedagogic action to inculcate certain social attributes understood as the valorization of distinct values, norms and even tastes. That the “American dream” is homologous with the economic field is downplayed which amplifies the challenge of detecting this chameleon-like disguise of cultural capital. Obviously, “Anglobalization” is open to the critique of being a nebulous romantic illusion. Nevertheless, as Vucetic (2010: 469) reminds us, “Scholars of global governance have long argued that we should never underestimate the capacity of ideas to shift international public policy”.

Blommaert’s (2013: 193) contention that the dramatic changes witnessed in migration patterns worldwide since the 1990s can usefully be explored within the framework of a continuum from “diversity” to “superdiversity” lends itself well in any study that grapples with the emergent urban demographic landscape, particularly in Oslo, Norway. Immigrants find themselves in a “cross-fire” negotiating between the demands of the host society to integrate into a plethora of explicit and subtle registers of cultural niches in addition to orienting themselves towards the demands of their own diasporic community. He mentions the hijab as an identity marker that from the perspective of the host society may be construed as a symbol of “discitizenship” or even “anticitizenship” (Blommaert 2013, 195). This superdiversity or what Blommaert calls polycentricity, when explored within the context of this study raises serious concerns. We ask the question: what happens, for instance, when immigrant students with backgrounds and mother-tongues from a cornucopia of nations are expected to come to grips with their mother-tongues, Norwegian and English?

The discussion will also refer, albeit briefly, to Critical Race Theory’s (CRT) critique of the notion of meritocracy as employed in standardized tests, such as the SAT or LSAT in the USA (Delgado and Stefancic 2012, 118).

## **Findings and discussion**

### ***Statistical standardization and global convergence***

In the first stage, three Norwegian government websites were explored with a view towards teasing out the ideological discursive formations underpinning Anglobalization. This is not to

say that officialdom conspires actively in this regard, but, rather, that this study is partly a response to Phillipson's (1998) challenge: "I regard it as vital that those of us whose professional identities are linked to English as the triumphal world language scrutinize the role played by language professionals, and assess in what ways the English language industry (so termed in the EL Gazette) operates." The first document analyzed is from Statistics Norway and reproduced verbatim:

"Statistics is an international language, and a pivotal part of producing statistics is facilitating comparisons, both within countries and internationally", says Olsen. The extent of the international cooperation is steadily growing, and its effect on us is also constantly increasing. In particular, the requirements of the EU through the EEA cooperation provide guidelines and opportunities. We also supply statistics to international organizations that can be accessed on their websites and databases (Statistics: an international language; Øystein Olsen, Director General of Statistics Norway, in connection with the celebration of World Statistics Day on 20 October 2010, Statistics Norway website).

In the citation above, there is admission that the work of Statistics Norway is influenced by directives from supranational organizations. The European Union is particularly singled out as operating with guidelines and requirements. The nominalization, *requirements* (the Norwegian version has *krav* which carries connotations of the much stronger *demands*) in reference to these directives from the EU is telling. The statement: *The extent of the international cooperation is steadily growing, and its effect on us is also constantly increasing*, by relegating the work of Statistics Norway to the informationally salient final position (impacts us) (Halliday 1985; Fairclough 1994), has the effect of absolving Statistics Norway by underscoring the asymmetry of power relations (i.e. between Norway and the EU). The pros and cons of churning out data for the EU and other supranational institutions are not on the table for discussion. Central to Statistics Norway's endeavors is its obligation to kowtow to these demands. No cognizance of the dangers of uncritical transfer of knowledge from one context to the other (Crossley and Watson 2003; Breidlid 2013) or an appreciation of the subtle machinations of a Foucauldian "power/knowledge" nexus, hardwired into the enterprise of statistics, is detected (Foucault 1972). Thus Statistics Norway misrecognizes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) its role as an "Anglobal" agent.

Obviously, this data must be translated into English of which not one word is mentioned in the entire website. Statistics, then, is no longer an innocuous undertaking, but becomes the handmaiden of Anglobalization precisely in that the EU, although unstated, requires not just

data, but data in English. Significantly, the webpage is entitled “Statistics – an international language”. The pre-modifier, international, followed by language, serves to subliminally trigger an intertextual topoi (Wodak & Meyer 2009, 48) one in which English looms large. This can be paraphrased as follows: statistics is an international language and thus what can be more “natural” than to publish data in the world’s language? Bourdieu’s symbolic violence is salutary in this regard. He describes it as:

... a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of conforming or transforming the vision of the world, and thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic) (Bourdieu 1991,170).

None would cherish the prospect of being seen as “anti-international” or opposed to regional and international efforts to cooperate (EEA and EU cooperation) and share knowledge. Couched in such platitudes, symbolic violence is inflicted when subjects are co-opted into a particular vision – an Anglobal one in this instance. It is not made explicit that the upshot of reporting data on national/PISA tests to supranational entities feeds into a global culture of further testing of what is, in essence, parochial cultural arbitrariness (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) elevated to the level of necessary and valid universals. This misrecognition permeates the entire website. The authors recall that not many years ago, very few Norwegian government websites had any substantial information in English. The current unprecedented proliferation of English in Norway – what one recent thesis called “The English Language Revolution in Norway” (Aalborg 2010) – co-implicates official institutions such as Statistics Norway as cogs in the wheel of the English Language industry.

Cavanagh and Mander (2004: 198) critique modern standards of measurement, such as gross domestic product (GDP) as “compatible with the expansive goals of corporate-driven globalization while marginalizing all other ways of judging how we are progressing as a society”. GDP takes no cognizance of the deleterious effects of the narrow focus on economic growth such as the “clear-cutting of forests, strip-mining of mountaintops, construction of toxic dumpsites...military hardware...prison construction [and] war” nor the indispensable contribution of work carried out by women in “unpaid household labor, care for the sick and elderly” (Cavanagh and Mander (2004: 199).

In a similar vein, the pressure on traditionally non-English speaking countries, such as Norway, to monitor, measure and report English skills to supranational entities like Eurostat, gloss over the deleterious impact on the diversity of cultures. The English testing culture does no favors for the local music industry in Norway, for instance, where Norwegian struggles with an “image problem”. Such is the reticence to sing in Norwegian that one major newspaper ran the headline “Thank you for singing in Norwegian, Autestad” (Autestad being the surname of a local artist) (Rønning 2015). Several social commentators have also decried the proliferation of English advertisements. One research found that Norwegian youth felt English was more “superior” (*overlegen*) to Norwegian in advertisements.

It is clearly the positive associations that dominate when it comes to English. English is, among others, modern, fashionable, trendy, hip, interesting, stylish, international, catchy, captivating, cool, exciting and global. With respect to Norwegian, the negative associations are in the majority. Norwegian is boring, old-fashioned, simple, not trendy, tacky, sad, slow, traditional and rural (Bergsland 2008, 25; translation ours).

Furthermore, and from the perspective of global business corporations, the costs saved in translation and easy access to a pool of readily accessible manpower, well-versed in English in a borderless world, are colossal. Some of the rush to Anglicize education would perhaps be better approximated through such a lens. In light of the aforementioned, the silence with regards to the rationale for monitoring and reporting, among others, English test results makes Statistics Norway complicit in facilitating the consolidation of markets and power in the hands of megaconglomerates. If more universities in Europe jump on the bandwagon and Anglicize higher education, as is the case, this will obviously create pressure for delivering a steady supply of students who are proficient in English. In such a scenario, supranational entities such as Eurostat would be indispensable in monitoring the progress each member country is making towards the objective of training a workforce amenable to the needs of a corporate-driven global world. Rather than the perhaps sweeping claim: “Global corporations are aiming at nothing less than the dismantling of public education and health care systems” (Cavanagh and Mander 2004, 133), this study makes the case for stating, as a minimum, that global corporations are being aided and abetted by national governments in the current anglobalization.

### ***PISA, National tests and the valorization of English***

The second document is from The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training which “is responsible for the development of kindergarten and primary and secondary education. The Directorate is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2014). Since 2004, the Directorate conducts national tests which are currently administered in the fall of the 5th and 8th grade in reading, numeracy and aspects of the English curriculum. It is argued that a cursory perusal of the historical trajectory of the national tests, English in particular, is germane to the task of demonstrating how officialdom is at the forefront of the Anglobalization discourse.

Norway’s mediocre (and below average) performance in the first OECD-conducted PISA results in 2000, in sharp contrast to Finland, which has since gained somewhat of an “educational celebrity status”, became a lightning rod political issue. Much ink flowed in the wake of this “PISA shock” (Hatch 2013, 124) with political parties on both sides of the ideological divide agreeing that something must be done. This something gelled into the current national tests in 2004 and an educational reform called “Knowledge Promotion” in 2006 (KL06) – the brainchild of the then conservative government. As Hatch (2013, 125) writes, “Although the national tests are closely linked to the Knowledge Promotion reforms of 2006, the Norwegian Parliament authorized the development of the national tests in 2003, and they were implemented for the first time barely 1 year later”. In all of the aforementioned, one is hard-pressed to explain how English became one of the key subjects measured in national tests. The justification cannot be found in the triennial PISA tests which measure reading (conducted in Norwegian), mathematics and science. In fact, according to the OECD PISA official website:

PISA is unique because it develops tests which are not directly linked to the school curriculum. The tests are designed to assess to what extent students at the end of compulsory education, can apply their knowledge to real-life situations and be equipped for full participation in society (OECD, 2014).

Clearly, these pronouncements are non sequitur with respect to English in Norway. By and large, Norway is still a country where knowledge of Norwegian is paramount, and an English-only speaker would encounter difficulties in some parts of the country. In an interview with one English teacher, who has been teaching English for over 20 years at the upper secondary school level in Oslo, the teacher had this to say:

Why is English one of the subjects assessed in the national tests? I really don't know but English is very important. English goes way back in Norway's history. The Directorate of Education has never really been good at justifying such matters. Is there nothing of substance on their website? Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that 80 per cent of material on the internet is in English, tourism etc. (male English teacher interviewed; 10.11.14).

In these answers one detects Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977: 9) symbolic violence understood here as "the genesis amnesia which finds expression in the naive illusion that things have always been as they are". The cultural arbitrary of English imposition through education is not interrogated and destabilized as symbolic violence perpetrated by the dominant classes whose interests are ventriloquized through the Department of Education, but becomes part of the "cultural unconscious" and leads to the "eternizing and thereby the 'naturalizing' of signifying relations which are the product of history" (1977: 9). The elusive quest for a convincing rationale behind English as an integral part of the annual national tests remained just as elusive after reading yet another document on national tests (Information on National Tests) authored by the Directorate of Education:

Why national tests? National tests provide us with information about pupils' basic skills in reading and numeracy and in some aspects of the English subject. The fundamental skills are: Digital skills, Oral skills, Reading, Numeracy and Writing. These skills are important for learning and development in all subjects, and they have a significant impact on how pupils cope with school and life in general (The Directorate for Education 2104).

The document above contains the statement: "Exemption may be granted to pupils with the right to special needs education or pupils with the right to adapted education in Norwegian, when it is simultaneously clear that the test result will not have much effect on the pupil's learning". This amounts to about 4.3 per cent in the 5th grade and 2.5 per cent in the 8th grade in English in 2013, according to Statistics Norway. This has led to allegations of embellishing the results by "weeding" out many of the weakest students – a not so subtle reference to segments of the immigrant community. Among others, Christian W. Beck from the University of Oslo has examined the reading results from 29 schools in the 5th grade in Oslo, the capital city (which tends to score very well in national tests compared to the rest of the country), and concluded that schools grant exemption to several students from immigrant backgrounds and hence inflate results (Sarwar 2013).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) critiques the notion of meritocracy as purportedly crystallized through standardized tests, such as the SAT or LSAT in the USA (Delgado and Stefancic 2012, 118). CRT puts the spotlight on the class-boundedness of several standardized tests, the occupation of the father and zip code as equally important predictors of a student's test scores (Delgado and Stefancic 2012, 121). As a case in point in regards to class-bound questions, the latter mention the a priori assumptions of familiarity with "polo mallets and regattas". This conflates with some of this study's findings. For instance, first graders see a picture of a woman driving a car with a silhouetted church in the distant background. The student is given several options to choose from with the correct one being: "Maria has been to church. Now she is driving back home alone, in her blue car. "(Example test 5-2010; Exercise 23; UDIR: Department of Education). The test designers assume that the typically Lutheran church spire is a dead giveaway. It is argued that several of these six-year-old children hailing from immigrant, and mainly Muslim, backgrounds, may experience some ambivalence in answering this as opposed to ethnic Norwegian students for whom the sight of a church spire is part and parcel of the ritual cycle marking poignant moments (births, confirmations, funerals, Easter, Christmas, etc.). The above resonates with Taylor's (2006,74) warning with respect to the No Child Left Behind Policy in the US: "Statistics, traditional methodologies, and formal databases, while important, do not, in the view of CRT scholarship, necessarily have the experience, proficiency, and expertise adequate to name and resist racial oppression." This being true, it must nevertheless be emphasized that given the dissimilarity in the historical trajectories of the USA and Norway with respect to issues of race, a full-fledged application of CRT in a Norwegian context would be superimposing a map that does not correspond to the terrain, or may do so partially - at least in the case of the historically oppressed Sami indigenous population who were subjected to sterilization and anatomical measurements until as recently as 1975. The lion's share of contemporary immigrants in Norway arrived as asylum seekers, refugees or labor migrants in the last few decades and hail from a potpourri of nations as diverse as Somalia, Kurdistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Chile, Iran, Albania and Poland. Of relevance, and corresponding to the shadow of Anglobalization that is the concern of this study, are the increasingly segregated patterns of schooling in Norway, a country which prides itself in its traditionally egalitarian ethos. Clearly, when students from homes with low English cultural capital cluster together in the same schools with a concomitant "white flight", standards fall. In the US context, Love (2010, 229), employing a CRT lens, considers the subversion of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* and its impact

on the current discussion of the “achievement gap” between Blacks and Whites and concludes, among others:

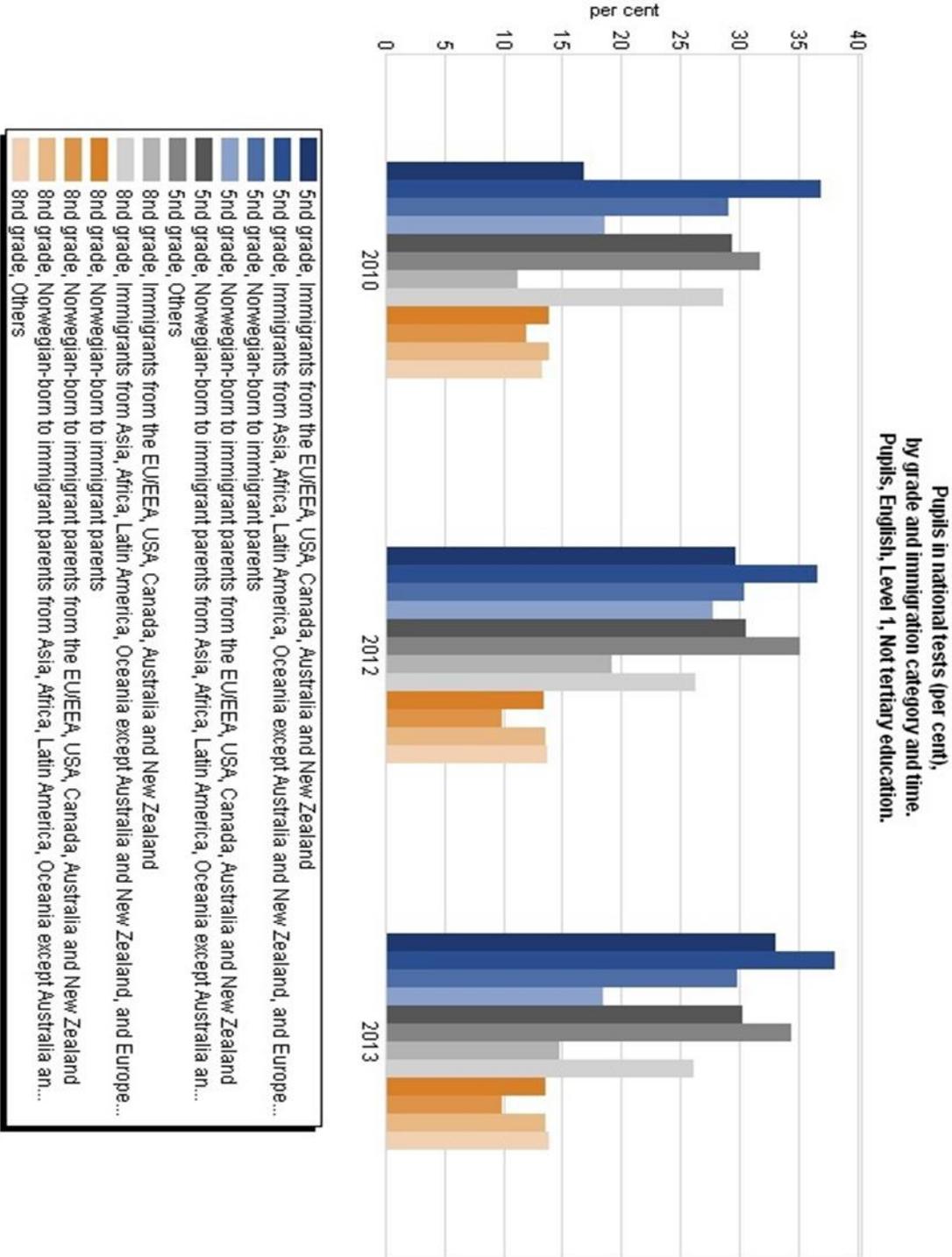
African-American children continue to receive a very different education from that received by white children...The policies, procedures, rules and regulations that result in these substantively different in-school experiences between African American and white children seem natural and normal, and seem to be seldom questioned by teachers, counselors, principals, and other school personnel.

In what follows (the third document), upper secondary school results in English for the last 3 years will be subjected to closer scrutiny. As the results indicate, it will be demonstrated that students from “immigrant” backgrounds are disadvantaged in the quest for English acquisition.

### ***Creating an English “underclass”***

Figure 1 was generated through the website of Statistics Norway. Researchers and members of the public are given several options for combining diverse variables and generating tables and graphs, for instance. The following variables were selected in Figure 1: the lowest scoring category in English (level 1); 6 ethnic/ immigration categories (individuals with both parents born abroad are categorized as “immigrants”); English results for grades 5 and 6 (the two grades when national tests are administered in autumn); results from the last 3 years (2011 is omitted because data was missing and, finally, the option “No tertiary education” was selected with respect to parents’ educational background. This is because the lion’s share of the immigrant population of Norway (ca. 44 per cent) comes under the category “Immigrants from Asia, Africa, South America and Oceania (except Australia, New Zealand and Europe outside EU28/EEA)”. Parents of the pupil cohort tested generally have the lowest levels of tertiary education (Statistics Norway 2014).

**Figure 1: Upper secondary national tests in English (2010, 21012 & 2013)**



Source: Statistics Norway

The graph for the years 2010, 2012 & 2013 shows that immigrants from Asia, Africa [...] (the second bar from the left) have between 35-40 per cent of the cohort scoring consistently in the lowest category in the national English test in the 5th grade. The results evince a slight escalation towards worsening results for this cohort (ca. 37 per cent in 2013). Norwegian children born to immigrants from Asia, Africa [...] (the 5th bar from the left) evince the poorest results after this cohort with 30-35 per cent concentrated in the lowest level 1. Norwegian children born to immigrant parents from the EU/EEA, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand [fourth bar from the left] have the lowest numbers obtaining for level 1 in the 5th grade (21 per cent on average as opposed to 36 per cent for immigrants from Africa, Asia [...]). Thus the difference between students with parents from the Anglosphere (and EU/EEA) and those from immigrant backgrounds in Asia, Africa [...] is 16 per cent.

With regards to the statistics for the 8th grade, it is significant that although overall performance is improved for all categories (lower percentages feature in level 1), students with parents from the Anglosphere and the EU/EEA still maintain a 16 per cent gap when the mean difference is calculated in regards to the cohort with immigrant parents from Africa, Asia [...] (compare the 8th and the 10th bars from the left for each year). If as Harper (2011: 530) argues, current globalization trends privilege English proficiency, and “there is not only a strong incentive for individuals to learn English, but there also incentives for national governments to provide English-based language education programs to their citizens”, then the analysis above suggests that “native speakers of English will benefit most from language shifts that promote the global use of English” (Harper 2011, 535). The above English disparity must be considered within the framework of intermittent educational and media reports suggesting that half of the students from minority backgrounds in Oslo have such a poor command of Norwegian that they experience difficulties understanding their teachers. In light of the findings above, it is suggested that a more prudent course of action would be for the educational authorities to concern themselves less with English tests propelled by the “global Anglophonic hegemony” (Harper 2011) and better exploit the freed up resources and energy to redress the crisis in Norwegian language acquisition among immigrant students. This thread is picked up below with reference to Blommaert’s (2013) concept of the “infrastructure of superdiversity”.

Although this study has been conducted in the capital Oslo, “superdiversity” is fast making inroads in other parts of Norway as well. Hordaland, for instance, is Norway’s third largest county. A recent study found that the number of students with an immigrant background has

doubled in the last five years (NRK, 2013). According to the report, “There are 80 different mother-tongues in the 45 upper secondary schools in Hordaland. After Norwegian, Arabic is the most common followed by Polish”. Not only in the report above from the national broadcasting company (NRK), but virtually every news media is inundated with reports on the inadequate Norwegian competence of minorities in Norway. Given this scenario, and taking cognizance of the pressures of being caught up in Blommaert’s confluence of “the infrastructure of superdiversity”, one wonders why these students are saddled with the additional burden of English national tests. Blommaert (2008: 429) notes that “Bureaucratic language regimes are mostly very demanding ones, and they thus often exclude those who needed access most” especially when “their own linguistic and sociolinguistic resources may deviate strongly from the presupposed ones”.

Most of the students in this study, and most minorities in Norway by extension, have mother-tongues which from a contrastive/comparative linguistic perspective are very different from Indo-European languages such as Norwegian and English. This was brought home to teachers in one seminar attended by one of the authors when students from Somalia, Thailand, Afghanistan and Pakistan were asked to explain some differences between Norwegian and their mother-tongues for the school staff (mostly ethnic Norwegians). Some of these teachers later remarked that they had no clue that verbs are not inflected in Thai, for instance, to indicate tense and do not conjugate for grammatical person either. The Urdu-speaking student shared that in Urdu each noun has either masculine or feminine gender. The neuter gender does not exist as it does in Norwegian where a table, for example, is neuter (*et bord*). Whereas mainstream Norwegian students concern themselves with the intricacies of the English language from the vantage point of a well-developed mother-tongue, students with non-European mother-tongues struggle in the confluence of conformity pressures exerted from their mother tongues - Norwegian and English. In light of the above, Blommaert’s (2008: 448) warning is apt:

The tendency in the face of increasing super-diversity is to withdraw into the safe fortresses of homogeneity in language and culture...is likely to reinforce the belief that meanings can only be produced in grammatically well-formed sentences, spoken in the right accent or written in the correct orthographic code.

The upshot is “... an increasingly small ‘mainstream’ surrounded by an increasingly big ‘non-mainstream’ population, the former fully enfranchised, the latter fully excluded” (Blommaert 2008, 448).

## Interviews

Results from the 17 interviews conducted with students follow. The students were asked about their parents countries of origin and education. In addition, questions about their practical use of English were solicited.

**Table 1: Interviewees background and English capital**

<b>Background</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Education (parents) (none)</b>	<b>English- speaking parent/s</b>	<b>English exposure outside school (never)</b>
Somalia	7	0	1	5
Pakistan	3	2	2	3
Morocco	2	2	0	2
Eritrea	1	0	0	1
Thailand	1	0	1	0
Philippines	1	0	1	0
Chechnya	1	1	0	0
Lithuania	1	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>

Although generalizability is limited given the sample, it is argued that the randomly selected students are in many ways representative of the school at large. For instance, the ethnic composition (understood as a preponderance of students with African/Asian heritage) and religious adherence roughly corresponds to the school's average: 14 of the 17 in the cohort hail from Muslim backgrounds (82 per cent compared to the schools 75). Only 6 of the 17 have parents with college/university degrees and 5 have parents who speak English. With

such low English capital it comes as no surprise that 12 of the 17 never experience any exposure to English outside the environs of the English classroom. As one student put it:

English is important but I find the language to be very hard to understand. Especially newspapers and books are complicated and I cannot be bothered to look up the dictionary every time I come across a new word, which is often (Somali male, 17; translation mine).

Warnings about the emergence of this new “English underclass” are not new. Back in 1996, Jacob Ørum, spokesman for the United Students’ Council at Copenhagen University, warned in a debate about the spread of English in Denmark:

The weakest 10 per cent of students, who have trouble with English, just flunk out. These students include immigrants who may have managed to master Danish but have not benefitted from the many opportunities to learn English that come while growing up in Denmark (Burton 1996, 40; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*).

Fears that English would become the “new Latin” of the universities and Danish the language of the “peasants” and “immigrants” (Burton 1996, 40) could just as well be applied to Norway in 2014. It is our experience as teachers that students from mainly immigrant backgrounds feel there is a cultural disconnect between the English syllabus and students’ cultural reference points. Several students during the course of the interviews and in classroom discussions opined that English competence was desirable but not “decadent western cultural values” (male Pakistani, 18). It is easy to dismiss these remarks as parochial but in the hope that the aim of English acquisition is not thwarted by fears of what Espositio and Mogahed (2007: 42) refer to as “westoxification”, efforts could be usefully exerted towards publishing more localized content (Mahboob 2009). That there is such a fear is captured in another respondent’s answer:

Who selected the contents of this textbook (*Access to English* 2013)? It is just filled with texts and assignments about illicit sex, rock and roll and the glory of Britain and the USA. There is no mention of the colonization of Arab countries such as the way these countries carved up the Middle-East. There is much focus on the Aborigines, Maoris and Native Americans, which is fine, but nothing about the Muslims and Arabs as if the British had nothing to do with us (female of Pakistani origin, 16).

That the recent “English revolution” in Norway, buoyed by a poorly interrogated Anglobal surge, creates a stratified educational landscape of “English haves” and “English have-nots” is

an important thesis underpinning this study. By “academic haves and have nots” we refer to the valorization and authentication of an educational ethos where English becomes ever more important. In such a system, the architects of educational planning perceive the role of education in neoliberal terms: the role of education is reduced to one of adumbrating the apparently inexorable forces of Anglobalization by supplying the “market” with graduates who have the appropriate cultural capital. This habitus is manifest in one teacher’s response:

English is very important. Norway has always had close relations with the UK and the USA. Before World War I, German had a much stronger position in Norway, but the Nazi occupation ensured the decline of German after the war. Norway is a small country and we cannot match the literary wealth and sheer volumes of books emanating from the USA and Britain. Many of the books I read during University, especially in the hard sciences, were in English. I do admit, however, that English’s growing encroachment into our society will pose a threat to our national heritage in the future (Female teacher).

For Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital can manifest itself in three ways: an embodied disposition of the mind and body (habitus); objectified cultural goods, or be crystallized in the form of educational qualifications in its institutionalized state. Habitus captures the principles of structure that govern order and meaning-making in society. Habitus – with undertones of “habit”, “automatic”, and the “taken-for-granted” (Nash 1990) – seeks to subject these arbitrary (e.g. monogamy versus polygamy) but real principles of structure that shape and sustain customs, mores, styles and tastes in society. The school is the generative locus of the distinctive habitus of culture, according to Bourdieu (1971). This study argues that the lack of any rigorous or credible justification for the disproportionate attention accorded English as a subject in Norwegian schools is better explained through a habitus of Anglobalization – an uncritical, almost unconscious Anglophilia - the values of which are secreted into the educational system and are ultimately complicit in the neoliberal commercialization of education. Whether deliberate or otherwise, it is when this affinity for all things English becomes a cog in the wheel of “The Great Global Convergence” (Mahbubani 2013), especially through education, that we are speaking about an Anglobalization of education.

## Conclusion

Complex events are codetermined by constellations of causal mechanisms. Arriving at some understanding of the issue would require the peeling away of each of these intrinsically linked relational and necessary layers without committing the “epistemic fallacy” (Bhaskar 1975) of collapsing them into an inchoate unit. This study has argued that the recent “English revolution” in Norway must be considered in the interstices of a growing standardization of education standards in the European Union. The 1999 Bologna Treaty has created an open market where English is supplanting national languages at the university level. This proliferation of English at the supranational level has a knock-on-effect on the national level. We have considered documents from Statistics Norway and The Directorate of Education and argued that the lack of a robust rationale for high-stakes testing in English must be seen in light of what we have called the Anglobalization of education – the global convergence of education shot through with neoliberal values acquiescent to the Anglosphere.

Following Bourdieu (1977a; 1986), it is argued that bureaus of statistics and education departments commit symbolic violence by disguising their roles as the vital catalysts of the economic field. The misrecognition of the role of these official institutions in Anglobalization is perpetrated in 3 ways: (1) by maintaining a distance from the economic field (2) the projection of an illusion of autonomy and (3) the promulgation of an “ideology of disinterestedness”. This flies in the face of Norway’s traditionally egalitarian ethos shot through with discourses of equity.

The study reveals the dissonance between the current preoccupation with English results and the experience of students from immigrant backgrounds. The national tests confirm that school tests often authenticate the socio-economic backgrounds of students lending credence to Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory. By way of recommendation, Mahboob’s (2009; 2014) work on the localization of world Englishes in the context of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia can usefully be modified and made relevant to Norway’s new emerging reconfiguration of majority-minority situation in several schools in Oslo at least. A pertinent question, following Mahboob (2009), would be to ask: how does the English syllabus and curriculum in Norway take cognizance of the cultural experiences and repertoires of a fast-growing segment of Norwegian students with an immigrant background? By this we mean that some school textbooks in Norway, which currently contain topics alien to the cultural universe of these

students (e.g. Rugby, the archaic “thous” and “thines” of Robert Burns etc.), could benefit from a localization of content.

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