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Informal language learning and media for migrants

Conference report (May and December 2022)



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Introduction

This report summarises the key insights that arose from the two-part conference on ‘Informal Language Learning and Media for Migrants’, which took place on 20 May 2022 and 9 December 2022, in Copenhagen and Oslo respectively. The conference was organized in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and Språkkraft, a Swedish NGO that focuses on helping migrants integrate into Swedish society through the facilitation of Swedish language learning through digital solutions. Both events were funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the official body for intergovernmental cooperation in the Nordic region.

Objectives

The main objectives of the conference were:

1. To raise awareness and promote the exchange of innovative ideas and solutions on informal language learning for migrants in the Nordic countries.
2. To highlight the value of informal language learning for the integration of migrants and identify ways in which formal and informal language learning can enrich learners’ experiences.
3. To highlight best practices to expand networks and partnerships within and beyond the Nordic countries.
4. To emphasize the critical role of the Nordic mass media in promoting language learning as an integral part of a democratic society.

Context

The prevailing assumption has been that for nearly anyone past childhood, a new language must be taught formally. However, with the advent of information and communication technologies, adult learners have been increasingly picking up new languages via various channels such as video games, YouTube, language learning apps and movies. This mode of self-learning has complemented – and in some cases even replaced – the classroom curriculum and instruction (Dressman and Sadler, 2020, p. 2–5).

Language learning, thus, has entered the everyday spaces we all use – the coffee shop, the living room, and the weekend excursion. In turn, the conception of language learning, as teacher-directed, has changed and moved towards what Knowles termed ‘self-directed learning,’ in which individuals take charge of their own learning journeys (Knowles, 1975, p. 18). What this warrants is new research on *informal* language learning, a vibrant and unexplored subfield within linguistics (Dressman and Sadler, 2020, p. 2).

In the context of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), the themes of media and informal language learning are especially relevant in connection to migration. Since 2010, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have seen an increasing number of migrants and refugees from far afield entering the region for various reasons. Currently, there are about 3.5 million immigrants in the Nordic countries (Nordic Co-operation, 2022), and ensuring that new arrivals can successfully be integrated into these societies has been of utmost political importance for governments. But the path to successful integration, especially labour market integration, is not

easy – on average, it takes about 5–10 years for a refugee to find sustainable employment in the Nordic region (Simic et al., 2018, p. 9).

One of the major essential skills for migrants and refugees is proficiency in the host country's language, which removes a huge obstacle in their efforts for integration in labour markets and societies. With a view to moving beyond this barrier, all Nordic countries have already established extensive language training programmes – using both formal and informal avenues – aimed at supporting the labour market integration of migrants and refugees. In a bid to design more innovative initiatives that can accelerate labour market integration and social cohesion through language learning, the Nordic Council of Ministers has sought to prioritize an in-depth understanding of what modes of language learning work, for whom, and why (Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research, 2006).

To address these questions, Språkkraft and UIL, with the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers organized a two-part conference on 'Media, Migrants and Informal Language Learning' in Copenhagen and Oslo. Språkkraft has been a strong force behind migrant integration in the Nordic areas with its focus on helping immigrants, refugees and newly arrived people integrate into Swedish society through technology-based Swedish and other Nordic language learning programmes.

UIL's priorities lie in promoting lifelong learning in general and addressing the needs of migrants and refugees for skills recognition and development at the national and local levels and, to this end, the organization has been making great strides in developing mechanisms and resources for lifelong learning among migrant and refugee communities. The two-part conference, therefore, aimed to draw on the wealth of experience and expertise of the researchers, staff and professionals involved in both organizations.

Furthermore, the conference was directed towards the achievement of the 'Nordic Vision 2030,' which envisions a green, competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic region by 2030. Among the 12 focus areas that are linked to this vision, the labour market and social cohesion were two specific areas that this conference aimed to address.

Participation

The conference saw the participation of specialists and staff from the UIL and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), researchers and teachers in the field of applied linguistics from various Nordic universities and beyond, directors and staff from NGOs focused on migrant integration in the Nordic regions, learning scientists and language specialists working in the social and corporate sectors and experts from the Nordic media. Representatives from the Nordic Council of Ministers were also present and highlighted the policy importance of the issue at the two conferences. Also actively participating were migrants from different parts of the world who have settled in Nordic countries and who shared their experiences with learning a Nordic language later in life.

Migrant stories

The stories from migrants were a unique addition to the two conferences, featuring people from vastly different walks of life who shared their experiences with learning a Nordic language during their resettlement in one of the Nordic countries. A common thread that emerged from these narratives was the value of informal sites – coffee shop breaks with their teachers, Christmas festivals, conversations with parents of other children – in these migrants’ lifelong learning journeys with a Nordic language.

Polish-born Denmark resident, Maciej’s learning experience with Danish, for instance, spanned four different countries – Poland, Denmark, Ireland, and Canada – from boarding school, to college, and later as he began his career in media. While his language learning journey went through a difficult period when he moved to Edmonton, Canada, where few people spoke Danish, watching Danish TV helped him stay in touch with the language over his four years living there. Moving back to Denmark and starting a family there, with interactions with his children’s friends and parents, have helped his Danish improve.

Burak and Neslihan Gultekin, refugees from Turkey, arrived in Sweden just as the COVID-19 lockdown measures were tightened in the country. Formal language education at the time was only offered online or in correspondence, which the couple found less than perfect. When their friends and fellow migrants to Sweden told them about mobile language learning using applications, Burak and Neslihan decided to try out the SVT Språkplay app, which works in partnership with the public service broadcaster SVT. Soon enough, the couple acquired Swedish to a high enough level to find gainful employment – Burak began working as a taxi driver and Neslihan entered the field of elder care. Even though Burak’s line of work gives him few opportunities to practise the language, the apps continue to help him stay in touch with Swedish and upgrade his language skills.

Claudette Vieguras, a Mexican immigrant in Norway, found that despite not having an ‘ear’ for languages, she learnt Norwegian via informal channels at work and through her conversations with local community members. Even as her learning journey with Norwegian progressed, she felt impelled to continue speaking her first language Spanish wherever possible, as it was the only easily available conduit to her roots. This had a positive effect on her bilingual capabilities – it meant that

Migrant stories

Tips for language learning from migrant language learners:

- Utilize informal spaces such as coffee breaks, festivals, language cafes, daily conversations to practice new language skills.
- Use local media (e.g. television, radio) with subtitles to learn the language in context.
- Speak and interact with local community members to improve speaking skills.
- Tap into your existing linguistic repertoire to aid language learning. (Evidence from research shows that the multilingual brain has better attention and task-switching capacities than the monolingual brain (Marian and Shook, 2012).
- Use language applications such as Lango, Duolingo, Babbel, etc.
- Volunteer in local organizations and events to mingle with locals and others seeking similar opportunities to practice new language skills.

her switching skills between Norwegian and Spanish were refined, and she can now fluidly move between the two languages as she desires.

For Bassam Arslan, a Syrian-Palestinian migrant in Finland, using informal tools such as the Lango app, e-courses offered by libraries, volunteering in civil society organizations and networking with Finnish locals who worked in the same field as him, helped him swiftly advance his Finnish language skills. While the language is undeniably challenging to learn with many exceptions to grammatical rules, the kindness of Finnish people encouraged Bassam to continue and eventually master the language.

These individual narratives firmly establish that informal language learning pathways, as diverse as they are, can have indisputable positive impacts on migrants' integration in host societies.

Programme and policy perspectives

A range of threads of thought on media, migration and informal language learning were brought to the fore over the two editions of the conference. The following section offers a synthesis of the most significant themes that emerged.

Understanding adult migrant language learners better

Language learning among adults works differently from children's language learning – adults' motivations, constraints and the degree of guidance needed differ vastly from those of children. Any design of language learning programmes for adults, thus, must consider these differences and build from adult learning perspectives on language learning. Drawing on this fundamental idea, speakers across the two days of the conference presented studies on the various aspects of how adults learn and what factors predict their success in language learning, which can offer a base for educational programme design.

Data trends on adult migrant language learners

The value of data collection to understand patterns behind adult language learning and facilitate better programmes for lifelong learning for adults in migrant contexts was highlighted by many speakers. Thus, as Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Team Leader at UIL noted, not only is there a literacy gap among people on the move who may be grappling with an entirely new language and writing system, but there is also a crucial under-reporting of this gap. For instance, as highlighted by Ms Zholdoshalieva, '37 per cent of countries did not know participation rates in adult learning programmes for minority groups, refugees, and migrants, and 26 per cent of countries did not prioritize refugee and migrant education in their funding distribution' (UNESCO, 2019, p. 14).



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The 2022 Duolingo Global Language report, which offers key insights on adult language learning trends across the globe, reveals the choices adult learners tend to make with respect to language learning when there are minimal financial or external barriers (as is the case with learners who sign up on Duolingo). Cindy Blanco, Senior Learning Scientist at Duolingo, noted that looking for the statistics around the second-most studied language in each country on the app could be highly effective in finding out user motivations and avoid any skew in the data owing to the global popularity of English language learning.

In the Nordic context, Norwegian in Norway, Finnish in Finland and Danish in Denmark were found to be the second-most popular languages in those countries, and many learners under 30 years of age mentioned that their reasons for learning a Nordic language were either for school, work or family implying that even with several barriers to language learning and integration in a new country, many young adult learners seem to show interest in learning the language of the country (Duolingo, 2022).

Accommodating low-literate and non-literate adult learners

Giving special attention to low-literate migrant learners was emphasized by the speakers. Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, UIL, and Rola Naeb, one of the authors of 'Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LASLLIAM)', delineated the higher levels of language learning challenges for adult non-literate or low-literate learners, who must learn a second language while either learning to read and write for the first time or developing basic literacy competences in a writing system entirely different from the one they may have learned initially. For example, the LASLLIAM guide has been offered by the Council of Europe, to foster and trace the literacy and second language learning of non- and low-literate adult migrants by designing learning environments offered to literacy and second language learners. It also defines and scales potential teaching goals

targeted to support migrants' communication in the social tasks that they want or need to perform (Council of Europe, 2022).

Other digital tools that facilitate language learning for low-literate learners were also introduced in the conference. For instance, VHS Lernportal, a free digital platform facilitating informal and non-formal learning of German as a second language, ensures easy access for users with low literacy by offering all content in an audio/video format and at the appropriate level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (UIL, 2022).



Figure 1. Choice of German language learning options according to proficiency. *Source:* VHS Lernportal

Social/psychological factors predicting adult second language (L2) learning

Understanding what social and psychological factors drive L2 learning among adult migrants can offer crucial insights that can inform language programme design in the Nordics. Fanny Lundell and Klara Arvidsson from Stockholm University conducted a study among L2 Swedish speakers in Paris and L2 French speakers in Stockholm, investigating the socio-psychological bases of language learning. In an effort to see if factors such as acculturation (identification with host cultures), social networks and multicultural effectiveness (personality) could have strong effects on L2 learning, they designed a test that would gauge the proficiency of learners in using collocations in their second language. Collocations – for example, ‘making a mistake’ and ‘doing the laundry’ – are extremely difficult to master and thus are a good measure for second language learning levels.

The result confirmed their hypothesis that a stronger sense of acculturation and more social networks with locals has a strong positive effect on collocation knowledge. They also found that informal language learning activities such as emailing, browsing the internet, having a lengthy conversation in the L2 had the strongest effect on the L2 proficiency of adult learners, which are important insights that can inform language learning pedagogy for migrants.

A stronger sense of acculturation, more social networks with locals and being at home in multicultural situations has a strong positive effect on collocation knowledge (Lundell and Arvidsson, Copenhagen, May 2022)

Multilingualism and adult language learning in the Nordic countries

The use of multilingualism in education is a widely debated subject in Norway, but there is a growing interest in the benefits of using multilingualism in education. Joke Dewilde, Professor of Multilingualism in Education at the University of Oslo, sought to establish how the multilingual capacities of migrants can be an advantage for learning a new language. Dewilde stated how ‘translanguaging’ – using all of one’s language resources, including both the first language(s) and the second language being learned, to make meaning and communicate – can be beneficial when used in a Norwegian language learning classroom.

Translanguaging may manifest in the migrant language classroom in many ways. For instance, in one of the interventions overseen by Dewilde’s research team, Arabic speakers used Arabic transliterations of Norwegian words to be able to remember them better. Some students also found that a cultural practice such as the practice of drinking clove tea, which is common across the different cultures represented in the language classroom, served as a conversational base for the eventual learning of the word for ‘clove tea’ in Norwegian. Multilingual capacity, Dewilde thus argued, can be an enabling scaffold more than a stumbling block for migrants seeking to learn a second language.

Pushing the frontiers of research on informal language learning

The participation of experts in applied linguistics, journalism and media studies, and technology at the two days of the conference resulted in fresh perspectives that push the frontiers of research in applied linguistics, especially in media studies and the emerging sub-field of informal language learning.

Informal language learning: Latest research perspectives



While the field of L2 learning in formal learning environments is widely researched, Hayo Reinders, TESOL Professor and Director of Research at Anaheim University in the USA, noted that little research has been done in applied linguistics to inform or understand second language learning in informal spaces. To bridge this gap, Reinders proposed the transformative potential of the ‘learning spaces’ approach to education, which advocates for education to be brought into the spaces that learners use daily. Rather than starting from the school, the curriculum, or educational outcomes, a ‘learning spaces’ approach sees the learner’s experiences as the starting point for teachers to build on. A related concept introduced was ‘lifewide learning’, which ensures that learners learn anywhere and anytime, and on different subjects. What Reinders also emphasized was the importance of ‘self-directed learning’, arguing that if programmes and policies can empower learners to master *how* to learn a language, instead of teaching them the language itself, it can have long-lasting benefits.

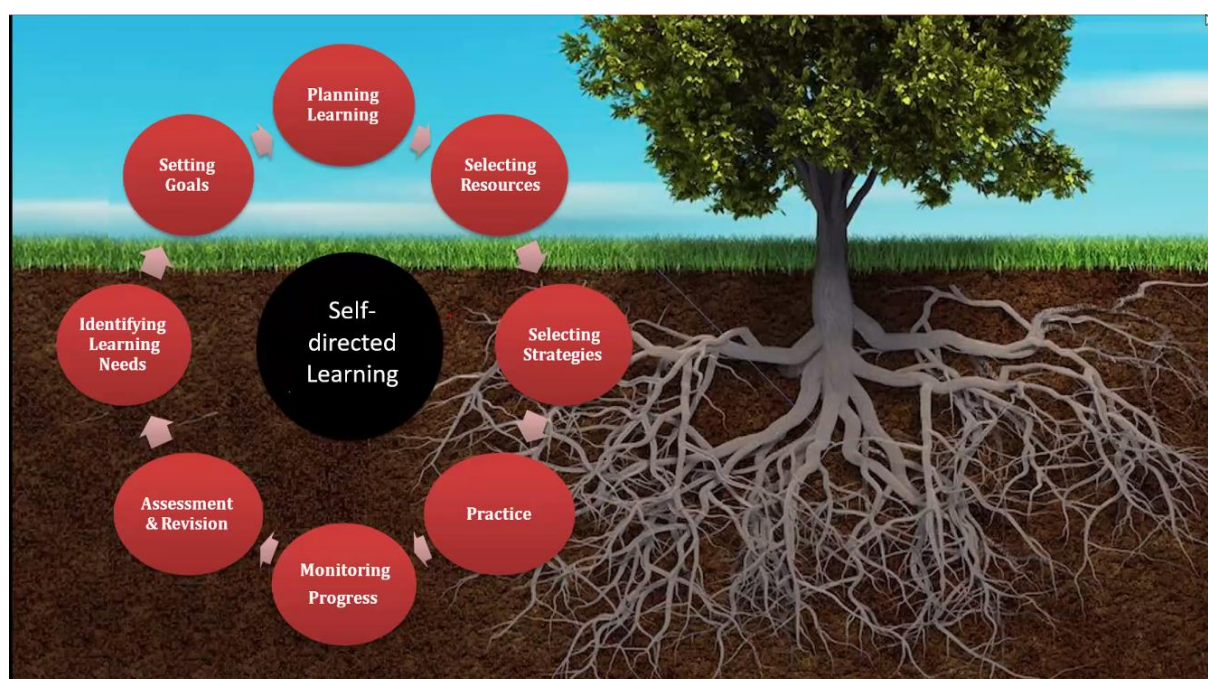


Figure 2. Self-directed learning (source: Reinders 2023, Copenhagen presentation, 2022)

Reinders’ argument regarding bringing learning to the everyday spaces of adult learners is also echoed in Louise Fabricius’ comparative study of publicly funded language training programmes for adults in the Nordic countries (Fabricius and Westerberg, 2023). The study revealed that the primary barriers to migrants’ participation and learning in language training programmes are firstly, a lack of time, and secondly, a lack of opportunities to practise with social networks – both of which can be overcome if language learning is brought to the daily lives of learners, on their smartphones and in their workplaces. Ensuring that alternative measures of language learning that are more non-formal in nature are integrated into formal language training channels can be advantageous, because of how complementary they can be to public programmes.

The concept of ‘language cafés’, which is emerging across the Nordic countries, is a great example of a ‘learning space.’ Language cafés are informal arenas for social integration and language training for immigrants to meet locals and practise the local language. Silvia Kunitz, Professor of English at Karlstad University, Sweden, described the results of her ethnographic study undertaken through 160 visits to 14 language cafés in Sweden and through analysis of recording of 81 café sessions. She

found that these cafés are rare spaces where multilingualism is encouraged, there is active listenership for migrants and their stories and a higher focus on practical vocabulary work, as opposed to grammar teaching/exercises.

The workplace is an important environment for language learning, according to Michael Svendsen Pedersen from Roskilde University. While it may be assumed that migrants automatically acquire the language skills they need in the workplace, there are specific scenarios – such as emergencies, requests, board meetings, and interviews – that require a specialized vocabulary. Additionally, the language used in the workplace is not always technical or vocational, and creative and communicative language is just as important. To address this, both employers and employees should strive to create a dynamic learning environment for migrants in the workplace, where they can learn language applicable to various work situations.

Louise Trankjær, an Associate Professor at Roskilde University, shared research findings on the effectiveness of digital language learning games in workplace settings. One such initiative is WorkdPlays, a mobile-based language learning game designed for workers in the cleaning and laundry industry. The game incorporates familiar work tasks and situations to facilitate language learning. Trankjær emphasized that initiatives like WorkdPlays have a triple effect – they maintain learners' motivation, promote integration into the workplace, and foster integration into the host country. These digital tools are flexible and user-friendly, making them ideal for language learners.

Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Southern California, USA, Stephen Krashen's presentation on the power of pleasure reading on language acquisition also offered a fresh perspective on informal language learning. Krashen argues that, as humans, we are better at *acquiring* or picking up a second language, than *learning* it. Moreover, in the initial stages of language acquisition, being forced to speak the language may only lead to anxiety, as we learn better by listening and understanding 'comprehensible input' rather than by constantly *producing* language. Krashen thus argued for 'pleasure reading' – reading very easy children's fiction bestsellers (Harry Potter, for example) in the target language – as an effective informal language learning technique.

Audio-visual input, digital games and informal language learning

The use of media input as an easy, low-effort language learning resource was a cross-cutting theme in the conference. Pia Sundqvist, Professor of English Language Education at the University of Oslo, outlined the value of digital gaming as a resource for informal language learning among children in Sweden. After introducing the concept of 'extramural English' – English learning that is learner – initiated outside the classroom and may be both incidental and intentional – she established the results of her study, which showed that Swedish children who frequently played digital games had a higher level of oral proficiency and vocabulary than those who did not. Moreover, gamer children were found to be 'users' and not 'learners' of English, which allowed for a more incidental learning of the language with lower efforts. Clearly, media and digital tools can be important avenues for 'extramural' language teaching/learning.

Elke Peters, Associate Professor of English Linguistics at KU Leuven, also presented the findings of a study that highlights the utility of audio-visual input (watching movies on the television, for instance) in informal language learning. The simultaneous presentation of audio and visual input, Peters

argued, results in better language proficiency across all age groups – children, adolescents, and adults. Moreover, watching video content in a foreign language subtitled in one’s first language has also been found to be more effective than watching the same content dubbed into one’s first language.

New initiatives and digital tools for migrant language learning and integration in the Nordic countries

All the theoretical perspectives on adult language learning and informal language learning detailed above laid the base for the presentations on new initiatives and digital language learning tools aimed at migrants that have been growing in popularity in the Nordic countries and beyond.

Annapurna Ayyappan, Assistant Programme Specialist at UIL gave a broad overview of various technology-supported programmes for migrants and refugees (UIL, 2022). Ranging from low-tech using radio and SMS solutions to high-tech solutions using AI and personalized learning, and across formal and informal learning spaces, a range of cases of technology-supported literacy programmes for youth and adult refugees, migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across the world were presented. The key insights from a close review of these programmes were that technology can help personalise learning by considering learners’ unique needs, can help bring initiatives up to scale, can facilitate pathways to formal education and can create safe spaces for learners to achieve their social, emotional, and cultural goals.

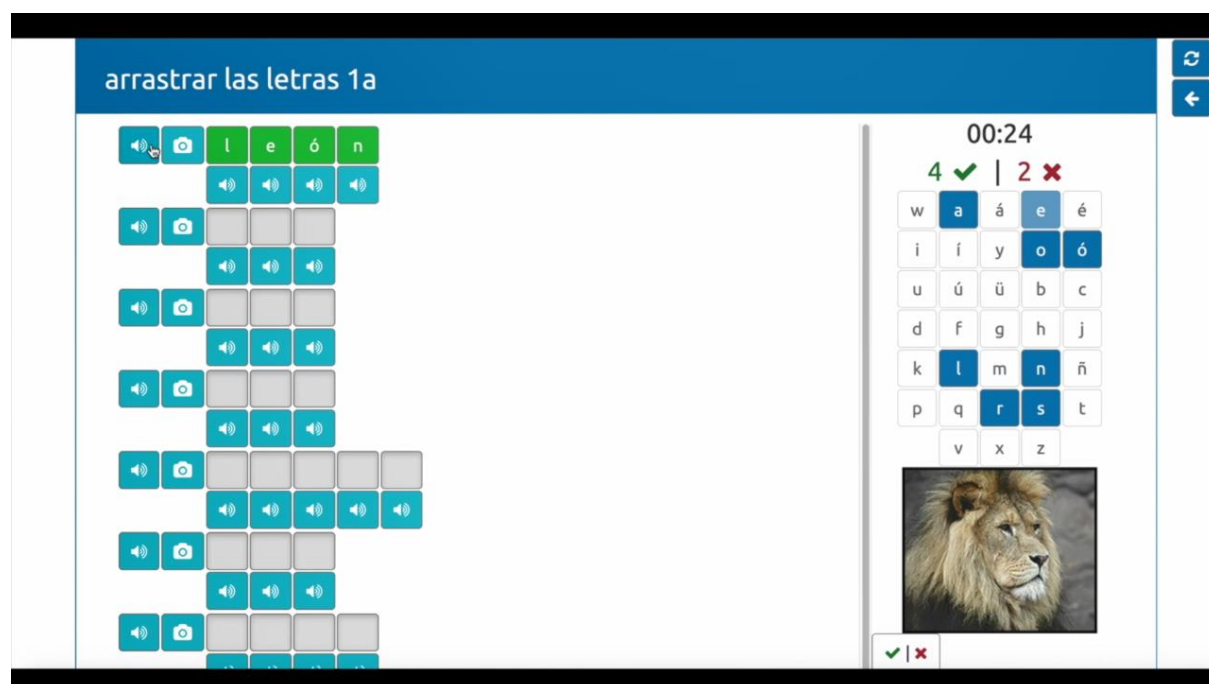


Figure 3. Example of a drag-and-drop exercise for DigLin Spanish presented. (© Friesland College, source: Diglin Spanish Platform, DigLin: The Digital Literacy Instructor, Netherlands)

Minna Pöntys from Finland’s public service media company Yle presented their Finnish and Swedish language learning initiatives for refugees and migrants, which use authentic local media content as its content base. The apps Yle Kielikoulu and Yle Språkskolan are based on the LingvisPlay format originally launched by public service media companies SVT and UR in Sweden as SVT Språkplay and UR Språkplay, with the aim to lower the threshold migrants and refugees to access Swedish and

Finnish media. Niss Jonas Carlsson, founder of Språkkraft, also further elaborated on the LingvisPlay concept and the opportunities it can provide in facilitating language learning through TV shows, news, and children's programmes, but also by using YouTube videos, music (from Spotify and YouTube), e-books, websites and more.

How does Yle Kielikoulu - Yle Språkskolan work?



- The service produces dictionary-like translations
 - Translation appears by clicking on the word in subtitle or by displaying the translations automatically
- Colours in subtitles help to focus on the relevant words of each learning level
 - Green: words known already
 - Yellow: words studied now
 - Red: words to be learned on next levels

Figure 4. Yle Kielikoulu - Yle Språkskolan is one example applying the LingvisPlay format (Språkkraft/ Lingvis foundation) on authentic media. (Source: Presentation made on 20.4.2022 by Minna Pöntys, Strategic Head of Access Services, Yle)

Refugees and other migrants were invited to test run the prototypes showcasing LingvisPlay with the remaining public service broadcasters in the Nordic countries: Ríkisútvarpið (RUV) in Iceland, Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK) in Norway and Danmarks Radio (DR) in Denmark. Some of the feedback from users were as follows:

RUV LingvisPlay prototype: *'This is exactly the kind of service that has been missing for people learning Icelandic! Being able to listen to and read Icelandic texts at the same time, doing 'listening exercises' and getting 'dictionary explanations' will help a lot to improve one's Icelandic level. Watching Icelandic news and TV programmes will also make the language learner get to know the Icelandic culture and help foreigners to become a part of the Icelandic community.'* (Lina, Swiss migrant to Iceland)

NRK LingvisPlay prototype: *'I think it is an excellent way to improve your language skills. People learn best when they are having fun and using their language skills actively. This app not only makes it easier for emerging bilinguals to look up and learn new words using media, but also makes the watching active through all of the activities (flashcards).'* (Svitlana, Ukrainian refugee to Norway)

DR LingvisPlay prototype: *'I think it's useful for migrants to get familiar with the Danish language, since it's a difficult language to learn. I think it's a very useful tool to both learn the vocabulary and the written part as well as the pronunciation and the spoken language. It's very easy to use, very practical and fast.'* (Carla, Spanish migrant to Denmark)

Yet another initiative enabling migrant language learning is Kompis Sverige – a 'buddy programme' that offers low threshold activities for migrants to make social contacts with other members of the local community in Sweden and ensure better integration, while also offering informal opportunities for language practice. Sprogland, by the Danish Red Cross also functions on the principle of a

language café – except it is online and can be accessed by anyone, anywhere. Run by volunteers, the application has had 400+ beneficiaries so far and 7000+ training sessions have been conducted. It also has a language learning version for children called Sprogland Junior.

More specialized digital tools that aim at the integration of migrants and refugees were also presented during the conference, such as Gimara Ltd., a Finnish solution provider that offers digital employment solutions for working life for immigrants in Finland and Hej Främling!, a Swedish charity that introduces refugees to Swedish cultural events with a view to enabling cultural integration.

Media ‘produsage’ and migrant representation

Even as media can be used as a tool to facilitate migrant language learning and integration into Nordic countries, production of dominant media content is still largely in the hands of native Nordic people and the news that is consumed by the majority rarely reflects or represents, with any degree of accuracy, migrant communities, or their problems.

Maarit Jaakkola, Associate Professor at the University of Gothenburg, pointed out the necessity of studying media production and consumption practices in tandem and presented the term ‘produsage’ as a term to encourage simultaneous study on the production, consumption, and usage of media by migrants. Along similar lines, Kerstin Gustafsson Figueroa and Reetta Nousiainen presented their initiatives on expanding diversity in Nordic media structures and mainstream Nordic journalistic content.

Dissatisfied by the inaccurate mainstream journalistic portrayal of Järva (a Stockholm suburb with a high migrant population) as a no-go ‘ghetto’ and crime-prone area, Järva-based Swedish journalist Kerstin Gustafsson Figueroa found herself compelled to start her own local newspaper *Nyhetsbyrå Järva*. As a ‘politically independent but in every way political’ newspaper, *Nyhetsbyrå Järva* seeks to place centre-stage pressing social and human rights issues that are relevant to Järvan residents. Since 2019, the newspaper has also been receiving and training interns, to ensure that young immigrants can explore careers in journalism and see themselves represented in the news they consume. Despite challenges in funding and recognition, *Nyhetsbyrå Järva* has now established itself as a formidable force of local journalism in Sweden.

Similarly, Finnish journalist Reetta Nousiainen noticed that despite the rising diversity of ethnicities on the streets of Helsinki, Finnish newsrooms continued to consist of largely middle-class and exclusively Finnish-speaking journalists. In an attempt towards making newsrooms more diverse and inclusive, Reetta pushed for the introduction of two non-degree programmes in journalism for immigrant journalists at the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. Through bootcamps and intensive courses, with the possibility of funding via stipends, students of these two programmes work on integrating their knowledge of worlds and worldviews outside of Finland with the Finnish tradition and culture of journalism. Despite the time-intensive nature of this programme, Reetta affirms that it is possible to create groups of journalists from diverse cultures and publish a varied range of news stories via Finnish media outlets.

Through these interventions, Nordic newsrooms are seeing more representation from migrant journalists producing diverse content. Nordic newspapers and media channels are beginning to

publish more content that allows migrants to consume news that is relevant to them and encourages them to guard their social, cultural and human rights.

Towards equity, access and inclusion

Across the multiple presentations, the theme of ensuring refugee inclusion in national systems was prominent, which is one of the priorities of both UNESCO (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018), and UNHCR (UNHCR, 2023). It is important that refugees and migrants find themselves included structurally in national education systems, integrated culturally and socially in the host country, while also being given the space to practise their own cultures and speak their native languages.

Echoing these sentiments, Jennifer Roberts, Senior Education Officer at UNHCR, advocated for the use of the additive approach in refugee language education, which respects the identity and culture of refugees while they pursue learning a new language. Another pathway towards increasing language learning for inclusion is to offer multiple formal, informal and non-formal channels for learning for people of different ages. Finally, offering scholarships for university education as an incentive to enrol and succeed in language learning programmes could also be an excellent method to improve migrants' competencies in the host country's language.

One promising example of the encouragement of informal language learning initiatives by public authorities was presented by Sanna Falk from the Swedish municipality of Järfälla, located in the Stockholm metropolitan area. Järfälla is a municipality with higher-than-average socioeconomic segregation and one of its political goals is to strengthen integration and thus decrease segregation. Among other initiatives, the municipality has utilized a type of public funding called 'Idea-based Public Partnerships,' in order to invite civil society organizations to work more closely with the municipality on integration initiatives. These include language cafés, digital competence training and digital language learning solutions based on local media, activities, and information.

A slightly different perspective was provided by Dimitra Makri, Refugee Education Coordinator in the city of Larissa in Greece. In contrast to the Nordic countries, which are generally 'destination' countries for refugees, Greece is considered by most refugees to be a transit country on their way to other destinations within the EU. This perception and practice can negatively affect the attitude towards integration activities such as informal language learning initiatives, which presents challenges, requiring a clear strategy and active involvement from the municipality in arranging opportunities for informal language learning. This includes clearly identifying the social needs of migrants and setting specific theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches.

What all these speakers commonly highlighted was that the importance of public funding and governmental support towards promoting equity, access and inclusion among migrant lifelong learners cannot be understated. They all upheld the central idea that lifelong language learning opportunities (be it through formal, non-formal, or informal channels) must be made available as part of national systems, must include refugee and migrant populations, and must be implemented within these groups in an equitable manner.

Conclusion

In bringing together all these thematic strands, it is evident that adult learning has distinct characteristics that need to be acknowledged when programmes for migrant language learners are designed. Given that adults have competing responsibilities, it is important to maximize opportunities for language learning that are integrated into their daily lives and routines.

For isolated migrant communities, specific measures must be taken to promote language exchange. Multilingualism can be a rich pedagogic resource for migrant language learning, as can 'learning spaces' such as language cafés. Watching television, playing digital games, and reading easy-to-read fiction in the target language can also be promising avenues towards mastering a second language.

In the Nordic context, many newly established initiatives and tools have shown promise in facilitating language learning for migrants using media and technology. However, the issue of representation of migrants and their issues in Nordic newsrooms and news content persists. Public service media could play a leading role both in this matter as well as generally and actively helping migrants to acquire the new language. Furthermore, the need for more formal, informal, and non-formal lifelong learning avenues for migrants, alongside their inclusion in national education systems is also pressing.

Overall, the conference brought to the forefront the vast potential of informal language learning in the context of widespread use of digital technologies and media and its significance in the achievement of the Nordic Vision 2030, as well as calling for a higher priority for the field in international research agenda.

Way forward

The two editions of the conference marked a landmark moment in the emerging field of informal language learning in the Nordic countries, especially against the backdrop of rising numbers of migration in recent times and refugees in Europe. Bringing together experts from across international organizations, civil society, private sector, academia and the government, the conference offered a platform for fruitful thought and discussion on how media technologies can be harnessed for language teaching and learning, in turn promoting migrant integration into host countries. Future conferences could be themed around the opportunities for migrant language learning that arise from recent developments in artificial intelligence, e.g., ChatGPT4.

In conclusion, Rakhat Zholdoshalieva presented three calls to action to ensure that the impact of the conferences was taken forward. Firstly, a dedicated publication on the key themes of the conference could contribute to promotion and advocacy about the relationship between media, migrants, and informal language learning. Second, collaborative, transdisciplinary research on informal language learning, media and migration studies in Nordic countries was called for. Finally, cross-sectoral partnerships across universities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and migrant associations were recommended at a larger scale to ensure that more effective programmes for migrant language learners are funded, designed, and facilitated and promoted.

Key insights and reflections

- Informal learning plays a significant role in the language learning of migrants and thus public policy needs to provide increased opportunities for informal learning in addition to all the effort already put into formal language training.
- Language learning for adult migrants differs from children's learning and requires more consideration of the complexity of migrants' backgrounds, social situations, and employment needs.
- Data on adult migrant language learners and their participation in learning programmes is scarce and efforts should be made towards improved data collection and reporting of migrant literacy statistics.
- Non-literate and low-literate migrants have specific needs that need to be accommodated when designing digital language learning solutions.
- Multilingualism and audio-visual media input can be great resources in facilitating informal language learning among migrants and must be integrated into migrant language learning pedagogy.
- The digital landscape allows for many 'learning spaces', where the traditional and formal learning space of the physical classroom is only one of many opportunities for language learning.
- Mass-media provides great opportunities for language learning, as indicated by experiences from learning using television programmes, computer games, news, and others. Getting familiar with the host country's mass media is also a key to better integration. Public service media corporations have an opportunity to play a key role here, and public policy should, through clear mandates, encourage public service media to actively take up this role.
- The workplace can provide many opportunities for language learning, but misconceptions about how interaction in the workplace happens can overstate the significance of employment for language learning, if deliberate action is not taken to ensure that these opportunities arise.
- Informal language learning initiatives are often carried out by volunteers and civil society organizations, with or without public funding. The value of these efforts is not always reflected in the share of public funding provided for the language training of migrants.
- Lifelong language learning opportunities (formal, non-formal or informal) must be made available as part of national systems, must include refugee and migrant populations, and must be implemented within these groups in an inclusive and equitable manner.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Agenda (May 2022)

The full agenda including links to video recordings of presentations can be found here:

<https://sprakkraft.se/agenda-iin.html>

Media and informal language learning for migrants		
Venue: VSK – Vestegnens Sprog & Kompetencecenter, Skolevej 6, 2600 Glostrup, Denmark		
Date: 20 May 2022		
Time	Presentation	Speaker/representative and affiliation
10:00	Introduction and welcome	Niss Jonas Carlsson, Språkkraft, Sweden, and Anna-Maria Mosekilde, The Nordic Council of Ministers, Denmark
10:10	Migrant story	Maciej Balicki, Vestegnens Sprog- og kompetencecenter, Denmark
10:20	Literacy and language education of the people-on-the-move from a lifelong learning perspective	Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, UIL, Germany
10:50	The role of language in refugee inclusion and integration	Jennifer Roberts, Senior Education Officer, UNHCR, Copenhagen
11:20	Migrant story	Bassam Arslan
11:30	Introduction to informal language learning	Hayo Reinders, Anaheim University, USA
Lunch		
	Public Service Media and Migrants: Yle Kielikoulu/Yle Språkskolan	Minna Pöntys, Yle, Finland
	Case: LingvisPlay Format explained - scaling and integrating informal language learning	Niss Jonas Carlsson, Språkkraft, Sweden

	A Comparative Study of Language Training for Adult Immigrants in the Nordics we	Louise Fabricious, Senior Research Analyst, Oxford Research
	Language cafés: Findings from a research project	Silvia Kunitz, Karlstad University, Sweden
Breakout sessions		
14:20	<i>Track 1: Synergies between formal and informal language learning</i> <i>Moderators – Lars Nordborg, Laura Ruuskanen</i>	
	Informal language learning and the LASLLIAM reference guide (Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants)	Rola Naeb, Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK
	<i>Meeting initiatives, mentors and language cafés</i>	
	Kompis Sverige	Johan Bäckström, Kompis Sverige, Sweden
	Sprogland	Nynne Reenberg, Red Cross, Denmark
	Gimara	Raisa Haikala, Gimara, Finland
	MiR	Whyn Lam, MiR, Norway
	Hej främling	Norea Thomas, Hej Främling, Sweden
14:20	<i>Track 2: Media, migrants and informal language learning</i> <i>Moderators – Maarit Jaakkola, Niss Jonas Carlsson</i>	
	Representation in media: training immigrant journalists	Reetta Nousiainen, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland

	Migrants as media audience - Research gap regarding media consumption patterns of migrants	Maarit Jaakkola, Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
	Migrants and the role of public service media	Alex Elliot, Ríkisútvarpið (RÚV), Iceland
	Funding model change in Sweden for public service	Niss Jonas Carlsson, Språkkraft, Sweden
14:20	Track 3: Technology and informal language learning Moderators – Henrik Melin, Annapurna Ayyappan	
	UNESCO-UIL Global Landscape Review	Annapurna Ayyappan, UIL, Germany
	VHS Lernportal	Michael Thiel, Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, Germany
	Språkbryggan – a project for more universal access to a digital solution for informal language learning	Henrik Melin, Språkkraft, Sweden
16:00	Sharing results of breakout sessions	
16.30	Panel discussion	Rola Naeb, Hayo Reinders, Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Louise Fabricius, Minna Pöntys, Silvia Kunitz, Michael Thiel
17.00	Preparation for the next conference	

Annex 2: Agenda (December 2022)

The full agenda including links to video recordings of presentations can be found here:

<https://sprakkraft.se/agenda-no.html>

Media and informal language learning for migrants		
Venue: Voksenåsen, Ullveien 4, 0791 Oslo, Norway		
Date: 9 December 2022		
Time	Presentation	Speaker/representative and affiliation
08:30 – 09.00	Welcome and registration	
09:00	Introduction	Niss Jonas Carlsson, Språkkraft, Sweden
09:19	Migrant story	Claudette Vigueras, MiR, Norway
09:20	Results from a comparative study of language training for adult immigrants in the Nordics	Louise Fabricius, Oxford Research, Denmark
	The role of digital language learning apps in migrant learning	Cindy Blanco, Duolingo, USA
10:10	Migrant story	Burak and Neslihan Gultekin (in Swedish), Sweden
Coffee break		
10:40	Presenting LingvisPlay prototype for Icelandic with RÚV	Niss Jonas Carlsson, Språkkraft, Sweden
11:00	Research on the media consumption of migrants in the Nordic countries	Maarit Jaakkola, Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
11:20	TV, subtitles, captions and language learning	Elke Peters, KU Leuven, Belgium
Lunch		

12:50	Multilingualism as a resource: linking in and out of school practices	Joke Dewilde, University of Oslo, Norway
13.20	The impact of social and psychological factors on second language proficiency of French long-term residents in Sweden: focus on informal language engagement	Fanny Forsberg Lundell and Klara Arvidsson, Stockholm University, Sweden
Breakout sessions		
14:00	Track 1: The role of municipalities in informal language learning for migrants Moderator: Henrik Melin	
	Strategic partnerships and cooperation with local civil society organizations (15 min)	Sanna Falk, Järfälla Municipality, Sweden
	The case of informal language learning for migrants and refugees in Central Greece: Municipality of Larissa	Miss Dimitra Makri, Member of the refugees and immigrants' inclusion working group in Larissa, Refugee Education Coordinator (Ministry of Education) and member of the scientific group of Citizens' University of Larissa, Greece
14:00	Track 2: Informal language learning in the workplace Moderators: Lars Nordborg, Laura Ruuskanen	
	The workplace as an environment for second language learning	Michael Svendsen Pedersen, Roskilde University, Denmark
	Designing and implementing digital language learning games for the workplace	Louise Tranekjær, Roskilde University, Denmark
	Arbetsplatslärande och språklig utveckling	Marie Ardström, Kravmärkt Yrkesroll, Sweden (non-participation)
14:00	Track 3: Media and migrants — consumption and representation Moderators: Niss Jonas Carlsson, Maarit Jaakkola	

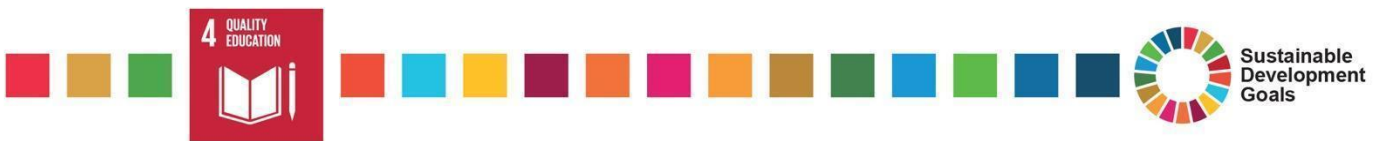
	Gaming and informal learning of English among Swedish youth	Pia Sundqvist, University of Oslo, Norway
	Nyhetsbyrån Järva, an initiative for local journalistic coverage of areas with high share of migrant population	Kerstin Gustafsson Figueroa, Nyhetsbyrån Järva, Sweden
	Informal language learning through YouTube	Marie Rödemark, Sweden
15:30	Sharing results of breakout sessions	
16:00	Language, acquisition & the power of pleasure reading	Professor Stephen Krashen, University of Southern California School of Education, USA
17:00	Panel discussion and way forward	Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, UIL, Germany
18:00	End of conference and vote of thanks	

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