

Find three Norwegian translations of the English word "waffle": Oversettelse i norske engelskbøker på videregående

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The aim of this project (work in its start-up phase) is to investigate the use of translation as a language learning activity in English (ESL/EFL) textbooks for Norwegian upper secondary schools. Although translation in various forms has been used in language learning tasks for a long time, it has also been viewed as a less productive and beneficial way of learning a language (see for example Cook 2007; House, 2009 and Tsagari & Floros, 2013). The “new” or renewed emphasis on “knowledge of similarities between English and other languages with which the pupil is familiar in language learning” in the curriculum (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017) highlights multilingualism and, in my opinion, opens up for potentially interesting ways of using translation in language learning activities.

Some previous studies of Norwegian foreign language textbooks indicate that the language learning tasks do not take into consideration that the pupils are very likely to have prior language learning experience, nor do they effectively draw on multilingual knowledge (see for example Haukås 2017). Marcus Axelsson and Camilla Bjørke at Høgskolen i Østfold are currently investigating Norwegian textbooks for German, French and Spanish as foreign languages in lower secondary school in order to find out whether pupils’ multilingual resources are taken into consideration in language learning (translation) activities. I would like to add the potentially slightly different perspective of English textbooks, where learners can be assumed to be at a more advanced level in secondary school.

We aim to investigate what types of translation tasks can be found, and what purpose they seem to serve. We also want to see if the types of tasks and the purpose of the tasks change over time (as, one would assume, a greater awareness of the benefits of multilingualism has developed). The basis of this investigation is empirical material collected by Åsmund Strømme Bakosgjelten in his MA (2022). In his thesis, Bakosgjelten collected data from 19 English textbooks for upper secondary school published between 1985 and 2020, and only four of those books did not contain any translation task (2022: 45). In his initial investigation, Bakosgjelten used the broad categories “grammar focus”, “vocabulary focus”, “life outside school” and “understanding of text”, and we will be working on refining these categories for the current study. As a potential avenue for further research, it would also be interesting to compare the findings to Swedish and Danish textbooks for English, in light of differences in curriculum focus.

References

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