“They rulling R”. Language awareness and emergent Danish in the multilingual classroom in lower secondary school

Abstract
In this article, we illustrate how language awareness emerges and evolves through social interaction when students and teachers collaboratively construct beliefs, analyses and understandings of linguistic phenomena and the concept of language as such. The article is a case study of specific forms of manifestation of language awareness in a particular plurilingual context, focusing primarily on one particular student, and considering the ways in which he engages with language in the situated and evolving context of plurilingual language weeks in year 9. The study is based on an extensive selection of empirical data gathered as part of a larger research project investigating language awareness across educational levels, and revolves around a student whose ways of manifesting language awareness in the eyes of the authors constituted a rich empirical point for several reasons: the emergent Danish which shapes his manifestations of language awareness in unexpected ways; the observable social origin of particular loci of metalinguistic attention, and the ways in which his manifestations of language awareness are both grounded in, shaped by and ultimately shape his position in group work. We analyse each of these perspectives on our focal student's manifestations of language awareness in three analytical steps, drawing on empirical classroom data in the form of student worksheets, notes and discussions in group work, as well as interview data. We conclude by discussing how the reflections of this three-step analysis affect our theoretical and empirical notion of language awareness as enacted and emergent in the classroom context.

Keywords: Language awareness, multilingual learning, pluralistic approaches, plurilingual teaching
“De røller R”. Sproglig opmærksomhed og dansk på vej i det flersprogede klasserum i udskolingens

Sammendrag


Nøgleord: Sproglig opmørsomhed, sproglig bevidsthed, flersprogethed, flersprogethedsdidaktik, tværsproglighed

Introduction

This article deals with language awareness as it manifests itself in the language classroom. Based on analyses of classroom data from a multilingual lower secondary school in Denmark, we present a conceptualization of language awareness as shaped by the individual student’s linguistic biography and repertoire. Language awareness shows up here as an inherently social and contextual phenomenon, emerging through classroom activities over time and shaped by group dynamics and social relations in the classroom.

The article draws on insights from the Plurilingual Education – Language Awareness Across Educational Levels research project. Through a multiple case study design, the projectexplores language awareness (LA) across educational levels, thus aiming to cast a light on the development of LA over time. This substudy looks at the emergence of LA within a smaller time scale: manifestations of LA through classroom interactions and group work during two project weeks.
This article draws on empirical material from a multilingual Year 9 class in a public lower secondary school. We take one specific student as our analytical point of departure a 15-year-old boy of Somali background. We refer to him as Abshir and consider his ways of manifesting language awareness an empirical rich point (Agar, 2000) involving an interesting tension between the strikingly sophisticated content and its expression in emergent Danish. Our choice of the term emergent Danish rather than alternative terms such as L2 Danish is in line with our epistemological point of departure drawing on complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008:157; 2019). By referring to Abshir’s Danish as emergent, we wish to highlight the dynamic and situated nature of the linguistic practices in the classroom while also acknowledging the ways in which Abshir’s Danish differs from standard Danish.

The quote in the title of the article “They rulling R” serves to illustrate the multifaceted nature of Abshir’s manifestations of language awareness, identifying a salient phonetic feature and describing it in emergent Danish with clear second language traits. We analyse Abshir’s linguistic biography and complex manifestations of language awareness in combination with a focus on the social emergence of a specific affordance for language awareness. This sheds new light on the relationship between classroom activities and interaction, group dynamics and individual linguistic repertoires, suggesting a complexity-oriented perspective for future classroom-based LA research.

Theoretical points of departure

Language awareness research is a diverse field, as illustrated by recent reviews such as Frijns, Sierens, Avermaet, Sercu, and Van Gorp (2018); Simard and Gutiérrez (2018) and Svalberg (2018). The concept may be defined in many different ways, all somehow involving some sort of attention to (Van Lier, 2004) or engagement with (Svalberg, 2018) language.

Scholars of language awareness and metalinguistic awareness take different approaches. Some investigate metalinguistic awareness through standardised testing or psycholinguistic experiments (e.g. Bialystok, 1991, 2011, 2015; Jessner, 1999, 2008, 2018). Such research to some extent views language awareness as a subdomain of metacognition (Haukås, 2018) and thus takes a view of LA focused on the individual and on cognition. Our approach in this article is different, focusing on LA as emergent, shaped by social interaction and available plurilingual affordances (Krogager Andersen, 2021) in interplay with individual students’ linguistic repertoires (Busch, 2017) and forms of engagement (Laursen & Daugaard, 2023). Previous studies using classroom-based approaches have shown that students at all ages engage with language in a multitude of ways, e.g. by comparing words, signs and grammatical categories across languages (Krogager Andersen, 2020, submitted; Laursen et al., 2018; Little & Kirwan,
2018), composing dual-language texts (Little & Kirwan, 2018), engaging in metalanguage conversations (Dufva & Alanen, 2005; Laursen & Daugaard, 2023) or language-related episodes (Thue Vold, 2018), or by drawing and reflecting on personal language portraits (Busch, 2017; Snoder, 2021). All of these may be considered manifestations of language awareness. The strength of these classroom-based studies lies in the accomplishment of connecting the abstract theoretical construct of language awareness to concrete, observable student practices. Furthermore, since such studies are placed in authentic classroom contexts rather than in experimental settings, they allow the tracing of students’ loci of language awareness over (short or long) stretches of time, and thus offer a situated, contextualised view of the relationship between language teaching and learning and language awareness.

Language awareness and plurilingual education
In the PE-LAL project (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2022), language awareness is investigated in the context of plurilingual education, drawing on pluralistic approaches to language teaching which attempt to build bridges between languages through integrated language didactics, intercomprehension and awakening to languages (Candelier et al., 2013). A common denominator for such approaches is the additive view of language learning and a view of the linguistic repertoire as dynamic, flexible and interconnected (Marshall & Moore, 2018).

Since the pluralistic approaches place language at the centre of attention, including a range of languages and comparing different aspects of languages, they are well suited to establishing plurilingual affordances for language awareness, defined in accordance with Krogager Andersen (2021) as plurilingual linguistic and metalinguistic resources and practices whose presence in the classroom invite language aware practices on behalf of the students (see also Drachmann, 2023; Engen, Kulbrandstad, & Lied, 2018). Examples of such affordances may be linguistic and metalinguistic input in the form of worksheets or posters and discussions facilitated by the teacher, but also ideas or questions emerging in student interactions or even in off-task comments or activities.

In this article, we draw on a three-dimensional model of language awareness developed by the PE-LAL project group (Daryai-Hansen et al., 2022) and recapped below. According to this definition:

- **Metalinguistic awareness** may be characterised as an awareness observable in a range of metalinguistic practices, focussing on language at a metalevel, i.e. taking linguistic form and/or meaning as its object. Metalinguistic awareness includes explicit reflection on and knowledge about language as well as metalinguistic analysis and metalanguage.

- **Practical language awareness** is a term used to describe any linguistic practice indicating awareness of language, characterised in the words of Van Lier (2004) by ”an element of active control”. Such practices may take the form of for example language play (Laursen, 2019; Van Lier, 2004),
linguistic fantasy and creativity (Krogager Andersen, 2020; Van Lier, 2004) or any other “willful manipulation of linguistic resources” (Van Lier, 1998, p. 132).

- **Critical language awareness** may be understood in accordance with van Lier (2004) as any practice involving a critical perspective on language and language use, focusing primarily on social or ideological dimensions, and draws on the ideas of Fairclough (1992). The concept of critical language awareness is relevant to current discussions of critical literacy across the curriculum (Frønes, Folkeryd, Børhaug, & Sillasen, 2022), but will not be developed further here.

Based on Daryai-Hansen et al. (2022)

In this article, we focus specifically on the metalinguistic and practical dimensions of language awareness, since these dimensions are the ones prominently manifested through different forms of engagement with language (Svalberg, 2018) in these classroom data.

**Methodological and analytical framework**

**Contextualisation: Language weeks in Year 9 and the focal student Abshir**

A central methodological component in the PE-LAL project is language weeks, planned in collaboration between a member of the research team and language teachers in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school. This article focuses on language weeks in a Year 9 class in a public lower secondary school in a large city in Denmark. The school is located in an inner city neighbourhood characterised by considerable linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity. It is known for its strategic focus on language teaching across the curriculum and features an unusually broad language curriculum in comparison to other public schools, including mandatory teaching in Danish and English, a choice between German or French and an additional optional Spanish class. While the school has a tradition for participation in research and development initiatives related to language teaching and for collaboration between language teachers in various language subjects, the school had no prior experience with plurilingual education as conceptualised in the PE-LAL project.

The language weeks unfolded over two consecutive weeks. During the language weeks, all ordinary teaching was suspended for four out of five days a week and replaced by a series of plurilingual themes:
Table 1: Overview of language weeks in Year 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plurilingual theme</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
<th>Day 6</th>
<th>Day 7</th>
<th>Day 8</th>
<th>Group Interviews 1</th>
<th>Group Interviews 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plurilingual theme</td>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Day 8</td>
<td>Group Interviews 1</td>
<td>Group Interviews 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a language?</td>
<td>Linguis-tic diversity</td>
<td>History of language</td>
<td>Scandinavian languages</td>
<td>Dialects &amp; socioc-lects</td>
<td>Language &amp; power</td>
<td>Language &amp; culture</td>
<td>Language &amp; social media</td>
<td>Language workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plurilingual theme</td>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Day 8</td>
<td>Group Interviews 1</td>
<td>Group Interviews 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The language weeks were planned in close collaboration between Author 1 and a group of five teachers, ordinarily teaching German, French, English, Danish and Social Studies. They were designed to include themes which are not ordinarily included in the language curriculum such as *What is a language?* or *Linguistic diversity*, and also included themes which are part of the language curriculum, but not usually taught from a plurilingual perspective, such as *Scandinavian languages*. Finally, themes were developed to invite reflection on students’ plurilingual repertoires such as *Our languages* which included the creation and discussion of personal language portraits, or the *Language workshop* where students taught each other phrases in languages they knew. Each of the five participating teachers was responsible for teaching one or more half or full days, and the plurilingual themes were divided between the teachers on the basis of their preferences and areas of expertise. During the language weeks, Author 1 conducted two rounds of semi-structured group interviews with selected students: the first mid-way through the language weeks and the second at the end.

Table 2: Group interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group interview</th>
<th>Selected students</th>
<th>Interview themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Group A: Abshir, Pista, Gunhild Group B: Sarah, Nora, Laura</td>
<td>Student perceptions about language and language learning in general plurilingual teaching in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Group A: Abshir, Pista, Gunhild Group B: Sarah, Nora, Jane¹</td>
<td>Similar to interview 1, with the addition of questions about the role of languages in society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The didactic approach in the language weeks was based on an investigative, holistic approach to language (Krogager Andersen, 2020), and activities were chosen, facilitated and designed in order to invite students to engage with language in many different ways, aiming to foster curiosity, metalinguistic and

¹ Since Laura fell ill with corona, she was replaced by Jane in group interview 2
critical reflection, language play and linguistic experimentation. Teaching activities included picture-sorting tasks; watching video and film clips and discussing them from different viewpoints; producing language portraits; producing sentences in Swahili based on a mini grammar and lexicon; inductively analysing cross-linguistic similarities in lexicon, morphology and syntax; and discussion of the student’s own and others’ use of linguistic varieties such as dialects, slang and multiethnolect. (Teaching materials used may be found here: (project web site removed for peer review)) For the duration of the project weeks, students were organised in working groups by the teacher. However, since the study was conducted during the corona epidemic, there were some changes in the groups due to illness.

The empirical material produced over the course of the language weeks in Year 9 is described in the overview below:

Table 3: Overview of empirical material in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom observation</th>
<th>Texts and artefacts</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Field notes (8 sets)</td>
<td>• Language portraits (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Photos (33)</td>
<td>• Students’ written texts (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Audio recordings (approx. 33 hours x 6 channels – one teacher, five groups of students)</td>
<td>• Student worksheets and notes (50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Audio recordings of group interviews with selected students (4 x 45 minutes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pool of empirical material was collected by Author 1, who was present throughout the language weeks, taking field notes, securing audio recordings of both classroom discourse and group work, talking to students, and photographing and to some extent collecting student work sheets.

Already during the observations, one particular student caught Author 1’s attention. Abshir is a 15-year-old boy born in Somalia. He spent a large part of his childhood in Ethiopia and eventually came to Denmark with his family as a refugee. At the time of field work, he had been in Denmark for three years and had joined his current class one and a half years earlier after spending almost two years in a sheltered reception class. On the one hand, Abshir came across as a quiet and soft-spoken boy of few words, rarely drawing attention to himself. On the other hand, Author 1 noted how Abshir seemed to show engagement in more subtle ways. He followed the teachers attentively, and could be heard murmuring to himself during teaching and seen writing private notes. When approached directly by the teachers or Author 1, Abshir willingly engaged in conversations about language and asked highly sophisticated questions in rather emergent Danish.
Ethical considerations
The PE-LAL project adheres to The Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, and data has been collected, stored and handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. Prior to data collection, teachers, students and parents were informed about the project’s intentions and purposes, and written consent was obtained from parents and informed consent from all participating students. In reporting on this study, student identity is protected through use of pseudonyms and blurring of names in student texts and artefacts. The study is based on close analysis of a selected focal student, Abshir. This naturally involves disclosing detailed information about Abshir’s life trajectory, language repertoire and ways of engaging in classroom activities, as it is customary in research depending on language portraits. We have strived to provide only the information necessary for our analytical purposes and to represent Abshir in a nuanced and non-harmful way, focusing not only on Abshir as an individual but on Abshir as part of classroom activities and dynamics.

Analytical process
The above observations of Abshir became the starting point for the analysis in this article, undertaken by Author 1 in collaboration with Author 2. Unlike Author 1, Author 2 is not a core member of the PE-LAL research team, but a member of the project’s national advisory board, and Author 2 was neither involved in the planning nor the execution of the language weeks in Abshir’s class. This dual gaze – one looking from within the PE-LAL research team, one approaching the language weeks from an outside-in position – has been a useful entry point for the analysis.

The analytical process can be described as abductive (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), since it involved an iterative movement between theory and empirical material and a gradual development of the analytical focus and a rethinking of the theoretically informed point of entry (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, 4–8). It can be illustrated as follows:
Based on this analytical process, we present the findings of an analysis in three steps. In the first analytical step, we present the focal student Abshir, analysing his linguistic repertoire and emergent Danish language. In the second analytical step we focus on a particular linguistic phenomenon – the pronunciation of the letter ‘r’ – which becomes a salient locus of metalinguistic attention throughout the language weeks, not only for Abshir, but at a classroom level, and we show how Abshir’s metalinguistic attention is intricately interwoven with classroom activities and dynamics over time. Finally, in the third analytical step, we return to Abshir and explore his role and ways of participating in group work and classroom interaction, and trace the shifts in his position during the language weeks, moving from a bystander to an expert position through diverse manifestations of language awareness.

Analytical step 1: Abshir – emergent Danish in a multilingual repertoire
In the following, we introduce Abshir using a language portrait he produced during the first days of the language weeks.

A language portrait typically consists of a generic body silhouette which a language user is invited to colour in order to illustrate the languages and linguistic varieties in his or her linguistic repertoire, subsequently adding written comments (see also Busch, 2018; Krumm & Jenkins, 2001; Daugaard et al, 2018). As a teaching activity, the language portrait constitutes an affordance for awareness raising and recognition of students’ linguistic repertoires in the classroom; as a methodology for the production of empirical research data, it invites a first-person perspective on a student’s linguistic repertoire (Busch, 2012; Daugaard, 2019: Daugaard et al, 2018). In this context, the students created the language portraits
on the basis of a photo of themselves (for worksheet, see Krogager Andersen, 2022).

Abshir’s language portrait contains Danish, Somali, English, Arabic and “Amara”. Danish is given the colour red and placed in the legs of the silhouette, and in the accompanying written comments (in emergent Danish), Abshir explains that he always uses Danish outside of the family. For Somali, Abshir has chosen the colour brown. Somali covers the head and torso of his silhouette, and Abshir writes that he speaks Somali at home. The left arm of the silhouette is filled by English in black, and Abshir reports using English when watching YouTube and listening to music and to talk to some of his friends. Finally, the right arm is divided between “Amara” in grey pencil in the upper arm and Arabic in blue in the lower arm. Arabic is reportedly used with friends who do not speak Danish and “Amara” sometimes with his family.

Abshir’s slightly unconventional language term “Amara” – apparently using an ethnonym as a glossonym – most likely refers to the Amharic language spoken by the Amhara people in Ethiopia. In the first group interview, Abshir explains that he went to primary school in Ethiopia for 4 years. He elaborates on the language portrait saying that he understands several languages, but speaks only four languages. While he is able to understand and speak some “Amara”, he is not familiar with Amharic writing. On the other hand, he claims to be able to write some Arabic, and during classroom observations, he is seen producing both Arabic written signs and writing Arabic using Latin letters.

Overall, there seems to a high level of correspondence between Abshir’s self-reported language repertoire in the language portrait and his actual language practices observed during the language weeks. As stressed by Abshir himself, his predominant language at school is Danish, and he talks, listens, reads and writes Danish throughout the school day. But he also continuously draws on other parts of his linguistic repertoire. He willingly reads Arabic aloud in class; he is seen writing both Arabic signs and latinised Arabic, he speaks and reads Somali, and he readily talks about politeness terms in Amharic.
When it comes to Danish, Abshir had no prior knowledge of the language before his arrival in Denmark and has been learning Danish for three years. In the interviews, Abshir several times exclaims that it was “mega hard” for him to learn Danish. Nevertheless, Abshir in three years managed to acquire Danish language competences allowing him to be schooled in and through Danish at Year 9 level across the curriculum, and his teachers expect him to pass the exams in Danish, English and Math, formally granting access to upper secondary education by the end of the school year. While this is a remarkable achievement in the light of persistent descriptions of performance gaps between students with Danish as a first and second language (see also Beuchert, Christensen & Jensen, 2020; for a critical discussion, see Holm & Ahrenkiel, 2018 or Holm & Laursen, 2011), Abshir’s Danish may still be described as emergent and bears distinct second language traits in writing as well as in speech, and his oral production of Danish is characterized by an unmistakably Somali accent.

Abshir’s emergent Danish shapes his ways of participation during the language weeks, and on several occasions the Danish language of instruction and interaction in class appears to provide challenges to Abshir – during whole class discussions, when working individually and in group work. Throughout the language weeks, Abshir most of the time works in a group consisting of himself and two girls, Nora and Sarah. These three students form a linguistically and socially diverse group. While Abshir has a refugee background and is a relative newcomer to Danish, Nora has an all-Danish family background and is characterized by her teachers as an academic high performer, whereas Sarah has a mixed Danish-Vietnamese family background and dyslexia. Nora’s linguistic repertoire includes English, French, some Spanish and even some Russian besides Danish, whereas Sarah speaks some Korean, some German, and bits of Japanese and Chinese beside her home languages Danish and Vietnamese.

The three students also have different styles of interaction and participation. During group work, Nora and Sarah appear markedly more talkative than Abshir, who in comparison seems rather quiet. The girls also write more and faster on their worksheets than Abshir. This difference is obvious in the example below, taken from group work on Day 4 focusing on Scandinavian languages. The students have watched videoclips from the Norwegian series *Skam* and the Swedish film *Fucking Åmål* and subsequently discuss four questions related to the
intelligibility of clips and write individual responses on their work sheet. Items 2–4 show the three students’ worksheets:

**Item 2: Nora’s worksheet**

**Item 3: Sarah’s worksheet**

**Item 4: Abshir’s worksheet**

A quick glance suffices to note that there are striking differences, quantitative as well as qualitative, in the Danish texts produced by the three students. While Nora and Sarah have both produced elaborate written responses in 6 of 8 cells, Abshir has merely managed to write brief responses in the two cells for the first question: *Do you understand what the characters are saying? Why/why not?*

In his brief responses, Abshir initially writes “yes”, followed by an important modification: “Not so much when they speak too fast”.

From classroom observations, we know that speed of speech presents a general challenge to Abshir – not only when listening to Norwegian and Swedish, but also in everyday Danish. In the excerpt below Abshir describes his initial experience with speed in spoken Danish. In the context of the language workshops on Day 8 towards the end of the language weeks, Abshir has successfully been teaching a small group of classmates – Norah, Sarah and Jane – Somali. The teacher walks by and asks how it went:
In the excerpt, Sarah and Jane collaboratively construct speed of speech as a major obstacle for the intelligibility of new languages. Abshir eagerly agrees with the girls’ evaluation. But for him, the primary experience of people speaking too fast for him to make sense of it is tied to his first encounter with Danish and not merely to Scandinavian and other languages during the language weeks. This illustrates how being new to Danish influences his possibilities for participation in school. However, as we will see in the next step of the analysis, although Abshir’s emergent Danish influences and shapes his ways of manifesting language awareness during the language weeks, it by no means constitutes a hindrance.

Analytical step 2: “Rulling R”

While reading and listening through the empirical material, Abshir’s attention to the pronunciation of ‘r’ sprung to our attention as a recurring rich point (Agar,
2000), and we decided to trace this specific object of awareness throughout the language weeks. To this end, we compiled a series of extracts focusing on Abshir’s and his classmates’ metalinguistic awareness of this specific linguistic phenomenon. In this section of our analysis, we zoom in on the rolling r and show how Abshir’s awareness of the rolling r is shaped through interaction in conversations, group work, individual work and whole-class conversations, presenting a chronological series of examples where ‘r’ is the object of students’ attention.

In the excerpt below, taken from the first round of group interviews, Abshir talks to Pista, a classmate with Hungarian-Danish background. The boys discuss how some languages are easier to learn than others:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 6: Roll on the accent</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance (our translation to English)</th>
<th>Danish original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abshir</td>
<td>French and Span-eh... Spani-Spanish, it is very easy to learn because, you know, my tongue it can, what’s it called... it is very easy for my tongue to learn, yeah</td>
<td>Fransk og Span-øh... Spani-spansk, det er meget nemt at lære... fordi, du ved, min tungte det kan, hvad hedder det... det er meget sådan nemt for min tungte at lære, jaer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pista</td>
<td>It can roll on the accent</td>
<td>Den kan rulle på accenten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this exchange, we see how Pista introduces a slightly unconventional version of the Danish expression “rulle på r’et” (literally: “roll on the ’r’”), referring to the [r] pronunciation of ‘r’ in contrast to Danish [ʁ]. Pista’s phrase “roll on the accent” functions as an acknowledgement of Abshir’s somewhat hesitant description of his tongue’s perceived aptness to pronounce French and Spanish.

The following day, the attention to rolling r resurfaces. The class works with Scandinavian languages, and Abshir, Nora and Sarah are trying to come up with an answer for the task Give a piece of advice for someone wishing to sound Swedish or Norwegian. Nora proposes: “A good piece of advice if you want to learn Swedish could be to roll on the letters and speak fast”. Sarah explicitly agrees, while Abshir does not comment at the time. The following day, the group discusses different dialects of English. Abshir focuses on the Liverpool pronunciation: “I noticed that when they say you know ’sick’, they say [χ]. [srχ] you know, they say [χ]”. Nora describes the dialect by saying “they roll a bit on their r’s and kind of a different vowel”. Abshir agrees, but does not comment further at the time. However, later this day, the following description surfaces in his handwritten notes about two oral Danish dialect samples he has been listening to, from the locations Skellerup (Eastern Jutland) and Sønder Bork (Western Jutland):
The spelling in Abshir’s notes shows various deviations from Standard Danish. The alternative vowel forms (“røller” for Standard Danish ruller, “luder” for Standard Danish lyder) seem to mirror Abshir’s spoken Danish which has a clear accent. The emergent nature of Abshir’s Danish may also be reflected in the fact that he refers to the place name as “der bork” rather than Sønder Bork – a reading which is probably influenced by the fact that the entire dialect map is not fully visible on his screen (cf. Item 8). Regardless of these challenges with the Danish language, however, Abshir has integrated the metalinguistic concept of the rolling r into his emergent Danish, using it actively in the alternative written form “They rulling R” which we met in the title of this article.

Over the following days, we see the concept of the rolling r surfacing in many students’ descriptions of different languages, here expressed in a range of different written notes taken from various students’ worksheets on Day 7 (rendered verbatim):
Item 9: Attention to rolling r in student worksheets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Our translation to English</th>
<th>Student’s original writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>&quot;R” where you roll it</td>
<td>&quot;R” vor man ruller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>that sound where you roll on “r”</td>
<td>den der lyd hvor man ruller på ”r”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pista</td>
<td>Roll your tongue</td>
<td>Rulle med tungen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>Rolling r’s</td>
<td>Rullende r’er</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These occurrences show that the concept of the rolling r has gained salience for several students in the class and is actively used in their metalinguistic descriptions.

In the final group interview, Abshir returns to the rolling r when talking about the oral dialect samples, saying:

Item 10: They roll the ’r’ a lot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original utterance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But… wh- (laughs) when you listen, then they, it was sw- I think it was sw- I thought it was Swedish at first because they roll the ‘r’ a lot, those eh dialects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men… nå- (griner), når man lytter, så de, det var s- jeg tror det var sv- jeg troede det var svensk først, fordi de ruller r’et meget, de der øh dialekter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, we notice how the expression “roll the R” is used by Abshir in spontaneous speech. This shows how the concept of the rolling r remains a salient locus of metalinguistic attention and reflection, even in the aftermath of the teaching activity focusing on dialects.

The prevalence of examples relating to the rolling r shows how this concept and the different pronunciations of ‘r’ experienced by the students constitute an affordance for language awareness, in the sense that these different pronunciations gain salience for the students and are progressively noticed and mentioned by an increasing number of students, who make use of the concept of the rolling r as a tool for thinking and talking about language.

Analytical step 3: From bystander to language teacher

In the last step of the analysis, we return to Abshir and focus on his position in the group and track the shifts in position over the course of the language weeks in the light of Abshir’s contributions to the collaborative manifestations of language awareness.

On Day 1, where the groups have just been formed, and Abshir, Nora and Sara work together for the first time during the language weeks, the teacher asks the groups to name all the languages in which they can say hello and goodbye. Nora and Sarah quickly start brainstorming and writing notes until Nora after a couple
of minutes realises that Abshir’s linguistic repertoire might also be a valuable addition:

**Item 11: How do you say it in Arabic?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance (our translation to English)</th>
<th>Danish original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Hello, goodbye. German hallo, tschüss, or how do you say it?</td>
<td>Hello, goodbye. Tysk, hallo, tschüss, eller hvad siger man?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>I know Vietnamese</td>
<td>Jeg kan vietnamesisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Hey, how do you say it in Arabic</td>
<td>Ej, hvordan siger man det på arabisk?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abshir</td>
<td>Kayf halik</td>
<td>Kayf hal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>And how do you say</td>
<td>Og hvordan siger man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Kayf hal</td>
<td>Kayf hal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Is that hello? Or like when you meet someone?</td>
<td>Er det hej? Eller sådan når man møder nogen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>I know Vietnamese and Korean</td>
<td>Jeg kan vietnamesisk og koreansk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Or is it also like goodbye?</td>
<td>Eller er det bare osse sådan farvel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You got the star, he – I expect you know how to say it in something like four languages?</td>
<td>I har jo fået stjernen, han – du kan vel sige det på en fire sprog eller sådan noget?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abshir</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Really, are there, do you know others?</td>
<td>Ej, er der, kan du andre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abshir</td>
<td>I can say it in a language which is spoken in Ethiopia</td>
<td>Jeg kan sige det også på et sprog, som man taler i Etiopien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>I also know Chinese</td>
<td>Jeg kan osse kinesisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Nå ja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Is that Korean?</td>
<td>Er det koreansk?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Korean. And I know a few words in Chinese, too</td>
<td>Koreansk. Og så kan jeg få ord på kinesisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abshir</td>
<td>(xxx) Somali</td>
<td>(xxx) somalisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Ko-re-an <em>(writing)</em></td>
<td>Ko-re-ans (skriver)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In utterance 4, Nora reaches out, including Abshir in the conversation, asking about the languages he knows, and Abshir willingly responds (in utterances 4 – 6). After acknowledging this contribution by repeating it (utterance 7), however, Sarah breaks in, talking about the languages she knows herself. When listening to the conversation, it is clear that by talking louder and faster than Abshir, Sarah wins the floor, dominating the conversation while Abshir’s contributions are limited to answering specific questions about Arabic and Somali, in spite of the teacher’s remarkable attempt in utterance 11 to cast Abshir as a “language star.” In this way, the teacher actively tries to frame Abshir’s linguistic repertoire as an important resource for the group, and even if Nora and Sarah’s initial interest may be fleeting, the girls do accept and take note of Abshir’s contributions.
Contributing on an equal footing
The next day, Abshir’s contributions take on a slightly different character. When approached by Author 1 to discuss a video about sign language watched in class, Abshir says he expects the acquisition of sign languages to be different to the acquisition of spoken languages, since:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 12: Different meaning</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our translation to English</strong></td>
<td><strong>Danish original</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because because when you sign on your hands, it might be that they… That sign you make has some different meaning in another language</td>
<td>Fordi fordi når man tegner noget på hænderne, det kan godt være at de… Den tegn som du laver har noget andet betydning på et andet sprog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of some difficulty in expressing his idea in Danish, Abshir is clearly engaging in metalinguistic reflection on the nature of sign language, and he continues expressing this line of thought, saying that he thought sign language was universal, and posing a new question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 13: Does it come naturally?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our translation to English</strong></td>
<td><strong>Danish original</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But I have a question. If I am deaf and I have. Do I lea- Is it something you can learn, or does it just come naturally?</td>
<td>Men jeg har et spørgsmål. Hvis hvis jeg er døv og jeg har. Skal jeg læ- Er det noget man kan lære, eller er det bare noget som kommer naturligt?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By posing this question – a clear manifestation of *metalinguistic awareness* in the form of reflection – Abshir takes on an active role in the metalinguistic discussion, bringing new ideas to the table. This marks a shift from his positioning in item 11, where he contributes only when explicitly included by Nora. This more active position, asking questions and offering reflections, is recurrent from Day 2 onwards.

Later on, the teacher gives the students a worksheet with a glossed quote from the Human Rights Declaration (art. 26, 1., first sentence: *Everyone has the right to education*) in eight typologically diverse languages (Danish, Greenlandic, Somali, Arabic, Turkish, Vietnamese, Finnish, Latin), and the students are tasked to analyse and compare the sentences syntactically and morphologically. After making individual notes on their worksheets, the students start checking their answers with each other. This quickly evolves into an intense dialogue between Nora and Abshir; Sarah and Jane being relegated to bystander positions. When Nora reads out a question to the group: *What does this tell you about the sentence structure in these languages?* Abshir responds with a lucid observation on word order across the different languages:
Item 14: Noun is last word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our translation to English</th>
<th>Danish original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know, but Somali Danish Finnish Vietnamese, last word it is education, it is noun that is last word.</td>
<td>Jeg ved det ikke, men somalisk dansk finsk vietnamisk, sidste ord det er uddannelse, som det er navneord, der er sidste ord.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With this cross-linguistic analysis manifesting a high level of metalinguistic awareness, Abshir is the one to take the initiative to solve the complex task at hand: How to find structural commonalities between languages which are so obviously very different. His analysis becomes the starting point for the students’ collaborative efforts, moving on to systematically compare the last word in each of the sentences. In this way, Abshir’s contribution shapes the flow of the groups’ collaborative metalinguistic analysis.

Abshir as multilingual expert

On Day 7, the topic of greetings in different languages comes up once again; this time in connection with politeness and how to greet people in more or less formal ways. While the session starts off in the same way as on Day 1, Nora and Sarah brainstorming at high speed, Abshir’s role in the interaction is strikingly different on Day 7. He no longer waits until he is asked, but simply asserts his knowledge by actively claiming the floor, demonstrating metalinguistic awareness by comparing linguistic form and meaning across languages:

Item 15: Be peace with you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our translation to English</th>
<th>Danish original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And how do you say. In Arabic, in Somali and Arabic they say normally, we say hi, it means hi, but they say as-salamu alaykum. It means be peace with you. Always when they leave.</td>
<td>Og hvad hedder det. På arabisk, på somalisk og arabisk de siger normalt, vi siger hi, det betyder hej, men de siger as-salamu alaykum. Det betyder vær fred med dig. Altid når de går.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sarah responds by checking her understanding: “Oh, so they don’t say hi, they say be peace with you?” and then goes on to compare the Arabic greeting with namaste, while Nora takes notes. Clearly, Abshir’s position in the group has shifted from what could be observed in item 11; the other group members now orient to his contribution as relevant and authoritative and appear to value his multilingual repertoire as an asset in this context, and he himself actively takes on the role as a “language star” as cast by the teacher already on Day 1.

On the final day of the language weeks, Abshir’s position is underscored when the teacher again asks Abshir to function as a “language expert” and teach his classmates some Somali. Abshir now readily takes on the role of the language teacher, telling his classmates to repeat after him, correcting their pronunciation and praising them for their efforts. He employs different strategies: repeating phrases word by word or syllable by syllable, altering his pronunciation slightly for easier imitation and writing words on a piece of paper in a Danish-like
phonetic spelling, encouraging the others to make their own notes in the same way:

**Item 16: Spell it just like Danish**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Our translation to English</strong></th>
<th><strong>Danish original</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But I think it will be much better if you spell it just like Danish, just like this one, so you can pronounce it again.</td>
<td>Men jeg tror det vil være meget bedre hvis I staver bare ligesom dansk, sådan ligesom det her, så I kan udtale det igen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By instructing the others in this way, Abshir clearly orients himself towards certain beliefs on how to learn and teach a language (by imitation, repetition and note-taking), a manifestation of metalinguistic awareness of language learning. Interestingly, Abshir seems to have a clear opinion about writing in a personalised phonetic script. This is a strategy he employed himself when trying to learn how to pronounce the Norwegian variety *Nynorsk* on Day 4. Abshir listened to the spoken version of the text and spontaneously wrote down his own version “as he heard it” (see item 17), in this way manifesting practical language awareness. Subsequently, when asked to read out the text in Norwegian to his group mates, he referred not to the written original, but to his own “phonetic” version.

**Item 17: Abshir's phonetic script**

In the Somali workshop, Abshir encourages his classmates to use the same strategy. This correlation between his own language learning strategies as observed in class and the instruction he gives his classmates clearly illustrates the relationship between his personal language learning experiences and his metalinguistic reflections.
The fact that Abshir readily assumes the role of the language teacher does not go unnoticed by his classmates who praise him as a good teacher, or by the teacher who now jokingly refers to him as “professor”. Abshir appears to enjoy this new role and is enthusiastic to hear his classmates speak Somali, praising their pronunciation as “insane” (in contemporary youthful Danish a very positive evaluation):

**Item 18: Sounds insane**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our translation to English</th>
<th>Danish original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oh, it sounds insane, it sounds correct</td>
<td>Åh, det lyder sindssygt, det lyder rigtig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of Abshir’s shifting position and role throughout the language weeks shows how he moves from a passive position, contributing only when called upon over a gradually more active position as a full group member to “being in charge” in the final session. While these shifting roles are obviously facilitated by the pluralistic teaching activities which set off the students’ multilingual repertoires as plurilingual affordances for language awareness, and the teacher’s framing of Abshir as a “language star,” it is nevertheless a striking change which may be illuminated by a closer look at the quality of Abshir’s contributions to the group work. In item 11, Abshir simply supplies information as prompted, but in the following examples, his metalinguistic awareness is manifested through thought-provoking questions (items 12–13), lucid and authoritative syntactic analysis (item 14) and an assertion of metalinguistic knowledge specifically related to his own multilingual repertoire (item 15), a quality which is further showcased by his successful language teaching endeavors in items 16–18. In short, through the language weeks, Abshir’s potential as a “language star” unfolds and gains recognition among his classmates.

**Discussion**

In the previous sections, we presented findings based on a three-step analysis of manifestations of language awareness in the multilingual classroom, foregrounding the focal student Abshir. In the first analytical step, we zoomed in on Abshir, describing his rich multilingual repertoire and emergent Danish. In the second step, our focus shifted to a particular linguistic phenomenon, presented by Abshir and his classmates as “rolling r”. We described how the rolling r gradually became a joint locus of metalinguistic attention in Abshir’s class throughout the language weeks and thus demonstrated how Abshir’s linguistic and metalinguistic awareness is intricately interwoven with classroom activities and dynamics over time. In the third and final analytical step, we explored these dynamics further as we investigated Abshir’s role, position and ways of participating in group work.
and classroom interaction during the language weeks and tracked the shifts from bystander position to acknowledged language teacher.

In Table 4 below, we provide an overview of the temporal progression of the language weeks, the three analytical steps and our use of empirical items. As a whole, the analysis sheds light on the relationship between classroom manifestations of language awareness and the individual’s linguistic repertoire and biography on the one hand and the social and temporal context of the language classroom on the other.

Table 4: Overview of items used in the analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plurilingual theme</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
<th>Day 6</th>
<th>Day 7</th>
<th>Day 8</th>
<th>Group interviews 1</th>
<th>Group interviews 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytic step 1: Abshir’s linguistic repertoire</td>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Items 2-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic step 2: Rolling R</td>
<td></td>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Items 7-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>Item 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic step 3: From bystander to language teacher</td>
<td>Item 11</td>
<td>Items 12-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Item 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Item 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Item 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident from Table 4, the three analytical steps do not represent a unidirectional chronological development. Nevertheless, considering the language classroom and students’ language awareness from a complexity-oriented perspective (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2019), it becomes apparent how Abshir’s linguistic biography and the social and temporal context of the classroom all interact in shaping his manifestations of language awareness. Being relatively new to Danish, we have described Abshir’s Danish as emergent, bearing clear second language traits in writing as well as orally. However, the analysis makes it clear that while the emergent nature of Abshir’s Danish naturally shapes his participation in classroom activities, it does not hinder his manifestations of practical language awareness and metalinguistic awareness. This potential is recognized by the teacher who casts Abshir as a “language star” already in the beginning of the language weeks. The social and temporal setting of LA manifestations in the classroom described in the analysis is largely defined by the language weeks in which the teacher actively frames the multilingual students’ linguistic repertoires as resources and scaffolds the inclusion and use of these resources through the use of plurilingual teaching activities and by underscoring this resource-oriented perspective in classroom discourse. It is evident from Abshir’s shifting positions in group work that both he and his classmates catch on to this perspective and increasingly draw on their multilingual repertoires. For Abshir, the role of his repertoire and linguistic
biography in shaping his manifestations of LA is clearly visible, e.g. in his
approach to the teaching of Somali.

When Abshir comments on his classmates’ pronunciation (item 18) and
actively proposes the use of a specific learning strategy mirroring his own (items
16–17), these comments manifest metalinguistic awareness in ways which seem
intimately connected to previously observed manifestations of practical language
awareness (experimenting with pronunciation and using his personalised phonetic
script). In this way, the practical and metalinguistic dimensions intertwine to form
a synergy of language awareness, akin to what was theoretically proposed, but not
identified different dimensions of language awareness manifested in largely
isolated episodes in different contexts. It proposed that overall language
awareness might be enhanced if students’ practical language awareness was
connected to their metalinguistic awareness, i.e. if they were able to draw on their
knowledge and reflections when doing things with language and the other way
around. This is exactly what we see Abshir doing in these examples, and as
theoretically proposed, a synergy emerges where both metalinguistic reflection
and analysis and practical language awareness seem to benefit.

Our analysis further shows how language awareness emerges and evolves
through social interaction: One student’s manifestation of language awareness in
a given activity at a given point in time constitutes an affordance for other students
at other points in space and time. Specific points of metalinguistic attention (such
as the rolling r) may move around the classroom, weaving in and out of the
different work forms which characterise language teaching: individual work,
work in pairs or smaller groups and classroom conversation. And while each small
incident may serve as a point of analysis for manifestations of language
awareness, focusing narrowly on one isolated teaching activity such as a language
portrait or a group-based task on Scandinavian languages would have led us to
miss the complexity of the dynamic flow of language awareness in and through
the classroom.

In our analysis, language awareness emerges as a dynamic phenomenon
shaped by the individual student’s linguistic biography and repertoires. At the
same time, it is inherently social and contextual in nature, as it emerges during
classroom activities over time and is shaped by group dynamics and social
relations in the classroom. Furthermore, manifestations of language awareness
draw on affordances in the classroom provided by both teaching activities and
materials and by classroom discourse.

This has implications not only for our theoretical understanding of language
awareness, but also for methodological choices in the exploration of language
awareness at classroom level. Even sophisticated hit-and-run analysis of isolated
activities – be it in experimental or authentic classroom settings – run the risk of
missing important dimensions of the inherently dynamic and social nature of the
ways in which language awareness manifests itself in the language classroom.
Therefore we suggest a complexity-oriented approach to classroom-based LA studies, considering carefully in the future which aspects of teaching, classroom dynamics and students’ individual linguistic biographies may contribute meaningfully to our understanding of LA in the language classroom.

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