If a full class conversation does not fit your group well, these learning strategies may allow your students to use the target language, discover and recognise examples in the text, make use of these examples, and reflect upon the topic at hand as well.

Creating a language identity map

One competence aim that is relevant for both lower and upper secondary challenges the students to “explore and describe some linguistic similarities and differences between English and other languages (…) (LK20).

Initially, working with the title of the poem is of interest. One could argue that the term “mother tongue” has lost or altered its meaning in later years.

Having the students map out the class’s first language, mother tongues, 2nd, and perhaps even 3rd, language may depict the diversity of languages spoken and mastered within the classroom. It also illustrates how a globalised world, a multicultural world, affects and alters languages. How many students have a different first language than their parents? Do they code switch between languages when talking? Are there differences between their ethnolect, sociolect and geolect? By comparing their own experiences to the ones commented upon in the poem, their own idiolect may become interesting and of more value to them. A visual or creative product, like the teaching trail above has, underlines the recognition of various languages and idiolects in the classroom. Thus, a pamphlet, a sway, an audio file, a PP with talking head, a word cloud, or a collage illustrating the ingredients making up the students’ idiolect could work well.

Kachru’s circle – infographics, multimodal texts and facts

Furthermore, an interesting approach to English and its reach in the world, but also development, suits this topic. A common model to use is Kachru’s circle. Kachru’s circle illustrates English speakers all over the world, and, among other things, the fact that there are more people in this world speaking English as their second and third language, than first. Thus, one may assume that these speakers influence the development of English severely. The students may read this graphic model, study its points and comment upon aspects as; Who owns English? What could happen to a language when it is used all over the world? Will English become a language filled with grammatical errors and simple vocabulary as it is the foreign users who holds the majority? What happens to a lingua franca if it is spread to all corners of the world and develops differently – like the matter of Englishes?

In groups the students may reflect upon given thesis statements and create texts, verbal or multimodal, that illustrates the situation and possible outcomes/predictions. For example, “The English language will never be dethroned as the world’s lingua franca.” Possible products could be interviews where the students take on different roles – experts, a worried teacher and the host, they could draw cause and (possible) effects-map, give a presentation, write an article or produce a “The history and future of the English language” montage.

Multilingualism, language and culture

In addition, the students’ own multilingualism is part of the competence aims. It is a difficult aim to address as teachers seldom speak all languages spoken in their classrooms. Normally, a vast majority of students in Norwegian classrooms learn either German, French or Spanish in school. In addition, one may be lucky and have for instance Polish or Arabic represented. An interesting task to do to accommodate the aim of using students’ own language competence is to present them with translated versions of the same texts and see if they can make sense of them. For example, through knowing Norwegian, English and German – how much would a student understand of a page from a Harry Potter book in Dutch? If given the German version of the same page, does it help?

Instead of doing a linguistic approach as the previous suggestion, one could also do a cultural approach. How are metaphors, similes and contrasts typically given in other languages. If, in a Norwegian text, someone would be compared to a troll, what would be the equivalent in an Asian or Irish fairytale? Through working with texts in different languages like this, making use of the students’ linguistic competence, one can illustrate the obvious link between language and culture as well – and add to their understanding of multilingualism. It is fairly easy to obtain countries’ mythological or folklore texts, for example. By comparing content in myths or fairy tales, students may learn a lot about countries and cultures. An example could be comparing and contrasting the Jewish golem, the Japanese oni, the Irish leprechauns and Germanic goblins.

Other typical approaches here, related to language, could be swearing words in different languages and ways to greet people. When addressing how language and culture is tightly knit together – the bridge to other competence aims as intercultural competence, is reasonable to embark on. Additionally, it is stated that this trail’s outcome could mount into other products as well. One possibility would be to create tutorials, requiring the students to use the target language and the competence they have acquired throughout working on the topic and with the poem. The tutorial may be on a multilingual phenomenon, on how to speak their ethnolect, sociolect, chronolect, version of English or a comparison of the current acrolect and their own way of speaking.