

# Teaching reading in EFL-instruction

What are teachers' attitudes towards reading in EFL-instruction and how is it taught in class?

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# Abstract

My aim with this thesis was to find out if and how reading is taught in English as a Foreign Language instruction in Norwegian lower secondary schools. In order to do so I tried to elicit a number of teachers' attitudes towards reading, and how they teach reading in class.

I used a qualitative research method and a phenomenological research design to find the information I was looking for. However, I started out by looking into theory and research on reading, both in L1 and L2, focusing on reading strategies and reading skills as well as the characteristics of a good reader. Furthermore, I looked into how reading is integrated in the Norwegian National Curriculum, both in general and more specifically in the English subject curriculum. All these aspects form the backdrop of the survey where I interviewed ten teachers from six different schools.

My findings indicate that most teachers believe that reading is important, however, most of them do not teach it systematically or consistently. It seems that the public debate in recent years has contributed to raise the awareness of the importance of reading, but failed to give practical answers to what adequate reading instruction is and how it could be carried out in the classroom.

This is a small-scale survey and the results cannot automatically be generalized to Norwegian EFL teaching in general. However, they indicate that there may be similar experiences in other schools and among other teachers as well, and confirm the findings of previous studies. It would be interesting to conduct a large-scale quantitative and qualitative survey with enough informants to ensure transferability. Such a survey would be able to help us map the current situation better and give further answers to how we can ensure that pupils get the reading instruction that they need and deserve.

# Forord

Målet mitt med denne oppgaven var å finne ut om, og i så fall hvordan, det undervises i lesing i engelskundervisningen på norske ungdomsskoler. Jeg ville undersøke hva lærere mener om lesing og hvordan de underviser i det på skolen.

Jeg fant ut at den mest hensiktsmessige måten å nå målet mitt på var å bruke en kvalitativ forskningsmetode og en fenomenologisk forskningsdesign. Jeg startet imidlertid med å sette meg inn i forskning og teori angående lesing både på førstespråk og andrespråk, og deretter lesestrategier og leseferdigheter i tillegg til kjennetegnene på en god leser. Dessuten undersøkte jeg Kunnskapsløftet for å finne ut hvordan lesing er integrert i fagplanene, både generelt, men også spesielt med tanke på engelsk på ungdomstrinnet. Alle disse aspektene danner bakteppet for undersøkelsen der jeg intervjuet ti lærere fra seks forskjellige skoler.

Funnene mine antyder at de fleste lærerne synes at lesing er viktig. De fleste har imidlertid ingen form for systematisk og vedvarende lesetrening eller fokus på lesestrategier.

Det kan virke som om den offentlige debatten de senere år har satt betydningen av lesing på dagsordenen uten at det har kommet svar på hva leseopplæring er og hvordan det best bør undervises i klasserommet. Det viser seg også at de fleste av skolene har et svært dårlig tilbud når det gjelder tilgjengelig skjønnlitteratur på engelsk. Dette kan også tyde på at leseopplæring i engelsk i praksis er nedprioritert på skolene.

Dette er en liten undersøkelse med få respondenter og resultatene kan ikke uten videre overføres til engelskundervisningen i Norge. Den kan imidlertid kanskje antyde en tendens som andre skoler og lærere kan kjenne seg igjen i, og den bekrefter også funnene fra tidligere studier. Det ville vært interessant å foreta en stor kvantitativ og kvalitativ undersøkelse med nok respondenter til at resultatene blir overførbare. En slik undersøkelse ville hjulpet oss å kartlegge situasjonen enda bedre, og det ville også gitt oss flere svar på hvordan vi kan forsikre oss om at elevene får den leseopplæringen de trenger og har krav på.

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# 1 Introduction

*“So it is with children who learn to read fluently and well: They begin to take flight into whole new worlds as effortlessly as young birds take to the sky.”*

- William James

As long as I can remember I have enjoyed reading. It was my favorite pastime as a child and it was my favorite subject in school. As long as I had a book I never felt bored or lonely. However, somehow I was under the impression that as reading was something fun, and it did not cross my mind that it could be very beneficial in learning a new language. I thought that in order to learn English reading would not do, I would have to spend endless hours doing grammatical exercises and repeating vocabulary and verb tenses. As my studies brought me deeper into the field of education and especially EFL I have discovered that reading is in fact considered by many a very efficient and good way of learning a new language. This surprised me, and I started to wonder if this was something that was only known in academic circles or if I was the only one in the dark. Some conversations with colleagues led me to believe that there might be a few more in the dark out there, so I decided to use this opportunity to investigate the subject a little closer.

Reading has to a varying degree been considered important in teaching of English as a Foreign Language (hereafter EFL). There is a lot of recent research that suggests that pupils trying to learn a second language would benefit greatly from a strong focus on reading. By interviewing some teachers on their attitudes towards the subject I hope to shed a little light on how reading is considered and taught in Norwegian Upper Secondary Schools. Hopefully, my project will be a small contribution to the discussion on how to make the EFL instruction even more beneficial for the pupils.

## 1.1 Reading

Reading is a complex process that involves a number of operations. This is true no matter what language the text is in. However, the process is even more complicated if you read in a language that is not your first language. The difference between reading in L1 and L2 has

to do with different factors such as cognitive capacity, how L1 facilitates or interferes with L2 reading and how students use their knowledge of language and reading strategies. There is a discussion among scholars about the importance of L1 in L2 reading. The most important factors in addition to the reading process, methods and models will be explained and discussed in chapter 2. But first I will look at some important research on reading in Norway, my research statement and an outline of the thesis.

## **1.2 Studies on reading in Norway**

The focus on reading in Norway has increased significantly over the last few years. According to Anmarkrud there are two reasons for that. First of all there were several international studies (PISA) where Norwegian pupils scored very low on reading abilities (Anmarkrud, 2009, p. 299; Hellekjær, 2007b; Roe, 2009). These studies shocked large parts of the Norwegian academic school environment as most teachers and school academics thought we were doing pretty well. The results were discussed and debated in a lot of forums; however, there was no getting around the fact that something had to be done to improve the reading instruction. As a direct result of these test scores, a stronger focus on reading was incorporated in the new curriculum, LK06. Now reading is one of five basic skills and is to be taught across the curriculum.

Anmarkrud's studies show that even though there has been more focus on reading, there is still a long way to go before pupils are taught reading and reading strategies adequately (Anmarkrud, 2009).

When it comes to studies of reading in English as a Foreign Language, Hellekjær is the scholar in Norway that has contributed most to the research. His studies show that the EFL-instruction in Norwegian upper secondary is not adequate to preparing students for higher-level education (Hellekjær, 2008). He has also found out that a great deal of Norwegian export companies suffer because of lack of appropriate knowledge in English (Hellekjær, 2007a, 2009b).

Another interesting study shows that in spite of the recent focus on reading in the public and scholarly debate, many teachers don't spend time reading or teaching reading in

class (Faye-Schjøll, 2009). As shown in the research statement below, the aim of this thesis is to look further into the teacher's attitudes towards reading and how they teach it in class.

## 1.3 Research statement

As stated in the introduction the research statement of this thesis is “What are teachers’ attitudes towards reading in EFL-instruction, and how do they teach it in class.” This research statement comprises the following two research questions:

- What are teachers’ attitudes towards reading?
- How is reading taught in class?

The first question is a theoretical question where the intention is to find out how teachers view reading and the importance they give to reading in their EFL teaching. The second question is intended to find out how the teachers put their theory into practice and teach reading to the pupils. In other words, I want to find out how reading in EFL is actually taught in the classroom, how the teachers use books, what books they use and how they divide their time between different parts of the instruction. Before moving on to the theory on reading I will first present an outline of the thesis and some important definitions.

## 1.4 Outline

The purpose of this thesis is to find out what attitudes teachers have towards reading and how they teach it in class. I will start by giving an overview of relevant theory on reading and reading in a foreign language in chapter two. In chapter three I will move on to reading in LK06, the Norwegian National Curriculum. The main focus in this chapter is to find out what the curriculum says about reading in English subject curriculum in upper secondary, however, in order to obtain a good picture of reading instruction and teachers view on this, I have also included a section on reading in the Norwegian subject curriculum. In chapter four I move on to describing the methods and procedures used in carrying out the survey as

well as a presentation of the questionnaire and the informants. Chapter five deals with the results of the survey and in chapter six these results are discussed in light of the research statement and relevant theory. The thesis concludes with chapter seven where I look at the possible implications this survey might have and also suggest further research in this field.

## **1.5 Definitions**

Most of the literature on reading and reading research operate with some common abbreviations. Some of these are listed below.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

L1: The first language of a person, in this case Norwegian

L2: The second language of a person, in this case English

PISA: Program for International Student Assessment

LK06: National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training

# 2 Reading Theory

## 2.1 Introduction

Reading is a gateway to a whole universe of enjoyment and learning. Countless people love to sit down and read a good book. There are innumerable topics and themes waiting to be discovered by whoever might want to dig into the pages. Even so, although reading is such a treasured activity for a multitude of people, for a lot of people it is a hard and laborious task. That is perhaps most noticeable in schools, where pupils are required to read and work with different texts much of the time. Many teachers can testify to the struggles and hardship that some pupils suffer in order to handle reading in different contexts. On the other hand, many of the students really enjoy reading and are therefore able to make use of these skills in other areas as well. Studies show that students that like to read score better in most subjects than students that do not like to read (Krashen, 2004, pp. 35-36). Hence, it is important to consider reading as something more than “just” a subject in school.

## 2.2 What is reading?

Reading is a very well-known activity, and “everybody” has an understanding of what reading is. It is a bit more difficult to *explain* what reading is. The concept is easy, but the process is a lot more complex.

### 2.2.1 Definitions

There have been numerous attempts to define reading in a simple phrase. Koda says that reading is “converting print into language and then to the message intended by the author” (Koda, 2007, p. 1). She also claims that “Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known” (Koda, 2004, p. 4). Urquhart & Weir say that “Reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 22). According to Hellekjær “reading comprises decoding the written text

on the one hand and efficiently processing the information on the other hand” (Hellekjær, 2007b, p. 2). All these definitions underline essential aspects of reading. The question that remains is *how* is it done? Grabe suggests a list of processes that define reading (Grabe, 2009, p. 14). His processes are as follows:

1. A rapid process
2. An efficient process
3. A comprehending process
4. An interactive process
5. A strategic process
6. A flexible process
7. A purposeful process
8. An evaluative process
9. A learning process
10. A linguistic process

In his book “Reading in a second language” Grabe explains all of these processes that are integrated in the art of reading. Looking at this list it is obvious that reading is a complex process. Even so, about 80% of the world’s population knows how to read. I assume that the majority of the remaining 20% do not know how to read, not because of lack of ability, but because of lack of opportunity to learn (Grabe, 2009, p. 4). Before examining reading in L1 and L2 I will take a look at reading skills and reading strategies, both important aspects of reading.

## **2.3 Reading skills and reading strategies**

The terms reading skills and reading strategies are often used interchangeably in literature on reading. A number of scholars and researchers have come up with different definitions that look at the concept from different angles. Roe claims that reading strategies are all the approaches that readers use to enhance understanding (Roe, 2009, p. 84). Hudson acknowledges that there has been much confusion as far as good definitions are concerned

(Hudson, 2007, pp. 105-107). However, he uses the definition of Paris, Wasik, and Turner which states that

Skills refer to information-processing techniques that are automatic, whether at the level of recognizing phoneme-grapheme correspondence or summarizing a story. Skills are applied to text unconsciously for many reasons, including expertise, repeated practice, compliance with directions, luck, and naïve use. In contrast, strategies are actions selected deliberately to achieve particular goals. An emerging skill can become a strategy when it is used intentionally. Likewise, a strategy can “go underground”... and become a skill. Indeed, strategies are more efficient and developmentally advanced when they become generated and applied automatically as skills.

Paris et al. (as cited in Hudson, 2007, p. 106).

This definition coincides with Grabe and Anderson’s explanations (Grabe, 2009, p. 220 ). According to Grabe “strategies are cognitive processes that are open to conscious reflection but that may be on their way to becoming skills” (Grabe, 2009, p. 221). Anderson defines a skill as “a strategy that has become automatic” Anderson as cited in (Grabe, 2009, p. 221). For my purpose in this thesis I will use the definitions of Paris, Grabe and Anderson.

### **2.3.1 Reading strategies**

There are a number of different reading strategies that readers use in order to get a better understanding and outcome of a text. Among others Roe, Hudson and Grabe have compiled lists of the most important and commonly used reading strategies. Some of these are:

- Activating prior knowledge
- Answering questions and Elaborative Interrogations
- Constructing mental images
- Forming questions
- Making associations
- Monitoring

- Previewing
- Summarization
- Text-structure awareness and story grammars
- Using graphic organizers
- Rereading
- Adjusting speed
- Concentrating
- Selectively reading

(Grabe, 2009, p. 228; Hudson, 2007, p. 120; Roe, 2009, p. 88)

All these strategies are valuable tools in teaching pupils how to become better readers and thus better learners. In addition to the ones mentioned above, I will add four examples of what Simensen calls “a real-life purpose and real-life expectations” (Simensen, 2007, p. 149). The first means intentional use of reading in order to achieve a purpose, and by real-life expectations is meant that most people normally have certain expectations about the text they are working with. These expectations can help the reader guess and predict the subject of a text and thus facilitate understanding and reading (Simensen, 2007, p. 149). The following are definitions of skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading (Simensen, 2007, p. 149).

### **Skimming**

Skimming is reading fast to get an overview over the text. The goal is to get a main idea of what the text is about (Simensen, 2007, p. 149).

### **Scanning**

Scanning is reading in search for specific information in the text (Simensen, 2007, p. 149). It could for example be a number in the telephone catalog or a historical date in a textbook. You know what you are looking for and don’t pay attention to other information. This strategy is often unconsciously used in school for example when the teacher asks a question and the pupils look in their textbooks for the right answer. However, many students are not aware that this actually is a valuable reading strategy (Bakke, 2008).

### **Intensive reading**

Intensive reading is reading carefully to remember the details and understand all the words and meanings (Simensen, 2007, p. 149). This is the type of reading that is most often taught and used in schools. Many pupils use only this strategy no matter what kind of text they are reading. This is a counterproductive way of handling a lot of material (Hellekjær, 2007b).

### **Extensive reading**

Extensive reading is reading to understand the general meaning of a text. According to Simensen extensive reading “usually means silent reading and reading for pleasure and enjoyment. A global understanding of the text, i.e. without grasping every part of it, is normally aimed at in extensive reading” (Simensen 2007, p. 149). Day adds that one important aspect of intensive reading is that large amounts of texts are read (Bamford & Day, 2002).

## **2.3.2 Reading Skills**

As mentioned earlier, a Hudson defines skills as automatized strategies (Hudson, 2007, pp. 77-79, 106). Thus there are a number of skills that will improve reading capacity. Hudson groups these into four categories, namely word-attack skills, comprehension skills, fluency skills and critical reading skills (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Each of these skills encompasses numerous subskills.

### **Word-attack skills**

By word-attack skills or decoding skills is meant the skills that are needed to transfer the orthographic symbols into language (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Subskills in this category will first and foremost have to do with the ability to recognize different aspects of the text like syllables, word boundaries, upper and lower case letters etc (Hudson, 2007, p. 79).

### **Comprehension skills**

Comprehension skills are skills where the reader uses his background knowledge and context to understand what is read (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Subskills in this category can be

grammatical competence, knowledge of how the language is built up, apply metacognitive knowledge etc (Hudson, 2007, pp. 79-80).

### **Fluency skills**

Fluency skills mean the ability to read larger sequences of a text without being “interrupted” (Hudson, 2007, p. 80). These “interruptions” often occur because a reader has to spell difficult words or because he does not understand certain words or parts of text and reads it over again. These interruptions lead to slow and fragmented reading. A fluent reader’s subskills are the abilities to recognize words and letter clusters fast. The fluent reader will also read fast and has a large vocabulary (Hudson, 2007, p. 80).

### **Critical reading skills**

By critical reading skills is meant the ability to “analyze, synthesize and evaluate what is read” (Hudson, 2007, p. 80). Subskills in this category can be recognizing arguments, the ability to discuss pro’s and con’s, seeing the cause-and-effect etc (Hudson, 2007, p. 80).

## **2.4 Reading in the L1**

### **2.4.1 Different models**

There are several models that are commonly used in first language reading research (Grabe, 2009, pp. 83-84; Hudson, 2007, p. 33). We will look at four of them in this section. These are the bottom-up, the top-down, the interactive and the new literacy models. The bottom-up and top-down models are not as strongly adhered to today as they were some decades ago (Grabe, 2009, p. 89; Hudson, 2007, p. 33). However, they are still important in explaining and researching reading, even though most scholars today will focus on an interaction between the two models, also known as the interactive model (Grabe, 2009, p. 96; Hudson, 2007, p. 39). Lately a new model known as the new literacy approach has made its impact on research and theory (Hudson, 2007, p. 55). The emphasis will differ from scholar to scholar, but in general terms, these four models dominate the research field. First of all however, a brief explanation of what a model is.

## **Definitions of a model**

According to Sadoski and Paivio “models characterize theories of reading, providing ways to represent a theory or part of a theory; they explain what reading involves and, in more detailed versions, how reading works” Sadoski and Paivio (as cited in Grabe, 2009, p. 83).

Indeed, the “term model refers specifically to a representation of the psychological processes that comprise a component or set of components involved in a human text comprehension” Goldman, Golden & van den Broek (as cited by Grabe, 2009, p. 83).

All models have their limitations and have been made based on research findings that have been synthesized to help explain the nature of reading or some of its basic components. Research findings often times conflict with each other and it is important to note that models also may be subject to the personal opinions of the scholars that made them. Therefore, a constructive skepticism might be useful in reading and applying the different models that exist. The models we are about to take a look at have been subject to studies and evaluation for decades, and are known to be some of the best ways of explaining reading (Grabe, 2009, pp. 83-84).

## **Bottom-up**

The bottom-up model is based on the idea that our human brain recognizes the basic units of a text, the characters, and puts them together in order to create meaning. According to Hudson the phoneme-grapheme correspondence is the key feature (Grabe, 2009, p. 89; Hudson, 2007, p. 34). The point is to reconstruct an already existing message. Gough claims that when reading a text the character register will be transposed into abstract phonemic representations. These will in turn be used to search the mental lexicon. He states that word recognition takes place prior to comprehension (Hudson, 2007, p. 35).

## **Top-down**

While the bottom-up model starts with the smallest units in sentences, the top-down model is based on a totally opposite concept. The reader relies on syntactic and semantic

knowledge that was known prior to the reading (Grabe, 2009, p. 89; Hudson, 2007, p. 37). According to Hudson Kenneth Goodman is one of the scholars known to promote this model and he views reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game (Hudson, 2007, pp. 33, 37). His model emphasizes the “cognitive economy of linguistic information over graphemic information” using four reading processes: predicting, sampling, confirming and correcting (Hudson, 2007, p. 37). A reader guesses or predicts what it is he is about to read. He starts reading and soon his predictions are confirmed and/or corrected. In this model the linear model of phoneme-grapheme correspondence, although present, has very little place compared to the bottom-up model (Hudson, 2007, p. 37). In the top-down model efficient reading relies much more on the reader’s skill to incorporate and use the information needed to understand the text. That means that the reader’s background knowledge on a given topic, and his ability to use this, is crucial in decoding different types of literature (Grabe, 2009, p. 89; Hudson, 2007, p. 37).

### **Interactive**

The interactive approach contains a variety of ideas and models that have in common that they draw upon aspects of the bottom-up and the top-down model (Grabe, 2009, p. 89; Hudson, 2007, p. 39). They build upon the interaction between lower level processing (bottom up) and higher level processing (top down). Lower level processing are processes of word recognition, syntactic parsing and semantic-proposition encoding while in higher level processing monitoring, and the reader’s back-ground information plays an important part (Grabe, 2009, p. 96; Hudson, 2007, p. 39). Apart from these aspects there are very different focal points and emphases in the different interactive models. According to Hudson there are three main perspectives that will shed some light on the difference in emphasis;

1. The automatic application of lower-level skills independent of comprehension
  2. The interaction of background knowledge and text
  3. The role of social, contextual, and political variables affecting the reader’s process of meaning making
- (Hudson, 2007, p. 39)

These three perspectives form the background for the different interactive models that are predominant in current research.

### **New literacy approaches**

The new literacy approaches are models that focus on the social and anthropological aspects of reading (Hudson, 2007, p. 55). Reading is not viewed as an independent activity where only the reader is interacting with the text; however, the social and societal context plays an important role in the reading process (Hudson, 2007, p. 55). Thus, the new literacy approach does not focus on the psychological factors of reader-text interaction, but “views reading as a social and cultural event around written language” (Hudson, 2007, p. 56). These approaches claim that reading never is neutral, but “always being embedded in ideological contexts involving societal constructions of power and control” (Hudson, 2007, p. 55). Hudson refers to Bloome who claims that the author-reader interaction is also a very important aspect (Hudson, 2007, p. 56). Both author and reader take on different roles and the reader has to consciously or unconsciously accept or reject the role that the author assumed.

These four models are the main approaches in reading research up until today. As mentioned, the bottom-up and top-down models are not used as much today, but they are still important in explaining important principles and also the development of reading research.

The new literacy approaches have interesting aspects that are not focused much on in the other models. However, these approaches have their limitations in reading research as they leave out the psychological factors. There is no doubt that social context is important in reading, but I would argue that in many contexts reading is indeed an independent activity, and that understanding the psychological factors of reader-text interaction will make it easier to grasp the concept of how individuals cope and interact with the social context.

Without ruling out important aspects from the other theories, the interactive model is the one that dominates modern reading research, and most scholars agree that the interactive model is the one that gives the best picture and description of the reading process.

Having taken a brief look at some first language reading models, skills and strategies, we now move on to our main topic, namely reading in a foreign language.

## **2.5 Reading in L2**

Even though the concept of decoding a text to find its meaning is the same when reading in a second language, there are so many different aspects that make reading in a second language a different project than reading in the first language. Before examining the views on second language reading I will take a brief look at the difference between reading in L1 and L2.

### **2.5.1 The difference between L1 and L2 reading**

According to (Hudson, 2007, p. 60) first and second language readers differ in some important ways:

4. Most second language readers already know how to read in their first language. This skill can help or interfere with learning to read in a second language.
5. Reading in first languages usually begins when the pupil already knows how to speak the language. Second language readers often begin reading without knowing much about either the grammar or the vocabulary.
6. There is a great cognitive difference between a child that learns to read in his first language and an adult that learns to read a second language (Hudson, 2007, p. 60).

These three aspects are illustrated in a model that Bernhardt has developed. This model illustrates the interaction between L1 and L2 in learning a new language (Bernhardt, 2005, p. 140). Her compensatory model is three-dimensional and demonstrates that knowledge is not additive, but rather “operates synchronically, interactively and synergistically.”

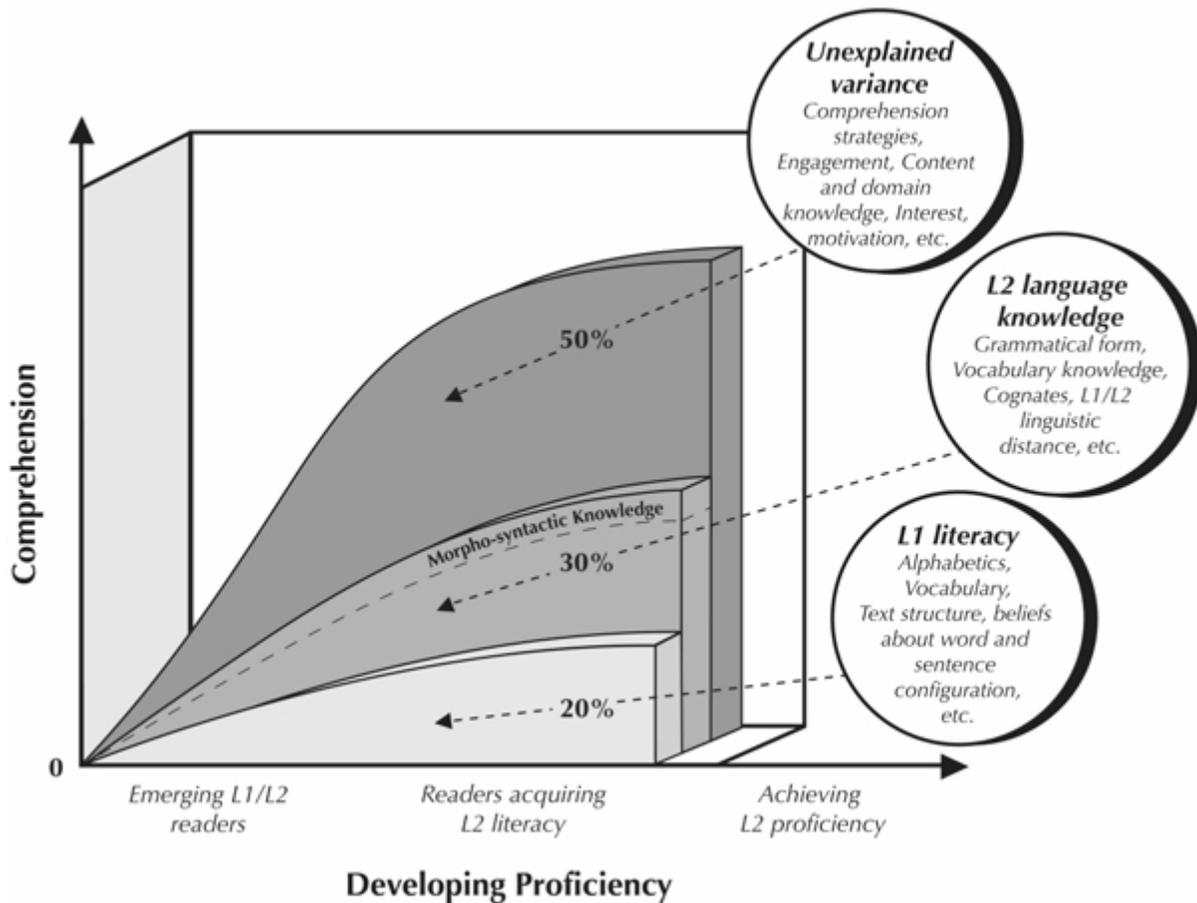


Figure 1. Berhardt's compensatory model of second language reading

This model illustrates that in compensatory processing readers can use their L1 literacy and L2 language knowledge interactively and make up for deficiencies in one or the other by leaning on other skills. It also clearly illustrates that there still are variances that are unaccounted for when it comes to comprehension and performance in second language reading. Bernhardt concludes her article by saying that although the field of second language reading has improved and picked up speed in later years there still are challenges and dilemmas that need to be dealt with before real progress can be made (Bernhardt, 2005, p. 141).

Having briefly discussed some of the differences in L1 and L2 reading I will now move on to examine the different views on second language reading.

## **2.5.2 Views of second language reading**

According to Koda (2007) there have traditionally been two opposing views of reading; a holistic view where reading is considered an indivisible whole, and a componential view where reading is considered to consist of a whole range of different components (Koda, 2007, p. 3). Koda argues that the componential view gives the better picture, and that if reading is viewed as a multifaceted activity it is easier to find out where the problem lies if there is a reading difficulty. That way it might be possible to address the problem and solve it instead of just saying that this person cannot read very well (Koda, 2007, p. 3).

### **Dual language involvement**

Traditionally, there have been two views on reading in a foreign language. According to Hudson (2007) Jolly (1978) and Coady (1979) claim that reading ability in a second language mostly depends on the reading ability in the first language, while Yorio (1971) and Clarke (1978, 1980) claim that knowledge of the second language's syntax and vocabulary is the single most important factor in second language reading ability (as cited by Hudson, 2007, p. 60).

An interesting question in addressing second language reading is whether or not reading is exactly the same in different languages. If a pupil reads poorly in his second language, is it then a reading problem or a language problem? Hudson (2007) deals with the question by pointing to Alderson who says that it is "necessary to address this because it is central to sorting out the causes and origins of second and foreign language reading problems" (Hudson, 2007, p. 61). Alderson has noted that some teachers think that their students are poor second language readers because they are poor first language readers, while others point to the fact that they do not know the second language well enough (Hudson, 2007, p. 60).

In her article "Progress and procrastination in Second Language Reading" Elizabeth Bernhard criticizes large part of the second language field for having been "slavish replication of studies conducted in first language" (Bernhardt, 2005, p. 133). She claims that researchers have made assumptions about second language reading based on first language literacy research without really investigating the underlying processes in any of them (Bernhardt, 2005, p. 134). She goes on to argue that one should not view second

language reading as depending either on reading ability in L1 or grammar knowledge in L2, but rather as a holistic process including all the variables in reading a second language (Bernhardt, 2005, p. 134).

Grabe (2009) points out that there might be a quite big linguistic difference between a person's L1 and L2, since different languages vary in their phonological, orthographic, morphological, syntactic and semantic systems. He quotes Wolf who says that our reading brains are shaped by our L1 since the neuronal connections are made when we learn to read our first language, and these pathways might differ significantly from language to language (Grabe, 2009, p. 109).

This implies that learning to read in L2 does not signify a simple transfer from L1, but rather a complex process that requires an "ability that combines L1 and L2 reading resources into a dual-language processing system" (Grabe, 2009, p. 129). Grabe argues that a lot of research seems to be pointing to a new hybrid L2 reading system that is evolving. L2 is about to go from someone trying to read in a second language to someone learning to read with languages (Grabe, 2009, p. 129).

In her article "Reading and Language Learning: Crosslinguistic constraints on Second Language Reading Development" Koda states that "the dual-language involvement implies continual interactions between the two languages as well as incessant adjustments in accommodating the disparate demands each language imposes" (Koda, 2007, p. 1). She joins Bernhard (2005) and Grabe (2009) in claiming that L2 reading is crosslinguistic and therefore a much more complex process than L1 reading. Koda claims that it is difficult to verify the dual language involvement because of the very different backgrounds and L1 experience that the readers have. She believes that it is very important to sort out and classify prior experience, prior knowledge, background etc. in order to be able to know how the dual language involvement really affects reading (Koda, 2007, p. 10). Koda makes it clear that both L1 and L2 literacy experiences play an important, though different, role in L2 reading. Important aspects to be discussed and considered are: common underlying competences, linguistic distance and crosslinguistic interactions (Koda, 2007, p. 25).

Hence the complexity of the reading process it can be complicated to detect where the problems lie when pupils lack efficiency in reading. One of the common mistakes that pupils make is that they use counterproductive reading strategies. Hellekjær (2005, 2008)

found out in his studies that most students do not know about different reading strategies. They read closely for detailed understanding all the time (Hellekjær, 2007b, p. 3; 2008, p. 4). This is not very efficient when the aim is to search for certain information or to get a general idea of a text. Faye-Schjøll added to the picture by pointing out that many teachers don't teach their pupils about reading strategies; hence it is no surprise that pupils are not familiar with the benefits of using these (Faye-Schjøll, 2009, pp. 131-133).

Hellekjær's research agrees with Alderson's findings as the latter suggests that poor foreign language reading might occur because the reader uses incorrect strategies for reading that specific language or because he is not using his first language strategies at all due to lack of knowledge of the second language (Hudson, 2007, p. 61).

Having discussed the dual language involvement we will now take a look at another crucial aspect of L2 reading, namely vocabulary.

## **2.6 Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is obviously an indispensable part of every reading activity. Having a large and varied vocabulary will make it easier to master a range of different texts, both when it comes to word-attack, comprehension, fluency and critical reading. All these skills are easier conquered if a reader has a large vocabulary. Both Grabe and Koda list a number of research studies that show a strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading both in L1 and L2 (Grabe, 2009, p. 265; Koda, 2007, p. 5). Grabe claims that an educated L1 adult will need to know about 40,000 words while an L2 learner needs to know at least 10,000 words to read instructionally and about 18,000 - 20,000 words to be able to read fluently in English (Grabe, 2009, pp. 270-271). The question is how to build or attain this kind of vocabulary. As Grabe states it is impossible to learn this amount of words by explicit vocabulary instruction (Grabe, 2009, p. 272).

Hudson claims that "there is a general agreement that much second language vocabulary learning occurs incidentally through extensive reading, rather than through explicit vocabulary instruction" (Hudson, 2007, p. 245). He lists three primary advantages to incidental vocabulary learning:

1. The vocabulary is contextualized, giving a richer meaning to each word
2. It is pedagogically efficient in that it allows both reading and vocabulary learning to occur at the same time
3. It is more individualized because the vocabulary that is learned is learner based  
(Hudson, 2007, p. 245)

Grabe (2009) agrees that it is important with incidental learning, however, he claims that “most vocabulary researchers argue that effective vocabulary learning is a combination of:

1. Learning words from context through extensive reading
2. Providing direct instruction of vocabulary words
3. Developing word-learning strategies
4. Building word-recognition fluency
5. Developing word appreciation (and motivation) on student’s parts  
(Grabe, 2009, p. 276)

Grabe and Hudson both agree that explicit vocabulary instruction teaches the student key words for comprehension (Grabe, 2009, p. 276; Hudson, 2007, p. 245).

Koda (2007) points to a number of studies showing that vocabulary knowledge enables reading comprehension (Koda, 2007, p. 5). She claims that this is supported by the concept of vocabulary threshold, which means that in order to understand a text about 98% of the words must be known. On the other hand Koda argues that since incidental learning from context requires the ability to build meaning from the local text, the expansion of vocabulary knowledge is greatly assisted by reading ability (Koda, 2007, p. 5).

This means that in order to read well it is crucial with a large vocabulary, and in order to expand one’s vocabulary it is crucial to be able to read well. The inter-connection between vocabulary and reading implies that both vocabulary instruction and reading instruction is essential in building good readers.

## 2.7 What is a good reader?

There has been a lot of research on good and poor reader characteristics. Pang has synthesized this research and come up with a profile that matches the good reader (Pang, 2008). He discerns between three different dimensions of reading namely language knowledge and processing ability, cognitive ability, and metacognitive strategic competence.

Table 1. *A profile of a good reader*

Dimensions	Characteristics
<b>Language knowledge and processing ability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Automatic and rapid word recognition</b> (e.g., Booth et al., 1999; Just &amp; Carpenter, 1987; Nassaji, 2003; Perfetti, 1985; Pressley, 1998)</li> <li>• <b>Automatic syntactic parsing and semantic proposition formation</b> (e.g., Chen, 1998; Fraser, 2004; Liu &amp; Bever, 2002; Lu, 1999)</li> <li>• <b>Reasonable size of vocabulary ranging from 10,000 to 100,000</b> (e.g., Alderson, 2000; Barnett, 1986; Carver, 1993; Grabe &amp; Stoller, 2002)</li> <li>• <b>Awareness of text type and discourse organization</b> (e.g., Beck et al., 1991; Brantmeier, 2004; Carrell, 1992; Commander &amp; Stanwyck, 1997)</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive ability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good store of cognitive strategies</b> (e.g., Block, 1986; Carrell, 1985, 1992; Grabe, 1999)</li> <li>• <b>Ready access to variety of purposeful strategies</b> (Hopkins &amp; Mackay, 1997; Long et al., 1996; Yang &amp; Zhang, 2002)</li> <li>• <b>Higher and proficient use of strategies</b> (Anderson, 1991; Grabe &amp; Stoller, 2002; Haenggi &amp; Perfetti, 1992; Reynolds et al., 1990)</li> <li>• <b>Effective use of prior knowledge</b> (e.g., Bernhardt, 1991; Chen &amp; Groves, 1995; Haenggi &amp; Perfetti, 1992)</li> <li>• <b>Supportive use of mother tongue in L2</b> (e.g., Kern, 1994; Upton &amp; Lee-Thompson, 2001)</li> </ul>
<b>Metacognitive strategic competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good knowledge of cognition</b> (e.g., Carrell et al., 1998; Gregory, 1994)</li> <li>• <b>Competence in monitoring comprehension process</b> (e.g., Karen &amp; Evans, 1993; Yang &amp; Zhang, 2002)</li> <li>• <b>Competence in evaluating and regulating strategy use to achieve maximum comprehension</b> (e.g., Gregory, 1994; Karen &amp; Evans, 1993; Long &amp; Chong, 2001)</li> </ul>

Keeping this profile in mind we will now look at possible methods and strategies that can be applied in order to help readers match this profile better.

## **2.8 How to become a good reader**

There is not one “recipe” that will make all pupils excellent readers. However, there are ways and methods that can be used to improve and strengthen ones reading skills. Looking at Pang’s profile of the good reader it is obvious that many strategies are involved in the activity of reading. A number of those are strategic, cognitive and metacognitive skills that good readers use without being aware of it. However, I believe that pupils would benefit greatly from learning strategies and skills that make them aware of the processes they engage in. This way they will be able to internalize them and excel as readers. Systematic and consistent practice is a key word in this context. According to Krashen’s research the benefits are greater and more consistent the longer reading is done. “Programs that last longer than a year are consistently effective” (Krashen, 2004, p. 3).

As mentioned earlier extensive reading is a reading strategy that is used when people read for enjoyment and relaxation. Research in later years has also emphasized the importance of using extensive reading in EFL, and different studies show it to be very beneficial in learning a new language (Krashen, 2004, p. 1). Krashen claims that FVR (free voluntary reading/extensive reading) is “the missing ingredient in first language “language arts” as well as intermediate second and foreign language instruction. It will not, by itself, produce the highest levels of competence; rather, it provides a foundation so that higher levels of proficiency may be reached. When FVR is missing, these advanced levels are extremely difficult to attain” (Krashen, 2004, p. 1).

The reason why extensive reading has been proved to be so effective is that people who read for pleasure acquire very important language skills: a large vocabulary, reading efficiency, understanding and using grammatical structures, good spelling and a decent writing style (Krashen, 2004, p. 149). Language skills can be acquired by other means than reading, but it takes a lot more time and effort. This has been confirmed by the research that Krashen refers to. In his input hypothesis Krashen argues that “an important condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer understand (via hearing or reading) input

language that contains structure “a bit beyond” his or her current level of understanding” (Brown, 2007, p. 295). Hence, the intention is that the students read books that challenge them to a certain degree without being too difficult. This will improve their understanding of the target language and eventually also help them acquire the desired language skills. Norbert Schmitt agrees with Krashen in this respect. He states that reading is a good way of incidental learning of vocabulary. However, he agrees with Koda that it is necessary to attain a certain vocabulary size “threshold” in order to make sense of the sentences on a page. If there are too many unknown words, incidental learning will not take place (Koda, 2007, p. 5; Schmitt, 2000, p. 120).

Krashen’s theory has been criticized for claiming that comprehensible input is “the only true cause of second language acquisition” (Brown, 2007, p. 295). Merrill Swain argues that output is at least as important as input because it can help students recognize their own errors, give them an opportunity to test out their language and assist their reflections on the language itself (Brown, 2007, p. 299). I believe that using actively both the comprehension skills (listening and reading) and the production skills (speaking and writing) would give the best point of departure for acquiring a new language.

According to Bamford and Day, extensive reading “can be a key to unlocking the all-important taste for foreign language reading among students.” They argue, referring to Eskey, that it can be as essential as teaching swimming strokes to people who hate the water (Bamford & Day, 2002).

Another advantage of extensive reading that it is considered to be an enjoyable and relaxing activity (Krashen, 2004, p. 28). It is more likely that students will enjoy reading a book they find interesting than memorizing grammatical structures.

Bamford and Day have made a list of ten principles that are important in an extensive reading approach to teaching reading (Bamford & Day, 2002). I will list them here because they give some practical insight on how to help pupils become better readers.

1. The reading material is easy
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available
3. Learners choose what they want to read
4. Learners read as much as possible

5. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding
6. Reading is its own reward
7. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower
8. Reading is individual and silent
9. Teachers orient and guide their students
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader

As mentioned earlier, there is not just one way to go about teaching reading and reading skills. There are numerous methods and programs that are both effective and interesting. However, the crucial point is that the teacher understands the importance and benefits of adequate reading instruction.

## **2.9 Summary**

In this chapter we have taken a look at several different aspects of reading. After defining what reading is we looked at different important reading strategies and reading skills that pupils need in order to become capable readers. Then we moved on to reading in L1 and the different models that have dominated the research in the field of L1. The most prominent of these are the bottom-up, top-down and interactive models. Moving on to L2 we started by looking at the differences between L1 and L2 before looking at the dual language involvement and different views of L2 reading. The last two aspects that were looked into in this chapter were vocabulary and the characteristics of a good reader.

Having a backdrop of theory on reading, I will now move on to look at LK06 and how reading is integrated in the Norwegian National Curriculum.

# 3 Reading in LK06

## 3.1 What is a curriculum?

There are several different definitions of a curriculum. According to Graves a curriculum is the processes and products of planning, teaching and evaluating a course of study (Graves, 2008, p. 149). Simensen distinguishes between curriculum as “a complete study program of a school or institution” and syllabus which is “a study program or course in a school subject” (Simensen, 2007, p. 17). According to this definition a curriculum may then contain a number of syllabi. I find Simensen’s definition helpful in order to make a clearer distinction between the national curriculum and the syllabus for English, which is the one I will investigate most in detail. However, the Ministry of Education and Research has chosen to use the terms national curriculum and subject curriculum instead of curriculum and syllabus. In order to avoid confusion those are the terms I chose to use as well for the purpose of this thesis.

In Norway the national curriculum is a political as well as a programmatical and pedagogical document (Sivesind & Bachmann, 2002, p. 27). These three aspects reflect the complexity of the document. On one hand it is a political statement that sets the standards for how society wants the school system to be and it is the politicians’ chance to influence education and instruction. The political discourse is made up of parliamentary discussions, decisions as well as the contributions from the different parties. The aim of this process is to clarify what the school’s tasks and purpose should be in view of a societal perspective. This perspective looks at both what should be conserved as cultural heritage as well as what contribution is needed from future generations when it comes to qualifications and education (Sivesind & Bachmann, 2002, p. 27). Another aspect of the curriculum is the programmatical discourse where the concrete curriculum and the guidelines are determined. This is also where teacher’s guides, textbooks etc. are produced. The programmatical discourse can be seen as bridge between the political discourses and the pedagogical discourse, which is how the curriculum is interpreted by the teachers and implemented in the classrooms (Sivesind & Bachmann, 2002, p. 28). In the pedagogical discourse the influence can be both direct and indirect. There is a direct influence if the teacher

consciously uses the curriculum in planning and carrying out classes and purposely intends to teach according to the guidelines. The indirect influence comes when other sources that have been influenced by the authorities are used in preparation or in teaching. An example of indirect influence is the textbook. The textbook, as noted earlier, is developed in the programmatic discourse and is thus made according to regulations and guidelines, or the syllabus as is the case with LK06, determined in the political discourse (Sivesind & Bachmann, 2002, p. 28).

Thus, according to Sivesind & Bachmann the Norwegian national curriculum can be viewed as what Graves in her State-of-the-Art Article calls the specialist approach (Graves, 2008, p. 149). Specialists, outside of the classroom, are responsible for the decision-making and the production of relevant material. Teachers and learners are in turn responsible for the implementation of the received curriculum. Graves has some critical comments to the use and function of the specialist approach. First of all, it is easy to end up with a mismatch between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum. As different groups of people perform different curricular functions and “hand off” the product to the next group, there is not a common ground for beliefs and assumptions. Wenger claims that “people who did not participate in producing a product that they are expected to use will interpret it according to their own beliefs, understandings and needs” Wenger as cited by (Graves, 2008, p. 151). Second, there is a fundamental issue that is raised when teachers and learners are expected to be recipients and implementers of received wisdom instead of decision-makers in their own right. A third problem that Graves sees as far as the specialist approach is concerned, is the lack of possibilities and will to evaluate the curriculum and change it if needed. Usually, there has been invested so much time and effort in creating a curriculum that when the actual classroom-implementation shows need for changes, there is a reluctance to go back and change the curriculum. “If there are problems in the implementation, the fault is seen to be with the teachers because they were not faithful to the curriculum, not with the curriculum or those who designed it” (Graves, 2008, p. 151). The end result is educational authorities that blame teachers for resisting curricular innovation and teachers that criticize the authorities for being out of touch with the reality in the classrooms. If we look at the public debate concerning school systems and

curriculum in Norway over the last few years it is difficult to deny that similar statements have been made both by the authorities and by the teachers.

Graves describes three different perspectives on curriculum implementations that are currently used: the fidelity perspective, the mutual adaptation perspective and the curriculum enactment perspective (Graves, 2008, p. 153). The fidelity perspective and the mutual adaptation perspective view curriculum as an entity produced by experts to be implemented by teachers through instruction. The curriculum enactment perspective on the other hand is concerned with how “curriculum is shaped through the evolving constructs of teacher and students”. The core of the curriculum is what happens in the classroom, namely the evolving relationship between the teacher, the learners and the subject matter.

Having defined what a curriculum is we will now take a look at the Norwegian national curriculum in order to understand what it is and how it functions before we move on to the subject curricula and the section on reading.

## **3.2 What is LK06?**

The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training, known as LK06 is the new national curriculum that was implemented by the Norwegian Government in 2006. This curriculum covers instruction from 1<sup>st</sup> grade all the way through secondary school. Earlier there were two totally independent curricula; one covered the grades 1 through 10, while the other covered upper secondary. The intention behind producing one curriculum for both primary, lower secondary and upper secondary was to make a curriculum that would be adapted to the increasing demands of today’s society and that would provide continuity and a controlled progression throughout the education by outcome-based learning. Outcome-based education (OBE) focuses on what the pupils are expected to know after they are done, the outcome, as opposed to traditional education where the focus is on what resources, input, are available for the pupils (Acharya, 2003). Another important aspect of LK06 is the focus on local involvement, meaning that the intention is that schools and teachers are to take part in designing the curriculum that they will be using. This is a step away from the specialist approach, even though the specialists still are heavily involved in creating the national curriculum.

The National Curriculum comprises the five following parts:

- The Core Curriculum
- The Quality Framework
- Subject Curricula
- Distribution of teaching hours per subject
- Individual Assessment

The Core Curriculum is where the general principles of the curriculum are outlined. The cultural, educational and value foundation is stated along with the overall goals and aims of the instruction. This part is tied to the quality framework where the common principles that apply to all subjects and all grades are presented. This part is also linked to the statutory rules and regulations. Next is the Subject Curricula where the purpose of the instruction, the main subject areas, and the competence aims, basic skills and the evaluation of the subject are specified. Then follows the distribution of teaching hours per subject and the individual assessment that gives instructions as to how the pupils are to be evaluated in each subject.

There are three new concepts that are introduced in LK06, namely Basic Skills, Main Subject Areas and Competence Aims. We will now take a brief look at these before moving on to reading in LK06.

### **3.2.1 Basic Skills**

A new term that was introduced in LK06 is basic skills. The curriculum operates with five basic skills that are to be taught throughout the whole curriculum, meaning that every syllabus and subject needs to incorporate the teaching and promotion of these basic skills. These skills are:

1. To be able to express oneself orally
2. To be able to read
3. To have skills in mathematics
4. To be able to express oneself in writing
5. To be able to use digital tools

The specific mention of these skills makes it “impossible” to ignore them and it also provides a great opportunity to focus the pupil’s attention to the importance of these skills in every area of their education.

Since “being able to read” is one of the basic skills it means that every syllabus needs to focus on how to teach and promote reading, even in subjects that are not normally associated with reading, like for example Mathematics. This can be a good opportunity to teach the pupils how reading can be beneficial in a number of different settings and also how different reading strategies can be useful and valuable depending on what the purpose of the reading is. There is obviously a great difference in reading a novel for the English class and reading a statistic table for the mathematics class. Nevertheless, both are reading, and helping the pupils understand this will increase their awareness of how reading can be used as a tool in interpreting and understanding a great deal of different material.

### **3.2.2 Main Subject Areas and Competence Aims**

Each Subject Curriculum in LK06 has been divided into main subject areas. These outline the core themes that are to be taught throughout the year. The subject areas are not clearly divided, but they supplement each other and the intention is that they are to be considered together.

Each main subject area has several competence aims that are intended to indicate what the pupils are supposed to have learned after the designated grades. There are competence aims in every subject curriculum after the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> year of primary and lower secondary school. In upper secondary there are normally competence aims for each subject curriculum every year. This means that the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year the pupils work with the material that is covered by the competence aims of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, etc. For upper secondary this means that all three years of instruction are covered by the competence aims after the 10<sup>th</sup> year.

The purpose and intention is that the school is capable of helping each student to reach the highest possible degree of achievement as far as the competence aims are concerned. Or in other words, that each student gets the possibility to explore their potential

and learn and grow as much as possible. In the next section I will look at the competence aims for reading.

## **3.3 Reading in LK-06**

I will start this section on reading by taking a look at the Norwegian Subject Curriculum before moving on to the English Subject Curriculum. It might provide some interesting and valuable information as to how reading is viewed in general, and how it is being implemented and taught in Norwegian.

### **3.3.1 Reading in the Norwegian Subject Curriculum**

As mentioned earlier LK06 has a stronger focus on reading than what has been the case in earlier curricula. This is shown by the fact that reading training now is to start in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. As reading is one of the basic skills, the Norwegian subject curriculum states that “being able to read in Norwegian is a basic skill that the Norwegian subject curriculum takes special responsibility for through initial reading training and then continuing this training throughout all the 13 years of schooling”.

The Norwegian subject curriculum has the following four main subject areas:

1. oral texts
2. written texts
3. composite texts
4. language and culture

Reading obviously has an essential role in all of these subject areas; however, the area of written texts explicitly focuses on written communication, that is to say reading and writing. The curriculum states that “reading and writing are parallel processes in each pupil’s learning process. The pupil develops writing competence by reading and reading competence by writing.” The document goes on to say that “pupils are stimulated to enjoy reading and writing and to developing their reading and writing strategies in continuous progression throughout the 13 years of schooling. Attention is also paid to the pupil’s own

understanding of their development as readers and writers.” The good intentions of this document is unquestionable, however, good intentions are not always sufficient. A doctoral study on how reading strategies and reading motivation in Norwegian is taught shows that there is very little explicit teaching of reading strategies in upper secondary school (Anmarkrud, 2009, p. 212). Anmarkrud discovered that the little teaching on reading strategies he found was implicit, and he doubts that the pupils were capable of extracting it from the context and viewing it as a reading strategy. He also found that most of the teaching on reading was done by teacher-directed instruction with the whole class. Thus there was very little room for smaller groups and individual follow-up. The result is that there is no “attention ... paid to the pupil’s understanding of their development as readers and writers” as the curriculum states. Another finding that contradicts the intentions in the curriculum is that the teachers in the study hardly work with the pupil’s reading motivation at all. They are taught neither the expectation aspect nor the value of reading (Anmarkrud, 2009, p. 212).

Anmarkrud’s findings are very interesting regarding the topic of EFL-instruction because another study conducted on reading in English in upper secondary shows that some teachers are under the impression that it is unnecessary to teach reading in English because the pupils already know how to read: “some of my informants are of the opinion that since their pupils receive adequate reading instruction in Norwegian class there is no need for the English teachers to spend time on it in their language instruction” (Faye-Schjøll, 2009, p. 133). When, according to Anmarkrud, reading instruction in Norwegian is by no means adequate, it is tempting to ask the question: if pupil’s are not taught how to read and use reading strategies either in Norwegian nor in English, who is actually to teach them how to read?

Now we will take a look at how the English subject curriculum and see how it deals with the topic of reading.

### **3.3.2 Reading in the English Subject Curriculum**

The English subject curriculum has been structured into three main subject areas where each one has its own competence aims. These areas are:

1. language learning

2. communication
3. culture, society and literature

In the presentation of the three areas reading is not mentioned in language learning. However, it is mentioned as one of five different ways of achieving communication. Reading is also brought up under culture, society and literature where it says that “reading literature may also help to instill the joy of reading in pupils and provide the basis for personal growth, maturity and creativity.” When it comes to the implementation of reading as a basic skill in English, reading is viewed as part of the practical language competence which means “being able to read and understand, to explore and reflect upon increasingly more demanding texts and thus gain insight across cultures and disciplines.” The document also adds that “developing reading skills in English also improves general reading skills.” There is no mention of how these reading skills are to be developed.

In order to find out some more about how reading is viewed we will take a look at the competence aims for the subject area of communication after the 10<sup>th</sup> year, meaning the competence aims that apply to all three years of upper secondary school. This area has thirteen competence aims, which I have numbered in order to simplify the discussion, and these are “that the pupil shall be able to”:

1. master vocabulary that covers a range of topics
2. use basic grammatical and text structures of English orally and in writing
3. understand spoken and written texts on a variety of topics
4. express himself/herself in writing and orally with some precision, fluency and coherence
5. adapt his/her spoken and written English to the genre and situation
6. present and discuss current events and interdisciplinary topics
7. read and understand texts of different lengths and genres
8. select listening, speaking, reading and writing strategies adapted to the purpose and situation
9. write texts that narrate, describe, argue or give messages, with the appropriate basic structure and adequate paragraphing

10. use content from various sources independently and critically
11. demonstrate the ability to distinguish positively and negatively loaded expressions referring to individuals and groups
12. communicate via digital media
13. describe and interpret graphic representations of statistics and other data

If we look at competence aims number 3, 7, 8, and 10 it is clear that these are directly related to reading. Pupils are supposed to read and understand different kinds of written texts, select appropriate reading strategies, and be able to analyze different kind of material in an independent and critical way. Furthermore, reading will be an indispensable part of the other competence aims as well.

In light of Anmarkrud's and Faye-Schjøll's studies it is interesting to note that there is an entire competence aim that focuses on the need to "select listening, speaking, reading and writing strategies adapted to the purpose and situation". This means that throughout the three years of lower secondary school pupils are supposed to learn what reading strategies are and how to choose and use them in the appropriate situations.

If we look at the competence aims listed under culture, society and literature we see that one of the aims is to "read and discuss a representative selection of literary texts from the genres poetry, short stories, novels and drama from the English-speaking world". This aim by necessity involves a lot of reading, using different strategies. I think it is interesting to observe that the subject curriculum specifically mentions different kinds of texts that need to be studied. This will give pupils a chance to get acquainted with different genres, not just theoretically, but by reading authentic texts. Furthermore, it will allow the pupils to use different reading strategies in discovering the essence and the distinctiveness of the different texts. Hopefully, the pupils are blessed with teachers who realize that "a representative selection" does not mean one text each year, but teachers that will make available a large assortment of titles and genres. If this happens the pupils can choose books they like and want to read and maybe be introduced to literature that they would not have chosen first time around.

## 3.4 Summary

In this chapter we have looked at what a curriculum is and more specifically at LK06 and the different aspects of this Norwegian National Curriculum and how it affects teaching. In LK06 there are several new aspects that have been incorporated. Both the focus on basic skills and on competence aims has been integrated and reveals the connection to outcome-based education.

Reading is an important part of the instruction in LK06. We understand that by noting the following features:

- Reading is considered a basic skill and is to be taught throughout the curriculum
- Reading instruction starts in 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- Several of the competence aims in 10<sup>th</sup> grades English subject curriculum relate directly to reading
- Pupils are expected to learn and be able to use various reading strategies

In short, the conditions and premises for good reading teaching seem to be in place in LK06, however much depends on the professionals that carry out the teaching in the classrooms.

Moving on to the next chapter we are going to look into the methodology used in this thesis.

# 4 Method

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will look at the method, namely explaining the choices I have made and the procedures that have been used in this study. I will start with a general definition of methods before moving on to the research process, presentation and evaluation.

To define what method is we go back to the origin of the word: “method, from the Greek word *methos*, means to follow a specific way towards a goal” (Johannesen, Tufte, & Kristoffersen, 2006, p. 32, my translation). Thus social scientific method is a specific way of gathering, analyzing and presenting information so that we can get a better picture of whatever aspect of reality we are investigating (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 33). According to Johannesen et al. this specific way of exploring a particular subject normally includes four phases. The following table shows the four phases and a summary of the research process.

Table 2. The research process, from (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 39)

<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Collecting data</b>	<b>Analyzing data</b>	<b>Presenting data</b>
Idea/Topic	Choice of method	Data reduction	Written report
Research questions	Selecting informants	Analysis and	Presentation
Relevant literature	Collecting data	interpretation	
Purpose		Quality assurance	
Research design			

I will now look at these phases by first giving a general description and then linking them to my study.

## **4.2 Preparation**

The preparation part is crucial in any research process because it is where the whole process is planned and outlined. The outcome of a research process might be seriously compromised if the preparation part has not been carried out in a thorough manner.

### **4.2.1 Research questions**

The first step in preparing for a study is to find out what it is that one wants to study. Then the topic has to be narrowed down to one or more research questions (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 37). It might sound obvious, but it can actually be quite challenging to find good and focused questions that lead us in the right direction and give us answers to what we really want to know.

### **4.2.2 Research design**

Another aspect of the preparation part is to find out what kind of study one wants to carry out (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 38). Is the aim to understand a phenomenon, count the frequency of it, or maybe describe it? We need to answer a number of questions such as: Why? What? Who? How? The answers to these and other relevant questions will lead us in direction of the right research design. A research design is a plan that outlines how to collect, analyze and present data so it can answer the research questions (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 38; Riis, 2005, p. 28). We distinguish between quantitative and qualitative data and the research designs differ correspondently. Quantitative methods aim to count the number of times a certain phenomena appears in order find out the nature and frequency of it. The common denominator in quantitative research is that the data can be counted and statistically processed (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 36). Qualitative methods, on the other hand, try to characterize and describe. Simply put we can say that the material in quantitative studies is numbers and the material in qualitative studies is texts (Repstad, 2007). Both in quantitative and qualitative methods there are several different research designs to choose from based on what kind of study one wants to conduct. The most common designs in quantitative methods are surveys, experiments and quasi experiments. In qualitative methods on the other hand the most common designs are phenomenology,

ethnography, grounded theory and case design (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 80).

Phenomenology aims to describe people and their experience with and understanding of a phenomenon. Grounded theory on the other hand seeks to develop new theories based on gathered data. Ethnographic studies try to describe and interpret a culture, a social group or a social system. Case studies is when you study one or more aspects in one or more cases and come up with a thorough description of the field (Johannesen, et al., 2006, pp. 80-87).

When I started the preparation for this thesis I needed to find out what kind of study I wanted to implement. I wanted to examine the area of teacher's attitudes towards reading in English. I looked into different possibilities, both quantitative and qualitative research. My first plan was to do a quantitative study with teachers from schools all over Norway, and then follow up with some interviews to complement the information. However, I was soon warned against it. First of all it would have been a project too big for the limits of this thesis, second people at the university that had worked with quantitative studies before, and a friend of mine that worked in a company that does quantitative studies for corporations and political parties told me that it was extremely hard and time consuming to actually get people to answer this kind of questionnaires. So I figured that if teachers don't have time to answer questionnaires from the Ministry of Education where they can win brand new computer equipment for their schools they will definitely not prioritize a mere master's study. These considerations led me to choose a qualitative approach, based on interviews. When it comes to research design I was neither aiming to develop new theory nor trying to describe a culture or social group and therefore ruled out grounded theory and ethnography. Furthermore, I was not trying to thoroughly describe one or several cases, but rather interested in examining the phenomenon of teachers attitudes towards reading. Thus, it seemed to me that the research design that best fit my intentions was phenomenology.

### **4.3 Collecting data**

“Data is documentation that reflects the reality we want to study” (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 37, my translation). According to our research design adequate methods of collecting data must be used. It is important that the data is relevant and reliable and that it has been collected according to ethical standards (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 38).

### **4.3.1 Interview guide**

There are three different types of interviews that can be used; unstructured, semi-structured or structured. The difference lies in how the interview is carried out. An unstructured interview does not have an interview guide and the questions are not fixed beforehand. The progression and direction of the interview is largely based on the informants. A structured interview, on the other hand is when both the topics and the questions are written down. There are different alternative answers and the interviewer ticks off the right alternative (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 138). My interviews were conducted using the middle way, namely a semi-structured interview guide, meaning that I had the questions written down, but was able to reorganize the order of the questions according to the development of the interview, and also ask follow-up questions that were not necessarily in my interview guide.

### **4.3.2 Conducting the interviews**

In phenomenological studies it is usual to gather data using long interviews with between 5 and 25 informants (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 81). I ended up interviewing 11 teachers from 8 different schools, taping the interviews. Seven of the interviews were done in person, while the remaining 4 were done by phone. However, one of the interviews is not part of this study because of technical problems that left me with only part of the interview on tape. Thus I chose to focus on the interviews that were complete in order to do the informants justice, and to compromising the validity of the study.

These interviews were conducted over a rather large time span. The reason is because I conducted a small pre study on the same topic for one of my English classes before I started on my master's thesis. This pre study provided valuable information in regard to the topic so I chose to include these three interviews as part of the data material.

As mentioned earlier, all the interviews were taped with the informants' permissions. This was done in order to get all the information right and also so that I would be able to focus my attention on the informant during the interview and not on taking correct notes. That becomes especially important in a semi-structured interview, because in order to ask relevant follow-up questions it is necessary to pay close attention to what is being communicated during the interview. Even so, I had pen and paper at hand together

with my interview guide in order to jot down anything of specific interest. After the interviews I saved them as audio files on my computer. All names of both informants and schools were changed according to ethical guidelines in order to secure the informants' anonymity (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 98). The three first interviews that I made were transcribed shortly after the interviews. The last ones were not transcribed for reasons of time.

Before the interview started I told the informants what the topic was about. I told them I wanted to ask them some questions about reading. I did not give them the interview guide, however. The reason was that I did not want them to prepare answers beforehand. I wanted to get their off-the-top-of-my-head answers. I believe that if they had had time to prepare some of the answers would have been more politically correct than the ones that I got. On the other hand I might have gotten more detailed answers, as there might have been aspects of the topics and questions that were left out and forgotten because they had not had time to prepare the answers beforehand. Even so, I believe that for the purpose of this study it was best to get unprepared answers.

### **4.3.3 Informants**

A crucial part of the interview process is to find some reliable informants. However, that is not always so easy. Initially, I started out with a list of different geographical areas that I wanted to be represented in the study. This was to ensure that both rural and central schools, as well as schools from different socio-economical and ethnical areas were represented. I made a list of the different schools in the different areas and contacted the administrators by phone to ask for permission as well as a list of possible informants. Most of the administrators that I was able to get hold of were positive. Some told me that they would get back to me; others that I should send them an e-mail and some gave me names of English teachers at their school that I could contact. I was quite optimistic to begin with, but soon found out that it would not be that easy. Most of the people that said they would contact me never did. The ones I sent e-mails to never answered. However, I did manage to get in contact with some very helpful teachers that were very cooperative and willing to be interviewed. Even so I did not have enough informants, so I had to look at other options. As many students in the same situation I had to use my network of colleagues and fellow

students and relatives. I interviewed some teachers at a school where I had worked, I interviewed some colleagues of one of my classmates, and my thesis supervisor was also able to provide me with some informants. In addition, I interviewed some colleagues and former colleagues of some of my relatives. It is important to add however, that even though I had to use my own network in order to find enough informants; these did not know anything about me or my study. Thus, hopefully, the validity of the study was not compromised by biased informants.

## **4.4 Analyzing data**

In order to get some answers to the questions we are asking, the collected data must be analyzed. In quantitative research that means counting the answers and statistically processing these. In qualitative research it means working through the data such as interviews, reports etc. to find patterns, interesting observations and so forth (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 164).

When I started working with the analysis of the interviews my primary goal was to get an overview of the material. After working through all the material I started to look for patterns and also grouping the information to make it more accessible. In order to organize the information I made a chart for each question where I filled in the information from each respondent. I used both color codes and letter codes to mark similarities, different patterns and other interesting information.

## **4.5 Presenting data**

After the process of analyzing and working through the data it is time to present the results. This is often done in reports, articles, books etc. (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 38).

According to the type of study that has been done there are set standards as to how to make the report, both in respect to the formal aspects of the writing as to how to use and quote relevant literature on the subject. I will now present the questionnaire I used as well as the different informants.

### **4.5.1 Presentation of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire that I used when conducting the interviews consisted of 15 questions.

The questions can be grouped as follows:

1. Teacher's background
2. Teacher's reading habit
3. Reading in class
4. Pupils' reading habits
5. LK06

The first three questions have to do with the informant's background and his/her level of comfort as far as speaking English is concerned. The fourth question has to do with the informant's personal reading habits and what kind of books are he/she reads. The following five questions are about the informant's use of reading in the teaching of English.

Questions 10, 11 and 12 have to do with how much the pupils read English books and what kind of books they read. The last three questions deal with reading in LK06 and 10<sup>th</sup> grades final examination that has a preparation part that requires a lot of reading.

### **4.5.2 Presentation of the informants**

#### **Introduction**

I will now give a presentation of the informants that have been interviewed. First, however, I will just give a brief explanation as to how I selected the informants, what kind of school they represent and how I have chosen to present them.

As mentioned earlier, it was rather difficult to find informants that were willing to be a part of this survey. I contacted many schools without being able to get hold of teachers that wanted to be interviewed. Part of the problem, I believe, was that I contacted the administration in order to get names and phone numbers or email addresses to teachers that taught English in lower secondary. Several times I was told that they would contact the teachers and get back to me, however, I was never contacted again. As mentioned above, I therefore ended up having to use my network of colleagues and family to find informants.

Even so, I did not know any of the informants beforehand, and none of them had any information about my project.

All the informants work in lower secondary schools. There are ten teachers from six different schools that have contributed to the survey. The schools are located in different parts of the country, three in cities and three in more rural areas. Four of the schools are public schools while the two others are private schools. The private schools are run by the same standards as far as curriculum is concerned as the public schools. There are no differences in the pedagogical platform between the schools.

In this presentation of the informants I have chosen to describe their background as well as how comfortable they feel speaking English in addition to give a little description of their personal reading habits. The names are fictitious.

### **Jonas**

Jonas has little formal background when it comes to English. He studied some English when in teacher's college, but he says that he was not very good. He claims that his competence has improved a lot over the last 15 years because he has read a lot of English. He has also had a part-time job where he has written a lot of English. He has also had to communicate with colleagues in English, both orally and in written. In addition he has travelled a lot, prioritizing countries where he could speak English. Jonas feels confident speaking English, but says that it depends on the topic. There are fields with specific terminology where he would feel uncertain, but generally he manages quite well. He also mentions that he tries to always speak English in class. In his opinion that improves the teaching a lot, and it also makes everyday English easier both for him and the students. Jonas reads quite a bit of English, both books and magazines.

### **Annika**

Annika's background concerning English started when she was in high school. She took the English studies there and moved to England where she stayed a year. After that she studied another year of English in Norway. She has not travelled a lot, but she reads a lot of English literature and feels comfortable speaking English. If there is a book she wants to read she tries to read them in English.

### **Maria**

Maria did not study English at the university, however, when she started working as a teacher she always seemed to end up teaching English. Therefore, she decided she wanted to have some formal competence in English, and started studying part time at a university college. She has travelled some, but not lived abroad. Even so, she feels comfortable speaking English. She says that the problem is not to speak English, but to be able to adapt her speaking to all the different levels of English in her class. Maria does not read much English literature.

### **Frank**

Frank is a native speaker from the United States. He has gone through the universities in the United States as well as the university in Oslo. Obviously, he feels very comfortable speaking English. Frank reads a lot of English literature, both magazines and books whenever he has time.

### **Karen**

Karen studied English for one year in teacher's college. She says that her confidence level varies a lot. Sometimes speaking English is not a problem at all while other times she feels clumsy, cannot find the words and thinks it is really hard. She assumes that when she has a lot on her mind it gets harder to speak a foreign language. Even so, she tries to speak English as much as possible. It has become easier since she started teaching and she is more focused on using the language. She likes to read English literature, both classic and new novels.

### **Robin**

Robin has studied English and English didactics at two different universities in Norway. He has been a teacher of English for four years. He has not had any long stays abroad; however, he has been speaking English a lot and feels very comfortable with the language. He reads a lot in English, both books of different genres and newspapers.

### **Veronica**

Veronica studied one year of English at the University of Oslo and has been teaching since 1992. She has also used the language on travels and she feels comfortable speaking English. She likes to read English literature, mostly novels.

### **Hanna**

Susan is a native speaker from the United States. She has studied English at a university in the United States and also in Norway. Susan likes to read in English. She has a passion for 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, but reads all kinds of modern and also older literature.

### **Mette**

Mette has studied English both in high school and at teacher's college. She has also taken some English courses after having worked for many years. She also spent one summer abroad in addition to attending several seminars in English-speaking countries. Mette feels pretty comfortable speaking English, but it depends somewhat on the topic. She claims that her confidence level has increased enormously after starting to teach English. She reads some books in English, but not very many.

### **Elisabeth**

Elisabeth studied one year of English after finishing her teacher's college. She has been teaching English for 30 years. She has also studied language in England as well as travelled a lot in English-speaking countries. She says that she feels very comfortable speaking English and that her confidence level has increased with her experience in teaching the language. She speaks only English in her English-classes and has done that for many years. She likes to read English literature, mostly novels and literature that her students are interested in.

## **4.6 Validity**

In order to know if a study provides valid data, we need to be able to evaluate not just the results, but the whole process. In quantitative research there are methods that will show if a

survey's results can be trusted or not. When it comes to qualitative research it is more difficult to “prove” that a study has been conducted in a good way. However, there are some aspects that will help us consider if the study can be trusted. These are reliability, construct validity, transferability and confirmability. I will now take a look at these concepts by giving a general description and then relating them to my study.

#### **4.6.1 Reliability**

The reliability of a study tells us “how precise and good the measuring instruments have been, how reliable and precise information we have been able to gather, and if we have been able to implement the study without mistakes and faults” (Repstad, 2007, p. 134), my translation. Thus the reliability tells us if we can trust the results and conclusions of a study. It is easier to verify the reliability of a quantitative survey than a qualitative study. It is possible to do the same survey twice and see if and how the results differ. And it is possible for another researcher to do the exact same survey and control the results. However, it is nearly impossible to do an interview over again and get the exact same answers, and it is even harder for another researcher to get the exact same results. The nature of the two processes are so different, however, even though reliability is easier measured in quantitative studies it certainly has its place in qualitative studies as well. A study is more reliable if the whole process is well documented and explained. That way it will be “possible to track the documentation of data, methods and decisions throughout the project” Ryen as cited in (Johannessen, et al., 2006, p. 199), my translation.

In this survey I have tried to explain and document the process and the choices I have made, in order to ensure the reliability of the survey.

The term reliability is often used together with validity, which we will take a look at next.

Another aspect that can verify reliability is if several independent researchers come to the same conclusions (Johannessen, et al., 2006, p. 46). When it comes to research on reading and reading in English in Norway there are several studies that mirror the findings of this study and thus indicate that the data in this study reflect reality and can be trusted (Anmarkrud, 2009; Faye-Schjøll, 2009; Hellekjær, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009a).

### **4.6.2 Construct Validity**

While reliability looks at how our study has been conducted, validity looks at the relationship between purpose and results. Did we measure what we wanted to measure? Did we get answers that reflect reality correctly and that match the research questions? (Johannessen, et al., 2006, p. 199; Repstad, 2007, p. 134). According to the answers to these questions we can determine the validity of a study. However, according to Guba and Lincoln there are two techniques that will improve the validity of a survey and these can be used on qualitative studies as well. One is continuous observation meaning getting to know the field so well that one is able to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information. Another technique is method triangulation which means using different methods, for example both interviews and observation in order to increase the chances of getting a correct picture of reality Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 199).

In this thesis I interviewed ten teachers from six different schools and I believe that I have a selection that qualifies as a convenience sample. I believe that I was able to find some answers to the questions I had and that way measure what I wanted to measure. I would argue that the sample I have is typical enough to give a picture of other teachers' opinions as well.

### **4.6.3 Transferability**

Transferability or generality are terms that look into the possibilities of transferring the results from one study to other similar phenomena (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 200). In the process of analyzing data there will always be constructed theories and a simplified picture of reality. These theories and pictures can sometimes be applied to other areas of life as well.

I believe that the ten teachers that I interviewed have representative views of reality, meaning that I believe that other teachers would be able to relate to their experiences and their views. Thus, in my opinion it is possible to transfer the results, however, it is important to note that because it is a small survey with few informants it is not possible to generalize even though we get some indications as to possible tendencies in teachers' opinions and teaching.

#### **4.6.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability means that the results are results of the research itself and not the biased assumptions or subjective attitude of the researcher. In order to achieve confirmability between reality and the results it is crucial to reveal and describe all decisions that have been taken throughout the research process. Thus the reader can assess whether or not the results speak for themselves (Johannesen, et al., 2006, p. 201).

When I started working with this project I had read some research and theory on reading, but nothing that applied directly to what I intended to find out. Thus, I did not really know what to expect or what information I would find. I have described and explained the whole process of this survey and I believe that the results are indeed the results of the research and not my subjective thoughts on the subject.

### **4.7 Summary**

In this chapter I have explained the progress and methodology of the survey I carried out. I started by pointing to the four phases of a survey, namely preparation, collecting data, analyzing data and presenting data. I started out this process by deciding on research questions and research design. For my purpose in this survey I chose to conduct a phenomenological study. I moved on to choosing informants, making an interview guide and conducting the interviews. Following that came the part of analyzing and presenting data.

Every survey has its limitations, so does this one. First of all it is a small qualitative survey with ten informants, as it proved to be difficult to find informants that had time and interest in being part of this study. It is not likely that these ten informants are able to show the whole picture of how reading is viewed and taught in Norwegian lower secondary schools, therefore, these findings cannot be used to generalize to EFL instruction in general. However, there are some interesting results that are backed up by other surveys (Anmarkrud, 2009; Faye-Schjøll, 2009; Hellekjær, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009a). All these studies have similar findings and the results of these studies mirror the results in my study and thus indicate that my findings show a part of the reality of reading in EFL-instruction in Norway.

# 5 Results

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the information I gained from the interviews. I will start by providing additional background about the respondents and then move on to the information they provided. I have chosen to present the findings chronologically following the structure of the interview guide. In order to facilitate the analysis and make the presentation clearer I have grouped the questions in 5 different categories. The categories are the following:

1. Questions on education and background
2. Questions on reading
3. Questions on textbooks and libraries
4. Questions on LK06
5. Questions on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade examination

This chapter will end with a short summary of the findings before the discussion in chapter 6.

## 5.2 Questions on education and background

Given the information provided on the informants and their background in chapter 4, I will introduce them briefly, and then look more closely at the similarities and differences in their education, level of comfortability in speaking English, and their reading habits.

In order to find out about their background I asked them the following four questions:

1. What is your background concerning English?  
(Education, stays abroad, teaching experience, other relevant experience)

2. How comfortable do you feel speaking English?
3. Has that changed since you started teaching?
4. Do you read English books on your own? If yes, what kind?

### **5.2.1 The informants, their background and reading habits**

As mentioned earlier, all my informants are teachers in lower secondary schools. Two of my ten informants, Frank and Hanna, are native speakers of English. Both are from the United States where they also studied English in different universities, but they have lived, studied and worked in Norway for more than 25 years. The other eight informants are from Norway, which is also where they have studied. Most of them have had one year of English in teacher's college, although Robin has studied both English and English didactics at two different universities. With exception of Frank and Hanna, only Jonas and Robin use the English language on a regular basis apart from their teaching. They both have hobbies and other jobs where they practice English. Most of my informants say that they have travelled abroad every now and then and thus had to speak English. Maria is the only one that does not have any background concerning English whatsoever. She has not traveled to English-speaking countries or had any language studies apart from her teachers college education in English that she insisted on taking after being assigned as an English teacher without having any formal education at all.

Most of my informants say that they feel very confident speaking English, however, only three of them wanted to be interviewed in English, and two of these were the native speakers, Frank and Hanna. Jonas and Mette say that their confidence depends on the topic and that they have become more confident over the years teaching English. Karen is the only one that says that her confidence level varies a lot. When she is tired and has a lot on her mind it is difficult for her to speak English. Most of them, however, say that they have been confident all along.

Nearly all of my informants say that they read English books on their own. However, there seems to be quite a bit of difference in what they view as "a lot". Some, like the native speakers Frank and Hanna, say that they read English literature in one form or another every chance they get; while others say that they read a lot – one or two books a year. The type of literature that is read also varies. Jonas and Frank say that they like to

read different kinds of magazines in addition to books. Robin reads books of different genres and also newspapers. Since he is currently studying English, he has to read a lot of different texts for his assignments. Hanna has a passion for 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, but likes to read all kinds of old and modern literature. Annika says that if there is a book that she wants to read, she tries to read it in English. Karen and Veronica read mostly novels. Karen reads both classic and new novels while Veronica reads mostly romance novels. Elisabeth reads novels and also literature that her pupils are interested in, like Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. Mette says that she reads some novels, but not very many, and Maria does not read much English literature at all.

## **5.3 Questions on reading**

After presenting the informants, I will now move on to the topic of reading. I asked the informants the following questions concerning reading:

1. How important do you consider reading to be in English teaching?
2. How do you teach reading?
3. Has that changed in any way since you started teaching?
4. If you had more time to teach reading, how would you do it?
5. How much time would you use on it?

### **5.3.1 How important do you consider reading to be in English teaching?**

All my informants consider reading to be important, although they put different emphasis on it. Three of them say that is important, but that different challenges make it difficult to teach it. Elisabeth says that there is just not enough time. Annika claims that it is hard to teach reading in a class with students at different levels. She does not want to force them to read out loud in class; however she believes that reading is important in order to improve pronunciation. Jonas says that in his experience you have to read in order to learn a new

language and to learn the vocabulary. He thinks that the biggest challenge is finding texts that the pupils have an inner motivation to read. He believes that inner motivation is alpha and omega in order to get the pupils to read more. He is also a firm believer in having the pupils use a dictionary and look up every unknown word. Jonas believes that that is one of the best ways to expand ones vocabulary, even though he claims that travelling and talking to native speakers is what gives the best learning experience.

The other seven of my informants all argue that reading is extremely or very important. They back up their statements by saying that reading is the basis for everything else: “Those who read well write well, speak well, and have a rich vocabulary that they are not even aware of,” Hanna says. Karen claims that many pupils don’t understand the connection between grammar exercises and writing. They know the “I am, you are...” by heart, but the next moment they write “you am...” Reading books, however, they learn grammar in a new way and understand how to use it. It is almost like the grammar “sneaks in the back door” to their conscience without a lot of effort on parts of the pupils to learn it. Robin agrees with both Hanna and Karen as he says that there is an undeniable connection between pupils that read and their written and oral abilities. He adds that he considers it very important to vary the use of literature. Frank says that he considers reading to be so important that it is 50% of everything he does in class. He claims that pupils have to read in order to be able to speak. The moment they feel comfortable reading out loud in class they will also feel comfortable speaking. Mette and Veronica both agree that reading is very important. Mette says that it has to be the basis of everything else, and Veronica claims that it is a very good way of learning a new language.

It is interesting to note that none of the teachers mention anything about reading strategies when asked about the importance of reading.

### **5.3.2 How do you teach reading, using textbooks and/or other books? Has that changed in any way since you started teaching?**

Four of my informants say that letting the pupils choose the books they want to read is important in their teaching of reading. Jonas admits that he should be more true to his own convictions in this case, because he believes that it is very important that pupils get to choose what they want to read. He has some pupils that are interested in football, some in archery, others in athletics, music and cars, and in if they find interesting texts about subjects that they like then the chance that they will make an effort to read is a lot bigger than if he chooses a “boring text about nonsense” from the textbook. However, most of the time it is just too complicated to find something that everyone will be excited about; “I can’t show up with 32 different magazines every class”. Thus he ends up with the “miserable textbook” more often than not. Karen, Robin and Veronica agree with Jonas on the benefits of letting the pupils chose the books or texts they want to read. This is because they believe that the pupils have the inner motivation to read something they find interesting, while reading something “because they have to” does not have the same motivating effect.

Several of the informants I interviewed have memories from their own schooling where they had to sit and listen to nervous classmates stammer through texts, reading out loud in class. Especially Annika is adamant about the negative sides of this method. Apart from being hard on the ones that never liked to read or that weren’t very good at it, it is inactive teaching, meaning that all but one pupil are not participating at all. Annika, Mette and Elisabeth all say that they now use reading in groups and reading in pairs instead of reading the whole class together. Robin claims, however, that his pupils really love to be read for, but then he does the reading, or else he has a volunteer do it.

Maria, Robin, Hanna and Elisabeth specifically mentioned that they encourage the pupils to read on their own. Maria says that she tries to make them aware of the benefits of reading and that she often speaks about reading in class in order to remind them of it. Robin encourages his pupils to read a lot and varied literature. He has also started an online discussion forum where the pupils can comment and discuss different books and texts that

they are reading. Hanna has a reward system where the pupils get bonus marks and rewards for reading outside of class.

Two of my informants, Frank and Hanna, have developed their own reading programs. Frank says that ideally he wants to start out with the pupils in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and follow them through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. This will give him time to build up confidence and teach the pupils that they really are able to read and speak a lot more than they are aware of. He has the pupils reading a lot of different books and texts from the start of 8<sup>th</sup> grade in order to let them understand that reading and speaking in English is a natural part of learning the language. He claims that reading is essential in order to be able to carry on a conversation, because after reading pupils can talk about things instead of just answer yes and no questions. He believes that the pupils go from reading to speaking, meaning that it is easier for the pupils to find word and construct sentences when they feel comfortable reading. Frank continuously tries to influence the teachers that he works with to accept the fact that since there are two grades in English, the written and the spoken grade, reading and speaking has to be, practically speaking, 50% of the time. He says that reading has become more important than it used to be. 30 years ago nearly all the teaching was focused on writing.

The other teacher, Hanna, has developed a reading program that involves much and varied work with different books. She has the whole class involved in pre-textual activities, in-depth reading, quote quizzes and two-minute talks. She claims that these exercises, based on the in-depth reading, prove to the pupils that they are able to read a book, remember the content and expose on it. It also makes them able to reproduce vocabulary and sentence-structure that they have never mastered. The first time the pupils are supposed to take the quote quiz they are not sure they can do it, and write a few sentences on their paper. However, Hanna claims that the third and fourth time around they write on both pages and even ask for another sheet of paper. Their confidence is boosted in many ways.

It is interesting to note that not one single teacher mentions anything, explicitly or implicitly, about reading strategies when asked how they teach reading. Even Frank and Hanna, that have developed their own reading programs, do not mention anything about teaching reading strategies.

When asked if their method of teaching reading had changed since they started teaching most of my informants said that they had developed their teaching in one way or another. Maria and Frank say that they now have a stronger focus on reading, while Robin, Hanna, and Elisabeth say that they like to try out new ideas and activities and thus develop their methods and gain more experiences. Annika and Mette say that their method of teaching has not changed very much. Annika says that she hopes that her teaching has changed. However, she claims that she was more creative in her earlier years of teaching, that there is just not enough time now. Mette says that her method has not changed, but that the topics and the vocabulary of the teaching has changed.

### **5.3.3 If you had more time to teach reading, how would you do it? How much time would you use on it?**

All of my informants would be happy to have more time to teach reading. Jonas, Annika and Maria say that they given more time they would work with graded readers so that every pupil could read a book adapted to his or her level. Their shared experience is that it is hard to teach reading in class because the pupils are on totally different levels. Jonas says that he has pupils that read Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" in English while others struggle with the easiest paragraphs in easy readers. He goes on to say that he would not spend time in class on actual reading, but have the pupils work with texts they have read at home. Annika says that she would have the pupils work with different texts in groups, and that her goal is that they would feel confident speaking in English. Maria would have the pupils work a lot more with different texts and she would also like to combine reading with music and movies and other visual aids.

Frank, Karen and Robin say that they would spend time on actual reading at school. Frank would use the time reading out loud, as he believes that hearing the language read or spoken is crucial in letting the pupils become acquainted with the language. He claims that the spoken training is what is first lost when English hours are cut back. Thus pupils get little training in reading and speaking. He also argues that there is very little reading and speaking English in the lower grades and thus the pupils are not very used to reading or speaking when they reach lower secondary. Frank believes that part of the problem is that

there is a shortage of English speaking teachers in the lower grades. Karen would spend extra time letting her pupils read extensively on their own. She says that she is happy with the language teaching she does today and would do more of what she does now. Robin would put the pupils in small groups where they could read and discuss the books and texts together. That way they will have the opportunity both to read and to speak and thus be able to practice both.

Two of the informants, Mette and Elisabeth, would spend more time on each individual pupil. Mette says that she would do a lot more of listening to them read, helping them with pronunciation and intonation. Elisabeth would spend quite a bit of time on letting them prepare and present individual mini-talks. That is an activity that lets them work with a topic of personal interest which motivates them more than working with texts that the teacher chooses. They read and gather information and make a short presentation. Elisabeth had made evaluation forms that she uses to give the pupils individual feedback. In her experience this method, though time consuming, is very effective in many ways. The pupils learn to find relevant information, to use reading in order to select what they want to present, and to perform in front of an audience. Apart from that it is an excellent way to assess and help the pupils develop individually. Elisabeth says that her classes have normally done very well on oral examinations in English because they were used to the concept of reading, presenting and performing.

All the teachers say that they would use more time on reading than they do today, given the opportunity. Frank and Karen state that they would use 50% of the time, while Elisabeth claims that one of every three hours would be spent on oral activities. Veronica would spend two hours every month on reading while Mette says that she would spend some time every class on oral activities. Maria says that she would use much more time on reading than what she does now. Jonas, Annika and Robin also say that they would spend more time than now on working with texts and reading. Hanna says that she feels that the constraints of the curriculum make it difficult to teach reading. She claims that because of LK06 there is a lot less literature that they are able to teach than what used to be the case. Still she wants to teach as much reading as possible without neglecting other areas that the pupils need in order to pass their examinations.

Although the teachers all have different ideas on how to teach reading, it is interesting to note that when asked what they would do if they had more time to teach reading none of the teachers mention anything about teaching reading strategies.

## **5.4 Questions on textbooks and libraries**

Having learned some about the informants' view of reading, I also wanted to know what kind of resources they use in their teaching and what kind of books are available for their pupils. I asked them the following three questions concerning books:

1. How much do the students read in their textbooks?
2. How much do the students read in other books?
3. How many English books are available for the students?

### **5.4.1 How much do the students read in their textbook? How much do the students read other English books?**

Of my ten informants, half of them are not happy at all with the textbooks. Jonas says that his pupils read “a lot less than most other” in their textbooks because the books are miserable; they are old and worn out, the texts are not interesting or catchy; there are not even good texts. The only positive side about the books is that they have graded sections, meaning that each chapter is divided in three where A is easiest and shortest while B is more demanding and C provides a challenge for the strongest pupils as well. Annika and Maria use the same books; however, Annika does not agree with Jonas that the books are terrible. She says that the pupils read in their textbook about 50% of the time. “The book has good texts, there is no reason not to use it,” she claims. Maria's agrees with Jonas that the books are old, outdated and not very good; however, her pupils also use the textbook quite a bit. She says that her challenge is to get the pupils to read more in their daily lives. Robin says that his pupils use the textbook quite little. His pupils do not like it because the books are old and not motivating. However, he claims that the pupils that like to read also

read the texts in the textbook. Karen does not use the textbook at all in her teaching because she claims that it is old-fashioned and that it is impossible to use with LK06.

Seven of the teachers say that the pupils read quite a bit in their textbooks. They use the textbook as the primary source of reading and the syllabus is made up around the different chapters and topics in the textbook. Mette and Elisabeth say that they have brand new books with a lot of interesting texts that they are very happy with. Mette claims that her pupils read in their textbook most of the time unless there are other supplementary texts that are recommended in the teacher's guide. Elisabeth says that it is quite individual how much the pupils actually read in the textbook. In her class of 70 pupils 15 read everything, 15 read most of it, 30 read the A-texts that are the minimum requirement, while 10 of the pupils do not even read that. Frank uses the textbook in his teaching as well. The book consists of 6 chapters, so they work through one chapter in each of the 6 periods of the school year. Veronica also uses the textbook most of the time, and as mentioned earlier, so do Annika and Maria. Hanna argues that because of the current curriculum the pupils get to read much less than they did before. She claims that she has had to cut out much of the textbook reading because of other demands.

When it comes to the reading of other English books five of the teachers say that they have organized reading of other books than the textbook. Frank says that he has his pupils read both books and short stories. In addition, he recommends that they read on the side. He says some of his pupils read a whole lot, but that all his pupils read some. Hanna says that she has her pupils read one novel and several short stories throughout the year. Veronica lets her pupils select one novel that they want to read individually and then she selects another that they all read and work through together. Robin and Karen both say that their pupils read a selection of books and different texts apart from the textbooks. Karen says that one problem when it comes to reading is that she often loses hours that are taken to other activities at school. These hours are often taken from the reading classes. Thus she ends up having less time to read than what she intended. All these teachers work extensively with the books in many different ways making sure that everybody, no matter level, has a certain grip of the content and vocabulary before they are done.

The other five teachers do not have any organized book reading at all. They base all of their reading on the textbook and different handouts. However, all the ten informants say

that they have pupils that read on their own. Maria, Frank, Robin, Hanna and Elisabeth actively encourage their pupils to read English books on their spare time, but most of them don't have a structure where they follow it up. Only Hanna claims to have a system where the pupils are given extra credits and rewards for reading out of class. Frank says that the pupils are not tested directly on the extra literature that they read, but that they certainly show off their skills in class.

#### **5.4.2 How many English books are available for the students?**

Only two of my informants, Frank and Hanna, are happy with the selection of English books that are available for the pupils at their school library. Frank says that they have "quite a few" books and also about 30 sets of books that can be used for the whole class together. These books are kept in the teacher's office so that they won't get lost. The school tries to renew the titles all the time. Frank adds that in addition to using the library at school the pupil frequently use the community library that is close by. Hanna says that at her school they have a "very good selection" of books at the library and "lots and lots" of class sets.

Six of the informants directly voice their unhappiness about the school library. Annika says that at her school they have about 100 easy readers, but these are kept in the teacher's office so that they won't be lost. In their school library there are a few comics and a couple of other books available. Maria and Jonas work at the same school as Annika, and Maria says that there are way too few books available and that the "key to reading is availability". Jonas is also very unhappy about the library. He is also the one that has been assigned the task of improving it, but he finds that the time he has available limits him very much.

Karen says that at her school there are about 50-60 books available for the pupils. These are old and worn out and not very interesting. She claims that their selection of books is not adequate for the pupils. The ones that suffer most are the boys as there are not many books that are able to capture their interest. She argues that in order to get the pupils interested in reading it is important that they have good books that they feel motivated to read. Her complaints are shared by Elisabeth who says their school library has just "very

few, very bad books". She feels that the books that have been purchased to the library have been the wrong kind of books. They are way too difficult for most of the pupils, and they are not interesting. The library at the school where Robin works is not adequate according to him; however, he feels that the availability of books for the pupils is good because they have the community library close by.

The last two of the teachers, Veronica and Mette, seem to be content with their libraries. Veronica says that they have about 100 English books in the library and 3 sets that are used in class. Mette says that they have one box of books and two half class sets of easy readers that they use in their teaching.

## **5.5 Questions on LK06**

As mentioned earlier there have been some quite significant changes from L97 to LK06 concerning reading. I was interested in knowing how the teachers viewed these differences. They were asked the two following questions:

1. How do you feel about LK06 compared to L97?
2. What do you think about the changes that have been made in LK06 concerning reading?

### **5.5.1 How do you feel about LK06 compared to L97?**

Of my ten informants, only eight have thoughts on the differences between LK06 and L97. Hanna has been teaching abroad the last few years and is not familiar with L97. Her colleagues however, have told her that they are disappointed. The other teacher that did not answer, Jonas, was not familiar with the document even though he teaches in a Norwegian school. He was the first one that I interviewed and thus the one that had the least time to study the curriculum before the interview.

The eight informants that are familiar with LK06 are divided in three groups; those that think that there is not a big difference between L97 and LK06, those that are disappointed in LK06 and those that see the new curriculum as an improvement. Two of the teachers, Annika and Veronica, belong to the first group. They claim that there are not very

many changes in the two curricula except that there is a stronger focus on basic skills in the new one. Veronica also mentions that the pupils are made more aware of their progress and what they have learned, which she believes is a very good thing. However, she is not happy about the fact that 9<sup>th</sup> grade only has two hours a week now. She says that they are able to accomplish much less at school now than before.

Three of the teachers, Maria, Frank and Karen are not very excited about LK06. Maria says that it is too open and vague. She claims that as a teacher you can practically do whatever you want as long as you reach the objectives as there are not as many guidelines as there was in L97. Karen liked the detailed plan that L97 provided. She liked to be told what she should and could read with the pupils. However, she claims that the good thing about LK06 is that she is able to use her creativity and try out new ideas and activities in class.

Frank is very negative to the fact that English has lost an hour in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He claims that this definitely will influence the teaching negatively and thus also have a negative impact on the English abilities of the pupils in general. He also believes that the teaching in the lower grades, 1<sup>st</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> must be upgraded in order to reach the objectives.

The last three teachers, Robin, Mette and Elisabeth, think that LK06 is an improved curriculum compared to earlier ones. Robin likes that there is a greater focus on reading and on other basic skills. He says that the ones that read will improve their speaking and writing. He is happy that this is reflected in the curriculum. Mette first and foremost emphasizes that the goals and objectives for the teaching are much clearer and that the focus on basic skills is very important. She claims that the pupils are made aware of what they are supposed to learn and what they have learned so far. She also says that the topics are much more relevant and challenging. They require a bigger vocabulary and more time. It is not enough to just read a text anymore; the pupils have to really work with the material. Elisabeth also agrees that the focus on basic skills and objectives is an improvement, however, she claims that the goals that are listed in LK06 are overly ambitious and unrealistic and that they go “way over the pupil’s heads”.

### **5.5.2 What do you think about the changes that have been made in LK06 concerning reading?**

When asked about the difference concerning reading in L97 and LK06 the informants were also divided in three groups. One group is of the opinion that it is basically the same, “just keep doing the same thing”. Another group believes that the changes are an improvement and the third group thinks that the changes are for the worse.

The first group, consisting of Annika and Elisabeth, believes that the changes in the curriculum are not very significant. Annika says that she will continue working with texts in small groups and through individual activities like she has been doing. Elisabeth says that LK06 puts more emphasis on oral activities, but that the goals are too ambitious for the pupils. She wants to help them be able to understand, communicate and discuss and believes that it is not possible to achieve that without practicing. She disagrees with those that say that pupils that can write, can speak. She believes that L97 was more concrete than LK06, but that what happens in practice is what really matters.

The second group, which consists of Robin, Maria, Veronica, and Mette, believes that the changes concerning reading in the new curriculum are great. Robin says that he strongly agrees with the pedagogical foundation of the new curriculum. He believes that the emphasis put on the basic skills is necessary in order to build a good foundation for the pupils’ further learning. In English teaching this means that the focus on reading and oral activities builds a foundation for further learning of the language. However, he adds that the challenge is to be able to follow up individual pupils on a daily basis; there is just neither enough time nor teachers. Maria says that she is very happy about the strong focus on reading in LK06. She says that reading is fundamental in language learning, and claims that it is extremely important and essential that the pupils be exposed to the language through written and oral means all the time. Veronica and Mette like the changes concerning reading because it helps the pupils and them as teachers to focus more on it. Mette adds that it is positive that the pupils have objectives so that they know what they are supposed to read and know when they are done.

The third group, Karen and Frank, is unhappy with the changes concerning reading. Karen says that there is less reading involved in LK06 than in L97, and that is why she does

not like it. She believes that reading is an important part of learning a new language and that this aspect of teaching has been limited in the new curriculum. Franks opinion is that the focus on reading in the curriculum is not very important. He believes that the interaction between the teachers in preparing the lessons is what counts. He claims that if teachers work actively, wanting to do a good job that is more important than what is in the plan. Good teachers will influence the pupils and accelerate learning. He says that it is good to have a plan, but the important thing is that teachers use their skills. Frank is very critical of the new curriculum where hours have been cut from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He says that he works very hard with the curriculum and that he is conscious of the fact that each hour is important. When he loses time to teach he loses an opportunity to influence the children. He claims that the number of practical, social and teaching related goals has increased immensely over the last few years. Thus, he fears that as the teaching hours have been cut, the number of pupils that will need special education will increase. The problem is that there are not enough resources, neither human nor time, to meet the needs of these pupils.

## **5.6 Question on 10<sup>th</sup> grades final examination**

The last question in my survey is about the final English examination in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The informants were asked the following question:

- What do you think about 10<sup>th</sup> grade's final examination, and the reading in the preparation part?

Before looking at their answers I will briefly explain what the final examination consists of and why I considered it an appropriate and interesting question.

### **5.6.1 Presentation of 10<sup>th</sup> grades final examination**

For their final examination in 10<sup>th</sup> grade the pupils get a preparation part that they are supposed to work with in order to get ready for the examination. Earlier this preparation part was a compendium that was made up of about 30 pages of different kinds of texts and pictures. Now it is an online compendium and the preparation part for the examination in 2008 consisted of three different parts A, B and C. Part A also contained three different

alternatives 1, 2 and 3. Below is a figure that shows the different parts and alternatives of the online compendium.

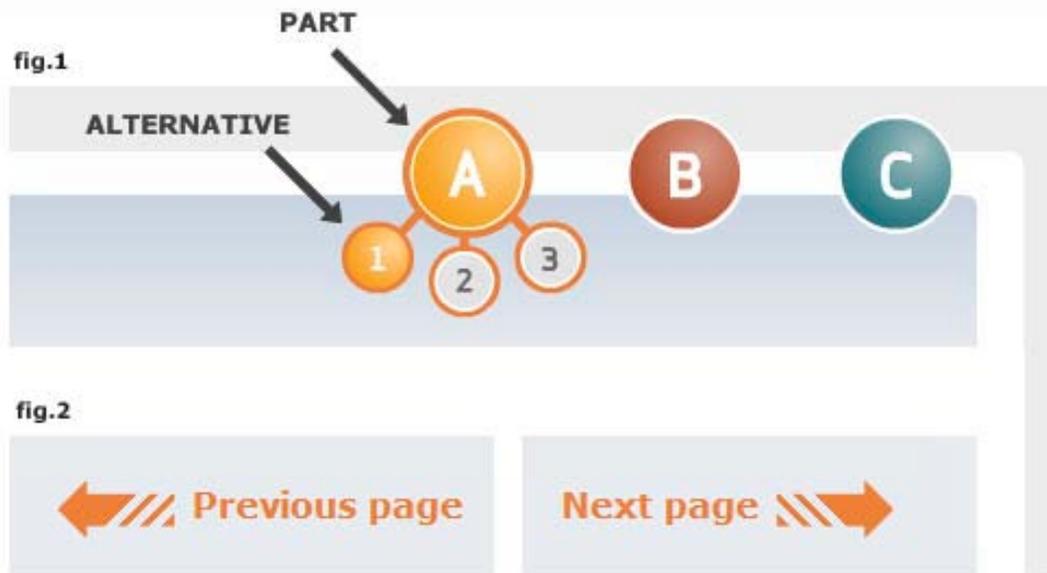


Figure 2: The navigation panel of the examination's preparation part

Each part and each alternative is made up of 3- 4 pages with different texts. In part A the texts are quite short while in part B and C the texts are longer and more challenging. The whole compendium has texts revolving around a certain topic. In 2008 the topic was “time”. Some of the texts were very concrete, talking about different famous clocks in different parts of the world, while other texts treated the subject in a more abstract way.

The pupils get one day where they are allowed to work with the texts and prepare themselves for the examination. They are permitted to use any kind of aid or tool while working with the preparation. They are also encouraged to take notes for the examination. The actual examination is a 5-hour examination where nothing but the notes is allowed.

Reading is obviously an essential part in order to be able to benefit from the preparation part. How the pupils read and how they are able to make use of different reading strategies will determine their results on the examination. Thus, it is interesting to

look into what the experiences are with this kind of examination and how the pupils deal with it.

### **5.6.2 What do you think about 10<sup>th</sup> grade's final examination, and the reading in the preparation part?**

Six of the ten informants have been teaching 10<sup>th</sup> grade and have experience with their final examination. When asked about their experiences with the reading in the preparation part the group was clearly divided in two, with three teachers on each side.

One group, Annika, Frank and Mette, likes the preparation part and believes that the reading benefits all the pupils. Annika claims that the strong students are triggered by the challenges of getting an overview and a grip of the content of the texts. The weaker students read some of the texts; they learn a few words and phrases; pick some of the easiest texts and use it as support. In Annika's opinion this benefits all the pupils. Not everyone reads very well or performs very well, but since all the pupils have to take the same examination, the differences in performance and grades are bound to show up sooner or later no matter what kind of examination they go through. Another reason why she thinks this preparation part is good is because the pupils like it and they enjoy reading and working with it. Frank states that "young people are brave, intelligent and successful". He claims that the pupils put an "awful lot of work into the preparation and presentation" and that they do it very well. Everyone, regardless of grades, reads and prepares for a presentation of 15-20 minutes and they are all able to accomplish it. His pupils have had very good presentations and have gotten very good grades. Mette agrees with the two others and says that this type of preparation benefits all the pupils as long as they have time to read and work with it. She initially believed that it would be too difficult to read and understand for the weaker students, but she says that they have managed to catch on, understand the basics of the texts and have been able to present it as well. Mette claims that the pupils work more seriously with the material than what used to be the case before. She believes that it is crucial to give the pupils time to read and work with the texts and the preparation, because it takes some time to understand the concept.

The other group, Robin, Veronica and Elisabeth, is of the opinion that the reading in the preparation part creates a bigger gap between the strong and the weak pupils. Elisabeth says that the challenge is very good for the strong pupils while the weaker pupils “totally give up”. She claims that the texts are difficult and that one of the biggest challenges is to read and deal with abstract texts. In her experience the weaker pupils need a lot of help and support in order to benefit at all from the preparation part. Veronica agrees with Elisabeth that the reading in the preparation part is good for the strong pupils. However, she says that the whole preparation part is too big, and that the technical aspect did not work, thus it was not a very positive experience. Robin claims that it is extremely important to give the pupils time to read and work with the texts. He also believes that the pupils who have inner motivation to read or outer resources, like parents or siblings that can help them, are able to do well on this kind of task. Those that have internet access at home also have an advantage. The problem is for those that do not have these kinds of resources. Robin claims that this examination is impossible to solve without being well prepared and that it widens and consolidates the gap between those that have a reading culture and those that do not.

## **5.7 A summary of the most important findings**

In this chapter I have looked at the results of the interviews that I conducted. I have gone through the interview chronologically grouping questions together that naturally relate to each other. I will now give a brief summary of the most important findings before moving on to the discussion.

The first question that the informants answered had to do with their background, both formal and informal, concerning English. Except for the two native speakers, only one of the teachers has more than one year of instruction in English. The other seven had one year, or less than one year, of English education.

Most of my informants have some kind of informal background when it comes to English. Not counting the native speakers, only two of my informants interact on English on a regular basis. The rest have travelled abroad to English speaking countries every now and then. One of my informants did not have any informal background regarding English at all.

Nine out of ten informants say that they read English books on their own. The native speakers read English literature every chance they get, and they enjoy all kinds of books. The other teachers read different magazines and books with varying frequency.

When they are asked what they think about the importance of reading in EFL-instruction, all my informants say that reading is very important. However, they have different reasoning for why it is important. Some view reading as the foundation for all other learning, while others see it as a task and a tool.

When it comes to the methods of teaching English there is a difference between those who do not let the pupils read at school, and those who separate time for actual reading in class, either loud or silent. None of the teachers mention anything about teaching reading strategies; however, there is the difference between those who have very structured programs and those who teach reading more casually. Then again, there are some teachers that focus on the importance of letting the pupils select their own books and others that decide on texts without giving the pupils a choice.

An interesting finding in relation to textbooks is that most of the teachers say that they are not happy with the textbooks, yet they use them anyway. There is also a difference between the teachers that are very structured and have a plan of what needs to be read at all times and those who improvise a little more. Another great difference is how the teachers use other books. Some see it as an invaluable resource, while others don't use it at all. Related to that is the interesting aspect of availability of books. Most of the teachers are not satisfied with the school library and the English books that are available for the pupils.

My informants could be placed in three groups according to their attitudes towards LK06. One group said that there were not really that many changes at all, another group was not happy with the changes, saying that LK 06 is a lot more open and vague and that cutting an hour was a very bad choice. The third group was very happy with the new plan, especially the focus on goals and objectives and on basic skills.

Only six of the ten teachers had any experience with 10<sup>th</sup> grades final examination. These six were very clearly divided in two groups. One group was of the opinion that the examination benefits all the pupils; that both strong and weak pupils are able to draw information from the preparation part and use it in their presentation although to a varying degree. The other group was of the definite opinion that this kind of examination only

benefits the strong pupils and that it creates a bigger gap between strong and resourceful pupils and the weak pupils without those advantages.

# 6 Discussion

## 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the findings and results that were presented in the previous chapter. The discussion will focus on the research statement by looking into the following topics:

- What are the teachers' attitudes towards reading?
- How is reading taught in lower secondary?

Before moving on to the discussion I will take a look at the research statement in order to discuss if I have answered the questions. The validity of the survey will be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

### 6.1.1 Research statement

As stated in the introduction the research statement of this thesis is "What are teachers' attitudes towards reading in EFL-instruction, and how do they teach it in class." This research statement comprises the following two research questions:

- What are teachers' attitudes towards reading?
- How is reading taught in class?

The first question is a theoretical question where the intention is to find out how teachers view reading and what importance they give to reading in their EFL teaching. The second question is intended to find out how the teachers put their theory into practice and teach reading to the pupils. I want to find out how reading in EFL is actually taught in the classroom. How the teachers use books, what books they use and how they divide their time between different parts of the instruction.

Looking at the results I will argue that I have answered the two questions in my research statement. I have gotten many interesting aspects of the attitudes that teachers have

towards reading, and also information on how they teach reading in class. By means of the interviews that were conducted I have been able to find out not only what the teachers believe that reading in EFL-instruction ideally would be like, but also the challenges and consequences of meeting the reality in the classroom. Having conducted the survey and looked at the results it is time to discuss the findings in light of the research statement.

## **6.2 Teachers' attitudes towards reading**

There are many interesting observations that can be discussed based on the results of my survey. I will now discuss some of the aspects related to the teachers' attitudes towards reading in light of theories and literature previously mentioned in chapter two.

### **6.2.1 The importance of reading**

The first thing that I noted in regard to how teachers view reading was that all my ten informants said that reading is essential; "important", "very important", and "extremely important" were the three recurrent initial responses to my question. Going a bit beyond the surface, however, it was easy to see that their motives for believing reading is important varied. Some of them seemed to agree with Krashen and considered reading as one of the main ways of acquiring the English language (Krashen, 2004, pp. 1, 17). Mette, for instance, claims that "reading is very important; it has to be the foundation". Many of the teachers seemed to agree with Mette saying that reading is essential for performance in all other areas, not just in English, but in other subjects as well. Hanna claims that "those who read well write well and they have a rich vocabulary that they are not even aware of." This opinion is second by Frank who says that pupils that read on the side definitely show off their skills in class without intending to do so. They just have a better vocabulary and sentence structure than those who do not read. Robin agrees as well and claims that there is an obvious connection between pupils that read and their oral and written abilities. This is consistent with research done by both Grabe and Krashen (Grabe, 1991; Krashen, 2004, pp. 8, 17). There are some undeniable links and connections between the reading ability, and time spent on reading, and a person's vocabulary.

While about half of the teacher's view reading as a foundation for all other language learning, the rest of the teachers were of the opinion that reading is an important task like many other tasks. Elisabeth says that "reading is important, but it is difficult to find time for it." That statement reveals that the activity of reading is not important enough to be prioritized in a tight schedule. The group of teachers was divided in how they go about reading in class. Some of them spent a lot of time reading in class, while other teachers have the pupils read at home and then go through it in class. Like Jonas said: "I can't have the pupils spend time at school actually reading!" This is not just a practical question; it reveals what kind of importance the teacher puts on reading as well.

The first thing that Annika said when she was asked about the importance of reading, was that she had some terrible experiences when she was young, and that she wanted to avoid that with her pupils at all costs. When she was in school there was a lot of reading out loud in class, and pupils were forced to read whether they wanted to and could or not. So her memories of reading were sitting in class suffering while listening to fellow pupils mumble and stutter through long texts. This experience has strongly colored Annika's view of reading and its importance: "Reading is important *as long* as you avoid having pupil stutter through texts out loud."

### **6.2.2 Language in the real world**

Another important aspect is the fact that reading helps pupils see how language works in "the real world". Karen claims that many pupils don't understand the connection between grammar exercises and writing. They know the "I am, you are..." by heart, but they don't remember to use it when they write. Thus they write "you am..." even though they know in theory what it should be. According to Karen reading helps the pupils learn the language in a new way. They pick up words, sentence structures and grammar without putting a conscious effort into it. This is exactly what Krashen argues to be one of the great benefits of extensive reading (Krashen, 2004, p. 17).

Jonas claims that the inner motivation is alpha and omega when it comes to reading. He says that it is not enough to work with the textbook, but that pupils have to read about something that they are interested in. This consists with Ray Williams' first principle in his article about the top ten principles for teaching foreign language reading. This principle

states that “In the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible.” Williams (as cited in Bamford & Day, 2002, p. 1).

### **6.2.3 Vocabulary**

Jonas claims that in order to be able to enlarge the vocabulary and understand what is being read the only solution is to use the dictionary and look up every word. Frank and Robin seem to disagree with this as they say that it is not necessary for the pupils to understand all the words in order to get the meaning and the essence of what they are reading. I believe that all three of the teachers are right to a certain point. It is not necessary to understand all the words in order to read a book, however both Koda and Bamford & Day argue, based on the vocabulary threshold, that it is necessary to know about 98% of the words on a page in order to understand the meaning (Bamford & Day, 2002, p. 2; Koda, 2007, p. 5). This means that it is important to help pupils find literature that is adequate to their reading level (Bamford & Day, 2002, p. 2). This will obviously be quite challenging in a large class, but I would argue that it is the only way to help pupils enjoy and improve their reading. If it is too easy, they will be bored, and if it is too difficult they will be discouraged and give up. I believe that most pupils would benefit from some help in finding adequate literature because not all of them are capable of analyzing at what level their reading skills are, and what kind of books they should read in order to reach the vocabulary threshold. One of Jonas’ students was a very weak pupil and reader, nevertheless she insisted on reading the original English version of “Lord of the Rings” by Tolkien. Her reading skills did not improve at all, because the book was far too difficult for her. I am quite convinced that if she had read a book that was appropriate to her level of reading, she would have enjoyed it a lot more and in addition improved her reading skills and her vocabulary.

### **6.2.4 Teachers’ reluctance to speak English**

Apart from the two native speakers among my informants, only one of them, Karen, wanted to be interviewed in English. She was a little apprehensive, but decided to do it to “challenge herself”. My intention was to interview the informants in English, but I quickly found out that in order to get any interviews at all, I had to leave it up to the informants to

pick the language that the interview would be conducted in. I was surprised by the reluctance to be interviewed in English; however one possible explanation might be that they thought the interview would be more difficult than they could handle, or that they were somehow intimidated by the fact that I study English on a higher level. Another possibility is that the teachers, consciously or unconsciously, feel that they are not competent enough when it comes to speaking English. Although most of them said that they felt quite confident speaking English, several said that it depended on the situation and the topic. Most of my informants have had one year or less of formal education and not much informal education. It might be possible that more formal education, and also possibilities to be updated in the field every now and then, would do much to improve both teachers' competence and confidence. No matter what the reason is, it indicates that the level of confidence in speaking English could be much higher, even among English teachers.

## **6.3 How is reading taught?**

There are many aspects that can be addressed and discussed when it comes to how reading is taught. We are going to look into and discuss the methods the teachers use in class, the kind of texts they use, the availability of books, the teachers role, and finally we will discuss briefly the preparation part of 10<sup>th</sup> grades examination.

### **6.3.1 Methods teachers use in class**

The methods the teachers use when teaching reading vary quite noticeably. I found it interesting to observe that not one single teacher mentioned anything about reading strategies when asked how they teach reading. There might be many possible explanations for this, however looking at similar research many teachers are not familiar with reading strategies, how to teach them or use them (Anmarkrud, 2009; Faye-Schjøll, 2009; Hellekjær, 2007b, 2008). Thus, I am inclined to believe that since there is a lack of knowledge of this among teachers in upper secondary, then it is quite possible that teachers in lower secondary also have little knowledge about reading strategies.

Another aspect that was interesting to note was that only two out of ten teachers had any plan or system in their teaching of reading. Although several of the other teachers have

incorporated reading in their teaching none of them have any systematic reading instruction.

### **6.3.2 Reading**

As mentioned previously, some of the teachers firmly believe that it is important that the pupils spend time actually reading at school, while others consider that a waste of time. What is interesting is that the teachers that will not let the pupils spend time at school reading also consider reading to be “important” and “very important”. Why then will they not spend time on it at school? I believe that part of the answer lies in the definition of “reading”. When the teachers were asked how they teach reading, several of them put all the emphasis on the pre- and post textual work they do, and not on the reading itself. Thus, according to them, the importance of reading lies in the work you do *before* and *after* reading a text and not in the actual reading of the text itself. This is interesting because it gives us two different perspectives on reading. One perspective is that reading is a valuable activity in and of itself. The other perspective is that reading can be valuable if you work well with the text before and after reading. According to Krashen free voluntary reading (FVR) is “one of the most powerful tools we have in language education” (Krashen, 2004, p. 85). By FVR he means “reading because you want to: no book reports, no questions at the end of the chapter. ...you don’t have to finish the book if you don’t like it.” Krashen’s opinion is thus that reading is a valuable and beneficial activity in and of itself. However, that does not mean that pre- and post textual work is not important, just that it is not necessary in order to benefit from reading.

### **6.3.3 Texts used in reading instruction**

Another aspect that is linked to the previous one is what kinds of texts are chosen. The teachers that work a lot with pre-and post textual work will necessarily need to have the pupils read the same books. Thus the teacher chooses the books that are to be read, and organizes the activities before and after reading. This can, however, be done in many different ways. Mette says that she has the pupils read a text from the textbook at home,

then she introduces it in class, they listen to it, and that is about it. Hanna, on the other hand, uses maps, names, themes and music in the pre textual work, then the pupils read the texts in depth and work with quote quizzes and two-minute-talks afterwards. If the teacher is able to get the pupils excited about a text and a task, then much learning can take place. The problem is when the pupils are bored and not interested and they read and memorize words simply because it is required, or they might not do it at all. This is also why several of the teachers claimed that it is important that the pupils themselves are allowed to choose what to read. Then they can pick a book about a topic they are interested in and motivated to read, and thus they might actually read it.

#### **6.3.4 Availability of books**

This leads us to another interesting aspect of how reading is taught, namely the availability of books and texts. Krashen claims that “the most obvious step [in encouraging free reading] is to provide access to books” (Krashen, 2004, p. 85). This is consistent with Bamford and Days “Top Ten Principles” as they claim that “a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available” (Bamford & Day, 2002, p. 2). Six out of the ten teachers I interviewed were not happy with the availability of English books at their schools. Of the four teachers that were content with the number and selection of books, I believe that at least one of them should not be. She claimed that at her school they had two half class sets of easy readers, and a box of books. I believe that it is hard to ensure “a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics” with two half class sets and a box of different books. One of the other teachers who did not complain about the books said that they had three class sets and about 100 books in the library. It is better than the previously mentioned selection, but hardly enough to serve as a good resource for English literature for a whole school. The six teachers that were not happy with their school libraries had “a few comics and a couple of other books”, “very few, very bad books”, “50-60 old, worn out books”. Thus, eight out of ten teachers have reason not to be happy with the availability of books at their schools. This must mean that providing a good selection of adequate literature in English is not a priority at a number of schools. It is also obvious that several teachers do not expect there to be a number of books available. I believe that this might

indicate that there is still a long way to go in promoting the importance of reading and extensive reading in Norwegian schools. If the teachers don't expect the pupils to read, then they have no reason to worry about there not being any books available. However, there were several teachers that were clearly concerned about the lack of English literature at their schools. This is obviously also a financial question that the administrations at the schools have to address. When the budgets are tight it seems like English books end up in the bottom of the priority pile. The teachers seemed to have realized this too, because several of them mentioned that there were good community libraries relatively close by that the pupils would use. My concern is whether or not this is true for all the pupils. I believe that the pupils that love to read and enjoy good books will go to the community libraries and find what they need and want to read. The problem is with the pupils who do not like to read. Why would they go to a community library? They will not go to the books, so I believe it is important to bring the books to them. Research shows that with easy access to books more reading is done (Krashen, 2004, p. 57). Krashen says that "it is certainly true that "you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink". But first we must make sure the water is there. And when it is, horses always eventually drink" (Krashen, 2004, p. 57)

### **6.3.5 The teacher's role**

Along with the access to books there is another important aspect that must also be considered, namely the teacher's role. In order to increase reading among pupils the teacher has a crucial role. First of all the teacher has the opportunity to put reading on the agenda. This can be done by encouraging pupils to read, helping them select adequate books, and by making time for reading at school. Creative teachers will certainly find numerous ways to promote reading if they want to. In addition to putting reading on the agenda, the teacher functions as a role model. Research shows that pupils read more when they see that other people are reading (Krashen, 2004, p. 84). This means that if the teachers read, it sends positive signals to the pupils as well. They will be motivated to read by seeing that others do it, especially if it is a role model.

I was surprised to find out that some of the teachers seem to have a quite unrealistic view when it comes to their own reading. One of the teachers claims to read quite a lot and then adds: “I try to read one book a year”. In my opinion, one book a year is not “quite a lot”. The reason why I find this a little disconcerting is because if some teachers are content with reading one book a year, then they will not expect more from their pupils. They will probably be happy if they have been able to get through one book or a few short stories in the course of a school year. In fact, some of the teachers said exactly that; they try to read one book with their pupils each year. Bamford & Day are of a different opinion; one of their principles is that “learners read as much as possible” (Bamford & Day, 2002, p. 3). They elaborate on this saying that:

The most critical element in learning to read is the amount of time spent actually reading. While most teachers agree with this, it may be the case that their students are not being given the opportunity or incentive to read, read, and read some more. There is no upper limit to the amount of reading that can be done, but a book a week is probably the minimum amount of reading necessary to achieve the benefits of extensive reading and to establish a reading habit. This is a realistic target for learners of all proficiency levels, as books written for beginners and low-intermediate learners are very short (Bamford & Day, 2002, p. 3).

In light of these statements it is easy to see the importance of the teacher being conscious of his role as a model and as a supplier of terms when it comes to reading.

### **6.3.6 The 10<sup>th</sup> grade examination**

The last aspect we will discuss here is if and how the reading in the preparation part of 10<sup>th</sup> grades examination helps the pupils prepare adequately for the examination.

Of the six teachers that had experience with this examination, three were positive and three were negative. The ones that had negative experiences say that a preparation part that requires so much reading consolidates and widens the academic, social and cultural gap between the pupils. Academically, because the pupils that are strong and resourceful are

able to handle this examination and do it very well, while the weaker ones do poorly. Socially, because the pupils that have resources available get more help. Pupils that have parents, older siblings or other resourceful people that help them do better on these kinds of examinations. The same is the case for those who have computers and are able to work with the preparation part at home as well. Culturally, because you clearly see the difference between the ones that have grown up in a print-rich environment and those who do not have this advantage.

The other group of teachers does not entirely agree with these observations. They claim that all the pupils, the strong ones and the weaker ones, benefit from a preparation part with so many texts. Obviously, there are differences in how well they perform on the examination, but these differences will be there no matter what kind of examination the pupils are required to take. These teachers' experiences are that all the pupils are able to gain some insight from the texts and all are able to answer some questions on the examination.

All the teachers agree on one point, and that is that this kind of examination requires a lot more of the teacher than what was the case with earlier examinations. They point out that it is important to work with the texts in the preparation part and help the pupils read and understand.

It is interesting to see how differently teachers approach the preparation part. Some of them work all year to prepare their pupils for the examination. They work with different kinds of texts and they also let the pupils prepare presentations. Others use the preparation day before the examination and other than that there is not much relevant instruction as far as the examination is concerned. I believe that this kind of examination reflects upon the instruction and the teacher's role as much as the pupils' preparations. The teachers that work with texts and books and teach the pupils how to read and process information see that they are much better equipped than teachers that do not spend time teaching reading in class.

Frank said that "young people are brave, intelligent and successful. They put an awful lot of work into it and they have good presentations and get good grades." He also says that his pupils are required to have 20 minute presentations regardless of grades. I believe that this is an interesting aspect that might be somewhat forgotten along the way –

at least in some schools: Most pupils can perform better than they believe themselves. However, if they are used to being “dumb” and get bad grades, quite a few settle for that. They give up and believe that they are destined to be “losers” in school. If, however, they are told that “you are brave, intelligent and successful and I am looking forward to your 20 minute presentation” they might live up to the vote of confidence. I believe that such a statement does something with a person’s self esteem and confidence. Granted, not all pupils will get the best grades, but very many could do much better if they were cheered on and motivated and expected to work and perform. Unfortunately, many teachers consolidate how these pupils view themselves when they do not expect them to have done the homework or to get any better than the lowest grade on any examination.

### **6.3.7 The importance of systematic reading instruction**

To sum up, there are three aspects that stand out to me after having interviewed the informants and worked with the material provided.

The first aspect that I have noted is that there is not much systematic reading instruction going on in lower secondary school, at least to judge from the basis of the teachers in this sample. Only one of the teachers I interviewed had a plan of how to go about in teaching the pupils how to read. All the others would spend more or less time on reading or working with texts, but not in any systematic way. My impression is that even though all the teachers claim that reading is important, most of them do not know how to go about implementing systematic reading in their EFL-instruction.

My second observation is that not once in all the ten interviews that I conducted did any of the teachers mention anything, explicitly or implicitly, about reading strategies. This is interesting because it might indicate that the concept of reading strategies is not very well known or much regarded among teachers.

Both these observations would be consistent with the findings of Linn Faye-Schjøll’s Master thesis as well (Faye-Schjøll, 2009). She found that pupils in upper secondary are not familiar with systematic reading instruction or reading strategies. This obviously means that they were never taught these skills in lower secondary. She also discovered that teachers in upper secondary do not spend much time on reading instruction in English. Part of the reason was because they believe that reading instruction is covered in

Norwegian classes and part because they are not aware of the benefits or the way to go about it.

My third observation is that there seems to be a strong lack of appropriate reading material available for the pupils. Only two of the ten teachers were content with the selection of English books at their schools. At some schools the books were not even available for the pupils but kept in the teachers' office for fear that they would disappear if they were placed in the library. Even more disconcerting is the fact that several of the teachers did not expect there to be a good selection of books in English. Even though there might be several different explanations, all in all these aspects appear to be further indications that reading instruction is in practice given low priority in lower secondary schools.

All things considered, I am left with the impression that the focus on reading in the aftermath of the PISA surveys has heightened teachers' awareness of the importance of reading without really helping them to develop a systematic reading instruction program that includes the teaching of reading strategies.

I believe that in order to improve and enhance reading ability and frequency among the pupils it is important to work systematically and consistently over a long period of time. Like any other skill it takes time and practice to become a good reader. The pupils need teachers that are aware of the importance of reading and that know how to help them become skilled readers. The benefits are tremendous, but it will not happen automatically.

## **6.4 Validity of the survey**

As stated in chapter four, this is a small-scale qualitative survey with only ten informants. A relatively small sample like that puts limitations on the validity (Johannessen, et al., 2006, p. 199). It is not possible to draw firm conclusions about reading instruction in EFL in Norwegian lower secondary schools based solely on this survey. In a small qualitative study there will always be limitations as to the transferability of the results. I cannot, based on my study, argue that the results are valid for all English teachers in Norway. However, in this study I interviewed ten teachers at six different schools in order to ensure that the results might be more reliable. If I had interviewed teachers from only one school it would

be possible to say something merely of the situation at that particular school. As I have ten different teachers and six different schools involved in my project it is possible to argue that the results that I have found are not mere coincidences, but rather tendencies that might also be valid among other teachers and in other schools (Johannessen, et al., 2006, p. 199). Still, it is not possible to generalize and draw conclusions based on only ten teachers from six schools. The project will therefore have to be expanded with further studies to be able to say something about the general situation of teaching reading in Norway (Johannessen, et al., 2006, p. 200). On the other hand, my findings are largely comparable with the findings in several other studies (Anmarkrud, 2009; Faye-Schjøll, 2009; Hellekjær, 2007b, 2009a). Anmarkrud has found that systematic reading instruction and the teaching of reading strategies is largely neglected in the subject of Norwegian (Anmarkrud, 2009). Faye-Schjøll has found that to be true in the teaching of English in Upper Secondary as well (Faye-Schjøll, 2009). In his studies, Hellekjær discovered that a majority of senior upper secondary students do not have the English proficiency needed for higher education because of deficient instruction (Hellekjær, 2007b, 2009a).

The comparable results of these studies, which all have been conducted in the last three years, might indicate that there are some tendencies in the teaching of reading in EFL-instruction that still need to be addressed in order to improve pupils' abilities to use reading as a powerful tool in their daily lives.

In this chapter I have discussed the findings that were presented in chapter five in light of the research statement and relevant theory presented in chapter two. I have also looked at the validity of the survey and I will now move on to the conclusion.

# 7 Conclusion

In this chapter I will conclude my thesis by suggesting further research and implications of my findings.

## 7.1 Further research

As mentioned earlier this research is based on a small-scale survey that cannot be used to generalize as far as teaching reading in lower secondary is concerned. It would therefore be very valuable to conduct a large-scale survey in order to find out whether the tendencies that I have found can be confirmed or would have to be disproved. The reason why this would be helpful is that such a study would be able to pin down more exactly whether or not there are serious problems in EFL reading instruction and what can be done to improve this instruction. There are several ways such a study could be conducted. One possibility is to conduct a qualitative survey on a much larger scale than what I have done. That would give an in-depth knowledge on how a number of teachers view reading and how they teach it. Another possibility is to conduct a quantitative survey that can be distributed to a large number of teachers throughout the country. This kind of study would offer a lot of information from many more informants, even though there would not be the same in-depth information provided. In my opinion, the best way to examine this field closer would be to start out with a large-scale quantitative survey and follow up with interviews to a number of informants afterwards. That way it would be possible to benefit from the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research method as well as gather much valuable information. The challenge would obviously be to have time and resources available for such a demanding and time consuming project, however, I believe that if such a survey were to be carried out it would help us determine the problematic areas in EFL reading instruction as well as point us in the direction of possible solutions.

## 7.2 Implications of the findings

In this thesis I have looked at two different aspects of reading in EFL, namely how teachers view reading and how they teach it. My findings make me suggest that there are several steps that can be made in order to improve teaching of reading.

First of all, teachers need to be made aware of the importance and benefits of reading. If the teachers do not know why reading is so important, then they will not be able to instruct and influence the pupils to read either. As mentioned earlier, I believe that the public debate in the wake of the PISA reports have made teachers more aware of the importance of reading. However, I am not sure that all know *why* it is so important. All the teachers I interviewed said that reading was very important, however, a number of them did not do anything about it, most likely because they did not know what to do about it.

The second point is therefore that teachers need to be made aware of how to teach reading. I found an evident lack of systematic teaching of reading and among most of my informants. And again, I believe that it is not because of negligence, but because of lack of knowledge of how to go about teaching reading and systematically.

My third point is that it is important to integrate the teaching of reading strategies in the EFL-instruction. Thus the pupils will learn how to read efficiently, they will also be made aware of their own cognitive and metacognitive capacities, and they will be able to better monitor their own reading and progress.

Finally, I believe that pupils must be allowed the time to actually read. It is necessary to practice a skill in order to excel at it, and so it is with reading as well. There is so much research and evidence showing that reading, and particularly extensive reading, is very helpful in learning a second language, that teachers should be willing to incorporate it into their programs.

It has been very interesting to work with this thesis. I have learned so much about the field in general and in particular about the situation of some teachers of English. I have a much better understanding of the challenges that lie in balancing the edge between one's ideals and reality in the classrooms. This is but a very small contribution to the discussion of reading instruction in EFL, but my wish is that pupils in every classroom might discover the enjoyment, potential and possibilities that lie in reading.

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## **Curricula**

*LK06 - The Knowledge Promotion, English* – English Subject Curriculum. (2006). Oslo: The ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

URL: [http://udir.no/Artikler/\\_Lareplaner/\\_english/Common-core-subjects-in-primary-and-secondary-education/](http://udir.no/Artikler/_Lareplaner/_english/Common-core-subjects-in-primary-and-secondary-education/)

## **Figure**

Figure 2 was copied from: <https://eksamen.udir.no/v2008/eksamen/eng0012/index.html>

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Semi structured questionnaire

1. What is your background concerning English?  
(When it comes to education, stays abroad, teaching experience and other relevant experiences?)
2. How comfortable do you feel speaking English?
3. Has that changed since you started teaching?
4. Do you read English books on your own- what kind?
5. How important do you consider reading to be in English teaching?
6. How do you teach reading, using textbooks and/or other books?
7. Has that changed in any way since you started teaching?
8. If you had more time to teach reading, how would you do it?
9. How much time would you use on it?
10. How much do the students read in their textbook?
11. How much do the students read other English books?
12. How many English books are available for the students?  
(Count and describe these)
13. How do you feel about LK06 compared to L97?
14. What do you think about the changes that have been made in LK06 concerning reading?
15. What do you think about 10<sup>th</sup> grade's final examination, and the reading in the preparation part?