

 Åpen tilgang



Ulrikke Rindal and **Lisbeth M. Brevik** (Eds.)

ENGLISH DIDACTICS IN NORWAY

– 30 years of doctoral research

English Didactics in Norway

Ulrikke Rindal and Lisbeth M Brevik

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– 30 years of doctoral research

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Introduction

This edited volume is a collection of doctoral research within English didactics in a Norwegian context from 1988 to 2017. The ambition has been to cover *all* doctoral research that has been conducted within this field, and to the best of our knowledge all but four PhD theses within the field of English didactics in the Norwegian context are represented here. The four missing theses are referenced below. Our aim is to continue this project in future editions, adding chapters as new doctoral studies are carried out.

As a relatively young research field both in Norway and internationally, English didactics has not had a clear distinctiveness as a separate field, and in Norway there has been no overview of the research that has been conducted. English didactics has traditionally been a practically oriented domain developed from research conducted in more established fields, such as linguistics, literature, sociology and psychology. It still is a practically oriented field, but in recent decades it has firmly established itself as a research field in Norway. Students in Norwegian teacher education write their Master's thesis in English didactics, research fellows do their PhD in English didactics, and scholars continue to conduct research in English didactics as the core of their academic careers. Furthermore, teacher education is increasingly in need of research-based literature to use as course texts. We believe it is high time English didactics in Norway is given the attention it deserves as a separate academic field.

Following these considerations, this volume has been compiled for scholars nationally and internationally who are interested in English didactics, as well as for students at Bachelor and Master's levels in teacher education. We demarcate the field of English didactics as follows:

English didactics is best described as research, theory and applications relevant for English as a school subject. This includes research and applications in primary and secondary school, as well as in higher education, including teacher education for future teachers of English, and including English communication outside school.

The English didactics research in this volume is thus also relevant for readers who identify themselves as scholars of *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL), *Teaching English as a Foreign Language* (TEFL), *Second Language Acquisition* (SLA) and *Applied linguistics*, as well as English language education in general.

IDEA AND CONCEPT

The volume comprises 19 chapters in addition to this introduction and a state-of-the-art chapter by the editors. Each of the 19 chapters represents one doctoral project, and each chapter is a “mini version” of the thesis using an IMRAD format, i.e. Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. Based on this format, each contribution thus comprises an opening abstract, followed by the introduction (including a review of earlier research, and theoretical framework), methods, and results (sometimes labelled findings). These first sections provide a synopsis of the doctoral project, which consequently entails that the theory and review of previous research reflect the status quo at the time of the study.

A discussion is then added to the synopsis of the doctoral project: Each author has added a new and updated section to the presentation of their doctoral study, making up approximately one third of each chapter, namely the section *Discussion: Contributions to the English didactics field*. These additional sections for all the chapters are the primary novelties of this volume as they highlight the overall contributions of the doctoral study to the field of English didactics. These sections specifically comment on the contributions of the study in light of the period in which it was conducted, as well as developments in the field since then, and discuss how their doctoral work is relevant for students, researchers and practitioners of English didactics today. Each author has thus been asked to *revisit* their doctoral study and discuss it in the format of this volume. In line with this task, each chapter has kept the title of the original doctoral study but with the crucial prefix *PhD revisited*.

The additional discussion section of each chapter is divided into three parts. The first part, entitled *Empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions*, raises the central aspects that each doctoral study offers to the field of English didactics, thus showing how this particular study has contributed to the development of English didactics as a research field. The second part, *Implications for teaching English*, applies to current English language teaching, learning and development, including specific recommendations for how to deal with topics related to the doctoral study in the English classroom. In the final part, entitled *Suggestions for future research*, each author briefly presents recent developments in this research

area and offers suggestions for further research on the topic. The update on the status quo of the research topic is especially relevant for doctoral studies that were conducted some time ago, but also within areas in rapid development, and some authors have added an additional section entitled *Recent developments* for this purpose. This section varies between chapters in the extent to which some authors have updated their own research in the field, and some have included updated research in the field of English didactics in Norway in general.

THESES NOT REVISITED

Four Norwegian doctoral theses in English didactics are unfortunately not included in this volume due to their authors' full or partial retirement from academia and the extensive work inherent in participating in this book. We do, however, want to honour their contribution to the field of English didactics by presenting them here in chronological order, with authors, titles, and years of publication, and encourage readers interested in their work to read the original theses or the published versions:

Bjørg B. Gundem (1986). *Skolefaget i skolereformen. Utviklingen av engelskfaget som del av skolereform og Læreplanrevisjon* (Unpublished doctoral study). University of Oslo, Oslo. The doctoral thesis is published as two publications: Bind 1 and Bind 2.

Angela Hasselgreen (1998). *Testing the spoken English of young Norwegians: A study of test validity and the role of "smallwords" in contributing to pupils' fluency* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Bergen, Bergen. The PhD thesis was also published by Cambridge University Press in 2004, in the series "Studies in Language Testing 20".

Torunn Lehmann (1999). *Literacy and the Tertiary Student: Why Has the Communicative Approach Failed?* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Bergen, Bergen.

Bjørg Olsen Eikrem (2006). *Teaching English as a foreign language in the 21st century: Perceptions, attitudes, dilemmas, types of talk and educational needs* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). This doctoral thesis was also published by VDM Verlag in 2009.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

The volume is divided into six thematic sections, representing separate but inter-related topic areas; (1) The development of English as a school subject, (2) English Writing, (3) Digital English competence, (4) Reading in English, (5) Culture and literature, and (6) Oral proficiency. Within each section, the chapters are presented chronologically to emphasise the development within each topic area; the thematic sections are also ordered chronologically based on the first doctoral thesis within its topic area.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

In the first section of this volume, Aud Marit Simensen revisits her pioneering doctoral work from 1988, *Engelsk i grunnskolen: Mål og innhold*, written only a decade after English didactics was introduced for the first time in Norwegian teacher education. She discusses the contribution of her work within three significant areas – the national curriculum, differentiation, and assessment – and discusses the implications of the development of English as a school subject for English teaching today.

ENGLISH WRITING

With a total of five doctoral theses conducted over 20 years, the works in this thematic section address English writing as a topic of research in secondary school, teacher education, and business. Aud Solbjørg Skulstad revisits her doctoral work from 1997, *Established and emerging business genres: Genre analyses of corporate annual reports and corporate environmental reports*, the only doctoral work during these 30 years to address English for specific purposes. Ion Drew revisits his doctoral work also from 1997, *Future teachers of English: A study of competence in the teaching of writing*, in which he studies the duality of student teachers' writing competence and the ability to teach writing. The remaining three doctoral theses in this section, all related to students' writing, were written 20 years later. Tony Burner revisits his doctoral work from 2016, *Formative assessment of writing in English: A school-based study of perceptions, practices and transformations*, studying the use of portfolios as a tool for formative assessment during the writing process in upper secondary school. May Olaug Horverak revisits her doctoral work, also from 2016, *English writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school – a linguistic and genre-pedagogical perspective*, concerning formative assessment of students' classroom writing in upper secondary school.

Finally, Stephanie Hazel Wold revisits her recent doctoral work from 2017, *INGLISH English – the progressive construction in learner narratives*, concerning students' narrative writing in primary and lower secondary school. These three chapters discuss implications for teaching and assessing writing in primary and secondary English classrooms.

DIGITAL ENGLISH COMPETENCE

Here, we present two doctoral theses that have both addressed the development of professional digital competence among experienced and future secondary school teachers, written 12 years apart. First, Andreas Lund revisits his doctoral work from 2004, *The teacher as interface. Teachers of EFL in ICT-rich environments: Beliefs, practices, appropriation*, in which he studied experienced teachers designing and enacting the use of digital technology in the secondary classroom. Next, Fredrik Mørk Røkenes revisits his doctoral work from 2016, *Preparing future teachers to teach with ICT: An investigation of digital competence development in ESL student teachers in a Norwegian teacher education program*, focusing on student teachers' development of digital competence in teacher education and enactment in school practice. Both suggest implications for English teaching, specifically the need for teachers to become designers of technology-rich environments to change the traditional teacher-centred ways of teaching with ICT in today's secondary classrooms.

READING IN ENGLISH

In this section, the three doctoral theses addressing reading comprehension in English among primary and secondary school students during the 30 years of doctoral research in Norway are presented and discussed. That is, three more theses on the reading of literature were also conducted during these 30 years – however, we have chosen to include these in a separate section on culture and literature due to their aim of studying literary interpretation. The three studies in this section are conducted across a period of ten years and focus on students in primary and secondary school, as well as higher education. Glenn Ole Hellekjær revisits his doctoral work from 2005, *The acid test: Does upper secondary EFL instruction effectively prepare Norwegian students for the reading of English textbooks at colleges and universities?*, involving an international reading test in English. Lisbeth M. Brevik revisits her doctoral work from ten years later in 2015, *How teachers teach and readers read. Developing reading comprehension in English in Norwegian*

upper secondary school, integrating classroom observations of reading comprehension instruction with teachers' and students' perspectives on such instruction, as well as with students' reading proficiency. Finally, Rebecca Charboneau Stuvland revisits her doctoral work from 2016, *Approaches to English as a foreign language (EFL) reading instruction in Norwegian primary schools*, in which she observes English instruction using different approaches to teaching reading. All three discuss contributions of their work and discuss implications for English teaching today.

CULTURE AND LITERATURE

This section addresses topics of culture and literature related to the English school subject through four doctoral theses written during the short span of four years, focusing on secondary school students and student teachers. Ragnhild Lund revisits her doctoral work from 2007, *Questions of culture and context in English language textbooks. A study of textbooks for the teaching of English in Norway*, which is the only doctoral thesis offering research related to teaching the cultural component of the English subject. The remaining three theses in this section study how literature is influenced by the cultural context of the readers. Signe Mari Wiland revisits her doctoral work from 2009, *Poetry: Prima vista. Reader-response research on poetry in a foreign language context*, Annelise Brox Larsen revisits her doctoral work from 2009, *Content in Nordic pupil narratives in instructed EFL: A Norwegian perspective*, and Juliet Munden revisits her doctoral work from 2010, *How students in Eritrea and Norway make sense of literature*. All four chapters discuss the implications of making students literate and culturally aware in the context of English teaching today.

ORAL PROFICIENCY

In this section, four doctoral theses address oral proficiency in English in very different contexts, also during the short span of four years, related to primary and secondary school, and focusing on both students and teachers. Ulrikke Rindal revisits her doctoral work from 2013, *Meaning in English. L2 attitudes, choices and pronunciation in Norway*, exploring adolescent (age 17) learners' spoken English. Anne Dahl revisits her doctoral work from 2014, *Young language learners: The acquisition of English in Norwegian first-grade classrooms*, in which she studies the effect of spoken input for young (age 6) learners' development of oral English competence. The two other theses in this section are both from 2016: Henrik Bøhn

revisits his doctoral work *What is to be assessed? Teachers' understanding of constructs in an oral English examination in Norway*, investigating what English teachers assess in an oral English exam without a common rating scale. James Coburn revisits his doctoral work, *The professional development of English language teachers*, in which he looks at the effect of an in-service teacher education course on English teachers' professional competence.

STATE OF THE ART

As a final chapter to this edited volume, the editors highlight some of the issues that have risen from collecting and revising the doctoral work on English didactics from the past 30 years in Norway. In this state-of-the-art chapter, they present the accumulated knowledge developed from these 19 research projects and discuss how this research has formed English didactics as a distinct research field, providing a foundation for further empirical research.

*

For the editors, it has been an absolute honour to gain access to the high quality research conducted by scholars of English didactics in Norway, from the first included doctoral work of 1988, to the (so far) final batch of projects – a staggering seven theses in 2016 and 2017. We are impressed by the professionalism of the authors in how they have dutifully revised – and particularly shortened – their work according to the editors' vision for this volume. We hope they agree with us that the volume does justice to their excellent work. We would like to take the opportunity to thank the anonymous reviewer who has worked through this entire volume, offering critical, yet constructive and enthusiastic feedback to all authors and editors, improving the work considerably. Furthermore, this publication would not exist as open access without the financial support of the publication funds at each and all of the nine academic institutions represented in the volume, which truly reflects the national effort to present the field of English didactics in Norway.

Ulrikke Rindal and Lisbeth M Brevik, March 2019

1

PhD revisited: English in compulsory school

*Aims and content*¹

AUD MARIT SIMENSEN

University of Oslo

ABSTRACT This chapter reports the doctoral study *Engelsk i grunnskolen: Mål og innhold* (Simensen, 1988a), which includes three investigations central to the field of English didactics. The overall aim of the study was to produce knowledge about the aims and content of the English school subject in compulsory school. One central focus was to investigate to what extent there was agreement over time between ideas in selected academic disciplines, “parent disciplines”, and ideas in the school subject, as reflected in curricula, assessment documents and adapted readers as teaching materials.

KEYWORDS curricula | ‘parent disciplines’ | aims of teaching | adaptation of text | assessment

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1. The doctoral study, *Engelsk i grunnskolen: Mål og innhold*, was conducted according to the regulations in force at the time at the College of Arts and Science, the University of Trondheim [presently the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU]. The study was defended in 1988, and consists of three studies (Simensen 1987a, 1988 b, c) All are available through The University of Oslo Library, UiO: Universitetsbiblioteket. (<http://www.ub.uio.no/>).

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INTRODUCTION

The doctoral study was completed in the late 1980s, at the start of the development of English didactics as an autonomous academic discipline. It was and still is a contribution to the history of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Norway. The work was motivated by a period of great change in the compulsory teaching of English. An important political aim was that courses in English should be offered to more pupils in rural areas, to younger pupils, and to pupils who previously had not been regarded as having a talent for learning a foreign language (e.g. Gundem, 1986a). Compulsory education in general was increased from seven to nine years from 1960 onwards. The reform was implemented in stages in different parts of the country. It culminated with English as a compulsory subject for all pupils nationwide in *Lov av 13. juni om grunnskolen* of 1969.² This represented an enormous challenge in terms of getting a new school system into operation, ensuring enough linguistically skilled teachers of English, providing suitable teaching materials, and establishing appropriate assessment systems.

Among the most significant changes to the English subject of a discipline-oriented nature were the definitions of new aims for teaching and the development of new methods and techniques for practical teaching and assessment of learning. These changes were partly due to new needs among learners and in society, and partly to new ideas and theories about language, language learning and assessment in relevant academic disciplines, such as linguistics, educational and applied linguistics and psychology, referred to as “parent disciplines” in my doctoral study.

The main aim of my doctoral study was to produce knowledge about the aims and content of the English school subject in compulsory school. On the one hand this entailed investigations of the *intentions* behind the school subject as communicated through policy documents, and on the other it involved studies of the *applications* of such intentions, specifically related to assessment (using exams and exam routines) and adapted readers for differentiation purposes (using publisher guidelines). The doctoral study dealt with these issues in three separate studies. The regulations at the time were different from those of the article-based theses of today, and so the three studies in my PhD thesis are to some extent independent of each other. They will therefore be presented separately in most of the sections below.

The first of the three studies, *Hvor kommer ideene fra? Skolefaget engelsk fra Normalplan (1939) til Mønsterplan (1987)* [hereafter *Where do the ideas come*

2. All titles of policy documents are given in the Norwegian original throughout the chapter. They are listed with translations in English following the reference list at the end of the chapter.

from?]) analysed and described the development of aims and content in the English school subject over a period of 50 years, and investigated how shifts in parent disciplines influenced changes in the school subject in compulsory education. The second of the studies, *Adapted readers and Publishers' Policy* [hereafter *Adapted readers*] had as its point of departure the problem of differentiating the teaching of English according to levels of language competence. Among the prescriptions in the curriculum at the time was to use various types of graded readers in practical teaching.³ The third of the studies, *Et kvart århundre med evaluering i skolefaget engelsk* [hereafter: *Assessment*] was an investigation of the system of assessment started during the period of great challenges, as noted above. The primary research question was to compare the system of assessment as *intended* to the system as *applied*.

THEORY

Stern (1983) specified the concept “theory” in relation to the comprehensiveness of it, distinguishing between three major types: T1, T2 and T3. T1 was described as the most comprehensive, “containing all reflection and all talk about education” including “all discussion about the curriculum and content of education, of good and bad teaching, teaching methods, [...] and psychological, sociological, and philosophical questions that underlie these” (Stern, 1983, p. 26). Stern’s own book from 1983 was a theory of the most comprehensive type, a T1, but it subsumed less comprehensive T2s, i.e. “different theories of language teaching and learning, based on different linguistic and psychological assumptions, often emphasising different objectives, and relying on different procedures”. According to Stern, “most books on language pedagogy can be regarded as theories of second language teaching in this second sense. They normally direct the readers to certain ways of teaching and often try to explain to them on what grounds a particular approach has been recommended” (Stern, 1983, pp. 26, 33). In Stern’s system, T3 was described as a concept in a more rigorous sense, as a theory having been verified experimentally or by observation, for example the electromagnetic theory of light or the behaviourist theory of language learning. A scientific theory of learning will deal with the effects on the learners of various amounts and types of exposure, but it will not, for example, be expected to deal with such practical issues that determine how timetables are made up. This is the purpose of a theory in the

3. The term “prescription” (or “prescribe”) is sometimes used below. It is not always used in a categorical sense in my sources, i.e. as something that “must be done”. It may be used as “could be done”, “can be done” or “should be done.”

broadest sense, a T1. Since my interests as a researcher concentrated on problems close to practice in English teaching, Stern's (1983) meta-view of "theory" was a useful model to help me see at what level of comprehensiveness my doctoral study naturally belonged and communicate this to future readers.

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

Kelly (1969) and Stern (1983) argued that ideas and perspectives in language teaching are developed in academic disciplines such as linguistics and psychology. Kelly (1969) showed how perspectives in language teaching have changed during 25 centuries. Furthermore, according to his theory,

The total corpus of ideas accessible to language teachers has not changed *basically* for 2,000 years. What have been in constant change are *the ways of building methods from them*, and the part of the corpus that is *accepted* varies from generation to generation, as does the form in which the ideas present themselves' (Kelly, 1969, p. 363; my emphasis).

In addition, he argued that language teaching is principally an art that, through the ages, has pursued three major aims: "the social, the artistic (or literary), and the philosophical" and that "at each period in history one of these has become predominant, generating its own approach to teaching" (Kelly, 1969, pp. 396–397). Kelly's point of view was intriguing and aroused considerable attention, although modified somewhat by his use of the word "basically" in the first quote. I included Kelly's opinion in the study to encourage a sober attitude among students of English didactics to changes in teaching methods.

In his T1, Stern (1983) focused on major concepts in language teaching over time such as "Concepts of language" and "Concepts of Society". In the former, the concepts were related to linguistics such as trends in linguistic theory; in the latter, the concepts were related, for example, to aspects of sociolinguistics.

Howatt (1984), revised as Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, presented the teaching and learning of English as a foreign or second language from the early years on. These two books primarily have a European perspective. Although to be regarded as second-generation theory in relation to the relevant parent disciplines, the works produced by the Council of Europe in the 1970s and 1980s – for example, van Ek (1977) – were also of theoretical importance for the doctoral study. These documents show how theoretical principles can be applied for pedagogic purposes. This applies in particular to the pioneering work done by the Council of Europe on curriculum design and assessment.

ADAPTED READERS

Theoretical discussions about which terms to use in connection with different types of graded readers were central to the study in general of graded texts in the 1980s. Tommola (1980) presented a theory of different parameters of simplification. Davies (1984) was a discussion of what was to be understood by the label “authentic”, which had become a catchword in applied linguistics and English teacher education spheres, and which at this point in time was trickling down into circles closer to educational practice. The distinction between “use” and “usage” in Davies & Widdowson (1974) and Widdowson (1979) was crucial in differentiating between adaptations and simplifications of texts. “Use” referred to an adaptation of content based on an interpretation of the *communicative value* of a text. “Usage”, on the other hand, corresponded more with a traditional linguistic simplification of vocabulary and structure. Three types of graded readers on the market at the time were distinguished: *Authentic readers* were readers not written for pedagogic purposes and published in their original style. *Pedagogic readers* were readers with texts specially written for learners of English as a foreign (or second) language. *Adapted readers* were readers with texts that were adapted for learners of English as a foreign (or second) language on the basis of authentic texts.

ASSESSMENT

Stern’s (1983) use of T2 as a theory at a medium level of comprehensiveness was visualised in models with boxes for decisive factors. His model comprised a separate box for “learning outcomes” and included updated perspectives from the 1970s on testing learning outcomes, as reported in Spolsky (1978). The theoretical distinction between “discrete point testing” and “integrative testing” was crucial for the investigation of assessment in my PhD study (e.g. Oller, 1979). In the former, “discrete point testing”, language was divided into small elements for testing. The ideal was to test one aspect of the learners’ language competence at a time. Discrete point testing was also referred to as “psychometric-structuralist testing” in some of the literature, thus signalling its link to the parent discipline “structural linguistics”. The latter type, “integrative testing”, on the other hand, combined several language categories, such as vocabulary and grammar, and/or several skills in the same test. One example was the type “Writing an essay”. Among other things, this would test knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, orthography, coherence and cohesion in the same test. An integrative test was sometimes referred to as global, as a measurement of the practical command of language or of language in use. The American linguist, Robert Lado, was central in this work (e.g. Lado,

1961). Finally, according to authoritative language test theory at the time, to be rational a taxonomy of tests should ideally be based on technique, such as fill the blanks in a text with words omitted, not on any *assumption* about what language skill, such as reading or writing, or language component, such as vocabulary or grammar, each test would measure (Oller, 1979).

REVIEW

The two studies investigating applications of intentions in the English school subject, *Adapted readers* and *Assessment*, dealt with issues that were relatively general for English language teaching and could thus be related to international research literature. The first study, however, about the development of the English subject, had a national focus, and was thus related to previous research mainly from Norway.

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

Up to 1962, research studies on English in the compulsory school system were rare. Only small-scale local experiments were normally reported. This changed with the introduction of *Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole of 1960* (L60). The research project which followed, “Skolefaget i skolereformen: Utviklingen av engelskfaget som del av skolereformen” is a most comprehensive study (Gundem 1986a; 1986b). It was reported in two wide-ranging volumes, and the conclusions were stated in terms of 10 tentative theses about the development of the school subject English in the relevant period. The theses were further developed and discussed in the paragraphs that followed. Among the theses were the following: The development of the school subject is part of the development of the school system in general; not only language and culture, but also other disciplines, are of influence; the impact of research is limited; and change comes gradually and depends more on teachers than on the curriculum.

ADAPTED READERS

Previous investigations or surveys of adapted readers mainly included the following works: Bamford (1984), Davies and Widdowson (1974) and Hedge (1985). On the basis of these works, two chief principles of adaptations were distinguished, summed up by the following key words: 1) Informational and situational features, organisation of information, explication of background concepts and suppositions. 2) Features of language including vocabulary, structures, sentence length, and how

sentences combine. The first principle belonged to the category “use” as expressed in the theory by Davies and Widdowson above. The second belonged to these researchers’ category “usage”. Two studies of the simplification of texts were also of relevance for my investigation. The first was Lautamatti (1978), which was an examination of cohesion and coherence in texts simplified by native speakers of English and meant for readers of English as a foreign language. The second was Simensen (1986), which was an experiment asking a group of Norwegian scholars in different non-language disciplines to simplify a Norwegian text that had proved to be particularly difficult to read for students of Norwegian as a second language. The resulting simplified texts were then analysed.

A question which seldom was referred to in studies of adapted, simplified or graded texts, was to what extent the reader’s knowledge in general or of specific topics was adequate for an understanding of the text at hand. Other studies, in contrast, dealt with the relationship between cognitive structures, text schemata or scripts and text comprehension (e.g. Carrell, 1983).

ASSESSMENT

Previous research of particular relevance were investigations of linguistic errors in learner language (Corder, 1981; and studies included in Svartvik, 1973). This applied both to the description of types of errors at different stages in learning, often referred to as features of *interlanguage* or *approximative systems*, and to studies of attitudes among people to learner language with errors. One assumption as a result of such studies was that learners should not worry so much about the errors they make because they may just be a step on the way towards the correct target language. According to the following title, some researchers even regarded errors as positive signals of learning: “...you can’t learn without goofing” (Dulay & Burt, 1974, p. 95). In one study, the following demanding question was asked in the title: “Should we count errors or measure success?” (Enkvist, 1973).

In studies of attitudes to erroneous spoken language, pronunciation errors were ranked as more disturbing or irritating than grammatical errors. In studies of written language, lexical errors were ranked as more negative for comprehension than grammatical errors (Albrechtsen, Henriksen & Færch, 1980; Johansson, 1978). Furthermore, studies in applied linguistics gave examples of conversations with long utterances that were correct according to the rules of grammar, but *not* according to the rules of this type of discourse, whereas short utterances without much repetition of previous utterances were defined as correct (Widdowson, 1978).

A descriptive survey in the 1980s of problems in language education had both Norwegian teachers and pupils as respondents. Among the findings were that English teachers thought oral skills were underrepresented in the examination systems and that the correspondence between the aims of the school subject and the examination system was poor (Evensen, 1986).

METHODOLOGY

Stern's (1983) T2 functioned as an overall research map for my doctoral study, recognising "the existence of different theories of language teaching and learning, based on different linguistic and psychological assumptions, often emphasising different objectives, and relying on different procedures (T2s)" (Stern, 1983, p. 26). Naturally, only selected areas on the map could be investigated in a PhD study.

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

This investigation spanned a period of 50 years in which four of the most noteworthy curricula were put into operation (i.e. N39, L60, M74, M87). The study included analyses of 1) texts about what language is and how languages are learnt, as described in the literature from the relevant disciplines in academia and 2) prescriptions in the curricula in operation about aims and content in the school subject.

For the first type of analysis, I grouped the data into partly overlapping periods. For the second, I distinguished between different types of aims and different types of content, such as language skills, language categories, teaching methods, procedures, etc. for the same periods. The final step of the study was to find out on which points the trends described in texts from parent disciplines accorded with those described in the curriculum for the teaching of English.

TABLE 1.1. Research design of the study *Where do the ideas come from?*

| Qualitative data | Analysis |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Data consisting of central concepts (such as communicative competence) over time in parent disciplines | Text analysis of scholarly documents |
| Data consisting of aims and content in the four most noteworthy curricula in operation in the period 1939–1987 | Text analysis of curricula |
| | Contrasting the two text analyses |

ADAPTED READERS

Existing books and articles about graded readers and the use of readers in teaching were used to obtain the necessary background information for the study (Bamford, 1984; Brumfit, 1979; Hedge, 1985; Nuttall, 1982). Publishers referred to in these works were contacted in 1981/82 or 1985 if readers of the adapted type were on their publishing lists. The publishers were qualified to be included in my study if they could provide written information about their policy of adaptation, referred to as “guideline documents” in my study. This applied to six publishers with a total number of nine series of adapted readers. These publishers were also asked how they selected texts for adaptation.

The guideline documents were analysed and compared. The comparison aimed at finding major differences between principles of adaptation, such as types of control. Finally, the principles were contrasted to foci of interest in parent disciplines, such as a focus of interest in linguistic structure or in discourse structure.

TABLE 1.2. Research design of the study *Adapted Readers*

| Qualitative data | Analysis |
|--|---|
| Guideline documents for adapting texts | Text analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to distinguish between different bases of selection of texts for adaptation, types of control, levels of vocabulary and types of structures permitted ▶ to relate principles of adaptation to foci of interest in parent disciplines |

ASSESSMENT

This study spanned a period of 25 years. The sources for the study were the sections about assessment in the curriculum in operation, the general guide for assessment at this level as well as assessment documents of a similar nature issued for each year. These gave information about the years when written and/or oral exams were arranged and the percentage of pupils selected for written and/or oral exams. In addition, the yearly documents included the written tests given each year as well as the assessment criteria for these.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the study. The qualitative approaches described and compared the aims of teaching and the criteria for assessment, as well as the prescriptions of test types that could be used in the test batteries. The quantitative approaches compared the numbers of pupils tested in oral and/

or written exams in the period. Furthermore, all the tests used were registered in a classification scheme, and the numbers and types of tests given were compared over time.

TABLE 1.3. Research design of the study *Assessment*.

| Qualitative data | | Quantitative data | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Data | Analysis | Data | Analysis |
| <i>Normalplan for byfolkeskolen</i> (1939; N39) <i>Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole</i> (1960; L60) <i>Mønsterplan for grunnskolen</i> (1974; M74) <i>Mønsterplan for grunnskolen.</i> (1987; M87) <i>Sentrale emner i norsk, matematikk, tysk, fransk fra Mønsterplan for grunnskolen.</i> (S-81) <i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Metodisk Veiledning,</i> 1964 <i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Avgangsprøva</i> (1964–1970) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1971–1973) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1974–1986) <i>Handbok for skolen</i> (1976), (1984) | Comparative text analyses of aims, test types, and assessment criteria | <i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Metodisk Veiledning,</i> (1964) <i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Avgangsprøva</i> (1964–1970) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1971–1973) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1974–1986) | Comparisons of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ numbers of oral and written exams arranged, ▶ numbers of pupils tested each year, ▶ the standing of discrete point and integrative tests given over time. |

FINDINGS

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

Normalplan for byfolkeskolen (N39) was a curriculum guideline for the teaching of English for only a small part of the school population. Among the major aims were good pronunciation and knowledge of grammar. The teaching of grammar was described as inductive. In addition, the rules of grammar should be learnt. The direct method was described as the approach to teaching.

L60 continued to keep good pronunciation and knowledge of rules of grammar among the aims listed. It argued, for example, for a systematic use of a textbook for grammar teaching (“*en skolegrammatikk*”). Otherwise, L60 adhered to the aural–oral approach to teaching. Thereafter, correct pronunciation and knowledge of rules of grammar lost their position among the aims of the school subject. The two curricula that followed, M74 and *Mønsterplan for grunnskolen* of 1987 (M87), gradually introduced new or slightly new aims of teaching.

The communicative aspect of English was mentioned for the first time in M74 and was further developed in M87. M74 clearly contained elements of the audio-lingual approach to teaching. Teachers were, for example, advised to direct controlled exercises in the classroom in such a way that linguistic errors could be avoided. The next curriculum document in line, M87, was exceptionally balanced when it came to underlying learning theory, i.e. in explicit terms it opened for two widely different concepts of language learning: a mechanistic one, including different procedures of formalised teaching, and a mentalistic one, trusting free acquisition and meaningful learning.

As to the comparison of ideas in the school subject and the relevant parent disciplines, there was correspondence on most points of significance. When it came to questions of language, for example, it applied to shifts of focus, in research as well as in teaching, from smaller to larger units in the language, and from linguistic competence as an aim for teaching to a more comprehensive concept of language as an aim, i.e. a communicative competence concept, including to some extent socio-linguistic and socio-cultural abilities.

ADAPTED READERS

The six publishers qualified to be included in the study all gave information about their norms for selecting books for adaptation. Among these was to pick books with the right themes for various age groups. It was, for example, suggested that with young readers it was important to be concerned with the things that happened, but with older readers, it was important to be concerned with the causes of action and the feelings of the protagonists. For several publishers it was important to give the readers a real book, not a disguised lesson or schoolbook, and to avoid talking down to them.

Three types of principles for a control of adapted readers were distinguished: a control of information, of language, and of discourse and text structure. Most of the publishers agreed on the principles of control of language. By far the greatest attention was in fact given to the control of language on a lexical and a grammat-

ical level. Thus, in Widdowson's terms, it was mostly an adaptation of "usage". Only two publishers differed noticeably by including principles of adaptation for a control of information and a control of discourse and text structure, an adaptation of "use", as noted above. As to control of information, this applied for example to avoid "loads" of information in adapted texts and instead to distribute information "in easily digestible amounts". As to control of discourse and text structure, this applied for example to avoid "too much time switching" in adapted texts and instead to organise a text in accordance with "the order of events". Thus, in this study, because of the general lack of principles of adaptation of "use" in most publishers' policy documents, I concluded that works of both a theoretical and an empirical kind in parent disciplines on the one hand, and text adaptation as a practical field on the other, represented two different worlds.

ASSESSMENT

According to existing information, written final exams were arranged 24 times, oral exams only 15. The statistics thus revealed a considerable lack of correspondence between intention and application in oral versus written assessment at final exams, as had been reported in the descriptive survey of 1986 mentioned above. The registration of written test types in my study showed that discrete point test types were in the majority in the first half of the period studied, while the integrative were in the majority in the second. The increase in integrative testing was exemplified by the test type "Write coherent text", with 11 instances in the period 1962–1975, but 47 in the period 1975–1986 for comparable numbers of examinees and during reasonably comparable time spans. In general, the shifts in interest in relevant parent disciplines – from a focus on smaller elements in the language to a focus on larger, meaningful units such as connected texts, stories, conversations, discourse, and texts in different genres – were thus reflected in the frequencies of different test types given in the period studied.

The general guide for assessment, *Evaluering i 9-årig skole* of 1964, underlined that positive, as well as negative aspects of the pupils' written texts should be noticed. Besides, assessors were advised to distinguish between essential and non-essential linguistic errors. A new step was taken in 1967 when assessors were instructed not to place too much emphasis on formal errors that did not distort ("*fordreier*") the meaning in the pupils' written texts. Thus, instructions for the assessment of written language were from now on in accordance with research in parent disciplines on attitudes to linguistic errors, as discussed above. This question was returned to and further developed in several directives during the years that followed.

The directive from 1965 was of a somewhat different kind. It recommended giving pupils credit if their writing gave an impression of a good *oral* command of the language, giving it the label “aural assessment” (“*auditiv vurdering*”). The yearly directive of 1970 recommended in addition that “short answers” to questions, typical of conversations, in certain written test types should be credited as correct. In 1978, this was reformulated as a prescription. This development of assessment criteria paralleled the shifts in parent disciplines towards a more comprehensive understanding of the functional and communicative purpose of language, as well as the priority of the oral language in linguistic research.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The PhD study reported in this chapter was and is a contribution to the history of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Norway. Among other things, it intended to provide an academic basis for English didactics both as a study component and as an autonomous field of research at universities and other higher educational institutions. In addition, the three separate studies all provide empirical contributions related to their separate topics.

The study *Where do the ideas come from?* showed that ideas nurtured in relevant academic disciplines were of great importance for a practical field such as foreign language teaching. Over time, people have criticised many of the most fundamental shifts in foreign language teaching. However, my PhD study has shown that these shifts are not due to whims and fads of the writers of curricula etc. but “to the best of our knowledge” at any time in scholarly disciplines.

The study *Adapted readers* showed that this type of teaching materials in English was produced according to standards which were essentially agreed on in the publishing world. These standards largely represented a control of language and were essentially carried out at low levels in the language such as on the levels of vocabulary and structure, i.e. an adaptation of “usage”, as discussed above. An important question in my PhD study was therefore if not the *communicative value* of a text, as denoted by the concept of “use”, should not be taken into consideration to a larger extent in text adaptations for pupils at compulsory levels of teaching.

The study *Assessment* was inspired by the conviction expressed by practicing teachers of English that it was the exam system, not the curriculum, which determined the priorities of skills in teaching. Significant discrepancies between intention and application were in fact demonstrated in the study, for example in the sta-

tus of oral and written skills at final exams. Attitudes to linguistic errors in the educational community changed radically in the period of this particular study. These changing attitudes were at the time interpreted as advance notice of assessment of a more communicative nature in the years to come.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches was appropriate for my doctoral study. The qualitative approach made possible a comparison between key concepts in parent disciplines and in various parts of English as a school subject. The qualitative approach was also appropriate for investigating to what extent there was correspondence between the aims of teaching as expressed in steering documents and the application of them in the assessment system. The quantitative approach, on the other hand, made possible a comparison of the frequencies of oral and written exams arranged, the numbers of pupils tested in oral and written disciplines, and the numbers of different written test types used across the years.

My doctoral study showed that an educational theory at a medium level of comprehensiveness, a modified T2-type in Stern's (1983) model, functioned well as a research map for the topics investigated.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS L2

Practicing teachers of English should know the history of their discipline. They should not only know how English teaching has changed over time, but *why* it has changed. This also applies to students in teacher education. They should, for example, know that what they learn in terms of teaching methods, techniques of teaching, etc. in their higher education studies might be different from what they themselves experienced as pupils in the school system, and they should also understand *why*. My PhD study was a contribution to such insights, showing how ideas in academic disciplines influence the development of aims and content in the English school subject and how the subject has changed from one curriculum guideline to the next. Insight into how and why English teaching has changed over the years is not something teachers need to pass on to their pupils, but it is a valuable addition to student teachers' development of teacher professionalism.

As to the practical problem of differentiation in mixed ability teaching, the use of texts for reading at different readability levels, sometimes combined with listening, may often be the only feasible alternative. Practicing teachers should study

a variety of up-to-date readers for this purpose, including, if convenient, in an electronic format. These readers should be adapted according to a current understanding in academic disciplines of what is a comprehensible text for whom and in what socio-cultural setting. The choice of adapted readers should be a responsibility of those who know the pupils best, i.e. their teachers of English.

As to the question of assessment, the lesson is unmistakable. In order to achieve the aims of the school subject, a must is that all possible aspects of the aims and content are assessed and, if possible, tested. There is truth in the saying: “What is tested, counts”. As many practicing teachers have experienced, this definitely applies to the opinions of the pupils.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

At the time of the doctoral study, there were considerable gaps in the knowledge of the school subject English in compulsory teaching. In addition to the three separate studies published as parts of the doctoral study, the issues dealt with here reappeared in several publications in the following years (see Simensen, 2008; 2011 on the relationship between parent disciplines and the school subject English, and Simensen 1987b; 1990 on adapted readers). In addition, the history of the English school subject in Norway, and the theories and research that have influenced the application of teaching methods and approaches, have been presented and discussed in various materials for teacher education (e.g. Simensen, 2007; 2018).

When I embarked on this doctoral study, it was at a time when the discipline “English didactics” in the wide sense of the term was introduced as an autonomous academic discipline in higher educational institutions, in teacher education programmes and related studies, first as a study component and later also as an autonomous field of research (see discussion of “*engelskmetodikk*” versus “*engelskdidaktikk*” in Simensen, 2018). The chapters in this book illustrate that the development and advancement of this academic discipline have indeed made a difference in closing gaps.

Among recent developments, it is also appropriate to refer to more informal observations that show that English in Norway has moved from functioning as a foreign language towards gradually functioning as a second language. This shift of status was, for example, pointed out in research approximately 20 years ago (Graddol 1997, p. 11).

FUTURE RESEARCH

Since my PhD study was completed thirty years ago, it is clearly necessary to update the knowledge of *all* aspects studied at that time. Among other things, practicing teachers and assessors at all levels will, for example, in the future in all likelihood need new criteria for assessing learner language in English that deviates in one way or other from standard norms, be it learner language influenced by sociolects of some kind, or by *new* varieties of English worldwide (see, e.g. Rindal, chapter 16). In order to ensure equal assessment practice nationwide, this will be one particularly important area for future research and development work.

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2

PhD revisited: Established and emerging business genres

Genre analyses of corporate annual reports and corporate environmental reports¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports on a doctoral study (Skulstad 1997) which examined an established and an emerging genre within a specific professional domain, using genre analysis as a theoretical and methodological framework. The doctoral thesis was put within an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, and the chapter explains how this study relates to the use of authentic texts, materials development and the development of vocationally oriented language learners' genre awareness.

KEYWORDS genre analysis | rhetorical organisation | rhetorical movement | English for Specific Purposes courses | genre awareness.

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1. The chapter presents main results of a doctoral study (Skulstad, 1997) from the University of Bergen, emphasising its practical implications for the teaching of English within a Norwegian educational context. The doctoral thesis was published by Norwegian Academic Press (*Høyskoleforlaget*) in a slightly updated version in 2002 (Skulstad, 2002).

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INTRODUCTION

The doctoral study reported on in this chapter set out to examine rhetorical and textual patterns (including multimodal patterns) of an established genre and an emerging genre within a specific professional domain. Hence, *genre* emerged as the most central concept of this doctoral study. As will be apparent from the theory section of this chapter, there were a number of definitions of this term at the time. As a starting point, we may say that genres represent conventional ways of expressing meaning within a specific culture or professional community, responding to specific communicative purposes (cf. Swales, 1990, see theory section below).

A basic assumption of the thesis was that there are important differences between an established and an emerging genre in terms of actual textual practices and approaches required by genre analysts. At the time of the study (the early 1990s), there was a growing interest in environmental issues among governments, companies and in the public sphere. One of the emerging genres related to this growing interest was corporate environmental reports, and this genre had not yet been researched. Corporate annual reports were considered as a good example of a well-established genre within the business domain that allowed contrast with a new genre. The study also aimed to identify textual manifestations of the relationship between communicative purposes of the genre and strategic needs acknowledged by members of the relevant discourse community. Another important aim was to illustrate that data provided by genre analysis can be utilised in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching approaches. ESP courses are often referred to as vocationally oriented courses, and the most relevant type of ESP course for this doctoral study was English for Business.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a growing interest in genre definitions and genre analysis, and this interest also fed into the field of language pedagogy. In the doctoral study reported on here, genre analysis meant an exploration of the linguistic, rhetorical and multimodal (mainly visual) conventions of a particular discourse community as manifested by the rhetorical actions in which the members of that community participated. Put more simply, genre analysis involved an examination of the interdependence of communicative purposes and generic conventions. Luke (1994, viii) raised the question why genre had become of such pedagogical importance and held that part of the reason was “the overt mixing, blurring and shifting of cultural forms that characterises late-capitalist cultures and economies”. He added, however, that genre mixing is not a new phenomenon, but that these processes of genre mixing, blurring, and shifting “are accelerated under fast capitalism and a globalised economy” (Luke, 1994, viii). Hence, there seemed to be an increasingly urgent need to develop learners’ genre awareness as one way

of coping with these processes of genre mixing, blurring, shifting and also the emergence of new genres.

A prerequisite for developing learners' genre awareness is to bring authentic texts from different genres into the classroom. Thus, we also need to develop ways of analysing established and emerging genres inside and outside specific professional domains.

The primary research question of the doctoral study reported on was:

What essential differences and similarities can be identified when it comes to rhetorical movement and textual patterns of an established versus an emerging genre within the same professional domain?

The two types of reports chosen were issued by British companies. The analysis of rhetorical movement was a central aspect of the type of genre analysis performed in this doctoral thesis. The term *rhetorical movement* (also used by Swales, 1990) here refers to textual manifestations of the communicative purpose of the genres and the role of the genre within the discourse community in question. In the case of the established genre, this involved an identification of rhetorical moves and steps. I defined rhetorical moves as discriminative elements of rhetorical organisation that identify and capture the communicative purposes of the genre. Steps were defined as rhetorical strategies for realising the communicative purposes indicated by the names of the moves.

It was expected that the conventionality of rhetorical movement would be different in an established versus an emerging genre. Thus, in the case of the latter, the aim was to identify emerging textual patterns. Included in the term *textual patterns* were linguistic as well as multimodal textual patterns. In an established genre, however, it was expected that it would be possible to identify conventional rhetorical moves and steps made by the authors, as well as the use of conventional multimodal strategies.

REVIEW

An inspiration for the analysis of rhetorical movement was the pioneering work carried out by Charles Bazerman and John Swales. In his seminal article, Bazerman (1981) documented disciplinary variations in introductions to research articles. Similarly, Swales (1981, 1990) examined rhetorical conventions of research article introductions within different disciplines. His research, however, documented the rhetorical moves and steps authors conventionally made across disciplines. These results were visualised by means of a Move-Step model called the Create a research space (CARS) model (Swales, 1981, 1990). His type of analysis sparked similar studies of genres within academia. Lindeberg (1994), for instance, analysed rhetorical movement in discussion and conclusion sections of research

articles within the fields of finance, management and marketing, using six major rhetorical moves, such as “Restate” indicating restatement of research gap, purpose, aim, method or theory, and “Limitations”, stating limitations of the present research (Lindeberg, 1994, p. 649).

Move-Step models outside the academic field existed while I was carrying out my doctoral study, but they were relatively rare. One of the studies that did exist was Bhatia’s (1993) analysis of sales promotion letters and job application letters. He found that these two genres were both persuasive in nature and their communicative purposes were reflected in a similar rhetorical organisation:

Establishing credentials
 Introducing the offer/introducing candidature
 Offering incentives
 Enclosing documents
 Soliciting response
 Using pressure tactics
 Ending politely (Bhatia, 1993, pp. 46–68).

Another example of a study within the business domain was Bloor and Pindi’s (1990) research on economics forecasts. They analysed the functional framework, using the terms *schema*², *episode*, and *move*. The forecasting event was identified as the only schema, and this in turn was split into the two episodes “reporting” and “predicting”. Each of the episodes was split into two obligatory and one optional move.

Genre analyses were also carried out using M. A. K. Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics. An example of this was Ventola’s (1987) study of service encounters, which means a dialogue in a shop, a library, a tourist information centre, etc. The communicative purpose of service encounters is to exchange a commodity (goods or information). She identified conventional discourse patterns (schemata) used to realise this communicative purpose such as the fact that seeking advice was followed by giving advice.

In other words, there had been little research into rhetorical organisation of genres outside academia. In addition, to my knowledge there were no previous studies that focused on conventional rhetorical patterns in established and emerging genres in a comparative perspective.

2. *Schema* was coined by the psychologist Bartlett in his study of human memory (Bartlett, 1967/1932). Nunan (1999, p. 133) sees schema as “mental film scripts” and by this he means that human knowledge is organised into interrelated patterns that are constructed from previous experience, and these patterns enable us to make predictions about future experience.

THEORY

Two broad frameworks were relevant for the doctoral study reported on: genre and ESP teaching. In other words, genre and genre analysis were seen in light of ESP teaching.

The concept of genre can be traced as far back as the work of Aristotle. In more recent times, three approaches within the Anglo-American and Australian research traditions have conventionally been identified. These are ESP studies, (North American) New Rhetoric and the Sydney School. Of these three traditions, genre analysis within ESP studies is the one that emerged most clearly from an L2 context, and the doctoral study was rooted within this context. The most prominent scholar within the ESP tradition is John Swales, and he defines genre in the following way:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert member of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style (Swales, 1990, p. 58).

Swales's definition emphasises the relationship between rhetorical movement and the communicative purposes typically experienced by members of what Swales (1990) terms "the parent discourse community". By this term he refers to members of a social group or an academic discipline who may be seen to "own" the genre in the sense that they regularly produce and/or consume texts that belong to the genre in question. A consequence of this definition is that communicative purpose is the main criterion for genre classification in the case of genre analysis.

Traditionally, the term *English for Specific Purposes* has meant different things to different scholars and practitioners. One interpretation is found among people who have emphasised the notion of *special English* (such as technical terms within a specific professional domain) as being central. Sager, Dungworth and McDonald (1980, p. 69) define special language as "semi-autonomous, complex semiotic systems based on and derived from general language; their use presupposes special education and is restricted to communication among specialists in the same or closely related fields". The doctoral study reported on here, however, sees special language as only a small part of the competence needed in order to become a full member of a specific discourse community. Another interpretation of *English for Specific Purposes* is to emphasise the *purposes* of learning English and it implies that these purposes can be more readily identified compared to

“general” courses. The definition of an ESP course underlying the doctoral study reported on here is that it is a type of course where decisions about syllabus design and methodology are based upon the learners’ specific purpose in learning English. These purposes are seen to be closely tied to the need for being able to operate successfully in the central genres of a specific discourse community.

METHODOLOGY

The doctoral study was conducted within the field of genre analysis. It was strongly rooted in linguistics, but the motivation for carrying out the study stemmed from a research interest in English didactics. Methods from linguistics were chosen for the actual data analyses and the discussion of theoretical framework and practical implications of the results was based on English didactics.

RESEARCH DESIGN

From the outset, it was decided that including an established and an emerging genre in my corpus would add a new dimension to genre analysis. Corporate annual reports are a particularly good example of a genre within the domain of business. First, it is conventionalised and it is easy to get hold of for people outside the parent discourse community. Second, corporate annual reports are recognised by participants who use this nomenclature (genre name) when referring to these types of texts. Third, this genre is heterogeneous in the types of discourses found in these documents. Hence, this may serve to illustrate the fact that heterogeneity is usually no impediment to genre classification as performed in the doctoral study. Fourth, corporate annual reports form part of a complex system of information between a company and present and potential investors. Similarly, corporate environmental reports was an obvious choice of an emerging genre in 1993 when my data collection started. The so-called green movement of the 1980s and 1990s promoted green consumerism and a general “rising green awareness” (Yearley, 1991, p. 80), which was also reflected in corporate communication.

Requests for corporate annual reports and corporate environmental documents were sent to 88 companies in Britain. This resulted in 72 annual reports from 70 different companies. The corpus was split into a primary and a secondary corpus, and the criterion for being grouped in the primary corpus was that these particular companies had also sent me environmental reports as a response to my request. The secondary corpus consisted of annual reports issued by companies that had not yet issued environmental documents of the type I was looking for. These doc-

uments were consulted, but not analysed in the same systematic way. As for environmental documents, the requests resulted in a corpus of twenty documents from 19 different British companies.³ In other words, one company sent two types of environmental reports. Thus, the primary corpus of annual reports consisted of 19 documents and the corpus of environmental reports counted twenty documents.

Inspired by Swales's (1990) analysis of introductions to research articles, I decided to carry out a Move-Step analysis of the introductory section of corporate annual reports – the chairman's statement. As a supplement to the analysis of chairmen's statements, one chairman's statement and one news report were compared. The criterion for the selection of texts was that the two documents dealt with the same topic – they both reported on the performance of one specific business company (Pilkington). The news report was printed in the *Financial Times*, June 12, 1992 and the chairman's statement appeared in a corporate annual report issued by Pilkington at about the same time.

The research design consisted of qualitative data and different types of genre analysis were carried out. Table 2.1 gives an overview of the data, methods, and type of analysis used in the doctoral study. Qualitative analyses were used.

TABLE 2.1. An overview of the data, methods, and types of analysis used in the doctoral study.

| The process of analysis | Qualitative analysis |
|---|---|
| Chairmen's statements ¹ Step 1: 19 (primary corpus)/53 (secondary corpus) | Genre analysis – Move-Step analysis |
| Corporate annual reports Step 2: 19 (primary corpus)/53 (secondary corpus) | Multimodal analysis (visuals) |
| A comparison of one chairman's statement and one news report Step 3: 1+1 | Textual analysis |
| Corporate environmental reports Step 4: 20 | Genre analysis Multimodal analysis (visuals) |

1. All the chairmen in my corpus are male.

3. These companies are Allied Colloids Group plc., Blagden Industries plc., The Body Shop International plc., British Coal Corporation plc., British Nuclear Fuels plc., The British Petroleum Company plc., Donald Murray Paper Ltd (Bunzl plc.), W. Canning plc., Esso UK plc., Imperial Chemical Industries plc., National Power plc., Nuclear Electric plc., Pilkington plc., PowerGen plc., The RTZ Corporation plc., The Shell International Petroleum Company Ltd, SmithKline Beecham plc., Thames Water plc., Wellcome plc.

GENRE ANALYSIS

Genres have conventional forms, functions, and meanings within specific social and cultural contexts. Obviously, the degree of conventionality is different in the case of emerging genres compared to established ones, and consequently the type of genre analysis needs to be different. As pointed out above, a Move-Step analysis was chosen for the analysis of chairmen's statements about corporate annual reports. This type of analysis identifies the rhetorical movement writers or speakers make when operating in a specific genre or part of a genre. First, linguistic signals indicating the beginning and change of rhetorical steps were identified. Examples are anticipatory lexical signals (Hoey, 1983) such as "Looking forward to 1993..." indicating a shift to projecting the future or looking ahead and "Our policy is ..." indicating that an announcement of corporate policy will follow. Lexical words and phrases such as "assurance", "reassurance", and the verb "thank" gave important clues as to the communicative function of a clause or a sentence. The choice of subheadings in the chairmen's statements, although sometimes misleading, was also taken as an indication of how the different sections were meant to be interpreted by the reader. After a preliminary classification into rhetorical steps, comprehension of this type of text, background knowledge about the discourse community and the role of corporate annual reports within that community facilitated grouping the different steps into a set of moves. Steps that were interpreted as serving a similar communicative purpose were grouped into the same rhetorical move. Next, the names of the different moves and steps were decided on, and in doing so I again observed the use of subheadings in the reports and the writers' choice of vocabulary. The result of the analysis was the Relationships and Confidence (RECON) model presented below. Finally, the chairmen's statements in the primary corpus were analysed again. This time the RECON model was used as a starting point for analysis to check if the Move-Step patterns were generally in agreement with the ordering and the names assigned to the various moves and steps.

In the emerging genre of corporate environmental reports, only emerging textual patterns were identified, instead of a Move-Step analysis as that of the corporate annual reports. However, also in the case of environmental reports the focus was on identifying rhetorical strategies employed by the writers to realise the communicative purposes of the genre. In other words, the main difference between emerging textual patterns on the one hand and steps on the other is the level of conventionality of these rhetorical strategies. These strategies used by the writers of environmental reports were identified in a similar way as the steps in

the case of chairmen's statements, and the communicative purposes were identified in a parallel way to the moves of chairmen's statements.

In addition, the use of metadiscourse in the introduction of the corporate environmental reports was analysed as it was expected that writers of an emerging genre would use metadiscourse to guide and direct the readers. Here, Mauranen's (1993) categories action markers (*the explanation is*), connectors (*however*), previews (*we will discuss distribution in the next section*), and reviews (*as suggested above*) were used. The analysis of metadiscourse concentrated on discourse elements which signal the rhetorical action taken by the writers, textual connectors, discourse anticipating later parts of the reports, discourse that helps readers to interpret the purpose of issuing this type of document, and finally, discourse which repeats or summarises an earlier part of the text.

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

Providing a complete multimodal analysis of annual reports and environmental reports within corporate communication was outside the scope of the doctoral study. The analysis was limited to the use of visuals in these reports. This type of analysis was inspired by Kress and van Leeuwen's (1990, 1996) book. Some interesting examples of visuals were chosen for a more detailed analysis. The categories used in these illustrative examples were *foregrounding* and *backgrounding*, *camera angle* (mainly in terms of power relations), *visual modality* (e.g. colour saturation, colour differentiation, contextualisation versus decontextualisation) and *Given-New structure*. The category of realistic versus symbolic photographs was also used (Nielsen & Johansen, 1996). In addition, the communicative purpose(s) of visuals in a Swalesian sense was central in the analysis, such as the argumentative function of visuals in realising the communicative purpose of the report. The use of visuals in the two types of reports was compared where relevant.

Above all, the analysis of visuals aimed to show that this type of report was multimediotic, and at the same time it was realised that the interplay between visuals and language is a complex issue that would deserve a study in its own right.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

A textual analysis was carried out in the case of a newspaper report and a chairman's statement, both reporting on the same issue. The motivation for carrying out this analysis was first that the genre names of annual reports and news reports indicate that a central verbal behaviour by the authors of these genres is reporting (see-

ing *report* as a speech act), or the function of “macroassertion” (van Dijk, 1988, p. 27). Second, it was thought that this analysis would provide a useful supplement to the Move-Step analysis carried out in the case of chairmen’s statements. Third, the analysis illustrated how corporate annual reports were used in another genre. A fourth motivation was that as the subject matter is the same in the two texts, it would illustrate that factors other than content are decisive in terms of the rhetorical organisation and choice of linguistic strategies.

The analysis concentrated on the rhetorical organisation and the use of linguistic strategies. The basis for the analysis was the RECON model of chairman’s statements (see below) and van Dijk’s (1988) news schema. Linguistic strategies were analysed from the point of view of their pragmatic function. Examples include verbal reactions (reported speech or direct quotation) and words used to describe the context, the industries, etc. Differences and similarities were identified, and the two types of genre texts were analysed in terms of type of audience and communicative purpose.

RESULTS

The results show differences in rhetorical movement and textual patterns in the two types of business reports. At the same time, there are important similarities related to the overall communicative purpose of creating a favourable corporate image. Strong parallels were identified between the use of verbal and visual strategies. The analysis of a news report and a chairman’s statement served to illustrate how differing communicative purposes in the two texts resulted in differences in rhetorical organisation, selection of content items and linguistic strategies. The doctoral study also produced results in terms of the assigning of genre and sub-genre membership. The latter is only briefly mentioned below.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF CHAIRMEN’S STATEMENTS

The Move-Step analysis of the section known as “chairman’s statement” in British corporate annual reports resulted in the identification of a Move-Step model that I called the Relationships and Confidence (RECON) model. In other words, this model shows the rhetorical movement writers of British chairmen’s statements conventionally make. The model may be applied as a tool for analysing this particular section of corporate annual reports. But above all, the RECON model captures in a schematic form the rhetorical moves and steps conventionally made by writers of chairmen’s statements, and the communicative purposes of this section.

The nomenclature of the three different moves of the RECON model reflects the interpersonal nature of chairmen's statement: Move 1 "Establishing relationships", Move 2 "Maintaining confidence" and Move 3 "Reinforcing the relationships" between the company and the readers. A move may be realised by several alternative steps and there are possibilities to recycle moves and steps.

TABLE 2.2. The relationships and Confidence (RECON) Model.

| MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS | |
|--|--|
| Optional Step A: | Salutation |
| Optional Step B: | Providing the background for the present scene |
| Step 1: | Summary statement |
| Step 2: | Providing figures describing company performance |
| Step 3: | Selecting aspects of the past financial year |
| MOVE 2: MAINTAINING CONFIDENCE | |
| Step 1: | Projecting the future |
| | by |
| Sep 1 A: | Announcing corporate strategies, policies and objectives |
| | and/or |
| Step 1 B: | Predicting the future/looking ahead |
| Optional Step C: | Signalling honesty |
| Optional Step D: | Providing reassurance |
| MOVE 3: REINFORCING THE RELATIONSHIPS | |
| Step 1: | Reviewing board changes (if any) |
| Step 2: | Acknowledging credit to management and employees |
| Step 3: | Closing statement of reassurance |
| Step 4: | Signature |

RESULTS OF THE COMPARISON OF A CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT AND A NEWS REPORT

The writer of a chairman's statement is free to add his or her personal comments. A journalist writing a news report, on the other hand, is expected to give a more

objective account of events. Image creation is an overall aim of corporate annual reports, whereas a news report may want to attract the reader's attention in a crowded field of media communication. Here, I will briefly comment on one textual example from each of the documents to illustrate some interesting relationships between communicative aims and textual responses. The *lead* in a news report usually has a summarising function:

PILKINGTON, the glass maker, slashed its dividend yesterday and warned that it could not see any sign of recovery in trading conditions (*Financial Times*, June 12, 1992).

The opening of the chairman's statement, on the other hand, was coded as optional step B, "Providing the background for the present scene":

Market conditions in the flat and safety glass industry during what has become the longest recession since the second World War have been the worst anyone can remember. The major users of the Group's products – the building and automotive industries – have been particularly hard hit (Pilkington plc., *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1992, p. 2).

The quote above was printed in bold face, as is often the case with the lead of news reports. The bad performance is typically "explained" with reference to general market conditions and overall trading climate as a way of preparing the readers for the bad news to come.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

Analysis revealed that both the corporate annual reports and the corporate environmental reports in my corpus shared the overall communicative purpose of corporate image creation. However, the corporate environmental reports typically reflected the following specific communicative purposes:

- a. signalling commitment and/or awareness of environmental issues
- b. signalling good business practices (business ethics).

This set of communicative purposes can be summed up by four key words: informing, caring, knowing, and acting. Being an emerging genre at the time of analysis, the corporate environmental reports showed a high degree of heterogeneity in terms of communicative purposes, content and form. Still, six of the

twenty documents deviated from the majority of documents in some important ways. To capture this difference, the documents were split into two subgenres. The biggest subgenre, counting 14 documents, was referred to as environmental performance reports. Generally, this subgenre reported on the performance of the company in question regarding environmental issues, and these reports were often issued annually. The other subgenre was referred to as environmental awareness booklets, but these documents had a less well-defined form and regularity, and reporting on corporate performance was less prominent.

The doctoral thesis also documented the fact that both types of reports analysed drew on other types of discourses in addition to business discourse, such as environmental discourse, business discourse, lifeworld discourse, promotional discourse, legislative discourse, discourse associated with personal communication and so forth.

The study also concluded that the metadiscursive categories *previews* and *action markers* were used much more frequently in introductory sections of the emerging genre compared to the introductory letter (the chairman's statements) of the established one. When a preview did appear in chairmen's statements, it typically marked a deviation from the conventional Move-Step pattern.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF VISUALS

Photographs that appeared in most of the corporate annual reports in my corpus were realistic pictures (as opposed to symbolic pictures) such as portraits of the chairman, the chief executive and members of the board, photographs of employees at work, parts of the production process, company buildings under construction, newly opened plants and so forth. The majority of the portraits of the chairman showed him in the setting of his office, or in less frequent cases, he was standing inside or outside one of the company buildings. Typically, he had eye contact with the reader and this strategy may be interpreted as a way of establishing a relationship between the chairman and the reader.

In one of the chairmen's statements there is a full-page photograph of the chairman together with two miners down in Whitemoor mine (Figure 2.1). Their clothes are dirty and the miners have dirty faces. All three are smiling and look like they have been interrupted in the middle of a conversation. This picture suggests that the chairman is in close contact with the workers and that he is even going down into the mines to interact with the employees. Hence, this photograph was chosen with the aim of promoting a favourable corporate image.

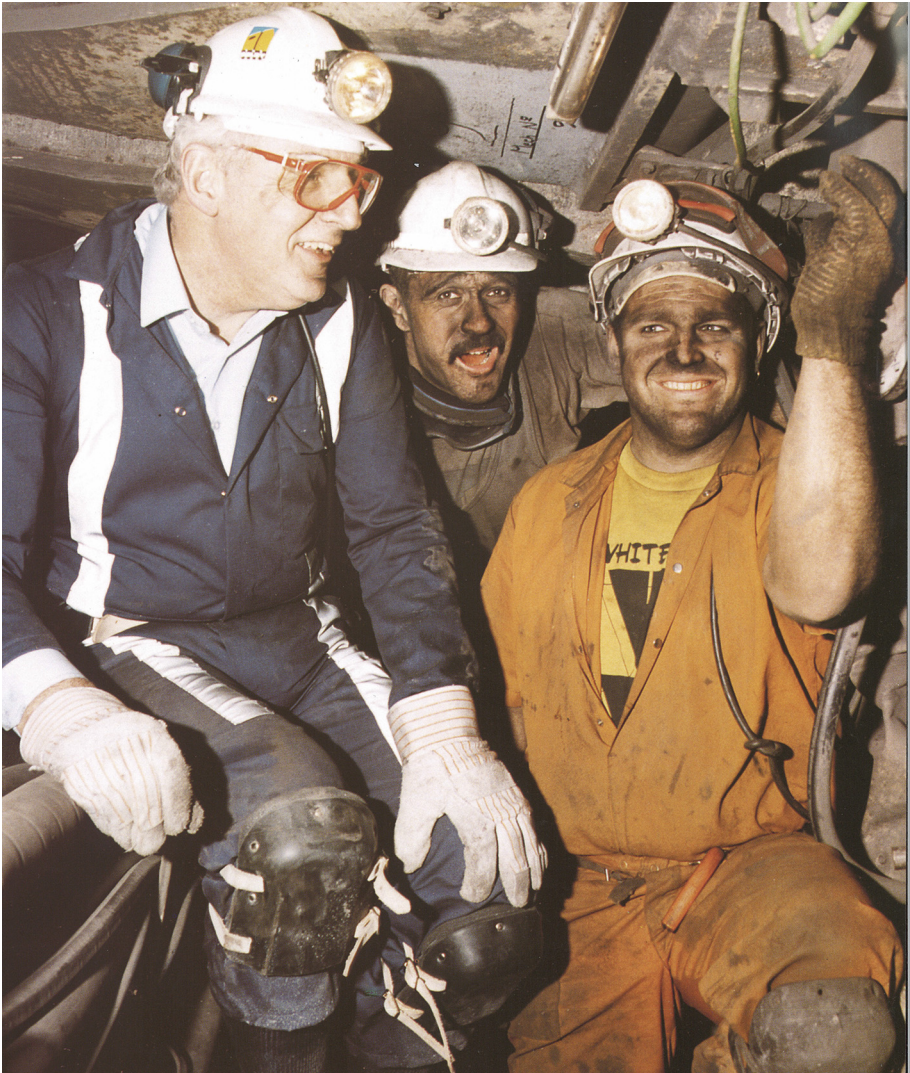


FIGURE 2.1. The Chairman of British Coal in a mine.

If we turn to the corporate environmental reports in my corpus, there were photographs of equipment, production processes, members of staff, portraits of the company chairman, and so forth. These are also typical pictures of corporate annual reports. But more importantly, there were pictures directly related to environmental issues. An important communicative purpose of these reports was to show good business ethics in relation to environmental issues. The use of visuals was found to support this communicative aim. Here, I have chosen to comment on two

photographs that may serve to illustrate the results found (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). These photographs appeared in the same document (an environmental awareness booklet issued by British Coal) and show a coal power station and a nuclear power station from the outside. The coal power station is seen from a high camera angle, and this perspective makes it look smaller and insignificant. The angle and size of frame of the photograph allow large areas of green, cultivated fields surrounding the power station to be included in the picture. The argument made by means of visual communication is that the burning of coal does not have any negative effects on farming in the area.



FIGURE 2.2. Coal power station.

The photograph of the nuclear power station, on the other hand, is taken from a lower camera angle and this makes the nuclear power station look bigger compared to the coal power station. In the foreground there are a number of private houses. These houses look very small compared to the nuclear power station. The caption states that there is strong resistance from the public on environmental grounds to the extended use of this type of power station.



FIGURE 2.3. Nuclear power station.

Visual arguments may be seen to have a stronger effect compared to verbal arguments. As Myers (1994, p. 136) states: “Any statement in words provokes an answer back, in words, but a picture does not evoke such a clear rational response”.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

The doctoral study has shown that rhetorical organisation and rhetorical strategies (including visual strategies) are responses to communicative needs of the discourse community on the one hand, and the needs experienced by the situated writer on the other. It has also documented that writers within business domains draw on a number of different types of discourse, and that special terminology makes up a very small part. Thus, it makes sense to include a large part of “general English” in ESP courses. A consequence of the fact that full members of a specific discourse community draw on a number of different types of discourses – also outside their specific domain – is that developing ESP students’ genre awareness becomes an urgent project.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: REGISTER AND RHETORICAL MOVEMENT

Up until the 1990s, ESP courses had focused largely on the teaching of specific registers, including special terminology. The doctoral study broke with this tradition and rejected the term *business register*. Instead, it drew attention to the fact that writers often break out of the typical register of business and draw on a number of different discourses and semiotic resources (such as visuals) to achieve specific communicative aims. The study claims that the most important aim of ESP courses should be to develop students' genre awareness. Available results of genre analyses will assist teachers in using authentic texts. This has been an important rationale for identifying the rhetorical movement of chairmen's statements in British corporate annual reports and emerging rhetorical patterns in corporate environmental reports.

The motivation for developing Move-Step models was not primarily for the purpose of genre analysis. Particularly within the Swalesian tradition, a basic idea was that the communicative purpose was reflected in the way the members of the discourse community structured the genre rhetorically (in terms of moves and steps). As Bhatia (1993, p. 21) puts it, "The communicative purpose is inevitably reflected in the interpretative cognitive structuring of the genre". Thus, the Move-Step model of chairmen's statements contributes to raising the awareness of the relationship between the communicative purposes of the genre (or subgenre) and rhetorical strategies used to achieve those purposes. Ideally, a Move-Step model reflects the communicative purposes of the genre and in a larger perspective it may be seen to mirror the communicative purposes of the wider discourse community. Hence, the RECON model of chairmen's statements may be seen to be relevant to a number of genres inside and outside the business domain in that it demonstrates some important mechanisms of communication within a particular professional domain.

The doctoral study has also documented some of the ways in which strategies of visual communication are used to achieve central communicative purposes of the discourse community. Thus, it shows the importance of not ignoring multimodal strategies in the central didactic project of developing learners' genre awareness.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

An important methodological contribution of the doctoral study is that it demonstrated the fact that Swales' (1990) type of Move-Step analysis can be applied to genres used in discourse communities outside academia.

Another methodological contribution is that the doctoral study has shown that established and emerging genres require different types of analyses. “New” genres do not have an identifiable Move-Step pattern in the same way as established genres do. However, some recurrent, emerging textual patterns can be identified.

Theoretically, this study can be seen to have contributed to new insight as to genre emergence. Corporate environmental reports emerged as responses to changes in legal requirements, social conditions, political consciousness and an increased awareness of environmental issues in the public sphere. The doctoral study has captured some of this dynamic between new needs and textual and generic responses to such needs. The study has also been able to capture central features of a genre at a relatively early stage of emergence. It has demonstrated some important differences between an established and emerging genre produced by the same companies. The doctoral study has also contributed to a discussion of the concept of genre as well as to a discussion of the assigning of genre and sub-genre membership, which may be useful for the field of English didactics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

Swales’ starting point for carrying out a Move-Step analysis of research article introductions was that he had noticed the trouble his students had in writing the first few paragraphs of academic texts. Very few people will ever have to write a chairman’s statement, and consequently, the motivation for carrying out a Move-Step analysis of these introductory documents was somewhat different. The doctoral study argues that the RECON model can still be a useful pedagogic tool in the sense that such models capture central characteristics and patterns of communication within a specific field. More specifically, the RECON model makes explicit some important characteristics of corporate communication: corporate image creation, strategies used to maintain confidence, the relationship between informing and persuading, and so forth. In other words, L2 students may benefit from using Move-Step models such as the RECON model for analysing genres within a central professional domain related to their vocational studies.

In the 21st century, new genres seem to be emerging more quickly than before. This has to do with the use of new technologies for communication and complex social, cultural, and strategic needs. Students of English need to develop a genre awareness, which will enable them to operate also in new genres. One way of developing learners’ genre awareness is by means of explicit genre teaching (cf. the Sydney school, e.g. Christie, 2013; Christie & Martin, 2000; Martin, Christie & Rothery, 1987; Skulstad, 2018). However, Move-Step models and textual pat-

terns should not be used as prescriptive tools. Instead, they should be viewed as a source of insight that may assist the learners in studying specific authentic texts. Such texts need to be brought into ESP classrooms and studied from the point of view of rhetorical movement and the relationship between rhetorical and linguistic choices and communicative purposes of the parent discourse community. Studying the relationship between communicative purposes and structure, content and style is essential for successful reception and production of genre texts within an educational setting.

Within the communicative paradigm of L2 teaching, a focus on communicative purpose, meaning, and context has always been important. Move-Step models may make these aspects clearer to L2 students, because such models may be seen to make explicit how communicative purposes act as determinants of rhetorical movement and rhetorical strategies within a specific context.

Annual reports, news reports, and environmental reports are examples of authentic texts that are easy to get hold of and use as part of an ESP course. Studying authentic texts and Move-Step models may assist L2 learners in understanding the complex relationship between communicative purposes and the discourse community that “owns” the genre or subgenre in question. Genre analysis also adds to our knowledge of a discourse community’s norms and ideologies that shape and constrain the textual practices found in a specific community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The doctoral study reported on here may inspire students and scholars to carry out research projects that may result in teaching material for ESP courses or vocationally oriented language courses. There is still an urgent need for teaching material that ESP students may find inspiring, motivating and challenging. In other words, there is a need for more genre analyses that may be used in terms of materials development for courses within vocationally oriented language education. This need does not only apply to genres for production, but also genres for reception. The results of such genre analyses can be used by textbook authors as well as teachers.

Genre does not seem to be a buzzword to the same extent that it was in previous decades. This may be illustrated by the fact that when the English subject curriculum of the *Knowledge Promotion* was revised in 2013, the word *genre* was replaced by *text type* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006/2013). There is a need for studies examining teachers’ and learners’ attitudes to the role of genre in ELT education today. There is also a need for classroom

research looking into if and how L2 teaching aims to develop learners' genre awareness.

Research resulting in theory development is also needed, particularly research resulting in a new definition of genre which keeps the central aspects of Swales' (1990) definition and at the same time reflects more clearly a multimodal view of communication. In the 1980s and 1990s, genre definitions reflected a focus on written and spoken discourse only, not other semiotic resources. Here are two examples:

Genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them. ... The term genre is used here to embrace each of the linguistically realized activity types which comprise so much of our culture (Martin, 1985, p. 250).

... discourse communities evolve their own conventions and traditions for such diverse verbal activities as running meetings, producing reports, and publicizing their activities. These recurrent classes of communicative events are the *genres* that orchestrate verbal life (Swales, 1998, p. 20).

With a stronger focus on the fact that a number of semiotic resources are used for communication came a need for definitions that do not only focus on language. Here is one definition of genre that takes a broader view of communication:

By defining genres as configurations of meaning, we have tried to open the door to multimodal realisations of genres, including various modalities of communication (e.g. image, music and spatial design ...) (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 234).

What is lost in Martin and Rose's (2008) definition compared to the one proposed by Swales (1990) is the central role of communicative purpose in shaping the genre.

Further theory development as to the notions of text type versus genre is also needed. Earlier specifications of major differences between the two concepts seem to have been largely forgotten. As Paltridge (1996) claims, this is an important and useful distinction. Text type used to refer to text categories based on text internal criteria. In other words, these are texts that share sets of linguistic patterns irrespective of genre (Biber, 1988). Genre, on the other hand, also includes text-external criteria such as the social and cultural context, the situational context of the specific discourse community, and mechanisms related to production and reception.

The need to develop learners' genre awareness in language courses at all levels of education has not diminished. This applies to both written and spoken genres, and particularly to genres within specific professional domains that are relevant to the learners' present or future needs.

The fact that this doctoral study has combined research interests in two fields, applied linguistics and English didactics, will hopefully be an inspiration for future studies in its own right.

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3

PhD revisited: Future teachers of English

A study of competence in the teaching of writing¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Drew, 1997) which explored factors linked to student teachers' competence to teach written English in Norwegian compulsory schools. The teaching of writing was perceived from the duality of writing competence, with a focus on form, and the perceived ability to teach writing. The results showed that student teachers' writing only marginally developed during a one-year English teacher training course, while their perceptions of teaching written English in schools changed considerably. Implications for L2 teaching and further research are discussed.

KEYWORDS Teacher competence | writing | ability to teach writing | teacher training

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1. This chapter presents a doctoral study (Drew, 1997) from the University of Bergen. The doctoral thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be obtained through university libraries in Norway or by contacting the author at ion.drew@uis.no.

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INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in written English is important for Norwegians both outside of and in school. Written English is important outside of school because of the pervasiveness of the printed word in English in the world and the growing political and commercial links that Norway has with the rest of the world. Being able to write is a necessity in the modern world, and not being able to do so would be a severe handicap. It is important in school because in addition to Norwegian, English is the only compulsory language from primary to upper secondary education, and one of three subjects in which pupils may sit a written exam when they complete their compulsory school education. Furthermore, Norwegians are required to read English in many subjects in higher education, e.g. Sociology and Medicine.

However, writing is probably the most difficult language skill to master and one of the most complicated human activities (Murray, 1987). In fact, Zinsser (1985, p. 12) argues that, “If you find writing hard, it’s because it is hard. It’s one of the hardest things people do.” A study by Drew (1993) revealed that most lower secondary pupils found writing in English much more difficult than speaking English. The same study also considered the role and competence of the teacher as central to the development of pupils’ writing, even though writing was likely to be influenced by other variables. The doctoral study reported here, building on Drew (1993), thus focussed on the proficiency and skills of the student teacher in relation to the teaching of written English and factors that would influence the student teacher’s proficiency and teaching skills.

The main purpose of the doctoral study was therefore to investigate variables that influenced student teachers’ competence to teach written English in compulsory school.

Competence in the teaching of writing was perceived from the duality of writing competence, with a focus on form, and the ability to teach writing. It was thus both a study of the student teachers’ written English and a study of their perceived skills to teach written English. It may be considered a limitation that the study was primarily quantitative, focusing on form, and did not address issues of content/meaning. However, it was conducted at a time when quantitative studies of form in writing were very common, especially outside the USA, as reflected in Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki and Kim’s (1998) metastudy of measures of fluency, accuracy and complexity in L2 development in writing, which was published the year after the completion of this doctoral study. The study was further conducted at a time when some colleges in Norway offered 30 ECTS and 60 ECTS courses in English with didactics and teaching practice, which was the case in the institution concerned. The courses were an optional component of a Bachelor of Education

degree incorporating English and were equivalent to today's "*grunnskolelærerutdanning*" (GLU) with English.

THEORY

Writing is primarily an act of communication and is essentially functional in nature (Halliday, 1989). Its function is to communicate written information to a reader. The functions of writing vary according to genre, level of formality and anticipated readership. For example, there are differences between writing an informal note as a reminder, a business letter to confirm a transaction, and a narrative to entertain readers. While narrative writing at the time of the doctoral study was predominant in primary and lower secondary schools, and was considered to have both educational and motivational value (Price & Takala, 1998), some scholars (e.g. Kress, 1982; Pincas, 1982) argue that school children should be trained to write multiple genres in order to prepare them for the kinds of writing they will need after leaving school.

With the shift from grammar/translation to communicative language teaching in the 1980s (Howatt, 1991), writing needs to be considered as a meaningful act and not simply as a tool to work with grammar (Ernst & Richard, 1994; Raimes, 1985). Its meaningfulness is emphasised in an integrative approach in which the four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) complement each other (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987; Jaraus & Tufts, 1988). The link between reading and writing is especially important and through reading, children can acquire, e.g. story grammar, schemata (background knowledge about the world), scripts (the typical order in which events take place in a given context, e.g. a wedding), and the ability to develop characters (Atwell, 1987; Beard, 1991; Graves, 1991).

Writing is a demanding form of communication. Good writers need to write clearly and unambiguously (Martlew, 1983). Flower (1979) makes the distinction between *writer-based* and *reader-based* prose. In the former, the writer shows little awareness of the needs of the reader and whether ideas are understandable or not. In the latter, the writer deliberately attempts to communicate to the reader and even attempts to anticipate the reader's response.

Skilled writers focus initially on the development of their ideas before turning their attention to language (Krashen, 1984). However, there has traditionally been an overemphasis on language (form) in second language (L2) writing (Zamel, 1983).

REVIEW

Since the teaching of writing is a multifaceted phenomenon, and one that needs to be considered in relation to other language skills, research on several key areas linked to the development of writing were reviewed. Many of these areas had their roots in first language (L1) environments, but were nevertheless considered relevant for L2 literacy development, i.e. development of L2 reading and writing. One key area was emergent literacy, namely the beginnings of reading and writing in children, and the importance of the pre-school years, especially the home, for literacy development (Goodman, 1986; Purves, 1992; Sulzby, 1985; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Because of their emergent literacy during the pre-school years, many children enter school with a good deal of knowledge about the written word (Sulzby, 1985), irrespective of their socio-economic status (Teale, 1986). The research on emergent literacy showed that children in literate cultures can develop oral and written language concurrently and in a natural way at home without formal instruction.

However, pre-school children's literacy development can also be fostered in kindergartens, as shown in Cambourne's (1986) and Cambourne and Turbill's (1987) research on children under the age of six in Australian kindergartens. These children were immersed in environmental print, were given time to practise writing, were expected to write, were given responsibility for what to write, and were given response to their writing. The importance of creating a literacy-promoting educational environment also with older children, namely at the junior high school level in the United States, was emphasised in the research by Atwell (1987). In Atwell's "reading and writing workshops", pupils developed their mother tongue reading and writing considerably and there was a strong link between the two: pupils chose what to read and their reading often inspired their choice of writing. Pupils' development in writing was clearly influenced by their reading.

In L2 contexts, the research on extensive reading (e.g. Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Williams, 1986) also demonstrated the strong link between reading and writing. Pupils in book immersion classes outperformed those taught in a traditional audio-lingual approach in multiple language skills, including writing. Children's written products in "reading classrooms" were far superior to those in "non-reading classrooms" (Turner, 1989).

A final important area connected to writing development was the paradigm shift from *product-oriented writing* to *process-oriented writing* (Drew, 1993). Research had shown that writing could be enhanced when undergoing different stages in a process (Chenoweth, 1987; Hillocks, 1986). Rewriting of content was

considered a key stage. However, research by Drew (1993) revealed that Norwegian lower secondary pupils writing in English focused on editing language errors and not on revising content. The implication was that these pupils had not been taught a range of writing strategies and had not received feedback on content before editing. It was thus considered important to investigate how competent future teachers of English were to teach writing in schools.

METHODOLOGY

This doctoral study was primarily quantitative. It was within the field of both linguistics and English didactics since it was about both writing and the teaching of writing. The linguistic part of the research was a corpus study of Norwegian and native speakers' writing analysing cohesive, lexical and syntactic sophistication, in addition to errors and fluency. Although some of these features of writing had previously been studied separately, e.g. lexical sophistication by Linnarud (1986), there were no known studies of all of these features combined in one corpus. The assumption was that this comprehensive approach would reflect the students' writing from a broad perspective, albeit focussing on indicators of form. The quantifiable items would enable measuring the Norwegian student teachers' written development, with a focus on form, throughout an academic year as part of their teacher training in English and comparing the Norwegian student teachers' writing with a native speaker reference group to establish how "native-like" it was according to these criteria.

The written texts of a random sample of 20 Norwegian student teachers was chosen from a cohort of 67 student teachers following an English teacher training course during one year at a Norwegian higher education institution, in which they were offered instruction in both English and English didactics. Ten of the student teachers studied part-time and ten full-time. Every second text was selected from the part-time and full-time corpora until a total of ten texts had been collected from each.

Each student teacher was asked to write a narrative and a literary appreciation essay at the beginning of the academic year, and the same at the end of the year. The two genres were merged into one corpus for each period. The two corpora of 40 texts each were compared. The second corpus, since it represented the student teachers' level of writing at the end of the course, was then compared with a native speaker corpus consisting of ten narratives and 15 literary appreciation essays written by 15 students at a sixth form college in England (age approximately 18–19). It was not possible to find a native speaker reference group that was identi-

cally comparable to the Norwegian student teachers either in terms of age or study programme. This group was nevertheless considered an appropriate reference group as they wrote similar texts and the advantage gained by being native speakers was counteracted by their younger age and lesser experience as writers.

The didactics part of the study was based on two sets of questionnaires answered by the cohort of 67 Norwegian student teachers. They answered the first questionnaire at the beginning of the academic year. It aimed to elicit data about how they had experienced the influence and value of different levels of the school system on their written English, how important they had perceived their different teachers for their written development in English, and methods of teaching that may have had a direct or indirect influence on their written performance. The second questionnaire aimed to elicit data concerning the influence of the teacher education English course for these student teachers' written proficiency in English, which they were asked to self-assess, and their perceived ability to teach written English. The second questionnaire also aimed to gather data about how compatible they found the teacher education course to be, for example in terms of genre, methods and writing strategies, with the requirements of practical teaching of written English in schools.

TABLE 3.1. Overview of data and analyses used in the study.

| Data | Analysis |
|--|--|
| Norwegian student teachers' writing sample 1 ($n = 20$). Narrative and literary appreciation essays ($n = 40$) | Cohesive, lexical, syntactic sophistication Errors Fluency (qualitative) |
| Norwegian student teachers' writing sample 2 ($n = 20$). Narrative and literary appreciation essays ($n = 40$) | Cohesive, lexical, syntactic sophistication Errors Fluency (qualitative) |
| Native speaker reference group writing sample. 10 narrative and 15 literary appreciation essays ($n = 25$) | Cohesive, lexical, syntactic sophistication Errors Fluency (qualitative) |
| Questionnaire 1 among Norwegian student teachers ($n = 67$) | Experiences/considerations of writing in primary, lower and upper secondary school |
| Questionnaire 2 among Norwegian student teachers ($n = 67$) | Perceptions of writing competence and competence to teach writing |

THE WRITING ANALYSIS

Firstly, four features of cohesion were measured quantitatively: the frequency of the simple coordinating conjunctions *but*, *and*, and *or*, and the number of different viewpoint and intensifying subjuncts (e.g. *politically*, *completely*), conjuncts (e.g. *however*, *nevertheless*), and style and content disjuncts (e.g. *probably*, *fortunately*) (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartevik, 1985). Conjuncts, subjuncts and disjuncts are three of the four categories of adverbials classified in Quirk et al. (1985). The fourth category, adjuncts, was omitted because of its enormous scope.

Secondly, lexical sophistication was studied by the ratio of low frequency to high frequency words in the narrative texts, low frequency words indicating greater lexical sophistication. Low frequency words were defined as any words not appearing among the first 700 most frequent words on the vocabulary list compiled by Engels, van Beckhoven, Leenders and Brasseur (1981). Both types and tokens of low frequency words were counted. Types constituted the percentage of low frequency words in the Norwegian student teachers' narratives and the first 1,000 words of the native speakers' narratives, which were generally longer. Tokens constituted the percentage of low frequency words repeated in the same text. The mean scores for each group were compared.

Thirdly, syntactic sophistication was studied through measuring sentence openers, noun phrase pre- and post-modification, passive forms, nominal “-ing” clauses, and subordinate clauses. Personal pronouns, proper nouns, and adverbial clauses in initial position were counted. Overuse of the first two was considered to detract from the quality of writing, while adverbial clauses in sentence-initial position were considered as an indication of variety and sophistication of language. Different types of pre- and post-modification of noun phrases (e.g. adjectives, participles, prepositional phrases), were measured as percentages of the total number of noun phrases in the texts. Mean scores for each group were compared. The frequency of different forms of the passive voice, considered as indicators of syntactic sophistication, were counted as types and tokens, and the mean scores per student essay in each corpus were compared. Nominal “-ing” clauses, measured in the same way as passives, were included in the analysis on the assumption that they constituted a major difference between English and Norwegian. Finally, subordinate clauses were counted in the same way as passives and nominal “-ing” clauses. These consisted of different categories of adverbial, comparative, relative, and nominal clauses. The ability to use a variety of subordinate clauses was considered a characteristic of syntactic proficiency in English.

Fourthly, two types of errors were measured: concord and incorrect choice of aspect. These were chosen because differences between Norwegian and English were assumed to cause problems for Norwegian learners in these cases.

Finally, fluency in the writing of the Norwegian student teachers was compared with that in the native speaker texts. The aim was to show instances of how the Norwegian student teachers' L1 may have hindered natural, native-like communication in English, e.g. *We came along fine, I can not say she was not nice against me*. This was done qualitatively through examples, with special attention to word order, idiomaticity, the degree of nominalization, use of incorrect lexis, and the degree of clutter (using too many words to say what could more appropriately be said in fewer) in the texts, e.g. *The conditions the family are living beneath are not very good*, as opposed to *The family are living in poor conditions*.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The Norwegian student teachers answered a questionnaire at the beginning of the year and a second one at the end of the year. The first questionnaire was retrospective, aiming to elicit data about their experiences of learning English at school, primarily writing. It contained 67 items grouped as follows: *overall content of teaching* in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school; *motivation* (comparative enjoyment of learning English and the different language skills during the three levels of schooling); *reading*; *learning about writing* (writing conventions, content, genres, strategies); *autonomy* (self-choice of reading and writing topics); *relative importance of the levels* (for future development in English and development of writing skills); *teacher competence* (as a model of English, ability to vary content of teaching, methods of teaching, as a teacher of writing); *self-evaluation* (oral and written skills in English, written skills in Norwegian); *external factors* (living in an English-speaking country, the home environment). Most items were closed. However, open questions were provided to give reasons when the student teachers assessed their own teaching of writing and to specify the greatest influence on their writing development.

The second questionnaire aimed to gather data about the student teachers' perceptions of their writing competence and competence to teach writing at the end of the year, as follows: *genres* (those practised during the course and considered important to teach in primary/lower secondary school), *writing competence* (areas of progress, feedback received about their written competence, which stage of education they considered the most important for writing development), *strategies* (those they had practised, their effect, whether they felt competent to use writing

strategies as teachers); *writing linked to other language skills* (whether they considered such links necessary and had knowledge to put them into practice, especially in the case of the link between writing and reading); *autonomy* (whether they would allow pupils to choose reading materials and writing topics); *general qualities as a teacher* (content of lessons, familiarity of suitable writing topics, ability to evaluate pupils' writing, whether they would demonstrate writing genres); *views on writing development* (the most important level and most important factor for pupils' writing development). Some open-ended questions were provided, e.g. to justify choices concerning pupil autonomy and the development of pupils' writing.

RESULTS

The main aim of the study was to investigate variables that influenced student teachers' competence to teach written English in compulsory school. Competence was perceived from the duality of writing competence, with a focus on form, and the perceived ability to teach writing. The results showed that the student teachers' writing only marginally developed in terms of the selected indicators of form during the one-year English teacher training course. In contrast, their perceptions of teaching written English in schools changed considerably during the year.

WRITING ANALYSIS

The results from the longitudinal study of the Norwegian student teachers' writing from the beginning of the year (hereafter P1) to the end of the year (hereafter P2) generally showed little or no progress in terms of cohesive or lexical sophistication. In terms of syntactic sophistication, there was little variance in the use of the passive voice from P1 to P2, while there was a tendency to use more nonfinite post-modification in noun phrases and more nominal “-ing” clauses and subordinate clauses. There was also a reduction in errors of concord and choice of aspect. Overall, however, since the period of study represented one academic year, the progress may be characterised as minimal.

The study of cohesive sophistication showed that the simple coordinating conjunctions were used frequently and increased from P1 to P2. The assumption was that a greater number and variety of subjuncts, conjuncts and disjuncts would be a sign of cohesive sophistication. Slightly more conjunct types (e.g. *then, for example*) appeared in P2, while the opposite was the case for disjuncts (e.g. *maybe, obviously*) and subjuncts (e.g. *really, just*).

The study of lexical sophistication showed minor variation between P1 and P2. The average percentage of low frequency words in P1 was 7.8% with a slight decrease in P2 to 6.7%. Roughly every fourth low frequency word was repeated as a token in both periods.

The study of syntactic sophistication constituted the most comprehensive part of the writing analysis. Firstly, the ratio of noun phrases per sentence was the same (1.3) in both P1 and P2. There was a higher rate of post-modification than pre-modification in both P1 and P2, with a slight decrease in both from P1 to P2. By far the most common pre-modifier of the head of noun phrases in both P1 and P2 was adjectives, followed by 's genitives, nouns, participles, and adverbs. As for post-modification, prepositional phrases were used in roughly every second noun phrase in P1 and P2, with finite relative clauses used in roughly every fourth noun phrase. Less frequent post-modifiers were non-finite “-ing”, “ed” and infinitive clauses, which all increased marginally from P1 to P2.

Secondly, the student teachers generally seemed to underuse the passive voice both in P1 and P2. The two most used passive forms were the simple present and simple past forms. Thirdly, the most frequently used nominal “-ing” clause form was after prepositions, and the tendency was to use nominal “-ing” clauses slightly more in P2 than P1. Finally, there was also a general tendency to subordinate more in P2 than P1. Almost all of the student teachers used nominal, relative and adverbial clauses of time both in P1 and P2, while adverbial clauses of result and concession were those with the lowest distribution. Clauses of reason, purpose, condition, comparison and place occurred in more than half of the student teachers' writing. Finally, the study of errors showed that the frequency of concord errors was much higher than those of incorrect aspect, but that there was a marked reduction of both from P1 to P2.

COMPARING THE WRITING OF THE NORWEGIAN STUDENT TEACHERS WITH THAT OF THE NATIVE SPEAKER REFERENCE GROUP

Generally speaking, the writing of the L1 students was more sophisticated than that of their L2 peers. However, the difference between the two was less than might have been expected. The main findings concerning differences in the writing of the native-speaker students (L1) compared to the Norwegian student teachers (L2) are shown in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2. Comparison of the writing of native speakers and the Norwegian student teachers.

| Category | L1 (native-speakers) | L2 (Norwegian student teachers) |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Cohesive sophistication | Significantly fewer simple coordinators (p<0.001) | Twice as many conjunct types, more disjunct types |
| Lexical sophistication | Mean of 13.7 high frequency words per text. Significant difference (p<0.001) | Mean of 6.7 high frequency words per text |
| Syntactic sophistication | Significantly more noun phrases (p<0.001) More participle and noun premodifiers Greater prepositional phrase and <i>-ed</i> clause postmodification Consistently higher representation of passive forms Greater distribution of nominal “ <i>-ing</i> ” clauses as subjects, objects, after prepositions Generally higher distribution of subordinate clauses. Significant differences in clauses of concession (p=<0.028) and result (p=<0.025). Generally higher type-token ration | More adverbial clauses in sentence initial position More ‘s genitive premodifiers More finite relative clause, <i>-ing</i> clause, infinitives, adverbs and adjective postmodification Lower type-token ratio of passive forms |
| Errors | No errors of aspect and few concord errors | Significantly higher number of concord errors (p=<0.003) and some errors of aspect |
| Fluency | | Impeded by Norwegian L1 influencing incorrect word order, lack of idiomaticity, inappropriate lexis, clutter, tendency to over-verbalise |

Firstly, the study of cohesive sophistication showed that the L2 student teachers depended more than the L1 group on the simple coordinators *but*, *and*, *or*, while

at the same time employing a wider range of conjuncts and disjuncts. Secondly, the study of syntactic sophistication revealed little difference in the way the two groups opened sentences, with the L2 group using more adverbial clauses in sentence initial position. Noun phrases were almost twice as frequent among the L1 students as among the L2 ones. While different types of noun phrase pre-modification generally had a higher distribution among the L1 writers, the opposite applied to post-modifiers. In general, passive forms, nominal “-ing” clauses and subordinate clauses had a higher ratio of distribution in the L1 than L2 writers. Thirdly, the study of lexical sophistication revealed a significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.001$), with the L1 students using roughly twice as many low frequency words as their L2 counterparts. Fourthly, and as expected, the error rate of concord and choice of aspect errors was much higher in the L2 group. Finally, a lack of fluency in the L2 writers generally appeared to be a result of L1 interference caused by Norwegian features of word order, idiomaticity, lexis, and verbalization (using verb phrases instead of noun phrases). Inappropriate word order and lexis appear in the following example: *These demands Asher does not want to obtain* (as opposed to *Asher does not want to meet these demands*). Oververbalization appears in the following example: *It was late in the summer, just a couple of weeks before the schools starts, when I one day took a call to one of the places where I had applied for a job* (as opposed to *Towards the end of the summer, just a couple of weeks before the start of school, I called one of the places where I had sent a job application.*) In general, the writing of the L1 students was more syntactically and lexically sophisticated, and more fluent, than their L2 counterparts.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The first questionnaire showed that the majority of the student teachers had experienced their primary school education as the least important for their development of English, especially writing. They generally held their primary school teachers in lower esteem than those in the higher levels, especially in terms of ability to vary lessons, teaching methods, and as teachers of writing. Very little writing and reading extensively had taken place at the primary level. While more writing had been experienced at the lower secondary level, 94% of the student teachers claimed that its aim was to practise language/grammar and only 5% described writing as a means of communicating ideas. There was also a general lack of strategies (e.g. process and group writing) to motivate creativity and enhance the quality of written products. Nevertheless, roughly 25% of the student teachers were very satisfied with their lower secondary teachers as models of English, their abil-

ity to vary lessons, and as teachers of writing. At the same time, roughly 25% were dissatisfied with them in the same respects.

A greater number of student teachers held their upper secondary teachers in higher esteem than those at the other levels. However, similar to the lower secondary level, roughly 30% of the student teachers were critical of their teachers' ability to vary lessons, their teaching methods, and as teachers of writing. There were thus considerable differences among the student teachers as to how they perceived their former teachers. At the upper secondary level, roughly 50% of the student teachers reported that they had been given the choice to choose their reading materials and 60% to choose their writing topics. Furthermore, more of the student teachers had been trained to write a greater range of genres at this level, the biggest change being the focus on discursive (discussion/argumentative) essays. As with the lower secondary level, few of the student teachers had experienced process writing in English. What or whom the student teachers considered to have been the most significant influence on their writing development is shown in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3. The most significant influence on writing development in English.

| Influence on writing development in English | No of students | % |
|---|----------------|-----|
| Upper secondary teacher | 22 | 33 |
| Extensive reading | 11 | 17 |
| Frequent writing practice | 9 | 13 |
| Lower secondary school teacher | 8 | 12 |
| Living in an English-speaking country | 5 | 7 |
| The home environment | 5 | 7 |
| L1 skills | 4 | 6 |
| Other factors | 3 | 5 |
| Total | 67 | 100 |

Upper secondary teachers (33%) had had the highest influence, while 12% considered their lower secondary teachers to have been most influential on their writing development. Thus, for almost every second student teacher, one of their former teachers had been the greatest influence on their written development in English. Extensive reading and frequent writing practice were also among the highest influences.

The second questionnaire investigated the student teachers' perceptions of their skills at the end of the year in three main areas: genre training, perceptions of teaching writing, and perceptions of writing competence. While they believed it was important to learn a wide range of genres in teacher education, only one in two considered that this had actually been achieved. The genres in which they felt they had received most training were literary appreciation essays and discursive essays, neither of which were traditionally considered typical genres for compulsory school. The student teachers considered themselves most competent to teach descriptions, letters, notes and narratives, whereas instruction in these genres was not provided during their English teacher education courses. In general, there was little accordance between the most emphasised genres during teacher education and those considered the most important to learn in school.

The student teachers' perceptions of the teaching of writing revealed firstly that they favoured a balance between oral and written communication. This contrasted sharply with the focus on reading texts, translation and vocabulary tests that most of them had experienced at school. As for writing strategies, the majority of the student teachers perceived benefits of using both process and group writing strategies in their teaching practice, although few had experienced these strategies during their own schooling. In addition, the majority intended to demonstrate a range of writing genres for their pupils and understood the importance of and considered themselves competent to link writing to the other language skills, especially extensive reading and oral activities. Finally, the student teachers considered themselves least competent to assess both the content and language of a written text. What they felt able or not able to do was probably a consequence of what they had or had not gained from their methodology course.

Finally, as for the relative importance of the different school levels, the lower secondary level was considered the most important by the majority of the student teachers, followed by the primary level, and lastly upper secondary school. This marked a major change from how they had initially perceived school level in relation to writing development. They were divided on whether the period prior to or during teacher education had been the most influential on their writing development. The actual areas of writing in which the majority of student teachers felt they had progressed most during the academic year were the variety of sentence openings, richness of vocabulary, and correct grammar, while they felt the least progress had been made in noun phrase modification, use of appropriate and idiomatic language, advanced grammar, and beginning and ending pieces. Their perceptions of progress in writing did not always correspond with the findings of the writing analysis, for example their belief about lexical growth. Finally, roughly

eight out of ten student teachers believed that the most important factor influencing pupils' development of writing was a combination of the teacher's writing competence and methods of teaching writing. In contrast, none of the student teachers believed this was due to the teacher's writing competence alone and only one in ten believed that it was solely attributed to the teacher's methods of teaching writing.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

This doctoral study aimed to explore variables connected to competence in the teaching of written English in Norwegian schools. By studying student teachers' writing with a focus on form and their perceived ability to teach writing, it addressed a complex set of interrelated variables connected to the teaching of writing, e.g. the link between past practices and present performance and attitudes, the link between performance and teaching methodology, and the link between input and output. Although not the only variable connected to the development of pupil writing, the teacher does have a key role in this respect.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main finding related to the Norwegian student teachers' writing was that it progressed marginally throughout the year in some areas of syntactic sophistication and error frequency, while no progress was achieved in other areas, e.g. lexical sophistication. In comparison, the writing of the native speakers was more sophisticated in several areas of lexis and syntax, and their writing was generally more fluent. The relatively low rate of progress among the Norwegian student teachers could be explained by them having reached a relative ceiling, or fossilisation, in their language. If this occurs, according to Bley-Vroman (1989), development ceases in spite of conscious efforts to improve language. Reaching a relative ceiling is partly supported by the student teachers' self-evaluation, in which every second student teacher considered the pre-college period as the most decisive for their English writing development. However, the fact that the student teachers did make some progress in certain areas undermines a ceiling theory. Another argument is that the student teachers were unable to realise their potential for development because of the nature of the English courses they had been studying during the academic year. In terms of language, these courses emphasised language theory at the expense of practical usage, for example the grammar course based on formal grammar instruction. The emphasis was on talking about and

writing about language rather than its actual usage. The danger of an over-emphasis on language theory in teacher training courses has been pointed out by scholars such as Lange (1990) and Cullen (1994). Cullen (1994) argued that teacher training courses lack the time and resources to help student teachers enhance their communicative command of language, as opposed to their knowledge of language. At the same time, language proficiency and positive attitudes to language use are extremely important for non-native language teachers (Britten, 1985; Medgyes, 1992; Murdoch, 1994). If language teachers lack language proficiency and confidence in their own language, they may resort to uninspiring methods and “safe” materials, e.g. relying on a textbook (Medgyes, 1992).

The main finding related to the teaching of writing was that the teacher training course, especially the module on English-teaching methodology, led to a number of changes in the student teachers’ attitudes and perceptions about teaching writing. The school level which most of them had considered to be the most influential for their own writing development at the beginning of the year (upper secondary) was considered at the end of the year as the one with the least potential to enhance writing development. At the end of the year, the student teachers showed a desire to replace the routine teaching many of them had been exposed to in school with a “language-rich” environment characterised by language acquisition and natural language use, communication of the language as opposed to learning about it, extensive reading, strategies to improve writing performance, and less time on monotonous textbook-based lessons.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main contribution to methodology was devising a broad taxonomy that could be used to measure writing development, with a focus on form, in a corpus of L2 writing. Many previous studies of corpora of L2 writing had focused on one specific area of writing. In contrast, this doctoral study incorporated several features of writing, namely cohesion, syntax, lexis, errors, and fluency. It was able to successfully apply the criteria to determine the student teachers’ rate of written development during the academic year and to compare the writing of this L2 group with that of an L1 reference group. Combining this predominantly quantitative doctoral study of the student teachers’ writing with two sets of questionnaires at the extremes of an academic year increased the validity of the study. In addition to analysing development in their writing, one was also able to study their experiences and perceptions of writing in their own school education, and their perceptions of their writing ability and ability to teach writing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

This doctoral study has implications both for the training of teachers of English and for the teaching of English writing in schools. In terms of the former, the study indicates firstly that more focus should be attached to helping student teachers develop the sophistication of their written language, that student teachers of English should practise reading and writing numerous genres, and that they should experience strategies, especially process writing, that are likely to enhance the quality of their writing. In essence, there should be greater correspondence between what student teachers learn and experience in their teacher training and their expected classroom practice.

At the time this study took place, the norm for student teachers of English was to take the same courses in English, with the exception of a methodology course, as those who were studying English for other reasons. However, after the educational reform of 2010, the GLU courses for student teachers of English (grades 1–10) in departments of education in Norway became more tailor made for student teachers' needs and enabled greater harmony between the content of their English studies and the practical teaching of English in schools. A positive development in GLU teacher education of English teachers has thus taken place since the completion of this doctoral study.

Another positive development has taken place with respect to English teaching in schools. Many of the variables considered important for enhancing the development of written English, namely early literacy, a greater emphasis on reading, the link between reading and writing, writing as an interactive process, learning a wide range of genres, and greater pupil autonomy, were emphasised in the former *L97* curriculum, which was introduced in the same year as this doctoral study was completed. These variables have continued to be emphasised in the subsequent *LK06* curriculum and its revised versions. Since 1997, reading and writing have been incorporated into the English subject from the earliest grades and, unlike for many of the student teachers that participated in this doctoral study, writing has become a communicative activity and not simply a tool to promote grammar. This shift is reflected in “written communication” being a main area of the revised *LK06* English subject curriculum.

The study has a number of implications for the teaching of writing in schools, both implicit and explicit. Since pupils are likely to develop their lexical and grammatical sophistication implicitly through reading extensively, teachers at all levels should provide the opportunity for them to choose to read a wide selection of texts that they are interested in and that are at an appropriate level of difficulty (cf. Krashen, 1984). In this way, they will also be widely exposed to correct forms

and structures of English, which in turn will likely reduce the number of errors they make and will help them gain an understanding of how texts are structured and organised. Pupils can also be taught explicitly to improve their writing. One example of explicit teaching is demonstrating and providing practice in sentence combining, i.e. forming a main and subordinate clause from two main clauses, in order to help pupils to increase their use and variety of subordinate clauses. Another example is demonstrating and providing practice in different ways of pre-modifying noun phrases (e.g. with adjectives and nouns) and postmodifying them (e.g. with prepositional phrases and relative clauses). Pupils can further be shown and given practice in how linking words, e.g. conjuncts and disjuncts, can enhance the coherence of a text. Finally, pupils should be given plenty of opportunities at different levels to write different types of text and should be given feedback during the process of writing in order to enhance the quality of their texts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Some of the criteria used in the study of writing in this doctoral thesis have later been successfully applied to other studies of writing produced by English learners at different levels in the Norwegian school system. For example, the author studied noun phrase modification and subordinate clauses to measure the progress made by writers as they developed from the 4th to 6th grade (Drew, 2010). Vigrestad (2006) included an analysis of subordinate clauses in her comparison of the English written complexity of Norwegian 7th and 9th graders with a corresponding corpus of Dutch pupils' writing. Larsen's (2016) study included subordinate clauses and noun phrase modification when comparing written complexity of 7th graders following an extensive reading programme with those in a control group. Vigrestad, Larsen and Drew (2010) also used T-unit length as a measure of complexity and fluency. In his seminal work on the writing development of 4th, 8th and 12th graders in the USA, Hunt (1965, p. 49) defined a T-unit as "one main clause plus the subordinate clauses attached to or embedded within it". Also, T-units featured widely in Wolfe-Quintero et al's (1998) metastudy of measures of fluency, accuracy and complexity in L2 writing development. Although not used in this doctoral study, T-units have functioned as useful units of measurement of L2 writing development in other studies and can be used in future research of writing.

However, there are limitations as to what corpus studies of texts, using quantifiable measures, can reveal about writing and writers. Further studies of writing should also take into consideration the content and organisation of texts, the way

texts are produced, and the process that they go through, including feedback given to the writer. In other words, qualitative studies of writing, focusing on both teachers and learners, will also increase the knowledge base in the field. There have been such studies focusing on specific aspects of the teaching of writing. For example, Maier (2006) used teacher interviews to find out about changing practices in the teaching of writing at the lower secondary level, Vik (2013) was based on teacher focus groups and pupil interviews about formative feedback to writing in upper secondary school, and McIntosh (2017) used individual teacher interviews and pupil focus groups to find out about the teaching of expository and persuasive writing at the upper secondary level. However, more studies of this kind are desirable. Finally, with the growth of mixed methods studies, there is the opportunity to integrate, for example, quantitative studies of written texts with interviews with teachers and/or pupils, which is what Thomson (2016) did in his study of hedging in the writing of lower secondary pupils. More studies of this kind would also be desirable.

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4

PhD revisited: Formative assessment of writing in English

A school-based study of perceptions, practices and transformations¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports from a doctoral study (Burner, 2016a) that explored teacher and student perceptions and practices of formative assessment (FA) in English writing classes. Four English teachers and their students ($N=100$) took part in the study. The assessment situation was analyzed using mixed methods before a plan for intervention cycles was made continuously throughout a school year. The main results, their implications for teaching English in Norway, and further research will be discussed in this chapter.

KEYWORDS formative assessment | writing assessment | portfolio assessment | classroom interventions

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Burner, 2016a), focusing specifically on its implications for the teaching of English in Norway. This is an article-based thesis, with three published articles (Burner, 2014, 2015, 2016b). The thesis in its entirety can be found here: <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/2379861>

INTRODUCTION

Some of the questions teachers need to reflect on are: What happens prior to and after assessment practices? What are the roles of the students in the different phases of assessment? And how can assessment of student texts promote learning? Politicians and the Ministry of Education and Research have shown a special interest in the field of assessment after the introduction of the current national curriculum in 2006 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, 2013). Seminars and workshops have been held for teachers and teacher educators on formative assessment (FA), commonly known as assessment *for* learning. Undoubtedly, the increased international research base on FA has influenced the national context. The research gap addressed in the doctoral study reported from here concerned FA in English writing classes in Norway, the views and practices of both teachers and students, and how their views and practices might change over time when writing portfolios as a new formative tool is introduced. Portfolio assessment was used as a tool in this study to enhance FA perceptions and practices. A definition of portfolio assessment is offered by Johnson, Mims-Cox and Doyle-Nichols (2010, p. 5), wherein a portfolio:

- ▶ is a collection of work that has been compiled over a period of time
- ▶ is organized to assess competencies in a given standard, goal, or objective and focus on how well the learner has achieved in that area
- ▶ makes learning concrete and visible
- ▶ is evidence of knowledge (what the student knows), skills (what the student is able to do), and dispositions (reveal the student's attitudes, beliefs, or values)
- ▶ includes higher levels of thinking through the use of inquiry (a process of collecting, sorting, selecting, describing, analyzing, and evaluating) and reflection (questioning and sorting of the selected work; questioning how he or she can improve personal practice)

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) suggest three main categories that define writing portfolios, namely collection of texts over a longer period of time, reflection on those texts, and selection of some of them for final assessment.

Thus, the primary research question for the doctoral study was: In what ways can portfolio as a formative tool influence teachers' and students' perceptions and practices of formative assessment?

In order to study the influences of portfolio assessment, the base-line situation had to be investigated to understand how teachers and students perceive and practice FA in English classes. In addition, the formative potentials of the tool used to enhance

FA, i.e. the writing portfolio, had to be reviewed. Finally, a plan for interventions was made together with the teachers at the end of the school year 2012–2013 and the very beginning of the next school year, 2013–2014. The aim of the interventions was to make use of assessment situations to enhance student learning. The interventions were guided by principles from portfolio assessment (Johnson et al., 2010).

THEORY

Black and Wiliam (1998) acknowledge in their seminal work that FA does not have a “tightly defined and widely accepted meaning” (p. 7). They point out that it consists of several classroom practices: self- and peer assessment, learning strategies, goal orientation, effective tasks, useful feedback, and so forth. Their definition of FA is “all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, pp. 7–8). The expression *assessment for learning* (AfL) was coined by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG, 1989–2010) to stress the learning dimension since not all assessments, for example mini-summative assessments, lead to further learning (Stobart, 2008).

It was particularly the Assessment Reform Group’s work (ARG, 2002) that effectively put FA on the educational agenda after its decline by 1995 (Black & Wiliam, 2003). Their definition of FA is “The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (ARG, 2002). Wiliam (2006) provides a short and concise definition of FA: “An assessment of a student is formative if it shapes that student’s learning” (p. 284). What Wiliam (2006) lacks in his definition is the type of shaping that teacher and student learning go through. Arguably, shaping that is detrimental to a student’s learning cannot be characterized as formative. Wiliam’s (2006) main concern is that FA has to be integrated as a part of teachers’ daily teaching: “Tools for formative assessment will only improve formative assessment practices if teachers can integrate them into their regular classroom activities. In other words, the task of improving formative assessment is substantially, if not mainly, about teacher professional development” (p. 287). In a follow-up article, Black and Wiliam (2009) add to their definition that this information, or evidence, is used “to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they [teachers and/or students] would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited” (p. 9). Teachers were the focal point of carrying out the interventions in this doctoral study, specifically using portfolios to enhance FA of writing.

Taking into consideration FA's documented learning benefits (Black & Wiliam, 1998), including in foreign language learning contexts (Ross, 2005), the question is then how it is perceived and practiced in specific learning contexts, and in what ways teachers and students take advantage of that information or evidence to enhance teaching and learning. According to Lee (2011), self- and peer assessment, where students assess their own and each other's works, formative feedback through multiple drafting/text revision, conferencing and portfolios are ways of realizing FA in the writing classroom. Such classroom activities allow reflection, interaction, and opportunities to return to one's text and improve it. A review of research on second or additional language (L2) writing and response to L2 writing shows that some scholars contend that L2 writing can and should draw on insights from L1 writing, whereas others claim that L2 writing is inherently different from L1 writing and should be considered separately (Ferris, 2003). Zamel (1985) belongs to the former category and suggests a process-oriented approach to L2 writing. This type of approach to writing includes assessment procedures that correspond to the process nature of writing, for example portfolio assessment (Weigle, 2007). Portfolio is a useful tool for assessment in light of the development described above due to its formative benefits in second and foreign language writing classes.

REVIEW

The research that is relevant for this study is to be found in the interface between formative assessment, writing assessment and portfolio assessment. Internationally, as pointed out by Abedi (2010), there is little research on FA of writing in English as a foreign language (EFL) compared to the vast amount of research on summative assessment of writing in EFL. Previous research into EFL writing has been analytical, focusing mainly on error corrections and their possible effects on students' writing (cf. Hyland's and Ferris's classic studies). Some exceptions are Lee and her colleague's research, shedding some light on FA of writing in EFL (Lee, 2011; Lee & Coniam, 2013). They maintain that the focus of assessment of writing in EFL has been retrospective, i.e. the assessment has served mainly summative purposes, not formative. In addition, research on FA has concentrated mainly on teacher views (Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Brookhart, 2001; Cowie, 2005). Given the dialectic nature of FA in which feedback informs both learning and teaching activities, the present doctoral study added to the research on student perspectives and the relations between their perspectives and teachers' perspectives.

Nationally, research reports (e.g., Sandvik et al., 2012) have investigated assessment in four subjects, amongst others English. The main findings were that teachers are predominantly positive toward the new emphasis on FA, that teachers' subject knowledge seems to be an important factor for their assessment competency, and that the lower grades (grades 1–7) have reached furthest in FA practices, such as self-assessment and student involvement. Empirical research on formative uses of writing assessment has been mainly conducted from a pedagogical perspective in contexts of higher education and in secondary schools (Baird, Hopfenbeck, Newton, Stobart & Steen-Utheim, 2014). Furthermore, there has been some assessment research conducted in L1 contexts, and in foreign languages such as German (e.g., Sandvik, 2011). Hasselgreen, Drew, and Sørheim (2012) collected some of the most important research into foreign languages in Norway, mostly for English. From the collection, it is evident that writing research has been confined to orthography and focus on errors, whereas assessment research has been looking at the use of the Common European Framework (CEFR, 2001) in assessing writing and oral exams in 10th grade. Other assessment research in English in Norway revolves around summative assessment (Reisjø, 2006; Thorenfeldt, 2005; Yildiz, 2011). The present study focused on FA of writing in English.

METHODOLOGY

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), which is rooted in a sociocultural approach to learning and development (Vygotsky 1978, 1986), was the methodological choice for the study. CHAT pays attention to historicity and the current situation, to the individual and the collective system. According to Wardekker (2000), CHAT is a systematic approach to analyzing and developing formative assessment. Pryor and Crossouard (2008) place the theory of formative assessment within CHAT, and claim that it is a useful tool of analysis due to its simultaneous problematization of agency, in this case students and teachers enacting formative assessment.

SAMPLE

For the purpose of the study, it was important to select a school that had FA as one of the main developmental themes, school leaders that support teachers in their professional development, and English teachers who were interested in working with FA but met certain challenges during their teaching practice. The selected

school met all these criteria. Four of the teachers (T1–T4) and their students ($N=100$) gave their consent to participate, two classes in 8th grade, and two in 9th grade. Two of the teachers, T1 and T3, were very experienced, both having taught for around 30 years each. The two others, T2 and T4, were less experienced, having taught for 1–3 years each. They were all female and fulfilled the formal criterion for being qualified English teachers, meaning that they had completed at least 60 ECTS of English as part of their teacher education (equal to one full year study). The students were 14–15 years old, and 12 of these were also selected for interviews, according to their self-reported and teacher-reported level of proficiency in English, i.e. low proficiency (grades 1–2), medium proficiency (grades 3–4), and high proficiency (grades 5–6).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

During the period of data collection, the teachers had the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon existing practices and to experiment with new assessment practices, before reflecting again and evaluating the new practices. Through work with a process-oriented assessment practice, the students were given the chance to work with the teacher’s feedback to improve their texts and assess their own progress when doing so. Figure 4.1 illustrates the research process in its three phases: historical and situational analyses, intervention, and evaluation.

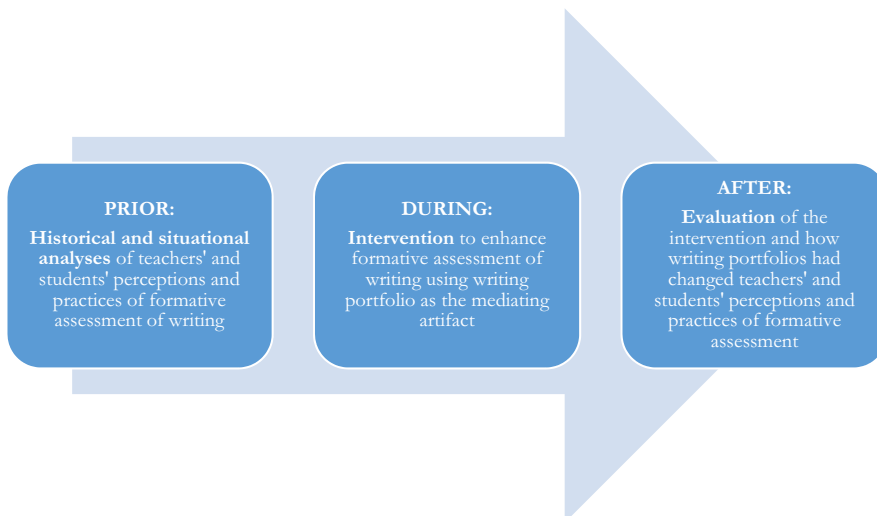


FIGURE 4.1. The intervention and research process.

Data were collected prior to (Phase 1), during (Phase 2), and after (Phase 3) the intervention period. The aim of the data collection was to understand the assessment situation in English writing classes before using portfolios to enhance FA of writing, and to understand how portfolios could influence teachers' and students' perceptions and practices of assessment. As part of the intervention, the researcher led workshops with the teachers. The formative interventions draw on Engeström's activity theory (1987). His activity system was used to find any contradictions in teachers' and students' enactment of formative assessment.

Intervention research aims at facilitating change through formative interventions (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). *Phase 1:* Prior to the intervention period, student questionnaires were handed out to all the students, semi-structured focus group interviews with students from all the four classes and semi-structured one-to-one interviews with all the four teachers were carried out, and observations of writing assessment classes were conducted. The objective was to understand the participants' perceptions and practices of FA of writing. *Phase 2:* During the intervention period, focus group interviews with the same students and continuous observations of writing assessment classes were carried out in order to understand how perceptions and practices of FA of writing would be influenced by using writing portfolios. *Phase 3:* The same procedures for data collection as in the beginning of the study were applied after a period of intervention in three of the classes. The primary sources of data were the interviews and questionnaires, whereas classroom observations were a secondary source of data used to validate findings from the primary sources. One class dropped out of the study half way through due to one teacher's long-term sick leave. Table 4.1 shows the data collection methods used in the various phases of the study.

TABLE 4.1. An overview of the data collection methods

| Phases | Data collection | Sample | Duration |
|--|------------------------|--|-------------|
| Phase 1. Prior (May – Sept 2012) | Observations | 4 classes | 4–5 hours |
| Phase 1 | Questionnaire | Students, 4 classes, $N=100$ | – |
| Phase 1 | Focus group interviews | 3 students selected from 4 classes, $N=12$ | 131 minutes |
| Phase 1 | One-to-one interviews | Teachers T1–T4, $N=4$ | 162 minutes |
| Phase 2. During (Oct 2012 – Apr 2013): Intervention | Observations | 3 classes | 18–19 hours |

| Phases | Data collection | Sample | Duration |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|---|-------------|
| Phase 2 | Focus group interviews | 3 students selected from 3 classes, $N=9$ | 66 minutes |
| Phase 3. After (May – June 2013) | Observations | 3 classes | 3-4 hours |
| Phase 3 | Focus group interviews | 3 students selected from 3 classes, $N=9$ | 72 minutes |
| Phase 3 | One-to-one interviews | Teachers T1–T3, $N=3$ | 156 minutes |
| Phase 3 | Questionnaire | Students, 3 classes, $N=70$ | – |

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

Based on readings of the research literature on FA of writing (see theoretical overview), indicators that were thought to shed light on aspects of FA of writing were identified. The questionnaire consisted of four parts: background variables (gender, class, grade level, language background), a set of items related to student perceptions of FA of writing, a set of items related to students' self-perceived practices of FA of writing, and a set of items related to their preferences of the same practices. The questionnaire was handed out to 8th and 9th grade students of English before ($N=100$) and after ($N=70$) the intervention. For the piloting of the questionnaire, it was given to all the students in 9th and 10th grade ($N=174$). None of these students would participate in the study later. The questionnaire was also handed out to students of English at another randomly selected school ($N=145$). The pilot testing led to changes of items that proved to be unclear for some students. On the part concerning perceptions, students could respond to five items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very little extent to 5 = very great extent). The binary items, where the informants could respond with yes/no, concerned students' self-perceived practices and preferences. All items loaded on a single factor with item loadings ranging from .671 to .361. The lowest loading, which was slightly $<.40$, was not discarded since it could theoretically be justified (Ringdal, 2007, p. 293) to be an important part of the construct "formative assessment of writing". Factor analyses with the final data supported a one-factor solution. The loadings from the pre-intervention data ranged from .470 to .796. The loadings from the post-intervention data ranged from .517 to .691. Reliability, expressed through Cronbach's alpha, was found to be .71 for the pre-intervention data and .74 for the post-intervention data, which is a fairly good reliability measure (Ringdal, 2007). Cross-

tabulation analyses were used to reveal any interesting relationships between students' responses and their background. To understand the difference between pre and post intervention, inferential statistics were used, i.e. *t*-tests for the Likert scale items and chi-square tests for the binary items.

TEACHER AND STUDENT INTERVIEWS

One-to-one interviews with the teachers and focus group interviews with 12 students were conducted (see Table 4.1). I considered focus group interviews to be a suitable way of discussing the topics with them. Focus group interviews open up for different views to be discussed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). An interview guide was used for the interviews. All the interviews were recorded. They were semi-structured (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), meaning that I had some topics and questions beforehand, related to FA of writing. At the same time, I was open for other relevant issues to be mentioned by the informants. I transcribed the interviews, becoming acquainted with the data and learning a lot about my own style of interviewing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The constant comparative method of analysis inspired the analyses of the interview transcripts (Creswell, 2013). The first interview transcript was coded together with a colleague, also a PhD candidate who was conducting research on FA, to ensure higher reliability than would be achieved alone.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Classroom observations were conducted at the beginning, during and at the end of the study. I was conscious of distinguishing between what I observed and my comments on what I observed (Table 4.2).

TABLE 4.2. An extract from classroom observation notes.

| Time and place | Topic | What I see | Comments |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| September 10, 2012 11:50–12:50; T2's class | Teacher feedback on student letters | Students look at teacher's corrected version of text. Around half of the students have the text in front of them. Some have not, and some have not handed in. | Students have problems seeing the connections between teacher's codes and her corrections. |

My role as an observer was the non-participant/observer as participant (Creswell, 2013). I needed to have a participative role as well, where I could achieve a close inside perspective without being one of the participants. In total, I observed English writing classes for 27 hours. The observation notes were used to validate findings from the other data collection methods, i.e. observing to what extent the informants enacted formative assessment the way they described their practices in the interviews.

FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings from the doctoral study will be separated into two areas: those from the base-line study prior to the interventions (Phase 1), where student and teacher perceptions and practices of FA of writing in English were investigated, and those from the intervention study, where writing portfolios were used as a tool to enhance FA.

THE BASE-LINE STUDY: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

The data from the questionnaires ($N=100$) provided a broad picture of students' responses to how they perceive FA of writing, which aspects they appreciate, and which aspects they find challenging. They reveal that students are positive to their learning outcome and reflective work in English writing classes. A majority of them appreciate text revision. Furthermore, they appreciate being involved in assessment practices, despite claiming that they are not being involved currently. On the other hand, they have different views on teacher feedback and grades. They would appreciate teacher modeling of quality texts. Finally, they claimed they conduct self-assessment, but reported that they do not learn much from it. There was consequently a gap between students' experiences of self-assessment and involvement in assessment practices on the one hand, and their perceptions of them on the other (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4).

The data from the student interviews showed that students have the impression that grades interfere with feedback, sometimes merely because their teacher had told them so. They appreciate feedback, but underscored that they would like to receive more positive feedback, as illustrated by the following quote: "The feedback is too much about the negative things. [The teacher] could write about what was good too" (average performing boy, 9th grade). As for text revision, they said that it is not a common activity in class. In other words, they appreciate revising their texts, but are not offered the opportunity to do so. Moreover, they claimed

they are not involved in assessment practices, and some of them revealed a rather simplistic understanding of what student involvement could mean. The students admitted that they do not follow up feedback on their texts: “I don’t do anything. I don’t think about it. If I’ve made mistakes on a test, then I don’t think about them for the next test” (high-performing girl, 9th grade). The main reason seems to be the negative form of the feedback, but also that they do not always understand the content of the feedback. Classroom observations concurred with the interview data on these points. Moreover, the students preferred a more coherent English subject where various topics are followed up and worked on more thoroughly. Other factors they mentioned which they found particularly challenging with writing assessment in English were grammar and that English is a *foreign* language to them.

In the data from the teacher interviews, the teachers claimed that grades interfere with assessment and that they use assessment rubrics to standardize their assessment practices. They were unsure whether students follow up their feedback or not – “I’m a little unsure about the extent to which the students read the feedback [...] very often they make the same mistakes” (T4, 9th grade) – and frequently consider whether they should provide feedback in Norwegian or in English. They believe writing assessment is more challenging than oral assessment. They emphasized the importance of self-assessment, but at the same time made it clear that 8th graders are not mature enough to reflect upon their own learning. Students were described as possessing inherent characteristics that make them either more capable or less capable in following up the teacher’s feedback. Furthermore, the teachers acknowledged the value of feedback and expressed a research-based understanding of what useful feedback should be like: “we remind each other that the focus should be the way forward for the students” (T3, 9th grade). When asked about challenges in assessment that can be related to the nature of the subject of English, the teachers pointed out four factors: lack of time, wide-ranging subject, subjectivity in assessing students’ work, and the gap between students when it comes to their knowledge of the subject.

THE INTERVENTION STUDY: TRANSFORMATIONS

Table 4.3 shows that students rated feedback from the teacher (Q1), reflection on their own writing (Q4) and teacher modeling of good texts (Q5) higher after the intervention. T-values ranged from $t = -.41$ ($df = 167$, $p = .68$) for Q5 to $t = -1.51$ ($df = 167$, $p = .13$) for Q1, thus not revealing any significant differences in students’ view on aspects of FA of writing before and after the intervention.

TABLE 4.3. Mean and standard deviation for Q1–Q5 before and after intervention.

| | Before (M) N=100 | After (M) N=70 | Before (SD) N=100 | After (SD) N=70 |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Q1. To what extent would you say feedback from the teacher helps you improve your English? | 3.49 | 3.71 | .896 | .980 |
| Q2. To what extent would you say grades from the teacher help you improve your English? | 3.52 | 3.41 | .925 | 1.110 |
| Q3. To what extent would you say you learn to express yourself in written English? | 3.65 | 3.47 | .837 | 1.003 |
| Q4. To what extent do you think about how you work with a text? | 3.63 | 3.70 | 1.026 | .998 |
| Q5. To what extent would you say the teacher helps you with understanding what a good text is? | 3.57 | 3.63 | 1.032 | .887 |

Table 4.4 shows that grades on texts (Q2a), text revision after receiving feedback (Q4a) and student involvement in assessment practices (Q6a) revealed the biggest differences between the student scores on assessment practices before and after the intervention period.

TABLE 4.4. Students' perceptions of FA of writing in English before and after intervention.

| | Before "No"% (N) | After "No"% (N) | Before "Yes"% (N) | After "Yes"% (N) |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Q1a. The teacher gives me both grade and feedback on my texts | 66.3 (65) | 80.0 (56) | 33.7 (33) | 20.0 (14) |
| Q1b. I learn best by receiving both grade and feedback on my texts | 20.6 (20) | 20.3 (14) | 79.4 (77) | 79.7 (55) |
| Q2a. The teacher gives me only grades on my texts | 87.8 (86) | 100 | 12.2 (12) | 0 |
| Q2b. I learn best by receiving only grades on my texts | 84.5 (82) | 80.0 (56) | 15.5 (15) | 20.0 (14) |

| | Before “No”% (N) | After “No”% (N) | Before “Yes”% (N) | After “Yes”% (N) |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Q3a. The teacher gives me only feedback on my texts | 15.3 (15) | 14.3 (10) | 84.7 (83) | 85.7 (60) |
| Q3b. I learn best by receiving only feedback on my texts | 55.8 (53) | 67.1 (47) | 44.2 (42) | 32.9 (23) |
| Q4a. I get the opportunity to work more with a text I have received feedback on | 25.0 (24) | 2.9 (2) | 75.0 (72) | 97.1 (68) |
| Q4b. I learn best by working more with a text I have received feedback on | 24.2 (24) | 17.6 (12) | 75.8 (75) | 82.4 (56) |
| Q5a. I assess some of my own texts | 33.0 (31) | 25.7 (18) | 67.0 (63) | 74.3 (52) |
| Q5b. I learn best by assessing some of my own texts | 63.9 (62) | 55.1 (38) | 36.1 (35) | 44.9 (31) |
| Q6a. I take part in deciding the process of assessment | 80.0 (68) | 60.9 (42) | 20.0 (17) | 39.1 (27) |
| Q6b. I learn best by taking part in deciding the process of assessment | 43.3 (39) | 38.6 (27) | 56.7 (51) | 61.4 (43) |

After the intervention, the students agreed unanimously that grades were downplayed in the teacher’s assessment of their writing (Q2a). The majority of the students (97%) agreed that they were given the chance to revise their texts (Q4a). And finally, the number of students who experienced that they were more involved in assessment practices had doubled (Q6a). The statistical analyses on all the binary items confirmed this by revealing that Q2a ($\chi^2 = 9.23$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$), Q4a ($\chi^2 = 15.03$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) and Q6a ($\chi^2 = 6.83$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$) were rated more often *yes* after the intervention than before the intervention. However, no significant differences between the data collected before and after the intervention were observed for the student belief items (Q1b–Q6b), i.e. which assessment practices they believe they learn from.

The student interviews and classroom observations were more positive toward the feedback provided to them on their texts in the final interviews (Phase 3) than in the mid-term interviews (Phase 2). Another finding was that low-performing students tended to prefer grades on all texts, as did also some of the average performing students. However, the high-performing ones were more inclined to adapt to FA practices where the focus was on providing useful feedback and downplay-

ing grades. The high-performing ones also preferred written feedback on written texts, whereas the low-performing ones tended to value oral feedback on written texts. However, all the students were positive toward revising their texts, which was also supported by the quantitative data. They said text revision can be time-consuming, but that it is useful because they learn from it. The high-performing students were more positive toward writing reflective logs than the low-performing ones. Self-assessment was a positive and demanding experience for most of the students. Peer assessment was a double-edged sword in that some perceived it as a good experience they learnt from, whereas others thought it was confronting having peers assess their text. High-performing students were more skeptical, saying they preferred that the teacher was the sole assessor of their texts. There were no visible changes in the feedback practices in the first term, but in the second term students experienced clearer, more selective, and more positive feedback on their texts.

The data from the teacher interviews indicated that portfolios made students work more with writing and writing assessment at school compared to before the intervention. Spending more time on writing at school opened up for more interaction between teachers and students about writing and writing assessment, as illustrated by the following notes from classroom observations:

T2 has prepared the lesson carefully. She has given her students a week to improve their texts according to the feedback they receive, before they upload their text on the Learning Management System and write a reflective log. I ask T2 whether she has changed anything for today with regards to the workshop we have had with the rest of the teacher team or with regards to the last lesson she had with her students. She says “I have tried to limit myself” [in giving students too much feedback].

T2 limits herself to a couple of things regarding grammar, content, and structure of the student texts. She writes “language, content, structure” on the blackboard. Under grammar, she writes “verbs, capital letter, spelling”. Under content, she writes “the wh-words, timeline”. Under structure, she writes “word order, paragraph”. Then T2 goes on to explain the writing process. She tells the students that the writing process means “revise, revise, revise”.

By adopting a portfolio approach, the teachers tried peer assessment of written texts with their students, which was new to all the participating teachers. One of the teachers claimed that peer assessment is as important as the teacher’s assessment of student texts. They all clearly saw the benefits of peer assessment by see-

ing how involved their students became in discussing writing, and how proficient they were in giving each other feedback. Text revision was something none of the teachers had tried before. However, all of them agreed that students benefited from revising their texts when they were given the chance to revise. The teachers agreed that their assessment practices became clearer by using writing portfolio as a tool. Apart from technical issues, the teachers mentioned the comprehensive nature of the subject as challenging. In middle school, English has been allocated two hours of instruction a week and requires that teachers assess their students in both written and oral communication.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

The present doctoral study reviewed the formative tool used in the interventions, writing portfolios. Furthermore, it shed light on teacher and student perceptions and practices of FA in English writing classes through a base-line study. Finally, processes of change when using portfolio as a tool to enhance FA in English writing classes were investigated through an intervention study. In the following, theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions to the English didactics field will be presented.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The review study of portfolios in second and foreign language writing classes is a theoretical contribution to the research field. In addition to systematizing writing portfolios' potential formative benefits, the review calls for more research from primary and secondary schools, and more research where classroom observations are used to validate findings. The age of the students in this study also adds new knowledge to the research literature, since most studies on the benefits of portfolio assessment have been conducted in higher education. Portfolio assessment has clear formative potentials in English lessons and should be used more as a tool for writing.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In the base-line study, significant gaps were identified in how the informants perceive and act on FA of writing. The gaps need to be addressed in order to make FA effective and meaningful. Notably, teachers' FA practices were not necessarily clear for the students. The conclusion is that there needs to be more interaction and

transparency in the classroom about FA and the writing process, and that teachers' knowledge of research into FA has to be tried out and evaluated with students' experiences of those practices in mind. Compared to first language learning, English in Norway has less hours of instruction. In addition, teachers tend to have low expectations of their students, partly because they underestimate students' abilities. These two factors combined could explain why portfolios are not used more extensively in English compared to first language classrooms, despite the formative benefits. The intervention part of the doctoral study proved to be a challenge in significantly transforming students' beliefs and preferences in relation to FA. Nevertheless, the students in the interviews showed appreciation of the changes (see Lee 2011; Lee & Coniam, 2013), and the large sample of students showed significant changes in their self-reported FA practices.

The practices that significantly changed were related to student involvement, text revision, and the downplaying of grades. The first two were practices that the teachers were reluctant to, whereas the downplaying of grades was something the teachers practiced but not all the students noticed or appreciated. The practice of student text revision was appreciated by the teachers in this study after having tried it, and the students believed text revision is useful but time-consuming (cf. Lee & Coniam, 2013). There were, however, no significant changes in student self-reported practices concerning self-assessment. This study shows that English teachers should not underestimate students' willingness and effort to take part in formative cycles of writing assessment.

Finally, the study reveals that despite what educational authorities believe, in-service courses and seminars on FA are not sufficient for making assessment work. School-based processes of change need to take place in order to provide teachers with the opportunity to act on formative tools that may enhance perceptions and practices formatively.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Black and Wiliam (1998) assert that research that merely interrogates existing practice can probably do little more than confirming discouraging practices. Consequently, they claim, "To be productive therefore, research has to be linked with a program of intervention" (p. 12). The present study interrogated existing practice and linked the research with a program of intervention, studied through the lens of CHAT, which is a methodological contribution within the field of FA. In most school subjects, however, the appropriate tools to induce change are lacking. Black and Wiliam (2003) claim that tools to work with FA have to be subject-spe-

cific. Writing portfolios will be somewhat different in the school subject History compared to English, or even in a first language context such as Norwegian in Norway compared to English in Norway. Thus, a significant methodological contribution in my doctoral study is the use of a subject-specific tool. As indicated by the empirical findings in this study, FA research will not manifest itself in classroom practices without being mediated by a formative tool (Vygotsky, 1978). A subject-specific tool has to be used in order to mediate what teachers learn at in-service courses and seminars about FA.

One final methodological contribution concerns the methods used in this study. In a recent review of FA research, Black (2015) concludes that there are few studies where observation is used to validate FA practices. The use of mixed methods in the present doctoral study, including classroom observations, has been a methodological contribution in that the methods have complemented and sometimes contradicted each other. The responses regarding involvement in assessment practices from the larger quantitative sample of students complementing the responses from the smaller qualitative sample of students is one example; the responses about the quality of teacher feedback from the teacher interviews contradicting the quantitative student responses about the same topic is another example.

Finally, much research on changes in FA is restricted to shorter periods of time, and often either the student or the teacher perspective is examined. The participants in the present study needed at least a year to get into a transformation phase. Classroom observations validated the self-reported data in that the teachers changed their writing assessment practices, emphasizing the importance of talking more about the recursive nature of writing and by spending more time on clearer and more targeted feedback practices on student texts.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

This study points out that there needs to be a change of how teachers and students work with and think about FA of writing in English. Teachers need to provide students with the opportunity to follow up written feedback at school. They can adopt a system where texts are not finished after receiving feedback, but incorporate students' response to the feedback while the teacher is present in the classroom enacting her supervisor role.

Secondly, a portfolio approach in English writing classes seems suitable in order to enhance FA, where students collect their texts in a digital learning management system, reflect on them, the feedback received and their follow-up of the feedback, and at the end of the school year select some of them for final assess-

ment. Peer assessment should be encouraged as part of a portfolio approach to writing, something that saved teachers in this study more time, contrary to what they believed initially.

Thirdly, motivated by a portfolio approach, text revision should be a natural part of English writing classes. English teachers need to consistently give their students the opportunity and encourage them to re-write and re-submit texts by putting the recursive nature of writing at the core of the assessment of written texts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since 2016, more research has been conducted within the area of FA in general and FA in English in particular (e.g., Saliu-Abdulahi, Hellekjær, & Hertzberg, 2017). Future research is needed to develop a fuller understanding of the construct of FA of writing, for example the elements that constitute student involvement in assessment practices and the ways students could follow up teacher feedback. Students could be interviewed about their definitions and interpretations of “involvement in assessment practices” and classroom observations could focus on teachers’ ways of involving them. After receiving feedback on texts from teacher and/or peers, their texts could be analyzed to consider the amount of and quality of revisions. The extent to which students use new knowledge and skills in other contexts could be investigated through interviewing and observing one or a few students throughout a school year. Moreover, the data were mainly self-reported in the present study through interviews and questionnaires, and supplemented by classroom observations. A next step could be careful analysis of student texts in order to trace development in their language performance, for example in the reflective statements. There is also a need for more longitudinal studies focusing on one of the most critical parts of interventions, namely the sustainability of changes in student and teacher assessment perceptions and practices a long time after the researcher (or other external collaborator) has left the research field.

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5

PhD revisited: English writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school

– a linguistic and genre-pedagogical perspective¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a PhD study (Horverak, 2016) that investigated English writing instruction practices and the effects of a genre-pedagogical approach defined as *scaffolding writing instruction*. The results suggest that this approach supports the students to improve their argumentative writing. The chapter discusses various aspects of writing instruction and feedback on writing, and concludes by advocating the need for a coherent model for teaching writing in English teacher programmes.

KEYWORDS scaffolding writing instruction | genre-pedagogy | argumentative writing | feedback

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a PhD study (Horverak, 2016) from the University of Agder, focussing specifically on its practical implications for the teaching of English in Norway. This is an article-based thesis, with four published articles (Horverak, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b). The PhD thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be found here <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2458188>

INTRODUCTION

From the early 19th century to the 1960s, second language instruction in Europe was dominated by the grammar-translation method, and grammar instruction of written language was in focus. This changed when new approaches emerged in the 1960s, and later with the audio-lingual method focusing on listening and talking, the natural approach based on Krashen's ideas about the importance of meaningful input (Krashen, 1988) and the communicative method focused on communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). These approaches focused on learning to speak the target language, rather than producing written texts, and could be said to present a reaction to the neglect of communicative situations and the strong focus on grammar in the grammar-translation method. At the same time, it could be argued that the strong focus on communicative situations led to a neglect of grammatical knowledge needed to produce formal, well-written texts (Lehmann, 1999), an important aspect of learning English. Organising argumentative texts has generally been considered a challenge on various levels in the educational system, both internationally (Andrews, 1995; Beard, 2000) and in Norway (Berge, Evensen, Hertzberg, & Vagle, 2005).

Due to deteriorating PISA results (Kjærnsli, Lie, Olsen, Roe, & Turmo, 2004), there has been an increased focus on basic skills in the curricula in Norwegian schools (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [UDIR], 2006), and writing skills is one of these. This need to improve writing skills is what inspired my PhD work, where I investigated writing instruction practices in English and tried out a genre-pedagogical approach to teaching writing. This approach is partly based on systemic functional linguistics (SFL), a theory that focuses on language choices and language in context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This is relevant according to the purposes of learning English in school; we need to learn English to communicate in various situations (UDIR, 2013a).

The research questions of my PhD study were as follows:

1. How is English writing instruction carried out in upper secondary schools in Norway?
2. What effects does applying systemic functional linguistics through a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing have on students' writing skills?

The study investigated how English teachers conducted writing instruction and how feedback was used in the writing process. Furthermore, students' perceptions of these practices were investigated. Finally, a genre-pedagogical approach to teaching writing was implemented in several groups to investigate whether this could support students in developing their writing skills.

THEORY

In Halliday’s SFL, grammar is presented as a network of resources that may be applied when receiving or producing text (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014). The network of possibilities outlined is stratified into 1) context, 2) semantics, and 3) lexicogrammar, with each of the strata providing a set of variables or options for the language user (see Table 5.1).

TABLE 5.1. A network of linguistic possibilities as outlined in SFL.

| Stratification | Instantiation | Explanation and examples |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 1) Context | Register variables a. Field b. Tenor c. Mode | Type of action/topic Social relationship between sender and receiver Role of the language, written or spoken channel |
| 2) Semantics | Meanings a. Ideational b. Interpersonal c. Textual | Representations of experiences of the world Interaction, expressing certainty, necessity and intensity Organising information, and creating coherence |
| 3) Lexico-grammar | The grammatical system and words | a. Choice of verbs (transitivity system) b. Formality of language, vocabulary and modal expressions c. Thematic patterns and cohesive ties |

Table 5.1 shows that we make choices from the resources in the linguistic system according to what type of register is expected in the context. If it is a formal context, we choose a formal language; in a more informal context, we may use more informal words such as “kids” and “teens”. The context comprises the register variables of a) field (type of action/topic), b) tenor (social relationship), and c) mode (the role of the language, written or spoken).

The register variables influence what type of meanings we express on the semantic stratum (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014). We have choices concerning a) ideational meaning: what representations of experiences in the world to include, b) interpersonal meaning: how to use language to interact, and c) textual meaning: how to organise the information and create coherence. On the lexicogrammatical level, we make choices concerning, for example a) what type of verbs to use to realise the ideational meaning, b) how to express modality to realise the interpersonal meaning, and c) how to use cohesive ties to realise the textual meaning.

The aspects of language described in SFL are relevant in the English subject, which has a focus on writing coherent texts suited to purpose and situation (UDIR,

2013a). It is also relevant within genre-pedagogical approaches as they focus on identifying what is typical of the language and structure of different types of texts. Genres are seen as constructed by stages, a kind of set pattern (Martin, 2012). A stage represents an element in a text, for example a topic sentence introducing a paragraph. Knowing these stages is an important step in learning how to produce texts of various genres. Different teaching-learning cycles have been developed within genre-pedagogical contexts, and my PhD study applied an adjusted version of Feez's cycle (1999), as elaborated on in Hyland's (2004) book on *Genre and Second Language Writing*. In this cycle, there are five steps included; 1) developing the context, 2) modelling and deconstructing the text, 3) joint construction of the text, 4) independent construction of the text, and 5) linking to related texts. This cycle was applied when analysing the data collected to investigate writing instruction practices and when developing a teaching intervention to investigate the effects of a genre-pedagogical approach.

REVIEW

In a review of research about genre as a tool for developing instruction in L1 and L2 contexts, three different traditions are outlined: a) English for specific purposes, or ESP, b) North American new rhetoric studies, and c) Australian systemic functional linguistics, on which this study is based (Hyon, 1996). Hyon (1996) points out that the understandings of genre in the different traditions have different advantages when applied in the classroom. The advantage of the Australian genre-pedagogy tradition and ESP is that these types of approaches provide students with insight into the linguistic features of texts and guidelines for presenting these. The advantage of the North American new rhetoric approach is that it provides a fuller perspective on context and function of genres.

In the tradition of teaching English as a second language, there has been an increased interest in how functional language descriptions may be used as a resource for making meaning (Schleppegrell, 2013). At Georgetown University in the United States, Heidi Byrnes has implemented a theoretical approach based on the concept of genre and SFL to a foreign language writing programme in German. Many studies conducted in this programme have reported the effectiveness of genre-pedagogical approaches in the context of advanced foreign language learners (Byrnes, Crane, Maxim, & Sprang, 2006; Ryshina-Pankova, 2010). Byrnes argues that there is a need for a long-term curricular trajectory for researchers and educators in contexts with advanced language learning, and she

suggests that the construct of genre may provide a theoretical foundation for this (Byrnes, 2012).

Much research on how genres are learnt by more advanced L2 learners in college or university contexts is undertaken in ESP contexts and is focused on professional settings (Gimenez, 2008). These studies generally claim that support is needed to meet writing expectations in different genres in working life. Another researcher, Swales, is well known for his work with English in academic and research settings (1990), and he provides a model that is applicable to teaching more advanced compositions and the teaching of English for Academic Purposes, drawing on linguistic and sociolinguistic theory. Many studies on genre-based approaches have focused on how heightened genre-awareness may help learners to contextualise the genre of their writing (Tardy, 2009). These studies argue that when students' genre-awareness increases, this has a positive impact on their writing ability. This is a central aspect in the type of genre-based approach applied in the current study, which is conducted in a Norwegian context, an under-represented context in second language writing research.

METHODOLOGY

My PhD study included a mixed-method design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), divided into three phases, as illustrated in Figure 5.1 below. Phase 1 included triangulation of the qualitative approaches of interviews, classroom observations, and collection of teaching material. In Phase 2, the English writing instruction (EWI) questionnaire was developed (Horverak & Haugen, 2016) and distributed to randomly selected upper secondary schools. Phase 3 included a quasi-experiment with a teaching intervention. It is defined as a quasi-experiment as the students were not randomly selected or assigned to conditions, and the study also lacked a control group (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

Using a mixed-methods approach to investigate how English writing instruction is carried out in Norwegian upper secondary schools enabled me to analyse data both at a local level (Phases 1 and 3) and a national level (Phase 2). The qualitative data from Phase 1 of the study, which focused on teachers' perceptions of writing instruction practices, provided a basis for developing a questionnaire and collecting quantitative data focused on students' perceptions in Phase 2. The qualitative study also provided a basis for the quasi-experiment investigating how linguistic theory applied through genre-pedagogy may contribute to support students in developing their writing skills in Phase 3.

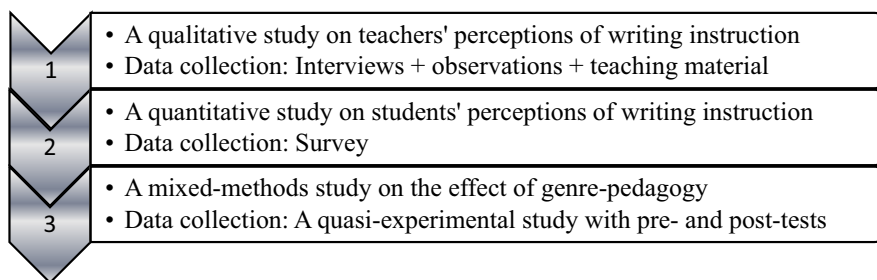


FIGURE 5.1. Research design: mixed methods, divided into three phases.

SAMPLE

In Phase 1, the informants were contacted via acquaintances in the southern region of Norway. Nine teachers were interviewed individually and six other teachers participated in a focus group interview, totalling 15 participating teachers. The teachers in this study came from 7 different upper secondary schools in total, and they varied in terms of age, gender, educational background and teaching experience. In Phase 2, the student sample was collected through a systematic sampling procedure (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2013). Schools were chosen at a fixed interval from a comprehensive list of upper secondary schools in Norway. Fifteen schools participated in the survey, and this resulted in 522 student respondents when respondents with missing values were excluded. In Phase 3, four English teachers with one class each of upper secondary school students participated in the experiment. This resulted in 83 student participants, about 20 from each class. Most of them had Norwegian as a first language (91.6%). Their final grades in written English from lower secondary school ranged from 3 to 6, with the majority getting the grades 4 and 5. All the participating groups were general studies students, which may explain that the participating students generally had rather good grades in English from lower secondary school.

DATA

In Phase 1, the interview guide used included questions concerning the structuring of texts, adjusting writing to purpose and situation and the use of various feedback strategies. The material from the interviews was complemented with notes from 13 observations of writing instruction lessons, three of which included different types of feedback situations. In addition, teaching material used to teach the five-

paragraph essay and connectors, and material used for teacher, self- and peer assessment was collected.

In Phase 2, I developed and used the English writing instruction questionnaire (EWI), which included two main parts with different categories: 1) EWIT – English writing instruction questionnaire – teaching, and 2) EWIF – English writing instruction questionnaire – feedback. This questionnaire includes items about the teaching of narrative and argumentative writing, items about the students' self-confidence concerning narrative and argumentative writing, and items concerning various feedback strategies, such as teachers' follow up of feedback, students' follow up of feedback and self- and peer assessment. In the first main part, the five categories included were: 1) narrative texts, 2) self-confidence and narrative texts, 3) argumentative texts, 4) self-confidence and argumentative texts, and 5) formality level. In the second part, the four categories included were: 1) teacher's follow-up of feedback, 2) working to improve, 3) self-assessment, and 4) peer assessment. In addition, some background variables concerning gender, first language, and grades obtained were included, as well as questions concerning what types of texts the students had written and frequency of writing.

In Phase 3, the data consisted of pre- and post-tests. The students were asked to write a text where they discussed American values and social issues in the American society, and include relevant sources attached to the task. There was an overall scoring from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest) of the tests in accordance with criteria used in examination evaluation guidelines (UDIR, 2013b). Each of the three main categories of structure, language, and content, as well as various items in all categories, were also scored. The evaluation form was divided into three main categories: structure, language and content. Each of these main categories consisted of 6 or 7 items describing what is included in each category. The category "structure" included the items: introduction, paragraph division, topic sentence, coherence of arguments, conclusion and cohesive links such as connectors and pronouns. The category "language" included the items: spelling, grammar, sentence complexity, vocabulary, formality level and modality. The category "content" included the items: appropriateness of the answer in relation to the task, clarity of the topic, relevance, thoroughness, discussion, use of sources and literature list. This evaluation form was based on criteria set in the official censor guidelines (UDIR, 2013b). Three raters evaluated each test, and a one-way random intraclass correlation was computed to check for inter-rater reliability. Furthermore, background variables were mapped; gender, first language, grades, and self-confidence level.

TEACHING INTERVENTION

The teaching intervention in the Phase 3 experiment focused on argumentative writing, or essay writing, and was inspired by genre-pedagogy, or more specifically, on the teaching-learning cycle as presented by Hyland (2004). Compared with Hyland's (2004) cycle, there was more emphasis on teacher instruction than on co-construction with students in the model applied in the intervention. The following steps were included:

1. *Setting the context*: The students reflected over what text types exist and purposes of writing.
2. *Modelling, revealing key features of genre*: The students were presented with a model text and were instructed in how to construct an essay with introduction, main part and conclusion. The model text was deconstructed by identifying the different stages of the text, e.g. topic sentences, supporting details, and critical reflections.
3. *Writing preparation and practice*: The students worked with relevant texts on the topic of social issues and values in the USA, such as rap lyrics and political speeches. They learnt about using sources and referring to sources, and they practised finding relevant quotes and arguments from texts.
4. *Grammar instruction*: The students were taught and worked with exercises in the following grammatical topics: a) cohesive ties: conjunctions, subjunctions, conjuncts and pronouns, b) modality, c) formal and informal language, d) vocabulary: work with synonyms to create coherence.
5. *Independent writing with support from feedback*: The students were given the pre-test with feedback and worked to improve it.
6. *Comparing to other genres and contexts*: The students investigated differences between formal and informal texts.

Based on these steps, teaching material was developed and distributed to the participating teachers, who applied this in their English classes.

ANALYSIS

In all phases of the study, genre-pedagogy constitutes a framework for the analysis. This means that the analysis was driven by theoretical or analytic interests, defined as a deductive or a theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In Phase 1, the data material was categorised according to various steps of Feez's (1999) teaching-learning cycle, as elaborated on in Hyland (2004). I chose this

model as a framework for the analysis as it reflects ideas presented in official guidelines relevant for this context. There is a focus on adjusting writing to context in the English subject curriculum, and using feedback in the process of learning is central in the programme Assessment for Learning that has been implemented in Norwegian schools. Hence, the three steps of the teaching-learning cycle that influenced the choice of three main themes in the analysis were 1) setting the context, 2) modelling, revealing key features of genre, and 3) independent writing with support from feedback. The data was analysed, identifying elements relevant for these three themes. The subthemes under each main theme were developed through a coding process carried out in Nvivo.²

In Phase 2, the analysis presented the total responses on each score in percentages for all the categories in the survey, which were 1) narrative texts, 2) self-confidence and narrative texts, 3) argumentative texts, 4) self-confidence and argumentative texts, 5) formality level, 6) teacher's follow-up of feedback, 7) working to improve, 8) self-assessment, and 9) peer assessment. In addition, medians were reported to give indications about central tendencies. Medians were reported instead of means as the data were based on ordinal scales and therefore non-parametric.

In Phase 3, the teaching intervention was applied at the beginning of the first semester for first year upper secondary school students. The students had a pre-test prior to receiving any English teaching on this level, and after the intervention, they had a post-test. There was no control group, so in order to measure improvement, the gain from pre- to post-test was measured. Paired t-tests were used to check whether the students had improved significantly from pre- to post-test. Cohen's *d* was calculated to measure the size of the effect of the teaching intervention. In addition, a multiple regression analysis was performed to see whether the background factors, i.e. gender, first language, grades or self-confidence-level may explain some of the variance in the results. The quantitative analysis was complemented by examples from students' texts that reflected the development from pre- to post-test.

RESEARCH RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

There were certain challenges with the reliability and the validity of the findings in this study. The main limitation in Phases 1 and 2 was that most of the collected data was self-reported, and in Phase 1, there was a limited sample. As the devel-

2. Nvivo is software widely used within qualitative research to organise and analyse research data.

opment of the student questionnaire was based on a genre-pedagogical framework and an interview study carried out in a Norwegian context, there were perhaps elements relevant in the context of second language writing instruction that were left out. However, the combination of qualitative and quantitative data strengthened the validity of the findings. Furthermore, there was a large, random sample in Phase 2. The main limitation in Phase 3 was the lack of a control group. Still, the inclusion of both pre- and post-tests made it possible to investigate changes to see if these reflected topics that were included in the teaching intervention.

RESULTS

My PhD study investigated how English writing instruction is carried out in Norwegian upper secondary schools (Phases 1 and 2) and tested whether applying linguistic theory through a genre-pedagogical approach to teaching writing has a positive effect on students' writing competence (Phase 3). In Phase 1, the data revealed that the teachers generally focused on teaching the students how to write argumentative texts, or 5-paragraph essays, using model texts and focusing on adjusting language and structure to genre and context in line with a genre-pedagogy approach to the teaching of writing. Many of the teachers gave feedback during the writing process, but not all had the capacity to do so, even though they saw this as the ideal. The findings of the survey conducted in Phase 2 supported these findings, and revealed that many students are uncertain about their writing competence. The main findings in Phase 3 was that the students benefitted from a genre-pedagogical approach to teaching writing regardless of gender, first language and level.

TEACHERS' WRITING INSTRUCTION PRACTICES

In Phase 1, I investigated teachers' perceptions of how writing instruction was carried out, including how they worked with feedback. Data from interviews were triangulated with data from observations and teaching material. I found that the participating teachers generally focused on teaching students how to write argumentative texts, and the students were given the 5-paragraph essay format as a practical template for an argumentative text to prepare them for the exam and for higher education. Model texts were used to demonstrate how argumentative texts are structured. The teachers also included some instruction on using connectors and adjusting language to the formality level required in the context.

There were, however, different opinions about how detailed the instruction should be. The teaching material collected shows that some teachers provided very detailed instructions about the different elements that were to be included in each paragraph by deconstructing example texts. Others were sceptical about supplying too detailed instructions as they feared this would restrict the students' creativity. As pointed out by one of the teachers: "If you just use a template imitatively, then it is never totally wrong, but it might not be brilliant either". In opposition to this, another teacher argued: "The problem is that they cannot be creative and good at this if they do not know what they are to relate to [...] they have to know the basic structure first".

In terms of feedback, the teachers reported that the typical issues they commented on were how to structure argumentative texts, how to use sources and give thorough arguments and how to adjust the language to the right formality level. When it came to feedback strategies, many of the informants in this study reported that they used a type of process-orientated strategy where the students received comments on drafts, with a focus on how to adjust the text to genre requirements, both in terms of language and structure. The observations revealed that students worked well with revising when this approach was applied. As one of the teachers argued: "Students become very motivated by receiving help in a process where it is still possible to get better results". Another teacher reflected: "Once I have started working like this, I don't see that there is any other way of doing it". Many teachers also reported that the students were given a grade on a revised version, and those who did not said that they would have done so if they had sufficient capacity. The teachers also used self-assessment strategies of various types, but they expressed that they could develop better practices for this. The teachers were more sceptical about peer assessment as they worried about how students would feel if they were asked to show others their written texts. The findings from the teachers' interviews and observations were followed up in a student survey.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOW WRITING INSTRUCTION IS CARRIED OUT

According to the results of the survey, most students had written argumentative texts in English in upper secondary school, but only about half of the group reported having written narrative texts. This was in line with the findings of the teacher interviews. How often students had written exercises as 1) tests at school, 2) home assignments, or 3) homework, varied from several times a month to never. A majority of the students reported a frequency of at least once every

semester in all three categories. The main findings based on the data from the first part of the questionnaire, were that a majority of the students expressed uncertainty about whether they had been taught narrative and argumentative writing, and about formality levels of language (Table 5.2).

TABLE 5.2. Total scores in percentages, part 1 – Teaching and self-confidence, Likert scale from 1= totally disagree to 7 = totally agree, $N = 522$.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Median |
|------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------|
| Taught NW | 18 | 13 | 17 | 22 | 18 | 10 | 3 | 4 |
| Self-confidence NW | 3 | 4 | 11 | 22 | 31 | 20 | 9 | 5 |
| Taught AW | 4 | 4 | 11 | 20 | 24 | 21 | 16 | 5 |
| Self-confidence AW | 1 | 2 | 8 | 19 | 26 | 27 | 18 | 5 |
| Taught formality level | 6 | 5 | 14 | 19 | 26 | 18 | 11 | 5 |

Note. As decimal numbers are rounded off, the added sum of the rows does not necessarily equal 100%. NW = Narrative writing, AW = Argumentative writing, “Taught NW” and “Self-confidence NW” include four items each, “Taught AW” and “Self-confidence AW” include six items each, “Taught formality level” includes four items.

The scores were lower on the questions concerning whether they had been taught narrative writing than in the other two categories of whether they had been taught argumentative writing and formality level of language. A majority of the students also expressed little confidence about being able to write both argumentative and narrative texts. However, they were somewhat more confident that they could write argumentative texts. According to the students’ responses, feedback strategies varied in English (Table 5.3).

TABLE 5.3. Teacher’s follow-up of feedback, Scale from 1 to 5, $N = 522$.

| | Never | Seldom | Some- times | Often | Always |
|--|-------|--------|----------------|-------|--------|
| The teacher makes the students work with revising | 7 | 21 | 37 | 28 | 8 |
| The teachers give new evaluations on revised texts | 40 | 19 | 22 | 15 | 5 |

Note. Results are given in percentages. As decimal numbers are rounded off, the added sum of the rows does not necessarily equal 100%.

The majority of students reported that they never or seldom received new evaluations on revised texts, even though a high percentage reported that the teacher made them work on revisions. The majority also answered that they agree that they worked with improving their texts (Table 5.4).

TABLE 5.4. Total scores in percentages, part 2: Feedback, Likert scale from 1= totally disagree to 7 = totally agree $N = 522$.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Median |
|--------------------|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|--------|
| Working to improve | 6 | 7 | 13 | 23 | 25 | 16 | 11 | 5 |
| Self-assessment | 3 | 4 | 9 | 22 | 25 | 22 | 17 | 5 |

Note. As decimal numbers are rounded off, the added sum of the rows does not necessarily equal 100%. “Working to improve” includes three items, “Self-assessment” includes four items.

The majority of the students reported that they agreed that they used self-assessment strategies (Table 5.4). Half of the group reported that they had participated in peer assessment. The findings of this study revealed that feedback strategies were not fully exploited in English teaching in upper secondary schools in Norway. This confirms the findings in Phase 1 of this study, which investigated teachers’ practices. In Phase 3 of the study, a teaching intervention was developed based on both genre-pedagogical theory and the findings of the previous phases of this study.

THE EFFECTS OF A GENRE-PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

The teaching intervention in the quasi-experiment included a focus on adjusting language to context, using an appropriate text structure and applying various feedback strategies in the writing process. The main findings in this phase of the study was that the students improved significantly from pre- to post-test in all the three main categories of structure, language and content (Table 5.5). Their paragraphs were better structured, and they used sources better to give thorough argumentation.

TABLE 5.5. Results of pre- and post-tests and gain from pre- to post-test.

| | Pre-test | Post-test | Gain | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------|-----|
| | M(SD) | M(SD) | M (SD) | 95% CI. | t | E.S |
| Structure | 3.13(0.81) | 3.74(0.88) | 0.61(0.70)* | (0.46 - 0.76) | 7.97 | .72 |
| Language | 3.53(0.78) | 3.90(0.81) | 0.37(0.58)* | (0.24 - 0.50) | 5.83 | .46 |
| Content | 2.87(0.74) | 3.66(0.86) | 0.80(0.70)* | (0.64 - 0.95) | 10.41 | .99 |
| Total | 3.10(0.80) | 3.75(0.88) | 0.65(0.70)* | (0.49 - 0.80) | 8.47 | .77 |

Note. Paired sample t-tests, $df = 82$, $*p < .001$ (Two-tailed), effect sizes are calculated as Cohen's d , scale: 1 – 6.

In the category of language, the students improved most in the use of modal expressions and correct formality level, which were both topics that were focused on in the teaching intervention. Multiple regression analysis revealed that students improved regardless of gender, first language and level (Table 5.6).

TABLE 5.6. Prediction of background variables on gain.

| | $\beta(p)$ |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Gender | 10(.44) |
| First language | 13(.29) |
| Grade, lower secondary | 09(.46) |
| Self-efficacy, pre-test | -.32(.02)* |
| F(df) | 2.52(4, 71) |
| R Square(p-value) | .124(.049)* |

Note. First language is coded 1 = Norwegian, 2 = others, including English Grade in lower secondary = grade on written English. β = standardised regression coefficient, $*p < .05$ (Two-tailed).

In table 5.6, we see that the four variables included in this analysis predicted 12.4% of the variance in the scores (R squared = .124). Hence, the type of genre-pedagogy applied in the current study supported different types of students in improving their writing skills. Students improved regardless of gender, first language and previous grade in English.

In the qualitative analysis in this study, examples from students' texts illustrated how students improved. One of the students started the conclusion in her pre-test

essay with “My opinion about this is that it is terrible!” In the post-test, the same student started the conclusion with “To sum up we see that America has many different social issues they need to work on.” The student changed from an informal, emotional style to a more formal, neutral statement starting with the connector “To sum up”, indicating a conclusion. A good deal of students used connectors signaling a conclusion, either “To sum up”, or “To conclude”, or connectors signaling a contradiction, such as “However”. The examples from student texts complemented the findings of the quantitative analysis in this study.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

Using a mixed-methods approach to investigate how English writing instruction is carried out in Norwegian upper secondary schools enabled me to analyse data both at a local and a national level. The qualitative data from Phase 1 of the study, which focused on teachers’ perceptions of writing instruction practices, provided a basis for developing a questionnaire and collecting quantitative data focused on students’ perceptions in Phase 2. The qualitative study also provided a basis for the quasi-experiment investigating how linguistic theory applied through genre-pedagogy may contribute towards supporting students in developing their writing skills in Phase 3.

In the following, I will discuss the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of the PhD study. The main contributions were perhaps in the empirical and methodological domains, as the study presented new insights about English writing instruction practices in a Norwegian context and methodology that was developed to investigate these. The section on theoretical contributions describes how the theories of genre-pedagogy and systemic functional linguistics were applied and adjusted in the context of teaching argumentative writing in English in upper secondary school.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: NEW KNOWLEDGE OF WRITING INSTRUCTION PRACTICES

First and foremost, my PhD study illustrated how SFL applied through genre-pedagogy may provide a useful framework for English writing instruction in L2 contexts. The use of SFL to describe and support language development has been important in language learning research in recent decades (Byrnes et al., 2006; Christie, 2012; M. Schleppegrell, 2004; M. J. Schleppegrell, 2013). The teaching intervention in my study did not apply the full framework for language studies

offered in the SFL tradition, but the focus on modal verbs, formality of language and cohesive links was influenced by SFL. This was included after the deconstruction of text in step two of the teaching learning cycle. In this study, I argued that there is a potential in using meta-language in writing instruction, and applying strategies from the teaching-learning cycle developed in the genre-pedagogy tradition.

The second contribution of my PhD study was knowledge of students' perception of writing instruction practices and their own writing skills. The students perceived argumentative writing to be more in focus than other types of writing in English. Like the teachers, the students reported differently concerning what practices were applied. Some students agreed that feedback strategies such as teacher, peer and self-assessment were applied during the writing process, which is in line with a genre-pedagogy approach to the teaching of writing (Martin, 2012; Hyland, 2004), whereas some said that they were not. Most of the students expressed an uncertain attitude as to whether they could write argumentative and narrative texts.

Third, my PhD study found evidence that teachers used model texts and writing frames when teaching writing, and that there was a focus on how to structure argumentative texts or five-paragraph essays. Further, the findings revealed that there was a focus on what elements to include in a text in each paragraph, as in the staging approach developed within genre-pedagogy (Martin, 2012). Some teachers also included a focus on how to use connectors to create coherence, how to adjust language to the correct formality level, and how to express modality. These are linguistic elements that are relevant in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The study also revealed that feedback practices varied, e.g. that some teachers used feedback strategies in the writing process before a final evaluation was given, and some did not. Implementing feedback as part of a writing instruction process is an important element of the teaching-learning cycles developed in the genre-pedagogy tradition (Martin, 2012; Hyland, 2004).

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: A SCAFFOLDING WRITING INSTRUCTION APPROACH

A theoretical contribution of my PhD study concerned the application of a linguistic and genre-pedagogical framework to English writing instruction in a Norwegian educational context. I illustrated how the teaching-learning cycle developed within the genre-pedagogy tradition includes elements that are applicable to the

Norwegian school system. In line with Byrnes et al. (2006), I argued that the emphasis on the meaning-making properties of language in SFL, e.g. the focus on cohesive links and adjusting language to purpose, makes this theory particularly useful in contexts of language teaching.

Another theoretical contribution of my PhD study was the adjusted model for teaching argumentative writing outlined in the quasi-experimental study, which I defined as *scaffolding writing instruction*. Compared with Feez's (1999) teaching-learning cycle as elaborated on by Hyland (2004), the third step, "joint construction", was replaced by the two steps "writing preparation and practice" and "grammar instruction". This step included pre-writing exercises such as studying relevant source texts to include in the writing, instruction in how to use and refer to sources, and grammar instruction. I would argue that the teaching-learning cycle model as developed in this study presented a theoretical contribution to linguistics as it applied linguistic theory in practice, as the grammar instruction was based on SFL. It also presented a theoretical contribution to didactics as it applied an adjusted teaching-learning cycle model for teaching argumentative writing.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND A RETURN TO RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ISSUES

One of the methodological contributions of this study was to present a mixed-methods model for investigating teachers' and students' perceptions of writing instruction practices. The first two phases of this study comprised a multilevel mixed design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), with qualitative data among the teachers and quantitative data among the students. When complementing the interview study with the survey investigating writing instruction practices from another perspective, there was some consensus between the findings of the qualitative study and the quantitative study. Both studies showed that there is an emphasis on argumentative writing in upper secondary school, and both showed that some teachers give feedback to students during the writing process while others do not.

A second methodological contribution of this study was the development of the English writing instruction (EWI) questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed through a validation process where the survey was tested in several English groups. A factor analysis was conducted on the results to confirm the categories in the survey, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated to check for internal validity (Horverak & Haugen, 2016). This questionnaire can be adapted and applied in

other contexts for writing instruction, and is therefore a methodological contribution.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

In my PhD study, I urged central educational authorities to consider the need to prioritise writing in English in schools. With the establishment of the National Writing Centre in Norway there has been increased focus on writing in Norwegian schools, but there has not been much focus on writing in English. There is a need for resources to further educate current English teachers in strategies for writing instruction and to give room for teachers to apply teaching strategies that have been proven to be useful, such as formative assessment strategies. There is also a need to include a more coherent model for writing instruction in the English teacher education, and this study suggests implementing the genre-pedagogical approach *scaffolding writing instruction* presented here in English teacher training programmes and in further education of English teachers.

Still, I think it is important that teachers keep an open attitude to creativity and to writing texts in different ways. We do not want students and teachers that follow templates rigidly without engaging in what they write. I believe that if teachers have a high competence in how to teach writing, it is possible to combine a *scaffolding writing instruction* approach with an open attitude to students' individual voices and creativity. If teachers provide students with a variety of model texts, so they can see that there are different ways of solving a writing exercise, this may facilitate creativity and prevent rigidity in English writing instruction.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There is a need to follow up the findings of this study in future research, for example to investigate writing instruction practices from a teacher's perspective on a larger scale, and to investigate more in-depth how students perceive these practices. Furthermore, there is a need for research on how English writing instruction is carried out at lower levels, as this is scarce in a Norwegian context – for example what type of texts are written in lower secondary school to prepare for further education, and what type of strategies for teaching writing are applied. There is also a need to investigate what feedback practices are applied in lower secondary school, and what prevents teachers from applying more varied feedback strategies in the teaching practices.

Future studies should also investigate whether SFL applied through genre-pedagogy may result in significant improvement when compared with other approaches. In this study there was no control group and the only type of students that participated were first year general studies students. The effects of this type of approach in other contexts also need to be studied. Finally, to establish the efficiency of a genre-pedagogy approach in the teaching of writing based on SFL, there is a need to investigate how students exposed to this type of treatment improve compared to students exposed to other types of treatments.

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6

PhD revisited: INGLISH English

The progressive construction in learner narratives¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter presents a doctoral study (Wold, 2017) that investigated L1 Norwegian learners' use of the English progressive aspect (BE + V-ing). While the construction is consistently overused, results indicate that Norwegian learners to some extent are sensitive to which verb meanings are most compatible with the progressive. The chapter discusses how such learner usage could be addressed by Norwegian teachers.

KEYWORDS progressive construction | Aspect Hypothesis | tense and aspect | learner development

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Wold, 2017) from the University of Bergen, focusing specifically on its practical implications for the teaching of English in Norway. The doctoral thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological, and empirical details – can be found here: <http://bora.uib.no/handle/1956/16798>

INTRODUCTION

The study presented in this chapter looked at how L1 Norwegian learners of L2 English use the progressive construction: a form of the auxiliary verb BE + V-ing, as in *The boy is sleeping*. This usage is both investigated across age groups (ages 11 and 15), in order to gain a developmental perspective, and in comparison with same-age native speakers of English, to see how the learners' usage differs from target language usage.

There are several reasons for choosing this particular construction. First, several studies have shown that the *-ing* ending is among the first grammatical features to be acquired by both L1 and L2 learners of English (e.g. Brown, 1973; Dulay & Burt, 1974), which suggests that it is easy to learn and use. However, to be used as the progressive aspect, the *-ing* form must be paired with auxiliary BE, which many learners fail to do. For example, a learner might use only *-ing* and say *The boy sleeping*, rather than *The boy is sleeping*, with the obligatory auxiliary. One important part of the study was therefore to find to what extent the use of *-ing* and the use of BE are connected in learner language. In other words, at what stage of development do the learners use the progressive as a *construction* with both elements in place? Second, it is a construction that does not exist as an obligatory grammatical feature in Norwegian. The L2 learners must therefore learn to both understand and use a grammatical distinction they do not have to pay attention to in their L1. This study sought to gain insight into how such an understanding develops. Third, many English teachers have informally observed that L1 Norwegian learners of L2 English *overuse* the progressive, or at least the *-ing* form (cf. Johansson & Lysvåg, 1987, p. 158), who speculate that this may be attributed to too much emphasis on this form in teaching materials. This overuse had not been properly investigated before, and similar reports of overuse only seemed to come from studies involving L1 speakers of Germanic languages (e.g. Axelsson & Hahn, 2001; Housen, 2002b; Kellerman, 1997). The question was therefore whether the reported overuse could be found in a systematic study and whether Norwegian learners' use of the progressive displayed patterns that could shed light on their understanding of the construction.

In addition, the study aimed to look at whether Norwegian learners followed the same path of development as learners with other language backgrounds, or whether their usage was influenced by their first language. All of this is knowledge that is useful to Norwegian teachers when they guide their pupils in the learning process: The primary focus of English instruction in Norway is on *communication*, and in order to achieve communicative competence, there is a need to ensure some level of grammatical accuracy.

In order to gain the desired information, the study asked the following primary research questions:

How do L1 Norwegian learners of L2 English go from learning the *-ing form* to learning the progressive *construction*? Specifically, how do the usage patterns of L1 Norwegian learners of L2 English develop as compared to those of L1 speakers of English?

To answer these questions, the usage patterns were investigated in terms of form, frequency, and semantic contexts.

THEORY

According to the theoretical framework called Cognitive Linguistics (see e.g. Croft & Cruse, 2004; Goldberg, 1995; Langacker, 1987, 1991, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2009; Radden & Dirven, 2007), all elements of language – including grammar – are *meaningful* and thus contribute to fulfilling our communicative needs. Grammar is seen as a set of *conceptual tools* that we use to convey meaning precisely. However, different languages make use of different grammatical features. As first-language users, we automatically choose to express meaning in a way that matches the grammar we have at our disposal in our first language. This is what Slobin (1996) calls *thinking for speaking*; a form of habitual thought patterns. Such habitual patterns are difficult to change. Thus, when L2 learners encounter a grammatical construction they are not familiar with in their L1, they will often first try to adapt its meaning and use to match an L1 structure, rather than pay attention to different meaning nuances in L2 usage. This is called the One-to-One Principle (Andersen, 1984).

Another theory that aims to explain the acquisition of verbal coding, and which this study largely draws on, is the Aspect Hypothesis (see e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, 2000; Collins, 2002, 2004; Housen, 1995, 2002a, 2002b; Robison, 1990, 1995; Rocca, 2002, 2007; Rohde, 1996; Shirai, 2007; Shirai & Andersen, 1995; Shirai & Salaberry, 2002). Studies have found that the semantic content, i.e. the meaning, of the lexical verb (phrase) is associated with certain verb endings. In most of these studies, researchers distinguish between four semantic categories:

1. *Activities*: dynamic verb phrases with duration and no clear end point, e.g. *run, talk, breathe*
2. *Accomplishments*: dynamic verb phrases with duration and a natural end point, e.g. *eat an apple, fall down, paint a picture*
3. *Achievements*: dynamic verb phrases with little or no duration, e.g. *notice, die, stop*

4. *States*: stative verb phrases with duration and no natural end point, e.g. *love, exist, know*

The Aspect Hypothesis (AH) is based on the trend shown in several studies that both L1 and L2 learners distinguish clearly between these categories – collectively termed *lexical aspect* – in their initial distribution of verbal coding². The hypothesis is articulated as follows by Shirai & Andersen (1995) and applies to L2 learners as well:

1. Children first use past (or perfective) marking predominantly with achievement and accomplishment verbs, eventually extending their use to activity and finally to stative verbs.
 2. In languages that have progressive aspect, children first use progressive marking mostly with activity verbs, then extending it to accomplishment and achievement verbs.
 3. Children do not incorrectly overextend progressive markings to stative verbs.
- (1995, p. 745)

In light of this hypothesis, the present study aimed to investigate the distribution of progressives by lexical aspect, to see if any overuse was random and systematic.

The early stages of the learners' use of an unfamiliar structure are part of their developing *interlanguage* (Selinker, 1972), which is a functioning language system distinct from both the L1 and the L2. Learners go through various stages of interlanguage on their path towards an L1-like use of the target language – which they may or may not ever reach. In most cases they do not, however, and it is important to recognize that each learner has an idiosyncratic language *system* that is not just a flawed version of the target language; it is therefore worthy of study in its own right, in order to find out which patterns emerge and at what stage. Not least, it is useful to know whether the patterns are particular to individual learners or representative of entire learner groups. In the latter case, teachers may make use of such insights to tailor their instruction to the learners' needs.

REVIEW

While one must not lose sight of the fact that learner language is a large system, it is beyond the scope of any study to outline the full system of any learner group.

2. I use the term “verbal coding” to encompass both morphological endings and periphrastic constructions. The progressive is in fact an example of both, with its auxiliary BE and *-ing* ending.

The present study is limited to the systematic use of English verbal coding in learner texts, centered on the progressive construction. Many have already looked at how such verbal coding is acquired and tried to find reasons for the patterns that emerge. As mentioned in the introduction, the *-ing* form is among the first that learners use productively. Goldschneider and DeKeyser (2005) suggest that stable and phonologically *salient*, or noticeable, forms such as *-ing* are learned earlier than forms that are variable and often phonologically reduced. This would also account for the fact that auxiliary BE – which has forms such as *am, is, are, was, were, etc.* – is more difficult to handle, and learned later.

The most relevant findings for the purposes of this study were those investigating the Aspect Hypothesis. To my knowledge, all AH studies have revealed the same trends: that learners overwhelmingly prefer to use the progressive with activity verbs, such as *run, eat, work*. They also find that prototypical³ state verbs such as *be, love, need* are not used with the progressive in learner language. However, some studies have also shown differences on a more detailed level. Rohde (1996) for example, registered unexpected use of achievement progressives, with verbs such as *find* and *win*, and Rocca (2002, 2007) found that L1 Italian learners of English used the progressive in ways that could be linked to the Italian imperfective aspect. Therefore another aim was to see whether Norwegian learners differed from English L2 learners with other L1s. Any such information on Norwegian learner usage would inform teachers on what type of learner behavior and development to expect, and consequently help them adapt their teaching to learners' needs.

Housen (2002b) also found that the initial use of the progressive was often as a default verb form, rather than as a clear expression of tense/aspect meaning. Housen calls this stage *pre-functional* (2002b, p. 156). As Norwegian does not have a grammatical form corresponding to the English progressive, it is not unlikely that learners initially perceive *-ing* as a tense form instead.

Related to the Aspect Hypothesis is the *discourse hypothesis* (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998), which assigns the progressive a backgrounding, descriptive role in narratives, whereas the simple tense is used to present sequential events and drive the narrative forward. We also find that the progressive is used with different frequencies in different genres, and more often in spoken than in written text (see e.g. Smith, 2002). With a focus on oral communication in the first years of learning English in Norwegian schools, oral-language conventions may be carried over to written texts before appropriate genre awareness is developed.

3. Prototypical examples of a category are the ones that best fit its definition; others may partly fit the criteria of several categories and therefore be harder to place, e.g. *agree* or *remember* in the case of states.

METHODOLOGY

In order to gain information about learner usage and development of the English progressive aspect, formally expressed as the construction BE + V-*ing*, over time, the project was designed as a *quasilongitudinal*, or *apparent time*, study. Although the primary focus was on Norwegian learners, it was the aim of this investigation to add to the knowledge of both L1 and L2 development as regards this construction, so L1 usage was also investigated.

SAMPLE

Learner data was selected from two different age groups, which were sufficiently similar to extrapolate to a learner group's linguistic development from one point in time to another. Their usage was compared to that of same-age L1 speakers. Data was collected from 165 informants. Of these, 89 were L1 Norwegian learners of L2 English; 45 from the 6th grade (age 10 or 11) and 44 from late 10th grade or early 11th grade (age 15 or 16). The remaining 76 were L1 speakers of English from the United States; 38 aged 10 or 11, and 38 aged 14–16. All informant groups were gender balanced. In the Norwegian groups, there were only informants who reported that Norwegian (and to a limited degree English) was their only language used outside school, as well as parents'/guardians' first language. Similarly, in the L1 English groups, there were only informants who stated that they, as well as their closest relations, were monolingual speakers of English. This was to ensure that the use of other languages would not influence the results of the study, as all language knowledge may lead to cross-linguistic influence (cf. Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). The informants that listed influence from other languages than L1/L2 English or L1 Norwegian, or extensive use of L2 English outside school, were not included in the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, written material was chosen as the object of study and the texts were limited to the *narrative* genre. For the purpose of comparison, the study relied on a method used in several previous studies of learner language (e.g. Berman & Slobin, 1987; Cadierno, 2004): the elicitation of “frog stories”, based on the picture book *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969). All the informants were asked to write their narratives based on the pictures in the same picture book. In addition to easy comparison with other studies, this would ensure similar stories and vocabulary, so differences in use of the progressive could not be attributed to great variations in genre or lexicon. Figure 6.1 below shows an excerpt from the book; pictures 18 and 19.



FIGURE 6.1. Pictures 17 and 18 of *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969).

The data was collected by means of a website specifically designed for this purpose by AKSIS⁴. It consisted of three parts: First, an introduction with instructions on to how to proceed. Among other things, the informants were asked to look at all the pictures of the story before starting to write, not to worry about spelling, and to ask their teacher for vocabulary items (dictionaries were not allowed). To ensure understanding, the instructions were given in Norwegian for the Norwegian L2 learners. A parallel site in English was designed for the L1 informants, with slightly different instructions, reflecting their monolingual backgrounds. The second part was a page where they filled in background information, including language background. The third part was a page with a text window, miniatures of all the pictures in the story, and a larger, single picture which would come up as any of the miniatures were clicked on; this would be the one they were writing about at any given time. When the story was written, each informant would click on “send” and the story and background data would reach AKSIS immediately.

The stories were subsequently sorted according to the background variables: age, gender, and language background. Some of the written texts were also removed due to, among other things, lack of background information, technical problems, or problems with the test conditions. Of the total, 165 met the criteria for the study. These texts gave a total word count of 55 706. On average, texts written by Norwegian 11-year-olds counted 210 words, whereas texts written by same-age Americans averaged 370 words. As for the 15-year-olds, the word count gap was much smaller: the Norwegian average was 380 and the American one 408.

4. A University-owned research company, which specializes in language technology. See <http://www.aksis.uib.no/> I am infinitely grateful to Knut Hofland for all his input and technical support.

ANALYSIS

The study distinguished between *extralinguistic* variables, which were used to group learners and interpret variation in light of learner backgrounds, and *linguistic* variables, which were used to account for systematic differences based on the interplay between language structures. In addition to the factors age, gender and L1, the texts written by the Norwegian informants were grouped according to proficiency level by experienced assessors who work on producing the national tests in English. The levels used were the ones defined by the Council of Europe (2001). The written learner texts ranged from the lowest level (A1) to upper intermediate (B2); the latter only one text. The majority were at levels A2 or B1.

As for the linguistic variables, all verb phrases were extracted and marked for both verbal coding and lexical aspect in an Excel spread sheet. The main variable, the *dependent* one, was called PROGRESSIVE and referred to whether or not the verb phrase was a progressive construction: the variants were labeled 1) PROG, which included all instances of the *-ing* form in contexts where one would expect a finite verb, whether or not auxiliary BE was used, and 2) NON, which included all other verb phrases in the same type of context. In this way, all finite verb phrases were included, whether or not verbal coding was attempted.

The other linguistic variables, the *independent* ones, which were thought to influence the distribution of the variants of PROGRESSIVE, were, first, TENSE, which included the variants PAST, PRESENT, and BASE – the latter was used for instances with no overt tense marking where this was required (3rd person singular), as the least proficient learners often have not learned to use tense forms appropriately. The second independent variable was LEXICAL ASPECT (cf. the review section), with the variants ACT (activity), ACC (accomplishment), ACH (achievement), and STA (state). A third variable, ING, was also included, as the initial search for progressives in the data set revealed that a large number of *-ing* forms were used in other constructions than the progressive. These instances were counted and labeled ING, and the question was whether there was any correlation between the number of ING and the number of progressives in a text.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The bulk of the analysis was carried out by means of descriptive statistics, presented by means of tables, charts and diagrams. The descriptive analysis was supported by a test of statistical significance, by means of a multivariate regression analysis. This is a statistical analysis with the great advantage that the effect of

several different variables can be compared and measured. It is then possible to single out the factors that have the most impact on the dependent variable.

RESULTS

The total number of finite verb phrase tokens in the data set, all groups included, was 6891. Of these, around 80% were in the nonprogressive and around 20% in the progressive. However, the progressives were far from evenly distributed among the groups, as seen in table 6.1 below.

TABLE 6.1. Distribution of finite verb forms: All informant groups; group scores.

| | NON | PROG | Total N | | NON | PROG | Total N |
|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | N (%) | N (%) | N (100%) | | N (%) | N (%) | N (100%) |
| N | 2384 (72.8) | 891 (27.2) | 3275 | NS | 3071 (84.9) | 545 (15.1) | 3616 |
| 11 | 804 (61.7) | 499 (38.3) | 1303 | 11 | 1475 (84.2) | 277 (15.8) | 1752 |
| Boys | 327 (57.5) | 242 (42.5) | 569 | Boys | 544 (79.5) | 140 (20.5) | 684 |
| Girls | 477 (65.0) | 257 (35.0) | 734 | Girls | 931 (87.2) | 137 (12.8) | 1068 |
| 15 | 1580 (80.1) | 392 (19.9) | 1972 | 15 | 1596 (85.6) | 268 (14.4) | 1864 |
| Boys | 769 (84.2) | 144 (15.8) | 913 | Boys | 763 (83.5) | 151 (16.5) | 914 |
| Girls | 811 (76.6) | 248 (23.4) | 1059 | Girls | 833 (87.7) | 117 (12.3) | 950 |

The rows in the table show results for both Norwegian (N: left) and native-speaker (NS: right) informants in both raw numbers and percentages; each divided first into age groups and then gender. The columns show numbers and percentages for the nonprogressive (NON) and the progressive (PROG).

With a 27% group score, the Norwegian informants' use of progressives was 12 percentage points higher than that of the native speakers (15%). The initial observation was therefore that these Norwegian learners clearly overuse the progressive compared to their L1 peers. In addition, there were clear age differences within the Norwegian group of informants: The progressive was used twice as frequently in the youngest group as in the oldest one (38% vs. 20%). And while the 15-year-olds displayed usage that was closer in frequency to the American groups (both around 15%), it was still around five percentage points higher than these, where the age difference was minimal. At this stage, the L2 Norwegian overuse seemed confirmed. There were also gender differences that were hard to explain, as boys used the progressive more than girls, except in the group of Norwegian 15-year-

olds. However, these differences were later found not to be statistically significant, which means that they are most likely due to random selection.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

While group scores can reveal important tendencies, it is also useful to know whether individual learners typically display the same type of behavior or have different approaches to learning a grammatical structure; as noted in the theory section, grammatical structures are seen as conceptual tools, and as language learners we try to match structures and concepts. In an L2 context, the concepts may be either existing ones from L1 or new ones we try to understand in the L2. Similar behavior might therefore be an indication that the L1 background influences the understanding and use of an L2 item (see e.g. Jarvis, 2000).

Individual differences were considered in light of L1, age and proficiency level; gender is not included here, due to lack of statistical significance. The box plots in figure 6.2 below show differences between proficiency levels, as well as between L1 and L2, in both age groups. The L1 groups are labeled “Ø” for “zero level”. We see that there was a great spread in the frequencies of the progressive in the L2 texts.

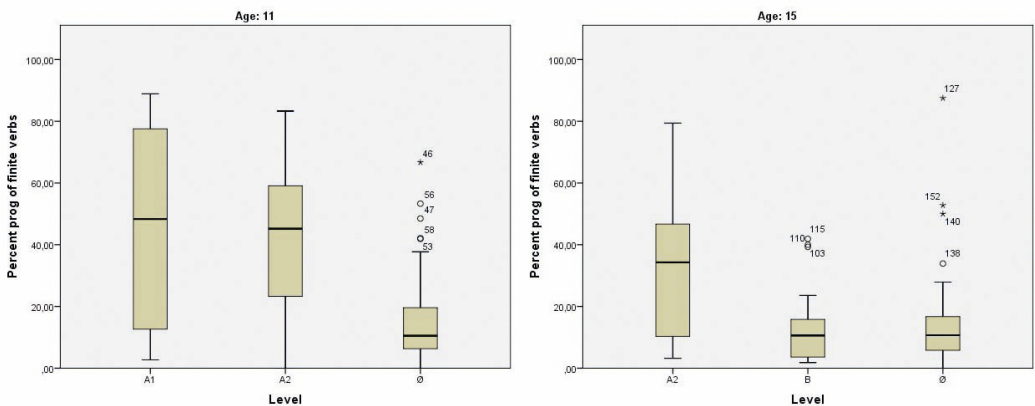


FIGURE 6.2. Distribution of grammatical aspect in percentages: all ages and proficiency levels. The horizontal line in each box shows the median.

The native-speaker groups are labeled “Ø” for “zero level” and the B1/B2 group is labeled “B”.

The informants at the lowest proficiency level, A1, had roughly the same median (the black lines in the middle of the plots) as the same-age learners at level A2 (around 45%), but the box shows a greater concentration around the median in the

latter group. These groups had an even spread from zero use of the progressive to close to 90%; such results indicated that the learners did *not* have a common understanding of the use of the progressive. By comparison, the older learners at level A2 had both a lower median (34%) and a more even spread in the lower frequencies. The greatest contrast, however, was between levels A2 and B⁵ – the latter with only a 10% median; in terms of frequency alone, this learner group was virtually indistinguishable from the native speakers. The B-level learners and the native speakers had frequencies mostly concentrated around the median, as seen by the smaller boxes – this behavior indicated a shared understanding of the progressive within the groups that was not seen in the low-proficiency L2 groups. This is the first indication that overall proficiency is necessary to understand the use of the progressive (at least in terms of frequency); learning about the form in isolation does not enable the learners to use the construction appropriately in a text. This seems to require both practice and comprehension.

TENSE

One of the hypotheses of the study was that the use of the progressive would correlate with tense forms; the progressive would mainly be used with a present tense inflection of auxiliary BE, e.g. *He is running*, or with no auxiliary at all, e.g. *He running*, and only rarely in the past tense, e.g. *He was running*. As seen in figure 6.3 below, this turned out to be the case in all groups – the L2 proficiency groups and the American age groups (NS11 and NS15) – and particularly in the least proficient ones.

The bar chart shows the percentage of progressives, out of the total number of tokens in each of the tense categories, in each group. We see that the ratio of past progressives was consistently low⁶, and while the use of progressives was generally lower in the more proficient groups, it was clearly more used with the present tense or without the auxiliary. A striking result is that at age 15, the L2 learners at the B level had results that resembled those of same-age native speakers (NS15) in this respect as well.

5. As there was only one text assessed to be at level B2, it was grouped with the B1 texts and all just called B.

6. The results for the A1 group are skewed by one text consistently in the past tense; the others hardly used past tense forms.

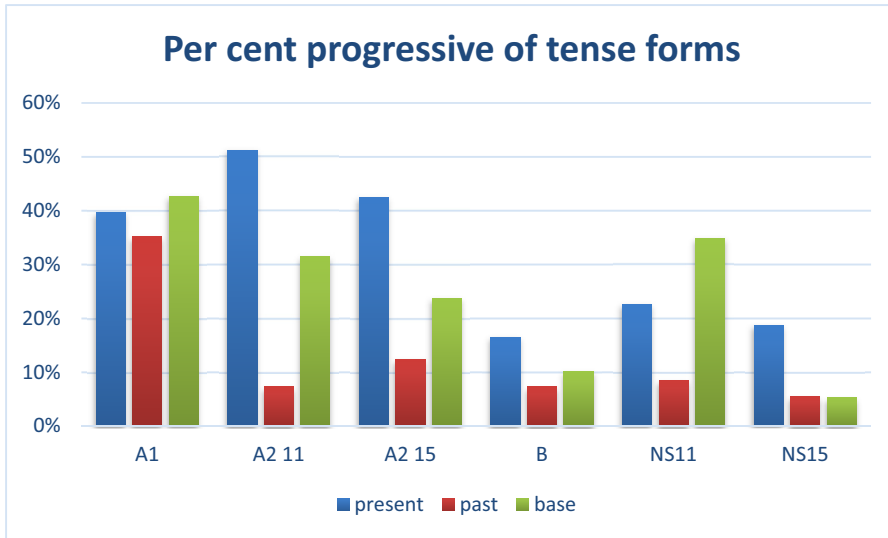


FIGURE 6.3. Percent progressives of each tense form: present, past, and base (= no tense marking).

In addition to percentages of each tense category, the study showed that *-ing* was by far the most used form of verbal coding at the lowest proficiency levels. At level A1, in particular, the past tense was hardly used and base forms were almost twice as frequent as the present tense. In other words, the study revealed that the youngest and least proficient L2 learners very often used aspect, i.e. the *-ing* form, *instead of*, rather than *in addition to*, tense forms⁷. An example is given in (1) below (verb phrases in bold):

*1 The ole **coms** after the boy and he **running** opp to the wook and **hold** he in the stic and say “help help!”, And he **looft** my upp in the air and **running** to the stuups (Norwegian 11-year-old)*

In this short passage, only one verb (*coms*) is marked for tense. The others are either not coded at all or marked with the *-ing* ending, which here clearly functions as a finite verb. With both age and proficiency, correct tense coding – both past and present – is used more and more consistently, both in the progressive and in the nonprogressive. At the same time, the frequency of the progressive goes down, and is similar to native-speaker frequencies at the B level. It should be noted here

7. Note, however, that this is a *formal* interpretation, which does not necessarily tell us anything about how the learners understand the *meaning* of these forms.

that level B1 is not particularly high; there are still many errors in the texts. However, they seem to be characterized by an overall mastery of the English verbal system.

LEXICAL ASPECT

The next variable that was predicted to influence the choice of verb form was lexical aspect; the idea that learners perceive verbal coding as connected to the lexical meaning of the verb phrase. Numerous studies have shown that this is the case, and the learners in this study largely followed the same pattern, particularly with the preference for activity verb phrases with the progressive (or bare *-ing* form). For this variable, it was hypothesized that both the L1 and L2 informants would show results in line with the Aspect Hypothesis, as outlined in the theory section above. In particular, it was predicted that progressives would mainly be used with activity verb phrases (ACT) such as *run, eat, look*.

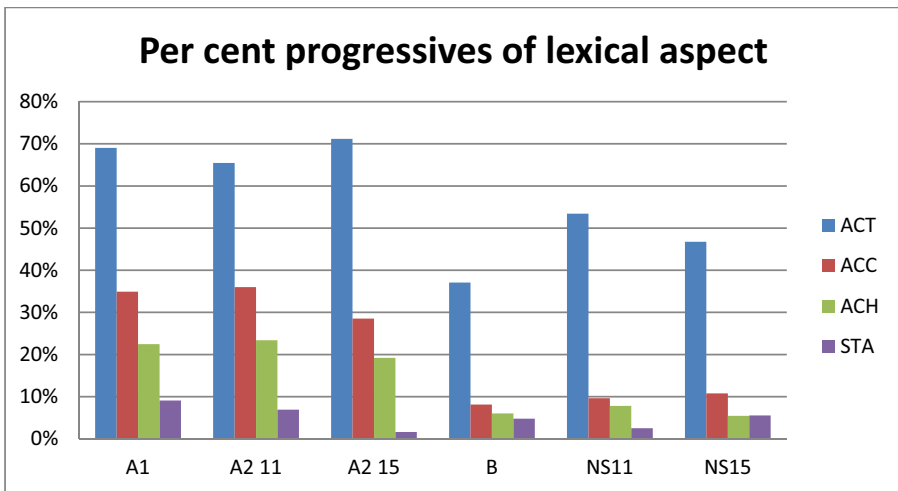


FIGURE 6.4. Percent progressives of each lexical aspect category (activities, accomplishments, achievements and states) in each of the groups: CEFR levels A1, A2 (split into ages 11 and 15) and B (B1 and B2 grouped together), as well as native speakers (NS) in both age groups.

Figure 6.4 above shows that the Aspect Hypothesis was supported by the results from this study; all groups used progressives to a much larger extent with ACT than with any of the other categories. An example is seen in (2) below:

2 *the owl flying over the boy* (Norwegian 11-year-old).

However, the Aspect Hypothesis predicted an increase of use in the other categories with greater proficiency, and also that low-proficiency learners would not use state progressives at all. To the contrary, the ratio of progressives went down with proficiency in all the categories, and the preference for progressives with activities was clearer in the most proficient groups. However, the learners in the study also used the progressive in contexts where it was not predicted to occur; while achievement progressives are certainly possible in English, they are less likely, and were often used unidiomatically in this study, as in (3) below:

3 *a boy finding a dog in the water*. (Norwegian 11-year-old)

Moreover, the Aspect Hypothesis claims that learners do not overextend the progressive to state verb phrases (Shirai & Andersen, 1995, p. 745), but several counterexamples were found in this study, as in (4) and (5) below:

4 *The boy is having a frog in a box on the floor*. (Norwegian 15-year-old)

5 *The [frog] is liking the other frog*. (Norwegian 11-year-old)

Even if the hypothesis is restricted to only *prototypical* states, as Housen (2002b, p. 165) thinks it should, these examples were in violation of the hypothesis. In addition, the clearest distinctions between the lexical aspect categories were found in the native-speaker and B-level groups, who were the most proficient ones overall. These findings further support the suggestion that the progressive and *-ing* may first be seen as a tense form, or at least as a very generalized verbal marker. On the other hand, all groups showed results that were broadly in line with the Aspect Hypothesis, indicating that there are several factors at play. Not least, the statistical tests revealed that learners who had the highest frequencies of the progressive also had the highest frequencies of activity verb phrases in their texts. These verb phrases are often intransitive (e.g. *the boy running*) and lack the complexity often found in accomplishments or achievements, which often describe an end point in some detail, e.g. *But dei was runing away from the bis*. (level A1); *The boy climb upp of the wather with has dog*. (level A2). Among several reasons why the progressive is overused, we may therefore add that the progressive is more compatible with less complex language. Overall, these results indicated a more indiscriminate overuse of the progressive in the earlier stages of learning.

Once again, however, we may note that the B-level learners group with the native speakers rather than with the other L2 learners.

THE -ING FORM (ING)

Finally, the study looked at the extent to which the *-ing* form was used in other functions than as a finite verb (with or without auxiliary BE). An example of such a function is found in (6) below, in an adverbial clause:

6 *But on the way up, a big owl hit's him while **flying**.* (Norwegian 15-year-old)

TABLE 6.2. Use of non-finite ING by nationality, age, and proficiency level.

| | Level | Total | N | Mean | Range |
|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| N11 | A1 | | 0/12 | – | – |
| | A2 | 10 | 8/33 | 1,25 | 1–3 |
| | B1 | 3 | 1/1 | – | 3 |
| N15 | A1 | | 0/1 | – | – |
| | A2 | 27 | 12/18 | 2,25 | 1–5 |
| | B1 | 170 | 24/24 | 7,1 | 1–26 |
| | B2 | 10 | 1/1 | – | 10 |
| NS11 | – | 233 | 34/38 | 6,9 | 1–28 |
| NS15 | – | 207 | 37/38 | 5,6 | 1–19 |

While there was no correlation – positive or negative – between the frequency of the progressive and the frequency of *-ing* in non-finite contexts, it was clear that the use of ING increased with both age and proficiency, as seen in table 6.2 above. The development of ING was also parallel to the increased use of tense forms. It seems that when the progressive is more firmly established as a *construction*, BE + *V-ing*, (e.g. *The boy is looking at a frog*) rather than *-ing* seen as a finite form in its own right (e.g. *The boy looking at a frog*), the learners realize more and more that the form can have other uses as well. Or it may be the other way round; that the more they come across *-ing* in other contexts, the more they realize that auxiliary BE is necessary to form the progressive. This point merits more research, but the findings from this study indicate that the development of tense forms and ING is connected. Either way, it was evident that L2 learners at level B mastered

the use of tense, aspect and ING, to a far greater extent than the less proficient learners. At levels A1 there was little use of tense and no use of ING, while we saw a larger proportion of both of these features at level A2, and more so in 15-year-olds than in 11-year-olds.

STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

While descriptive statistics gave revealing results, statistical tests were necessary to find whether the correlations were random or likely to be due to influence from the independent variables. The multivariate regression analyses showed that gender was not a statistically significant factor ($p = .734$), but age and L1 background clearly distinguished the informants' frequency of the progressive ($p = .000$). However, this was only before the linguistic variables were considered: when all the variables were added, the only factor that reliably predicted use of the progressive was presence of activity verb phrases in a text ($p = .000$). With an effect size of .461, this variable accounts for 46% of the variation in the use of the progressive, and thus has great explanatory power. The only other factor that contributed greatly was proficiency level: A separate multivariate regression analysis showed that proficiency level accounted for around 27% of the variation in the use of the progressive. Moreover, the greatest distinction was between levels A1 and A2 on the one hand, and level B and native speakers on the other; these results were all highly significant ($p = .000$). In other words, when Norwegian learners reach a certain general level of English, overuse of the progressive no longer seems to be any reason for concern.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

In the doctoral project presented in this chapter, learner data was analyzed in order to gain an understanding of how Norwegian L2 learners develop a verbal system in the target language, English, with the progressive construction as a focal point. In addition to the background variables L1, age, gender and proficiency level, the use of the progressive aspect was seen in light of the learners' use of *tense*, *lexical aspect* and the use of *-ing* in other constructions. This section discusses the empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions of the study, and how findings from the project may inform pedagogical practice in Norwegian schools.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The results presented above showed that the L2 learners in the study overused the progressive considerably compared to the same-age L1 users; the study thus confirmed the claim made in Johansson and Lysvåg (1987, p. 158). However, the overuse is far from static. The proportion of progressives (or bare *-ing* forms, as is often the case) goes down somewhat with age, but the greatest difference is between proficiency levels A2 and B1: In terms of frequency alone, the latter group performed on roughly the same level as the native speakers. In addition, the study saw a correlation between the learners' use of the progressive and their use of tense and lexical aspect. A parallel development was also shown between the mastery of the progressive construction and the use of *-ing* in other contexts. In all these respects, the Norwegian learners' usage was similar to that of native speakers, once they reached CEFR proficiency level B1 or higher.

While the L1 speakers' (and the B-level learners') frequency of the progressive was lower than that of the low-proficiency L2 learners, it was still higher than in most large adult corpora known to the present author (see e.g. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, p. 460ff; Smith, 2002). However, this may be due to the nature of the task, as the frequencies resembled those found in adult native-speaker Frog stories (Berman & Slobin, 1994, p. 138). In fact, it is also worth mentioning that the youngest L2 learners in this study had frequencies of the progressive that matched those of native-speaker three-year-olds (*ibid.*). This finding at least superficially indicated a similar development of this construction in Norwegian learners as in American native speakers. Indeed, when Norwegian learners reach a certain level (B1 or higher) their use of the progressive is similar to that of native speakers and seems to be connected with overall good writing skills.

The development found in the study presented here is similar to that found in other studies of both native-speaker and L2-learner language, where the *-ing* form is among the first forms acquired, before past or present tense inflections, or auxiliary BE. This indicates a natural process that learners go through, with initial use of *-ing* before other forms of verbal coding are added and balance out the frequencies. Moreover, since Norwegian is a tensed language, it is possible that *-ing* is first seen as a tense form rather than as part of a grammatical construction that expresses aspectual meaning.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

While the use of the progressive has already been studied in many different learner groups, as well as in light of the Aspect Hypothesis, the most important methodological contribution of this study is its thorough use of complex statistical analysis. A range of linguistic and extralinguistic factors that could potentially influence the use of the progressive were selected, and through a multiple regression analysis, it was found which ones had the greatest explanatory power: The frequency of the progressive was most strongly correlated with the frequency of activity verb phrases – more so than with the informants' status as first or second language speaker. This method is an improvement over previous studies that have looked at such factors separately or not applied statistical significance tests at all.

As for theoretical contributions, the study found that while a positive correlation between activities and the progressive was confirmed, there is no indication that learners avoid state progressives (e.g. *He is liking it.*) entirely: such a negative correlation was not statistically significant. In addition, this is, to my knowledge, the first study to thoroughly distinguish between the progressive and other uses of the *-ing* form and to trace the connection between such uses and their developmental stages. Teachers should be aware of the difference between the various constructions and expect other uses of the *-ing* form only after learners master the full progressive construction, BE + *-ing*.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS L2

When teaching English verb forms, it is useful for Norwegian teachers to know how learner language develops compared to native-speaker usage. The doctoral study presented here provides useful information in that respect and may also guide teachers in choosing which elements to emphasize. One thing that is evident is that the learners were far from reluctant to use the progressive/*-ing* – quite the contrary. The challenge for teachers is rather to help their learners automatize the appropriate use of *other* verb forms, especially when they produce written texts. This transition can be difficult for learners, as the emphasis is on oral language in the first years of training and writing receives more focus later on. In particular, it should be emphasized that the simple tense is more used in both narratives and factual texts, whereas the progressive rather belongs to oral language.

The implication of all this is that *-ing* alone is not a form that needs extensive focus and practice; instead, learners could practice tense forms more and be made aware that *-ing* needs auxiliary BE to express tense in the progressive construction.

While teachers may choose to practice verb forms based on what learners typically struggle with, it must also be emphasized that the learners in the present study seemingly followed a path of development common to both L1 and L2 learners. The consequence of this finding is that teachers should not expect learners to master one stage before the previous one. If they initially use the *-ing* form without the auxiliary, this should be seen as a step of development, rather than a great mistake. At this stage the teacher may intervene to speed up the process and focus on the use of auxiliary BE. One way to do this might be to have the learners ask and answer yes-no questions based on situations they see in pictures or film clips and stress that they should use BE, for example **Is the boy eating?** – *No, he is not eating, he is running.* As for the all-too-frequent use of the progressive, this ought not to be a focus in itself, as frequencies seem to go down when learners increase their overall proficiency, including the mastery of other verbal coding.

Another important factor is lexical aspect – the meaning of the verb phrases used with the progressive: Until learners have learned to use more accomplishment and achievement verb phrases, it is likely that they will continue to overuse the progressive. These verb phrase types are often combined with the sort of complex contexts – including past time expression – that low-proficiency learners are unlikely to master, whereas typical activity phrases express more simple and immediate actions. Teachers may therefore want to help their learners produce more complex sentences, with clause elements that describe goals, directions, circumstances, etc., as well as more vocabulary. In short, until other elements connected to the complex English verbal system are mastered, the progressive (or just *-ing*) is likely to be the default form, as it is salient, stable, and easy to use. This means that part of the role of the teacher could be to promote genre awareness, rather than just focus on grammatical forms in isolation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although the study presented in this chapter has provided some answers to the issues it sought to explore, other questions have been raised during the process and given cause for further investigation. We have seen that these Norwegian L2 learners at the beginning of their 6th year of schooling were well aware of the *-ing* form and used it freely in what may or may not be understood as a progressive construction (with or without auxiliary BE). First, what we have not learned is exactly when this form first emerged and in which contexts, and the development was not traced in individual learners. Second, information about the type and amount of L2 input, inside the classroom and out, was not available. The role of

the learning context was thus one of the missing parts of the puzzle. An answer to such questions calls for a true longitudinal study where learner production, both written and oral, is collected regularly, along with information about teaching materials and the learners' access to English outside the classroom. Such information could fruitfully include the types of lexical verbs used with the various verb constructions in the material, both written and spoken, to which learners are exposed. This could provide explanations as to how and why learners at the same age and with the same amount of schooling arrive at different levels of proficiency, particularly in a group such as N15, where the difference between the proficiency groups was so great in the construction investigated in this study.

There was also quite a large gap between the two age groups in this study, in which time the use of *-ing* in other constructions than the progressive went from minimal to widespread. A longitudinal study would be able to pinpoint the stage where non-finite uses of *-ing* emerge in individual learners.

The suggestion that *-ing* is initially seen as a tense form should also be explored further. This study did not compare the learners' L1 and L2 production, but in subsequent studies, Norwegian learners' use of tense should also be investigated in texts written in their L1. This would reveal whether their narratives rely on the present tense in Norwegian as well, or if their L2 performance is merely a consequence of a lack of formal mastery of all parts of the English verbal system.

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7

PhD revisited: The teacher as interface

Teachers of EFL in ICT-rich environments: Beliefs, practices, appropriation¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter summarizes a doctoral study (Lund, 2003) that investigated teachers of English in Norwegian Senior High schools and their use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The aim was to examine how teachers perceive the impact of ICT on their school subject, how they practiced in technology-rich environments, and how they appropriated ICTs to transform and expand their practices. The conceptual framework and theoretical perspective guiding the analysis were drawn from sociocultural perspectives and especially Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. The chapter discusses current and future issues related to teaching English in technology-rich and networked environments.

KEYWORDS English teaching | information and communication technologies | Cultural-Historical Activity Theory | transformation

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Lund, 2003) from the University of Oslo, focusing specifically on practical implications for teaching English in digital and networked contexts. The doctoral thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be found here: <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/32284>

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' encounters with ICT and how they integrate ICTs in their work constitute a complex phenomenon. In the present study, two main research approaches were chosen. The study aimed in part to capture teachers' socially and culturally constructed beliefs about and attitudes to ICT. How they experienced an ambitious course linking the teaching of English and ICT was researched through a survey. In addition, the study aimed to capture aspects of teachers' educational practices in ICT-rich environments, and *how* they practiced was researched using an ethnographic approach.

The rationale for the study was that education should prepare learners for life and work in the immediate and more distant future, not just serve a curriculum. Digital technologies as introduced and used productively by teachers will play a crucial role in such an endeavor; consequently, there is a need to develop insights as to how the interplay between teachers, learners, and technologies affects life in the classroom. The doctoral study presented here argued that teachers' encounters with and integration of technologies, their *appropriation* of them, had been an under-researched phenomenon. Appropriation involves making something that originally existed in other people's contexts your own and on your own terms, instilling it with your own intentions – in this case as a teacher (Bakhtin, 1979/2000; Wertsch, 1998). Thus, appropriation also involves change – *transformation* – in humans as well as in contextual factors, and these transformations are found at individual, collective and institutional levels.

In the doctoral study, teachers' appropriation processes were observed where three strands intersected: the school subject (EFL²), digital technologies (ICT), and didactics. These composite and mutually constitutive fields had not yet become an established academic domain. However, as ICT continued to make an impact on diverse school subjects it was assumed that the intersection of school subject, technologies and didactics would become an interesting area for research. It was where the three fields converged – not primarily to the separate fields – that this study intended to make a contribution.

The issues outlined above raised some challenging research questions about the instrumental use and the far more demanding appropriation of digital artifacts. Consequently, the overarching research question was formulated as follows:

In what ways are ICTs appropriated in the EFL classroom?

2. Since the publication of this thesis, EFL has become an obsolete term, but is kept throughout the chapter in order to stay true to the original text and with the original connotations of the term.

The aim was to see teachers' encounters in an interactive perspective where teachers, learners, technological artifacts, and environments constituted an *information ecology*, "a system of people, practices, values, and technologies in a particular environment. In information ecologies, the spotlight is not on technology, but on human activities that are served by technologies" (Nardi & O'Day, 1999:49). Consequently, three supporting questions were posed:

1. What are some of the beliefs and attitudes of teachers of English who encounter ICTs in their profession?
2. What kind of educational practices emerge when teachers of English integrate ICTs in their classes?
3. Under what conditions do we see innovative practices emerge?

The immediate purpose of this study was to increase our insight in and understanding of what it means to teach English as a Foreign Language in technology-rich environments; i.e. there was a marked didactic dimension to the purpose.

REVIEW: A MULTIFARIOUS FIELD

What is a field? Traditionally, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and didactics had constituted three separate research fields. However, at the risk of simplification and superficiality, the doctoral study adopted an approach that looked at the synergy and complexity that emerged when these strands converged. There had been studies that defined the field of technologies and teacher education through a subject matter focus (Willis, 1993), but the present study aimed to analyze the *interplay* between technologies, subject matter and issues of teaching and learning in an organic, ecological sense. A research field is often approached from its "state of the art", the highest level of development at a particular time. However, the research field of the present study was a composite that drew on (at least) three separate domains (EFL, ICTs, didactics). Where these converged was an under-researched phenomenon and, consequently, not well documented in research literature.

CALL

At the time of the study, when questions of teachers, learners and technologies had been raised, the school subject had often been left unspecified (Lankshear, Snyder, & Green, 2000). Also, technologies had rarely been conceptualized beyond instru-

mental features (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001). When a defined school subject or a knowledge domain constituted the point of departure, literature had often taken on prescriptive approaches ranging from collections of ideas and recipes (Hardisty & Windeatt, 1989) to more methodologically reflective examples of good practice (Warschauer, 1995). Regardless of type, such practices had been subsumed under the umbrella term Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which went back to the 1980s. But over the years, any notion of a particular “CALL method” had been refuted and the need to link CALL to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research had been acknowledged (Chapelle, 2000). Several scholars had tracked the history of CALL and noted the same patterns (Kern & Warschauer, 2000; Levy, 1997; Murphy, 2000).

Studies on the use of ICT in teaching and learning English had often focused on technological features (e.g. style checkers, speech technology), addressed generic learning processes (e.g. concept formation, types of interaction) and less often what happened when a particular school subject was introduced. However, this seemed to change with the growth of scientific literature.

Thus, the reviewed literature showed that there was a need to focus on how technologies impact on language learning and how they were embedded in larger social and cultural practices. With the impact from sociocultural studies of language learning on the one hand, and the trend towards collaborative uses of ICT on the other, adding the rapidly developing technologies on top, questions of how teachers and learners could cope had become acute, especially with a focus on teachers’ pedagogical and technological expertise (Lankshear et al., 2000).

TEACHERS’ DIGITAL EXPERTISE

One of the assertions that emerged from the review of the field was that teachers’ *expertise* is a crucial – perhaps *the* most important factor in a sustainable and future-oriented education ecology. For example, a study by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) found that “When teachers disengage from the use of technology and leave pupils to use it and teach each other how to use it, the potential for enhancing learning drops away steeply” (Dawes, 2001:64–65). Teachers’ ability to work as the more knowledgeable peer in technology-rich settings had become an integral part of their professionalism. However, what counted as expertise may not have been obvious.

Further, the review of teachers’ expertise showed that teacher knowledge is constantly evolving in practices and is not a compilation of subject knowledge and managerial skills to be applied to a classroom situation. Rather, teacher knowl-

edge is a multifaceted, evolving understanding of how three dimensions interact; *subject knowledge*, *school knowledge* (i.e. *institutional dimensions*), and *pedagogic knowledge* (including *learner knowledge* and *curriculum knowledge*) (Lankshear et al., 2000; Dawes, 2001). Together, these dimensions add up to teachers' professional knowledge. A model of how these dimensions interrelate was devised by Banks et al. (1999) and was also used by McCormick and Scrimshaw (2001) where they applied it to analyze change in practices as a result of ICT implementation. Similarly, Becker (1994) found significant correlations between teachers' constructivist pedagogies and realizing the potential of ICT in education.

VARIATION IN ENGLISH

Moving from teacher expertise to the subject in question, EFL, the review also revealed intriguing trends when the language goes online. Like Global English (Graddol, 2001), Online English exhibits variants determined by situational factors – the plural form *Englishes* was frequently used (Crystal, 2001a; Kachru & Nelson, 2001). In his book on language and the Internet, David Crystal (2001b:17) used the generic term *Netspeak* for online language use and reserved *Netlish* for the English language. This extended mode of expression opens up for experiments with online identities, a well known phenomenon from several studies (Kirkup, 2002; Turkle, 1995). In a study of Norwegian learners' first encounter with a virtual classroom, a particular form of hybrid Netlish was found to mediate the process of learners establishing a presence through written language only (Lund, 2001).

Out-of-school contexts are rich in non-standardized variants that may be regarded as innovative and functional outside the classroom, but may be seen as challenging or even harmful in a curricular perspective. This means that there exists a strong element of out-of-school language socialization (Roberts, 2001) that is not easily compatible with the traditional perspective on language learning within the educational system.

In many ways, David Crystal summarized what this multi-thematic (CALL, teacher expertise and English variants) review revealed:

The language classroom will lose all credibility if it is defined as only a counter-culture to new trends developing. An inevitable consequence of this development is that the language will become open to the winds of linguistic change in totally unpredictable ways (Crystal, 1998:130–31).

When English goes online we have seen both gusts and breezes.

THEORY

This section sought to explain, justify, and elaborate key concepts in a *sociocultural perspective* on the study of teachers' encounters with and *appropriation* of ICTs. The rationale for choosing a sociocultural perspective was found in its explanatory power; it builds on a fundamental assumption that learning is a social and cultural phenomenon, i.e. it involves collaboration and the use of available resources and is not confined to the mind of the individual. This will be elaborated in the following.

VYGOTSKY'S LEGACY

Essential to a sociocultural perspective is the Vygotskian tradition in psychology and education. Lev S. Vygotsky (1896–1934) refined the theories of the human being as a tool-using social agent and how language affords and constrains thinking (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). This is referred to as the principle of mediation and mediated thinking and represents a cornerstone in sociocultural perspectives. In addition, Vygotsky was interested in studying development and future-oriented activities, and found this to be intimately linked to social and cultural rather than individual and cognitive dimensions. Thus, his seminal concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) rests on socially situated activity in which:

[i]t is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more intelligent peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

In sum, mediated thinking and action by cultural tools and mental development as a social and cultural phenomenon, not merely a cognitive and individual one, form the essence of Vygotsky's approach. This doctoral study argued for the explanatory power found in such approaches to the use of digital artifacts and teacher-led guidance and instruction. However, Vygotsky conceptualized but never operationalized the ZPD. It remained for his colleagues and students to pursue such endeavors.

CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY (CHAT)

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) takes Vygotsky's focus on the interplay between humans and tools (especially language) and takes a larger and more

systemic approach where a collective motive, the object of activity (for example, collaborative authoring in a wiki), is the driver for learning as expansion and going beyond current knowledge practices (see e.g. Engeström, 1987; Engeström, Mietinen, & Punamäki, 1999; Leont'ev, 1978). In Figure 7.1 (below) an activity system is illustrated.

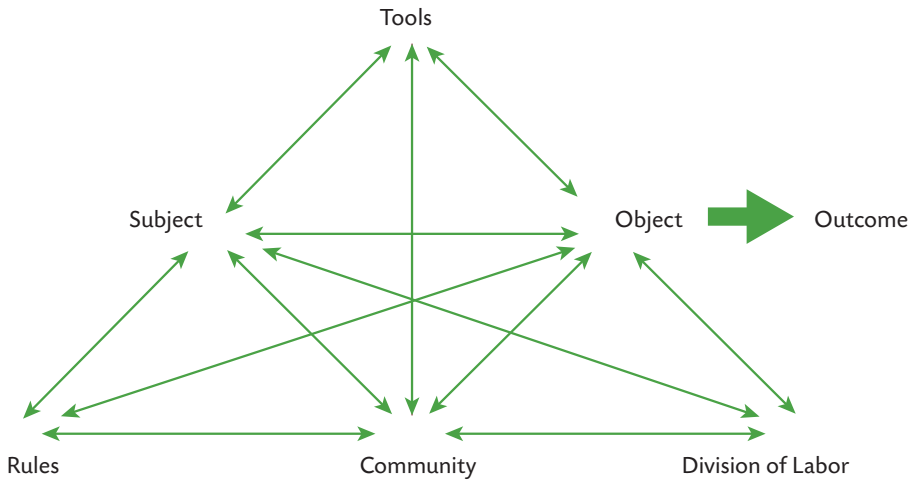


FIGURE 7.1. A model of an activity system (Engeström, 1999).

The top triangle is an approximation of Vygotsky's mediated action. In the expanded model of activity theory, this action rests on a foundation of rules, a community of practice (for example teachers), and a division of labor (for example between teachers and students). One component may be in tension with or mediate the transformation of another component. For instance, networked ICTs (cultural tools) may be in tension with a traditional teacher/learner division of labor (delivery/consumption) but also mediate the transformation of such division into a more interactive, collaborative, and empowered situation for learners. Furthermore, actors shape – as well as are shaped by – contexts and relations. An example is found in the way languages and language use are transformed when mediated by ICTs; we see an emerging vocabulary (blog, wiki, webinar), experimental syntax and register (emails), use of emoticons, multimodality etc. (Crystal, 2001a, 2001b; Wark, 1997; Warschauer, 2002). Engaging in such literacy practices also changes the person as a communicator and language user, for example when at the speed of a few key strokes s/he engages with diverse interlocutors in very different communicative cultural contexts, genres, and registers.

Taken together, the theoretical approaches and assumptions referred to above take us from language acquisition to language participation and increased student agency, although under expert guidance. But such expertise among teachers requires that they have appropriated the mediational means involved, made them their own, and instilled them with their own intentions as well as those of society. This is much more demanding than mere “mastery” of a tool (Bakhtin, 1979/2000; Wertsch, 1998) as it involves fusing subject-specific and didactic expertise with pedagogy; that, together with the affordances of technology, makes it possible to transform and improve teaching practices.

METHODOLOGY

The present study applied a mixed methodology and multilevel analysis. Methods included descriptive statistics, ethnographic research on classrooms, as well as virtual communities, elements of discourse analysis, and some informal talks and semi-structured interviews.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The Mixed Methodology Design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) was intended to bridge research questions, the composite field to be studied, and theory on the one hand, and unit of analysis, types of data, types of description, and conclusions on the other. The multilevel approach also involved a perspective that embraced individual, collective and institutional planes.

Below is a visualization of the research design.

If we break down Figure 7.2 into stages, we can analytically get an overview of how the research design progressed over a two-year period (September 2000–September 2002). Note that it appears as more linear than in the actual research, which involved overlaps and cycles. The first stage involved developing the design to examine teachers’ attitudes to and beliefs about ICT through a questionnaire, and also by observing online interactions among EFL teachers who took part in an extensive and ambitious in-service course on the use of ICT in EFL (*The Tower*). The second stage consisted of data collection in accordance with stage one. The third stage involved analysis of this data, predominantly in the form of descriptive statistics; however, qualitative approaches were also needed when encountering open-ended questions and the online interaction data. Stage four represented a shift into designing for examining what practices emerged in two classrooms. Stage five involved data collection through ethnographic classroom studies of

teacher and learner interactions, in addition to interviews. Finally, stage six represented a phase in which the previous stages converged in a more holistic analysis involving mostly qualitative analysis, but also some frequency counts.

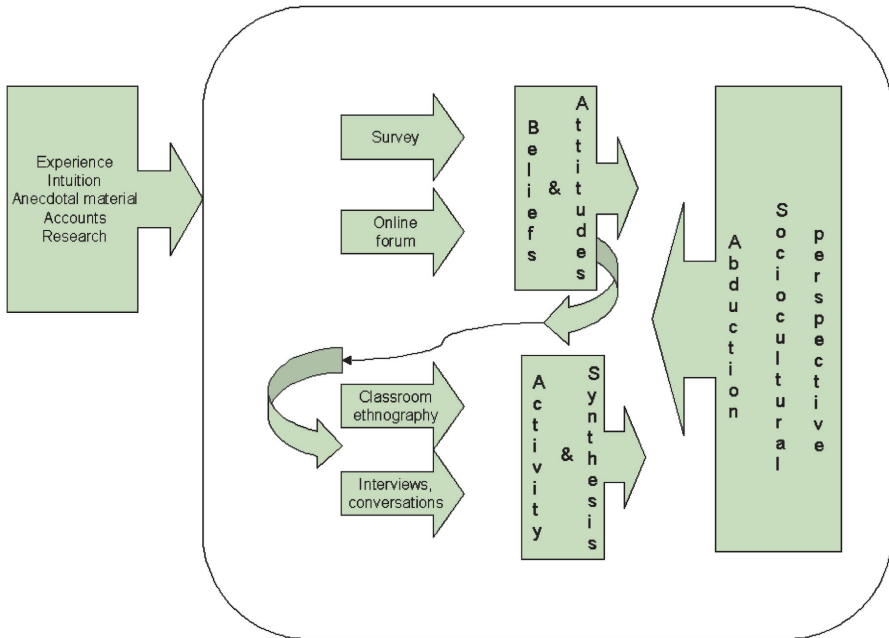


FIGURE 7.2. Research design. The model reflects a dynamic and evolving process in accordance with an abductive approach (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 1994), i.e. identifying patterns and relating them to the conceptual framework in order to analyze examples in depth. The link from the survey and online forum (Phase One) to the classroom ethnography and interviews (Phase Two) is not causal, only suggesting a connection.

SAMPLE

The above research design yielded several types of data; survey data in the form of responses to closed as well as open questions, data from a vast number of postings from teachers participating in the many discussion groups offered by *The Tower*, audiotaped interactions and field notes from classroom practices, data from senior high school students' work online and in virtual classrooms, and data from semi-structured interviews and informal talks with both students and teachers.

The data for this study was collected and processed over a period from September 2000 until September 2002. During this period, two primary sources were tapped; participants in the in-service course *The Tower* ("Språktårnet"), and teach-

ers and learners in two classrooms. A survey with pre-designed ($N=208$) as well as open-ended ($N=92$) questions was conducted with teachers of English who took part in the extensive in-service course. This quantitative approach sought to elicit the participating teachers' beliefs about, attitudes to, and experiences with ICT; i.e. their appropriation of ICT. The survey served as a backdrop for the qualitative, longitudinal study of three teachers (*Tower* participants) and their students. Thus, the second part of the study aimed to capture aspects of teachers' *practices* in ICT-rich environments. Both *The Tower* data and data from the two classrooms amount to purpose sampling in the sense that they were regarded as decisive in explaining the phenomenon under examination.

In order to rise above inductive accumulation while at the same time trying to grasp patterns in digitalized communication as they emerged in the data corpus, an abductive approach was chosen (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 1994). An abductive approach combines deductive and inductive approaches as it seeks to identify patterns in the data corpus, juxtapose patterns with theoretical concepts, and use the explanatory power of such juxtaposition to analyze examples in depth. Thus, empirical examples go beyond a status of being mere illustrations to become empirical carriers of principles and determinants pertaining to the phenomenon under study.

FINDINGS

This section is divided into two parts. First, three main findings emerging from the collected data corpus are listed. Next, these findings are extrapolated onto a meta level where the emerging educational activity system, as identified through the analyses, is juxtaposed with a schematized version of the activity system that functioned as its point of departure.

PATTERNS IN THE DATA

Pattern 1: The social spaces (both in terms of time and place) for EFL practices became extended. As EFL practices and content increasingly became “externalized” in distributed networks and other digital artifacts, new communicative spaces emerged. Teachers could exploit such new spaces by making designs for learning at the interface of offline and online environments. By populating and colonizing new social spaces, teachers and learners brought their lifeworlds, their cultures-of-use into them and, consequently, a potential for a shared or “third space” emerged, not least because of a series of innovative tasks designed by the

teachers. For example, in one such design, the class was divided into motorists on their way to an important event and demonstrating environmentalists blocking the highway. The setting was L.A. The participants were to articulate and enact their arguments and perceptions of the situation, using the school's intranet. This also resulted in subsequently videotaped role-play.

Pattern 2: The school subject of EFL learning was partially transformed. With networked ICTs, new participatory genres emerged as socially constructed conventions. These were developing and did not become well-established communicative forms on par with e.g. the business letter or the scientific essay. Nevertheless, the ICT-rich environment afforded opportunities for innovative and diverse practices. Thus, the distance between school and out-of-school practices was reduced. Moreover, such practices pointed to EFL as situated and contextual, both in human and technological terms. However, teachers sometimes found it difficult to assess such practices by conventional or standard criteria.

Pattern 3: Teachers needed to teach in ways they were not taught to do. In ICT-rich environments we saw the outline of communicative practices that ideally should prepare learners for the future. For teachers, this meant being committed to continuous professional development, e.g. by engaging in collaborative teamwork with colleagues, by fostering collaborative cognition in the classroom, and by developing a capacity for risk-taking and transformation. These processes involved learning and teaching as two aspects of an activity; the two could not always be separated, but emerged as two dimensions of partaking in the development of educational activities and discourse.

FINDINGS ON AN AGGREGATED LEVEL

On an aggregated level, the above findings point to tensions between an activity system of emerging practices and an activity system that carries a long institutional-organizational heritage. However, for the emerging activity system to be sustainable and not merely a stunt, constraints in the traditional system will have to be overcome. As schools are socially and culturally constructed institutions, the way they arrange conditions for teaching and learning are manifestations of how they think about (or ignore) urgent educational issues. Based on the findings gleaned from the data corpus, the present study revealed that the teachers found themselves at the interface of a historical and an emerging activity system (Table 7.1).

TABLE 7.1. Teachers at the Interface. Aspects of cultural reproduction and renewal.

| Issues | Interfaces | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| | Traditional | Emerging |
| Ontology | Dualist (mind \neq world), static | Non-dualist, relational interdependence of mind and world |
| Epistemology | Knowledge can be possessed through transfer and (individual) mental processes | Knowledge is situated, procedural, relational, collective, distributed over humans and artifacts |
| Literacy | A series of discrete functional skills to be taught (encoding and decoding) | Increasingly informed engagement in complex, diverse multi-modal social practices; |
| Technology | Enhancement of learning and teaching | Transformation, potential new spaces for learning and teaching |
| EFL school subject | Defined by curriculum, standardized | Beyond the curriculum, diverse and not (yet) approved variants |
| Didactics | Priority to knowledge acquisition, loose connection with a theory of learning | Priority to knowledge production, closer connections with theories of learning |
| Curriculum | Standardized, administered and controlled in the form of individual tests and exams | Negotiated with a view to “real world” practices and controlled as capacity for mature, collaborative participation |
| ICT Policies | Promote skills (technical and pedagogic) that produce efficacy in learning and teaching | [At the time of writing, this was not clear. Recent years have shown ICT policies also embracing innovation, creativity, transformation and epistemologies] |

In sum, findings from data analysis and findings on an aggregated level amounted to what was argued as the most important discovery in the doctoral thesis; that the underlying activity system for EFL teaching was changing, and that teachers who engaged in ICT-rich practices found themselves caught up in, challenged, and also invigorated by this process.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

In the following, empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions are listed before turning to implications for teaching English in technology-rich environments and suggestions for further research into this field.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Firstly, by juxtaposing data from *The Tower* survey with ethnographic and discourse data, this study could report from what teachers *perceived* and what teachers *did*. Thus, the empirical foundations for understanding what English didactics in technology-rich learning environments entails became more analytic and robust than in the rather descriptive accounts that often have been published.

Secondly, the field of ICT in EFL had at the time of the study not produced much data in the form of recorded interactions elicited from teachers' practices in ICT-rich environments. The micro-level properties of these data made it possible to track and analyze certain crucial decisions, "teachable moments", and serendipitous incidents up close. Important spaces for participation and realignment of teacher and learner positions could be seen in such data, including practices where learners exercised more agency and drew on language practices acquired and cultivated out of school, not least in online activities. Also non-standard utterances and linguistic features (spelling, emoticons, register) emerged in the course of the activities.

Cultures and technologies influence what counts as functional and valid English in the 21st century. Instead of locating the discipline within a linguistic system to be acquired, it is located in practices that are constantly being shaped and reshaped through an increasing number of people who engage in global and online Englishes. This situation has consequences for what we consider "acceptable" or "functional" practices and how we assess such practices. Novel communicative conventions are currently emerging in online communicative spaces, and while some might interpret such novel conventions as innovative experimentation, others might see regular errors and miscalculated context or interlocutor response. Such ambiguity could complicate assessment practices that take standardized language as their point of departure. Still, teachers need to take part in and point to productive and relevant use of such conventions in order to serve as informed and convincing users. If not, they risk becoming marginalized and abdicating their position.

This amounts to a novel image of the teacher: the new generation of teachers will find themselves at the interface of cultural reproduction and renewal. They will not only be entrepreneurs and executors of approved policies but also activists and agents of change, i.e. people who persistently inquire into and research educational practices. In this capacity, teachers will themselves constitute an interface between tradition and innovation, cf. the title of the present study.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Firstly, *The Teacher as Interface* was a study that was broad in its scope; it sought to capture appropriation processes as they emerged in collective as well as individual contexts. The mixed methodology approach used in the present study was in itself not new, although not common within a sociocultural perspective. However, the way quantitative and qualitative methods were sought to complement one another may represent a suitable methodological approach when the researched phenomenon is complex.

Secondly, the study aimed at capturing a multi-dimensional view of appropriation processes. The survey presented a “snapshot”, an accumulation of beliefs and attitudes aggregated in teachers over the time they participated in *The Tower* course but captured at the end of the course. Although descriptive statistical techniques have been used, the responses have also been analyzed qualitatively as a polyphony of voices, captured in a particular scientific genre. Thus, the survey made it possible to examine teachers’ appropriation of ICTs on a collective level after having participated in a particular discourse community.

Thirdly, the classroom observations captured the more longitudinal aspects of appropriation emerging in and through teachers’ practices. In addition, the longitudinal design captured levels of activity: horizontally in the form of consecutive sessions that added up a course or a term, vertically in the form of episodes and sequences, how these were enacted, and where we see different configurations of learners, teachers, and artifacts.

Finally, there was a contribution regarding recurrent phenomena and patterns and how they related to the theoretical perspective. Avoiding a strictly inductive or deductive approach, the present study made use of abduction. This approach examined instantiations of phenomena in light of theoretical assumptions and concepts; i.e. there is interplay between empirical data and conceptual framework. Abduction afforded an intimate relationship between the two and served as a valuable research strategy and methodology when analyzing phenomena through a particular theoretical perspective.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This researcher will argue that the current PhD study has made an important theoretical contribution to understanding how change and innovation affect education at the interface of offline and online settings and, consequently, the work of teachers.

Firstly, a sociocultural perspective was used to link the separate fields of EFL, ICTs, and didactics and to view their convergence in terms of the interface metaphor. Sociocultural approaches come with a set of constructs that make it possible to examine the transformation of the classroom under the impact of ICT. By transcending dichotomies of the individual and the social, mind and activity, actors and contexts, a sociocultural perspective provides analytical tools for studying how learners, teachers and artifacts realign themselves when encountering digital and networked technologies. Thus it was possible to make visible the relational expertise teachers in the 21st century will need (Edwards, Gilroy, & Hartley, 2002). The study has brought about a reconsideration of literacy and what it means to be literate today and in the near future. This is particularly important when the subject in question, English, is a global language on the rise in online settings.

Secondly, the present study instilled the field of didactics with certain assumptions of knowledge and learning to show that questions of ontology and epistemology become didactic concerns as information increasingly becomes digitized and distributed. Another aspect is that the distance between a subject matter as it appears in a formal schooling context and in the “real world” is reduced. Practices in the schools resembled authentic practices and in which the students’ lifeworld experience became a real asset. The epistemological implication is that learners relate to a school subject in new ways as they participate in giving it shape and may, over time, contribute to forming an activity system that challenges the traditional system. Such future-oriented, exploratory, and creative efforts must, however, be balanced by the cultural heritage found in the discourse of a school subject. Teachers play a crucial role in making visible and sustaining this balance between tradition and innovation. Thus, it can be argued that the theoretical lenses employed in the study brought about valuable contributions to didactics.

Finally, the construct of *appropriation* has been developed in some detail. The construct appealed to the present researcher because of its explanatory potential when examining how and why some teachers integrate ICTs and some do not. In sociocultural literature, the construct is often brought up but seldom in great detail or applied to a specific research objective. Rather, the appropriation construct has been used in general terms to characterize the relationship between agents and mediational means (Wertsch, 1998). The present study used appropriation as a key

to understanding how teachers integrate technologies in the EFL classroom and has, thus, aimed to operationalize the construct within a particular domain. This involves not only demonstrating how teachers (and learners) merely enact digitalized communication, but also how they cope and at times struggle with making emerging genres and registers their own. With on-going change and development in language and learning/teaching approaches as well as digital technologies, the appropriation processes of teachers might be one of the major roads to explore in order to advance and improve our understanding of what goes on in the 21st century classroom and how to prepare teachers for practices in transformation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AND TEACHER EDUCATION

At the two schools, the three teachers that were observed made changes in the way they organized their teaching. This came about either by grouping sessions into larger units or by going beyond “normal” working hours, e.g. when conducting online sessions with students in the United States, ICT suspended many constraints regarding time and space. Therefore, there seems to be a need for greater flexibility with regard to the school subject and its allotted time that the current organization of schooling does not easily accommodate.

Another similar issue is how the three teachers managed to cope with the added complexity. Teachers at one school tried to take on challenges by building a collaborative approach that included teachers of English as well as technicians and ICT-savvy students at the school. This amounts to enhanced relational competence as part of teachers’ professionalism. In the case of the other school, there was a quite different situation as the ICT-competent teacher ran a mostly solitary practice. This can be seen as a survival strategy: teachers with the kind of competence that this teacher displayed might be exploited and experience burnout if they are not allocated time to let their expertise benefit staff and administration. In both cases, the issue is one of sustained support and division of labor. The implications are that innovative practices cannot be separated from how contexts encourage, adapt to, or resist transformation at classroom level as well as on an institutional level.

A basic but relevant question that might follow any study would be *So what?* In slightly more sophisticated form, the above question might be rephrased, *What might be the practical relevance of the present study for educators?*

Responses from *The Tower* survey as well as the classroom practices observed showed how the EFL curriculum was innovatively enacted at classroom level. One could say that the teachers observed at the two schools in many ways taught

beyond the curriculum. When ICTs permeate practices and are not just add-ons to existing ones, we see fundamental transformation. The PhD project demonstrated that such transformation included a re-conception of literacy, realignment of positions, relations and agency, new spaces for participation, and proximity to diverse and authentic practices, in addition to students' practices involving e.g. experimental spelling and objectionable choice of (four-letter) words far from "accepted standards". Well thought-out designs of learning environments and activities and careful orchestration of them are needed.

In turn, the analyses and findings of the doctoral study have implications for teacher education and in-service training courses. ICT-intensive designs and enactment of them need to be integrated, and designs must pay attention to two dimensions of education; enculturation into an existing discourse that centers on a school discipline (e.g. EFL) as well as transformational potential that prepares for emerging discourses. ICTs offer opportunities for creating such designs but teachers will need support from institutional and academic quarters in order to make such opportunities materialize. For instance, ICT integration needs to be linked to theoretical frameworks in order to avoid being merely *ad hoc* and unprincipled efforts. It is the relations between humans, artifacts, and contextual factors that emerge as mutually constitutive of learning and teaching. Moreover, in order to sustain innovative practices and make them more robust, teachers need to become *designers of technology-rich environments and trajectories as well as researchers of their own practices*.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study was conducted at a time when there was very little similar literature, especially where a sociocultural approach was used. The study was also broad in scope, which left room for more in-depth research to be done in a number of areas. Some might appear as an extension of the implications presented above. In the following, two major themes with strong links to the present study are briefly pursued: a) Teachers' Professional Digital Competence (PDC), and b) Language Learning and Identity.

Professional Digital Competence (PDC)

In recent years, increased interest in teachers' professional digital competence has emerged. This corresponds with a teacher role where s/he is not merely an executor of the curriculum but a knowledge worker and designer of learning environ-

ments and learning trajectories (see e.g. Cviko, McKenney & Voogt, 2014; Lund, Furberg, Bakken & Engelen, 2014; Brevik, Gudmundsdottir, Lund & Strømme, in press). The *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* has frequently published articles on such issues.³ From a sociocultural perspective, the focus has often been on the juxtaposition of technology and literacy as practices that have operational, cultural and critical dimensions to be appropriated by teachers. Furthermore, connecting school and out-of-school practices has emerged as a research topic that has raised a lot of scholarly interest in recent years (Lund, 2016). As for the transformative dimension touched upon in the empirical contributions (above), this is firmly linked to the role of the teacher as a designer of technology-mediated learning activities where humans and “non-humans” collaborate, but also to epistemological implications: how we come to knowledge and engage in knowledge practices and communicative endeavors when information is digitized, multimodal and infinitely accessible.

PDC is not an established concept or practice, and much research remains until we have a robust conceptualization of this competence. However, a vital element is how PDC connects deeply with the learning sciences and fundamental assumptions of learning; in our case sociocultural perspectives. Further, as an epistemic framework PDC links theory and practice in the sense that the two are not dichotomized, but rather represent two knowledge types and logics mutually constitutive of learning and development, in many ways the ultimate girder of the teaching profession. To further develop the understanding of PDC among teachers and student teachers, it is important to discuss the specific conditions that apply when teachers use ICT in their profession, and to discuss teacher education as one of the important realms where the operationalization of the concept takes place. Further research along these lines represents a multitude of exciting possibilities for enriching the educational professions.

Language Learning and Identity

A more subject-specific research direction that follows from the empirical contributions is how digitalization affords a whole new communicative ecology (social networks, hybrid spaces, virtual worlds, tele-collaboration, mass collaboration and communication, communication via avatars, etc.). With English as one of the primary languages used on the Internet, it commands special interest for anyone wanting to study language use and development in digital environments.

3. See e.g. <https://www.idunn.no/dk/2014/04>

As digitalization has become more sophisticated and pervasive, we see how digital environments not only offer opportunities for learning activities but also for developing, experimenting with and enacting identities by engaging in digitally mediated communicative practices (Thorne & May, 2017). Through virtual reality, augmented reality, imagined communities, online gaming, social networking sites, and blogs, language learners can experience an extension of their personal physical lives or adopt alternative identities, experimenting with and enacting personae.

The connection between identity formation and language learning has for decades been accepted as a powerful incentive for development of the first language (L1); how we construct our social identities through language, projecting for example class, gender, culture, nationality and/or community. Thus, *language as a social practice* has become one of the seminal constructs. Furthermore, research on identity formation has shown that identity is not an innate and static attribute of the individual, but that we may have multiple identities that are authored and enacted as we improvise and observe conventions depending on contexts and cultural worlds and spaces (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). It would seem that at the juxtaposition of identity formation and new digital spaces, we encounter exciting opportunities for developing L2 proficiency and an expanded linguistic register, brought about by the possibilities of participating in diverse online language communities. For example, Brevik (2016) examined a phenomenon where male students in upper secondary school emerged as more proficient readers in English L2 than in Norwegian L1, and that online gaming seemed to play an important role. This is due to game instructions in English as well as communicating with other gamers in English.

Increasingly researchers and practitioners alike have started to investigate how virtual worlds (often with avatars) and online communicative spaces mediate diverse language use and, consequently, language learning (e.g., Norton & McKinney, 2011). The possibilities for cultural interaction, expanded literacy, and commuting between contexts, discourses, and registers open up for a plethora of context-specific and context-sensitive task types and activities. This opens up a whole new field of language research on poly-contextual use of English.

Many of the above suggestions require interventions and intervention research. In such studies, teachers could be involved since they can be identified as agents of change and since they increasingly have access to powerful digital artifacts. The primary reasons for interventions are found in the vagueness of the curriculum and syllabi when it comes to ICT, the mismatch between instrumental views of ICT (ICT as “mere tools”) and the way digital technologies influence and trans-

form practices, and also how curricula as well as policy papers, programs for ICT integration and EFL teachers' professional development need to be informed by current research.

This doctoral study showed that EFL educators needed to appropriate technologies from a social and relational perspective. However, more research is needed on perspectives and practices that link human cognition and social practices in order to make sense of the transformational potential of digital technologies (Brevik et al., in press). The present doctoral study was written with an intention to contribute to this endeavor.

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8

PhD revisited: Preparing future teachers to teach with ICT

An investigation of digital competence development in ESL student teachers in a Norwegian teacher education program¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Røkenes, 2016b) which investigated English as a Second Language (ESL) student teachers' development of digital competence in a Norwegian secondary teacher education context. Results show that ESL student teachers might be digitally confident, but lack knowledge and awareness of how to use information and communications technology (ICT) didactically to support pupils' learning in English. Implications and further research for professional digital competence (PDC) development in ESL for Norwegian teacher education are discussed.

KEYWORDS Professional digital competence | student teachers | teacher education | ESL | ICT

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Røkenes, 2016b) from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, focusing specifically on its practical implications for Norwegian teacher education and the teaching of English in Norway. This is an article-based thesis, with three published articles (Røkenes, 2016a; Røkenes & Krumsvik, 2014; Røkenes & Krumsvik, 2016). The doctoral thesis in its entirety is available here: <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2395012>.

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INTRODUCTION

English can be considered a global language or the lingua franca of the Internet, software and digital technologies (Crystal, 2006), which underlines the importance of mastering the language for participating in the increasingly digitalized and networked world. Hence, English language teachers play an important role in enabling pupils to participate fully in our increasingly digitized and networked society, knowledge- and competency-based economy, and world of work (Voogt, Erstad, Dede, & Mishra, 2013). In order to meet the requirements of language teaching in today's digitalized schools and networked world, language teachers need professional digital competence (PDC) in subject disciplines such as ESL (Lund, Furberg, Bakken, & Engelién, 2014; Tømte, 2013). Teaching English with information and communication technology (ICT) in Norwegian secondary schools (grades 8–13) and in higher education is now considered a given; pupils in upper-secondary schools are commonly provided with laptops while several schools use tablets and mobile devices, and most classrooms and lecture halls are equipped with projectors, interactive whiteboards and broadband Internet (Egeberg, Hultin, & Berge, 2016; Gjerdrum & Ørnes, 2015). The situation puts pressure on teacher education institutions to prepare future language teachers to be able to master and appropriate teaching with ICT in their disciplinary field in a didactic manner (Instefjord, 2014). However, Norwegian teacher education institutions have been criticized for over a decade for their slow uptake, tool-focused and teacher-centered teaching practices, and lack of innovative ways to integrate and teach with ICT (Hetland & Solum, 2008; Tømte, Kårstein, & Olsen, 2013). At the time of this doctoral study, little empirical research in the field of secondary teacher education, both internationally and in Norway, has focused on didactical, subject-related use of ICT and digital competence development in secondary school student teachers (Haugan, 2011; Kay, 2006; Tondeur et al., 2012). The research context for this study is a Norwegian teacher education program with secondary school ESL student teachers enrolled in an ESL didactics course leading to a qualification to teach ESL in the Norwegian secondary school.

The overarching purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding about how secondary school ESL student teachers develop digital competence and become proficient in integrating ICT in ESL teaching through teacher education. The main research question examined throughout the study was:

How is digital competence developed in secondary school ESL student teachers at a Norwegian teacher education program?

In order to examine the main research question further, the study investigated different aspects related to ICT training in secondary teacher education, ESL student teachers' self-reported digital competence, and their digital competence development after completing a workshop in digital storytelling.

THEORY

The study draws on a sociocultural perspective of learning and the notion that learning has to do with mastery and the appropriation of cultural tools (Wertsch, 1998). ICT exemplifies such a cultural tool that could potentially change how student teachers teach and pupils learn English in school. Over the last two decades, the notion of digital competence has been used to capture how we use, interact, and learn with ICT and digital tools. Digital competence is often referred to as “skills, knowledge, creativity, and attitudes required to use digital media for learning and comprehension in a knowledge society” (Erstad, Kløvstad, Kristiansen, & Sjøby, 2005, p. 8, my translation). Erstad (2010) has further suggested several categories to specify and operationalize core components of digital competence in school, which in turn can be used to assess pupils' digital skills. These include: 1) having basic skills, and being able to 2) download/upload, 3) search, 4) navigate, 5) classify, 6) integrate, 7) evaluate, 8) communicate, 9) cooperate, and 10) create (Erstad, 2010, pp. 101–102, my translation). These components move from mastering technical skills towards appropriating critical reflection regarding the role and function of media in society, and can be related to learning both inside and outside of a school setting.

In Norway, digital competence has been considered a part of teachers' and teacher educators' professional competence since the last curriculum reform, where the use of ICT for teaching and learning has increasingly become an important aspect of teachers' work (Krumsvik, 2011; Lund et al., 2014). Research shows that teachers' use of ICT differs from other professions, resulting in a need to develop PDC among teachers, teacher educators, and student teachers. Accordingly, PDC can be understood as “the teachers/TEs' [teacher educators'] proficiency in using ICT in a professional context with good pedagogic-didactic judgment and his or her awareness of its implications for [digital] learning strategies and the digital Bildung of pupils and students” (Krumsvik, 2011, pp. 44–45). From his definition, Krumsvik (2011, 2014) has created a theoretical model for making visible “tacit knowledge”, and for prompting teachers and teacher educators' “reflection-on-action” on their digital competence (Figure 8.1). The model, originally developed for digital competence in teachers and TEs, also takes into

account the various key aspects contained in the concept PDC by attempting to show “the many ways in which teachers have to deal with this complex competence journey” (Krumsvik, 2011, p. 46).

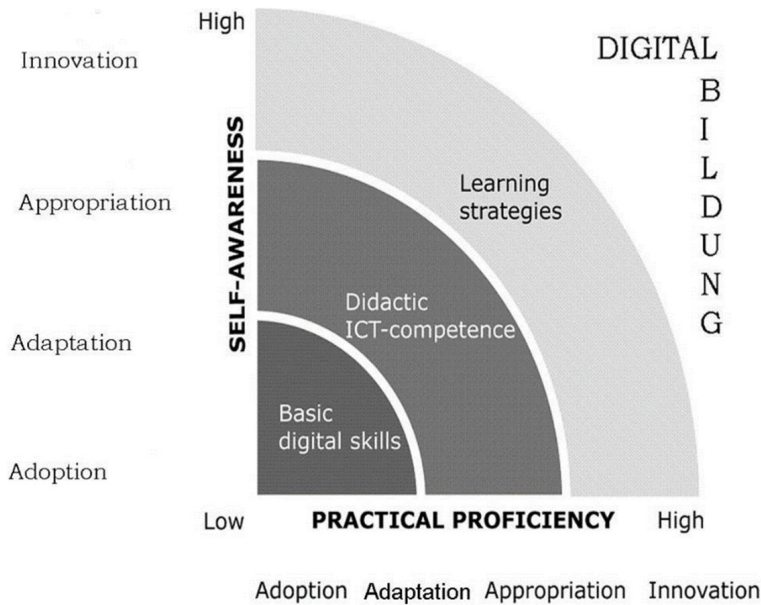


FIGURE 8.1. Model of digital competence for teachers and teacher educators (Krumsvik, 2011, p. 45).

Both the horizontal and vertical axes in the model depict different stages in the teachers’ practical proficiency and self-awareness with ICT through the four dimensions of adoption, adaptation, appropriation, and innovation. These dimensions are related to Wertsch’s (1998) concepts of mastery and appropriation of cultural tools in which adoption and adaptation (i.e., mastery) refer to knowing how to use a cultural tool, while appropriation and innovation point to “the process of taking something that belongs to others and making it one’s own” (Wertsch, 1998, p. 53). In the adoption and adaptation stages, the teachers are relatively incompetent, unsure, and unaware of the possibilities and limitations of ICT in teaching. However, as they progress towards the appropriation and innovation stages, they become more competent, confident, and aware of the potential that ICT can offer teaching. Eventually, during the innovation stage, they might develop their own digital resources and working methods while commenting on existing technologies and practice.

While the two axes in the model focus on the practical and mental aspects of digital competence development, the center region of the model is concerned with pedagogical use of ICT in education. Digital competence is described as consisting of four core components (Krumsvik, 2014, pp. 276–277):

- 1) Basic digital skills – elementary use of ICT for leisure and social communication (e.g., fundamental technical skills, social media, news, music, games) outside of school and work, and basic use of administrative and office software, and technical tools for teaching in schools (e.g., office tools, email, LMS, interactive whiteboards, laptops, tablets).
- 2) Didactic ICT competence – reflective pedagogical use and seamless integration of ICT in subject disciplines (particularly relevant for ESL are e.g., online dictionaries, multimodal learning resources, digital quizzes, chat, discussion boards), and the awareness of its added value and limitations for teaching subject content knowledge and for pupils’ learning potential (e.g., writing with pen and paper versus on a laptop, using paper-based textbook versus digital textbook, showing still images versus animations).
- 3) [Digital] Learning strategies – awareness of how to scaffold pupils’ development of learning strategies, knowledge construction, and metacognition with ICT (e.g., when working with reading screen-based texts, creating digital mind maps, conducting Internet searches, comparing and interpreting multiple online sources), as well as how ICT impacts forms of assessment, adapted education, and learning environment (e.g., digital exams, e-portfolios, task differentiation, classroom management, individual versus group and whole-class activities).
- 4) Digital Bildung – awareness of ethical considerations, social implications, and effects that ICT has on human development, how to deal with these issues, and how to foster positive moral behavior and use of ICT by discussing ethical pitfalls and dilemmas involved with pupils’ increasingly digital lifestyle inside and outside of school (e.g., cyberbullying, plagiarism, source criticism, illegal downloading, privacy, online anonymity, escapism).

In sum, the model attempts to illustrate the core components of teachers’ PDC through abstract and to some extent overlapping categories. The model was used as an analytical research lens in the study to support the interpretation of the collected data on ESL student teachers’ PDC development in teacher education.

REVIEW

In several international studies on language teaching, ICT is highlighted as effective for learning and teaching by affording access and exposure to authentic language material, communication opportunities, instant and individualized feedback, and classroom integration (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014; Stockwell, 2007). For example, in their review of over 350 studies on language teaching and learning with technology, Golonka et al. (2014) found that technology made a significant impact on foreign language learning in studies on “computer-assisted pronunciation training, in particular, automated speech recognition (ASR)” (Golonka et al., 2014, p. 70). The improvement of pronunciation in language learning could be facilitated using ASR and provide efficient feedback to the learner “to a larger extent than human teachers can” (Golonka et al., 2014, p. 88). The authors also found strong evidence for the use of online chat in foreign language learning, where these studies showed a significant increase in both complexity and amount in the learner’s language production.

Another review by Stockwell (2007) examined the use of technology in teaching language skills by looking at 206 studies published in four major English-language journals in the field of computer-assisted language learning from 2001 to 2005. Stockwell (2007) found that most studies focused on developing the learner’s grammar and vocabulary skills through incorporating online learning resources, online chat, or presenting the language skill with “different annotation styles (e.g., links for textual meaning, audio, graphics etc.)” (Stockwell, 2007, p. 110). Both reviews showed that the range of technologies used in language teaching is broad and constantly evolving, and that technologies such as ASR, chat and online learning resources can have an impact on language skills.

In Norwegian educational research on technology, in particular with Norwegian secondary school ESL teachers, there seems to be an increased use of digital technologies to promote pupils’ language production, proficiency, and knowledge such as through Wikis (Lund, 2008), social networking sites (Vasbø, Silseth, & Erstad, 2013) and digital storytelling (Normann, 2012). In particular, research on the use of digital storytelling (DST) for educational purposes has focused on teachers’ use of the method for developing pupils’ language skills. However, at the time of this doctoral study, little was known how DST is used in teacher education for teaching ESL with ICT, and for developing PDC in student teachers.

The increased use of technology in language teaching and learning has consequences for teacher education, being responsible in preparing future language teachers, both in Norway and internationally. Researchers and policymakers note that as the demands of teaching ESL with ICT in Norwegian classrooms increase, future

teachers need to develop PDC through teacher education to fulfill curricular requirements and be able to teach in today's digitalized schools (Krumsvik, 2014; Lund et al., 2014; Tømte, 2013). Moreover, as pointed out by Stockwell (2007), it could be argued that student teachers should be introduced to relevant teaching activities and approaches that prepare them to integrate ICT in their language teaching.

However, in Norway there was currently very little research on the preparation of future teachers to teach with technology. In particular, at the time of my doctoral study, no studies had been conducted in the field of PDC development in Norwegian teacher education for grades 8–13 (for studies on grades 1–7 & 5–10, see Instefjord, 2014; Tømte, 2013), and no studies had examined how this competence is developed in subject disciplines such as ESL. This doctoral study attempted to fill the knowledge gap by investigating the development of PDC among ESL student teachers in Norwegian teacher education (grades 8–13).

METHODOLOGY

The overarching research methodology for the study drew on approaches and strategies from literature review (Hart, 1998) and design-based research (DBRC, 2003). In the latter approach, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for collecting data to understand the investigated phenomena both in breadth and in depth. In addition, the main research method for the study can be classified as following mixed-methods (MM) research since both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative data (document analysis, participant observations, semi-structured interviews, document analysis) were collected and integrated in the three sub-studies making up this doctoral study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The overall research design is presented in Table 8.1. A qualitative document analysis² was first conducted (sub-study 1) to examine what approaches were used for ICT training teacher education programs to develop digital competence in secondary school student teachers. The document analysis was followed up with an MM case study where a quantitative survey was first used to investigate ESL student teachers' self-reported digital competence. This was followed up with qualitative participant observations of their ESL didactics university teaching, school practice,

2. For the purpose of this chapter, the term “document analysis” is used instead of “literature review”.

and semi-structured interviews of a sample of purposefully selected ESL student teachers including their teacher educator in ESL didactics. Finally, results from the sub-studies were used to inform the execution of a design-based research study on the use of digital storytelling (DST) for developing PDC in teacher education.

TABLE 8.1. An overview of the three sub-studies, MM data and analyses used in the doctoral study.

| | Sub-study I | Sub-study II | Sub-study III |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| Title | Development of Student Teachers' Digital Competence in Teacher Education – A Literature Review | Prepared to teach ESL with ICT? A study of digital competence development in Norwegian teacher education | Digital storytelling in teacher education: A meaningful way of integrating ICT in ESL teaching |
| Research question | What approaches for ICT-training do teacher education programs use to develop digital competence in student teachers educated to teach in the secondary school grade level? | How is secondary student teachers' digital competence developed through an ESL didactics course at a Norwegian teacher education program? | How can a digital storytelling workshop promote secondary ESL student teachers' digital competence in teacher education? |
| Design | Document analysis | Case study research | Case study research Design-based research |
| Sample | Online peer-reviewed empirical articles Previous review articles | Student teachers Teacher educator | Student teachers Teacher educator |
| Data | Database searches ($N=3104$) Keywords <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Digital competence ▶ Digital literacy ▶ Computer literacy ▶ Media literacy ▶ Teacher Inclusion/exclusion criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Included studies: 42 | Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ S1: $N=41$ ▶ S2: $N=112$ Participant observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ESL didactics lessons: $N=20$ ▶ Classroom visits $N=18$ Semi-structured interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ESL student teachers: $N=15$ ▶ ESL teacher educator: $N=1$ | Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ S1: $N=41$ Participant observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ESL didactics lessons: $N=20$ ▶ Classroom visits $N=18$ Semi-structured interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ESL student teachers: $N=15$ ▶ ESL teacher educator: $N=1$ Reflection logs |
| Analysis | Thematic analysis Coding/categorization | Digital competence model Coding/categorization | Digital competence model Coding/categorization |

SAMPLE

The study included different types of sample including documents (study I), ESL student teachers, and their ESL teacher educator (studies II & III). The main sample population in the study was made up of ESL student teachers following a five-year postgraduate degree program at a Norwegian teacher education institution, which qualifies them to teach ESL in Norwegian secondary school, grades 8–13. The student teachers were between 20 to 30 years old, and would finish their teaching degree by writing a Master's thesis in their main subject discipline. The student teachers were sampled from four cohorts of ESL student teachers attending ESL didactics lessons (2012–2014). From these four cohorts, 15 ESL student teachers (11 females, 4 males) were purposefully sampled for follow-up investigations along with their ESL teacher educator. Student teachers were also sampled for two surveys. The first survey, S1, comprised 41 ESL student teachers in their first teaching semester while the second survey, S2, comprised 112 student teachers in their second and final teaching semester.

DOCUMENTS

A thorough document analysis was conducted exploring approaches to ICT training in secondary teacher education. The sample in the literature review consisted of 42 online peer-reviewed empirical studies in which eight approaches to ICT training in teacher education were uncovered. These approaches were later used to inform the research design and analysis in the following sub-studies. Furthermore, a wide range of documents (grey literature, i.e. unpublished documents that are sometimes difficult to access) was explored to inform the design of and complement the study. The documents used can be classified into two types; the first being policy documents, reports and the national curriculum; the second being documents generated in the overall project throughout the research process, including the ESL student teachers' assignments, digital stories and reflection logs. The purpose of analyzing these was to shed light on the use of ICT in ESL teaching and Norwegian teacher education.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEYS

Following the document analysis, two quantitative self-reporting surveys were distributed. The surveys were made up of two sections of self-reporting items: demographic information (10 items) and concept mapping questions and statements regarding digital competence (i.e. exploring the respondents' attitudes, per-

ceptions, and needs for PDC), ICT use in the teacher education program and among their teacher educators (19 items). With every conceptual question and statement, the student teachers were asked to choose the answer that fitted their own self-perceived beliefs on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very low level of skills/competence/completely disagree) to 7 (high level of skills/competence/completely agree).

The quantitative data from the two student teacher surveys were analyzed for descriptive statistics (Maxwell, 2013); S1 ($N=41$, collected using “clickers” during plenary lecture) and S2 ($N=112$, collected by electronic survey). The descriptive statistical analyses included calculating frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The purpose of these analyses was to examine the ESL student teachers’ self-perceived PDC and their views on the use of ICT in the teacher education program. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to check the validity of the variables in the digital competence model (Figure 1). Table 8.1 shows the variables included in the factor PDC as well as mean differences, and standard deviations.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

The participant observations were conducted in ESL didactics lessons and two DST workshops (January 2013 & January 2014) at the university, and in the sampled ESL student teachers’ classrooms during school practice over four academic semesters (2012–2014). The collection of observation data was recorded through ethnographic field notes during and after the observations, where the researcher included both descriptions and personal reflections (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). The focus of the participant observations in the ESL didactics lessons was on the student teachers, teacher educator, and in-class teaching and learning activities involving the use of ICT in English language teaching. During the observations in the student teachers’ school practice English lessons, the focus was on the student teachers’ activities, use, and integration of ICT during their lessons.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) were conducted with a total of 15 purposefully sampled student teachers and their ESL didactics teacher educator. The purpose of using interviews in these studies was to get a deeper understanding of how the student teachers developed their digital competence in ESL teaching, and what, how, and why they used ICT in their school practice.

Interviewing the teacher educator also helped shed light on what, how, and why ICT was used in the ESL didactics course and in general in the teacher education program. The interview guide was divided into five main themes and piloted with two graduate ESL student teachers: 1) the student teacher's reflections on prior ICT experiences in and out of school, 2) the student teacher's teaching experiences with ICT during the school practice, 3) ICT training and the use of digital technologies in the English didactics course, 4) ICT training and the use of digital technologies during the teacher education program, and 5) the student teacher's reflections on self-perceived digital competence development during the teacher education program. All interviews were conducted in Norwegian and translated into English by the researcher.

RESULTS

The results from the surveys, participant observations, and interviews show that the ESL student teachers' development of PDC varied throughout their teacher education. Although they seemed to be confident in elementary and basic digital skills, the ESL student teachers seemed to lack knowledge and awareness of how to use ICT didactically to support pupils' learning in English, and how to develop pupils' digital learning strategies and digital Bildung (Table 8.2). The outcome of the two DST workshops, which were organized and run by teacher educators on campus in 2013 and 2014, showed that the ESL student teachers were able to move beyond basic digital skills and that they started thinking didactically about the learning potential that ICT could have for English language teaching.

TABLE 8.2. Student teachers' self-perceived PDC.

| Question | S1 | | S2 | |
|---|------|-------|------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Elementary ICT skills – how well student teachers master the use of laptops and digital tools (e.g. online banking and social media) in their spare time (outside of work and school) | 6.00 | 0.949 | 6.32 | 0.750 |
| Basic ICT skills – how well student teachers master the use of digital tools (e.g. learning management systems, Word, Excel, and Power-Point) in their studies in a coherent way | 5.39 | 0.919 | 5.89 | 0.809 |
| Didactical ICT skills – how well student teachers master the use of digital tools (for instance digital learning resources in ESL) for teaching and potentially enhancing pupils' subject learning | 4.44 | 0.950 | 4.94 | 0.942 |

| Question | S1 | | S2 | |
|---|------|-------|------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Digital learning strategies – how student teachers master guiding pupils in reading screen-based texts with concentration, persistence, flow, and coherence | 3.49 | 1.247 | 4.34 | 1.119 |
| Digital Bildung – how well student teachers master guiding pupils in developing digital Bildung associated with ethical challenges (e.g. cut and paste, illegal downloading and similar) that their digital lifestyle offers | 4.46 | 1.645 | 5.36 | 1.012 |
| Overall digital competence – based on the previous questions, how well student teachers assess their digital competence for teaching | 4.68 | 1.011 | 5.16 | 0.812 |

Questions used a 7-Point Likert scale (1 = no skills, 7 = very good skills).

MODELING DIDACTICAL USE OF ICT

From the document analysis, eight approaches to ICT training in teacher education emerged, including collaboration, metacognition, blending, authentic learning, modeling, student-active learning, assessment, and bridging theory and practice gap. The most prominent of these approaches was modeling, i.e. having the ESL teacher educator serve as a role model was pointed out by the student teachers as an effective approach to generate more ideas on how they could integrate ICT into ESL teaching. In particular, observational and interview data showed that making pedagogical reasoning for practice clear, explicit and understandable promoted the student teachers' didactical ICT competence:

I was lucky with my mentor teacher. She worked with eTwinning [online collaborative platform], which our ESL teacher educator has also talked about at the teacher education program. I got the opportunity to see how it worked (Erich, spring interview, 2013).

The ESL teacher educator has shown us several good web pages such as BBC World News where you can go in and find short video clips. It becomes more authentic than the textbook in a way (Katie, fall interview, 2013).

Observation data from the ESL didactics lessons involved the teacher educator integrating ICT into ESL teaching through, for instance exemplifying writing digital texts in front of the student teachers while thinking out loud, demonstrating

quiz apps and online dictionaries, and showing pupils’ digital stories, podcasts, and multimodal compositions. Some student teachers were observed modeling the use of ICT in front of their pupils including critical use of social media, how to compose DSTs, and how to locate information by using search engines:

Sometimes I have to Google things, and then I take it up [on the projector] so that everybody [pupils] can see it. So when I am Googling then we can discover together what they are wondering about (Ellie, spring interview, 2014).

However, most of the time during the ESL didactics lessons the student teachers were observed passively listening to the ESL teacher educator’s instructions of how they could use ICT in ESL teaching. In the interviews, the student teachers expressed that they also wanted to actively try out the different digital tools rather than being passive listeners, and further explore the potential that the tools could afford for teaching and learning:

The ESL teacher educators could have invested more time on going in-depth with certain tools like “This is how you can do these things. You can use these in this and this context”. This might be the reason too why so few of us use it because we do not really know how to use the digital tools in our school practice (Andrew, fall interview, 2013).

TABLE 8.3. Teacher educators’ PDC.

| Question | S1 | | S2 | |
|---|------|-------|------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Overall digital competence of teacher educators* – based on the previous questions, how well student teachers assess the digital competence of their teacher educators | 4.56 | 1.119 | 4.26 | 1.257 |
| Competence development of teacher educators** – to what extent student teachers see a need for competence development in the use of ICT for teacher educators | 5.41 | 1.322 | 5.44 | 1.354 |
| Teacher educators as a role-model*** – to what extent student teachers perceive their teacher educators as a role-model for their own use of ICT in their teaching | 3.66 | 1.296 | 3.60 | 1.372 |

Note. Questions used a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = no skills*/no extent**/completely disagree***, 7 = very good skills*/high extent**/completely agree***). The asterisks refer to the different question formulations.

Time with the ESL teacher educators to explore different digital tools in-depth seems to be a crucial factor for the student teachers to familiarize themselves with how to use these technologies in their school practice. In the surveys, the student teachers were asked to report on their teacher educators' PDC in their teacher education program and to what extent they perceived them as digitally competent role models for their own ICT use (Table 8.3).

In contrast to the interview data, both surveys (S1 & S2) showed that not all student teachers perceived their teacher educators as role models for their own use of ICT in teaching (Table 8.3). Likewise, a majority of the student teachers seemed to agree that there was a need to develop digital competence in teacher educators (Table 8.3). Furthermore, observational data showed that during their school practice, a majority of the student teachers tended to adopt teacher-centered styles of teaching ESL with ICT similar to those used by the teacher educator and mentor teachers, including using ICT for direct instruction and content delivery. Often, this entailed reliance on basic digital skills including using word processors, PowerPoint, and YouTube, which were also commonly featured in ESL didactics lessons. During the interviews, one student teacher argued that:

A lot of the digital learning in teacher education happens implicitly by “copying the teacher educator”, but that does not provide you with the competence to do it yourself. It ends up being a “trial and error” approach instead of giving us research or lessons about it (Tim, fall interview, 2013).

SCAFFOLDING LEARNING EXPERIENCES WITH ICT

Although the student teachers perceived modeling as helpful in developing their digital competence, they also noted a preference for practical activities where they were supported in authentic hands-on learning experiences with ICT. For instance, exploring online learning resources and creating digital artifacts in the ESL didactics lessons and in short workshops were pointed out as helpful activities for learning about how ICT could be used in a real classroom:

NDLA [Norwegian Digital Learning Arena] was new to me. It is a very good tool because you know you can find verified information there. In a way, it is a “teacher approved Wikipedia,” which I think is great (Mariam, fall interview, 2012).

Digital storytelling [workshop], that's an example where we got to try out being a pupil and not just a teacher (Erich, spring interview, 2013).

Survey and observational data showed that the student teachers seemed fairly confident in their self-perceived digital competence, notably elementary and basic digital skills. For example, Table 8.2 describes how the student teachers rated their elementary and basic digital skills as very high, indicating mastery of basic use of ICT including for entertainment, social media, and office and administrative software. In addition, observational data also support these results where the student teachers' use of ICT in the ESL didactics lessons and during their school practice was observed to be centered on direct instruction and content delivery. Nevertheless, confidence does not necessarily transfer into practice and might just come off as "talk". Despite their mastery of basic digital skills, some student teachers expressed in the interviews that they did not have significant learning experiences with ICT from prior schooling, higher education, or teacher education. Therefore, they saw little educational value in using ICT in their own teaching. In other words, they were not able to see the real affordances that ICT could offer for teaching and learning, and therefore resisted appropriating ICT into their lessons. Although the ESL teacher educator was observed exemplifying how to use relevant digital learning resources to develop pupils' language skills such as the BBC Languages website and with DST, the student teachers did not seem to appropriate these resources into their own teaching:

We're used to using video, PowerPoint, and Word for writing assignments. I wish we could have developed a bit more and use apps and learning tools, other tools than those we already are familiar with (Mariam, fall interview, 2012).

Social media should have been discussed more just because a critical focus on social media is important (Tara, spring interview, 2014).

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

The doctoral study presented here focused on how ESL student teachers developed professional digital competence (PDC) in Norwegian teacher education. The main argumentation was that teacher education plays an important role in preparing student teachers to teach with ICT in today's digitalized schools and should therefore enable them to meet curriculum demands, where teaching with ICT is significant in teaching various subject disciplines. Hence, teacher education programs should develop student teachers' PDC for integrating ICT in their subject discipline such as ESL. Ultimately, such a competence could better equip ESL student teachers to face the increasingly complex demands of the curriculum, con-

temporary schools, and learning expectations of current and future generations of pupils. In the following, empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions including implications for teaching English in teacher education and in school, and suggestions for further research, are discussed.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Through designing, trialing, and investigating the use of DST in teacher education, the thesis provides insight into an innovative, pedagogical, and didactical way of integrating ICT in ESL teaching. The study's document analysis seems to paint an optimistic picture of how technically competent student teachers are and how they can be prepared to teach with ICT in their future careers as professional teachers. However, the results from the doctoral study showed that few of these approaches, such as collaborative learning with ICT or setting aside time for hands-on experimentation with ICT, were actually implemented by the ESL teacher educator. Moreover, from the data, it appears that most ICT usage by both the ESL student teachers and their teacher educator in this study was based on traditional teacher-centered ways of teaching, i.e. content delivery and direct instruction. The data reflects the fact that innovative use of ICT is not prioritized in teacher education, and that the most frequent use of ICT revolves around using technology to support traditional teaching practices. This superficial and teacher-centered use of ICT in teacher education raises the critical issue of whether a gap is really being created between what student teachers are taught in teacher education and the demands they face in the digitalized school (Krumsvik, 2014).

The main empirical contribution of this thesis is increased knowledge about how PDC can be developed in student teachers qualifying to teach in secondary school. The study showcased different approaches for ICT training in teacher education. For example, the document analysis highlighted approaches such as modeling, metacognition, and collaborative learning as important steps in teacher education towards PDC development. The study showed the teacher educator as an important factor concerning PDC development in student teachers, notably through modeling and scaffolding ICT integration in teaching, as pointed out in the case study. Despite the reported lack of opportunities to try out digital technologies in teacher education, this study offers evidence that most ESL student teachers pick up and employ these technologies during their school practice when teaching English in secondary school. Thus, the data indicate a link between the teacher educator's use of digital tools and student teachers' subsequent integration of ICT in teaching.

Second, regarding how to integrate ICT in ESL teaching, the teacher educator played a critical role for student teachers to appropriate PDC. However, because a majority of the ICT usage by the teacher educator was teacher-centered, focusing on direct instruction and content delivery, the student teachers' ICT integration seemed affected by these experiences during school practice. The student teachers' use of ICT was fairly superficial, and dominated by administrative and office software, presentation technologies, social media, and using the Internet to locate information. Thus, the student teachers drew on their basic digital skills. Although these technologies were already mastered by the student teachers, the issue was how to develop their PDC to move from mastering basic digital skills to appropriating didactical ICT competence (Figure 1). A possible solution here is to provide student teachers with opportunities to appropriate PDC, by getting hands-on experience with how to integrate ICT in their teaching such as through DST. Watching the teacher educator model didactical use of ICT in subject discipline teaching might not be enough to ensure that student teachers will master and appropriate PDC.

Third, the study showed how working with DST in teacher education could be used to integrate ICT in ESL teaching in innovative ways, and to develop student teachers' PDC. The study shows how approaches from research literature about ICT training in teacher education can be applied to a design-based research study context to promote PDC in ESL student teachers. Notably, this includes the teacher educator modeling DST and offering the student teachers opportunities to try out DST for themselves in a scaffolded and collaborative learning environment. Using familiar, basic desktop tools for creating digital stories such as Movie Maker, the threshold for integrating ICT in teaching is lowered, thus increasing the chances that student teachers use DST in their future teaching. These approaches might stimulate student teachers' PDC development to go beyond mastering basic digital skills towards appropriating didactical ICT competence.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The results of the iterations and refinements of the workshop design could potentially provide a blueprint for other researchers and teacher educators who wish to implement the method in similar contexts. In addition, the use of “clickers” for collecting survey data during a plenary lecture (S1) can be considered an innovative method, and holds methodological implications for collecting quantitative data. Other Norwegian studies have successfully employed this method in different contexts, including pupils' and teachers' digital competence in secondary

school (Krumsvik, Egelandstad, Sarastuen, Jones, & Eikeland, 2013). This doctoral study, however, might be the first to collect quantitative data on ESL student teachers' PDC using "clickers", which could be considered a methodological contribution.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

As a theoretical contribution, this study used Krumsvik's (2011; 2014) theoretical model to examine PDC development in student teachers (Figure 1). Originally the model was intended to investigate digital competence in teachers and teacher educators (Krumsvik, 2014). In the doctoral study, it was applied as a research lens for examining ESL student teachers' PDC development in teacher education. The study demonstrates how Krumsvik's (2014) model can be applied to study this phenomenon in a Norwegian teacher education setting. Specifically, this study calls for more critical awareness and focus on how teachers, teacher educators, and student teachers can utilize ICT to teach in a sound pedagogical and didactical way. Here, the study provides theoretical arguments for further promoting the development of PDC in teacher education.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Overall, the findings imply that ESL teacher educators need to critically and didactically reflect on what kinds of digital tools they use during teacher training as well as how and why, because they will model and influence how ESL student teachers will be using ICT in their future teaching. This argument can be extended to include the mentor teachers during school practice who are also digital role models. Furthermore, the study findings imply that teacher educators and mentor teachers need to set aside time to provide scaffolding for the student teachers to practice authentic, pedagogical, and didactical ways of teaching with ICT.

Modeling innovative ways of integrating ICT in ESL teaching during teacher education might lower the threshold for student teachers to use technology in their own English teaching, and ESL teacher educators should encourage student teachers to share new ICT practices from their school practice with their peer students in teacher education. Moreover, video technologies could help student teachers see alternative pedagogies and purposeful didactical integration of ICT. In turn, these technologies could potentially change their traditional teacher-centered ways of teaching with ICT.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

More research on ICT in teacher education should focus on developing innovative teaching practices with technology through the use of interventionist research designs such as design-based research. For example, a recent study analyzed the development of PDC among student teachers at the University of Oslo through the use of a small private online course (SPOC), identifying how such use developed their PDC (Brevik, Gudmundsdottir, Lund & Strømme, in press). As there is a dearth of such studies, more research is needed. Moreover, there seems to be an abundance of reports in the media on the rise of non-academic use of mobile devices and cyberbullying in schools. Further research in teacher education could explore the use of mobile devices for teaching and learning, including how to address emerging ethical issues (c.f. digital Bildung, Figure 1) related to new technologies. In addition, there is a need for more mixed methods research showing subject specific use of ICT in teacher education such as in ESL, as the field seems to be dominated by quantitative studies reporting on general ICT use, attitudes or beliefs among staff and students (Gjerdrum & Ørnes, 2015). An emerging topic for further research is how teacher educators and teachers' PDC could be developed and assessed in further education courses (c.f. the DigGiLU project. 2018–2020).³

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9

PhD revisited: The Acid Test

*Does upper secondary EFL instruction effectively prepare Norwegian students for the reading of English textbooks at colleges and universities?*¹

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ABSTRACT This quantitative study used an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Reading Module to examine the academic English reading proficiency of Norwegian upper secondary and university students. About 66% of the senior upper secondary school students scored below IELTS Band 6 compared to 32% of the university students. Their problems were due to slow reading for detail and poor vocabulary. Implications for teaching and further research are discussed.

KEYWORDS Reading English for Academic Purposes | language testing | Content and Language Integrated Learning | International English Language Testing System

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1. This chapter presents the overall results from my doctoral study (Hellekjær, 2005). The entire thesis can be downloaded from: <http://www.uv.uio.no/ils/forskning/publikasjoner/rapporter-og-avhandlingen/HellekjaerAvhandling%5B1%5D.pdf>

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INTRODUCTION

The role of English in Norwegian higher education in the 1990s and early 2000s was characterized by three overall factors. First, since Norway is a small language community with a limited book market it has long been necessary to put English texts and textbooks on university reading lists (Dahl, 1998; Hatlevik & Norgård, 2001). Second, an increased focus on internationalization and student mobility (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2002) led to a growing number of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) courses and programs for Norwegian and international university students. Third, Norwegian higher education institutions relied on upper secondary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction to provide the skills needed for higher education. The importance of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) reading proficiency and the lack of research in this area led to the doctoral study presented here. This doctoral study aimed to examine: *Whether, and to what extent, Norwegian students in higher education have problems reading the English texts and textbooks on their reading lists.*

After a brief look at what characterized Norwegian reading research of the time, selected data from three quantitative sub-studies of EAP reading proficiency are presented. Two are from higher education, and one from the General Studies (GS) branch of upper secondary school that qualifies for higher education. The focus is put on presenting reading scores, and their covariance with selected variables such as unfamiliar vocabulary, EFL courses, extracurricular reading, and university level study experience.

THEORY: DEFINING READING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In the present thesis, reading or reading to learn was understood as the active creation of meaning in an interactive process between information in the text on the one hand, and the knowledge of the reader on the other (Bråten, 1997). It drew upon a model of reading as an interactive process involving lower-level (bottom-up) processing and higher-level (top-down) processing (e.g. Alderson 2000; Bråten, 1997; Grabe, 1999; Koda, 2005). The core, bottom-up process involves recognizing the written words in the text along with relevant grammatical information. This hinges upon rapid and automatic word recognition, which provides the basis for higher-level processing, i.e. the creation of meaning in an interactive process between the information in the text being read, and the reader's knowledge of language, content, processing skills and strategy use. For academic reading it also requires the ability "to integrate text and background information

appropriately and efficiently” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 28). This involves using background knowledge, that is content knowledge on the one hand, and knowledge of the language and text types on the other. It may also involve other cognitive processes, meta-cognitive monitoring in particular, and strategy use.

Reading in a second language (L2) was considered to be similar to in first language (L1), but subject to “a number of additional constraints on reading and its development” (Grabe, 1999, p. 11). The most important of these was vocabulary, since fluent reading depends on rapid and automatic word recognition that leaves as much as possible of the limited working memory free for higher level processing (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989). This means that having to struggle with unfamiliar words can slow down or even disrupt the reading process, as will excessive dictionary use. There was at the time an on-going debate about what an adequate vocabulary for academic reading meant in practice, and the ability to understand 95% of the words in academic texts was considered a minimum for the fluent reading of academic English as the L2. Such a level would require extensive and systematic vocabulary instruction, along with years of reading practice (Coady, 1997; Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 1999; Paribakht & Wesche, 1997), and was by no means reflected in either syllabus goals or requirements of the then current EFL syllabi.

Another of the key differences between L1 and L2 reading discussed at the time was the claim that readers approached the latter with a dual-language system (Koda, 2005). For many such dual processing could even be an advantage – in the Interdependence Hypothesis, Cummins (2000) argued that “academic proficiency transfers across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their first language will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in their second language” (p. 173). Bernhardt (2005) proposed a compensatory model of L2 reading that attempted to quantify the importance of L1 literacy, L2 language knowledge and what she terms “unexplained variance”. The latter category comprises content, comprehension strategies, interest and motivation, etc., and Bernhardt (2005) argued that a weakness in one area might be compensated for by knowledge from another (see also Stanovich, 1980). However, poor L2 proficiency could hinder the transfer of skills and strategies to the L2, which was known as the threshold hypothesis (Alderson, 2000; Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Carrell, 1991; Laufer, 1997).

Against this background, the reading construct in this thesis draws heavily on Grabe’s (1999, p. 34) description of what is needed in order to be a good reader in either the L1 or L2, researched-based criteria upon which tests such as the Inter-

national English Language Testing System (IELTS) admission tests were operationalized. Grabe's (1999) criteria are listed below:

1. Fluent and automatic word recognition skills, ability to recognize word parts (affixes, word stems, common letter combinations);
2. a large recognition vocabulary;
3. ability to recognize common word combinations (collocations);
4. a reasonably rapid reading rate;
5. knowledge of how the world works (and the L2 culture);
6. ability to recognize anaphoric linkages and lexical linkages;
7. ability to recognize syntactic structures and parts of speech information automatically;
8. ability to recognize text organization and text-structure-signaling;
9. ability to use reading strategies in combination as strategic readers [. . .];
10. ability to concentrate on reading extended texts;
11. ability to use reading to learn new information;
12. ability to determine main ideas of a text;
13. ability to extract and use information, synthesize information, and infer information; and
14. ability to read critically and evaluate text information.

Again, few of these criteria were reflected in the then-current upper secondary school curriculum.

READING RESEARCH IN NORWAY – A BRIEF REVIEW

During the late 90s there was mounting criticism of Norwegian L1 reading instruction for failing to go beyond the decoding stage to the teaching of “reading to learn”, with negative effects on students’ reading practices with regard to strategy use and the ability to adjust reading to reading purpose (Bråten, 1997; Bråten & Olaussen, 1997, 1999). In a study of teacher education students, Fjeldbraaten (1999) found that these used the counterproductive, reading-for-detail approach to their L1 textbooks they had learnt in secondary education. She also found that even a one-year reading strategy course did not change this – when under stress, the students promptly reverted to the reading-for-detail approach they were used to. Despite the growing criticism, there was little debate about reading instruction before the 2001 OECD “Pisa-shock” study showed that Norwegian 15-year-olds were not proficient L1 readers (Lie, Kjærnsli, Roe, & Turmoe, 2001). It was first

and foremost the high, in-class variation in reading scores that led to serious debate and the Knowledge Promotion curriculum reform, which continued when the next tests showed no improvement (Kjærnsli, Lie, Olsen, Roe, & Turmoe, 2004).

Given the transfer from L1 to L2, there was good reason to expect that the weaknesses found in L1 reading proficiency would be present in the L2 – English – as well. There had been only a few relevant but small-scale, studies. The first found that that current EFL teaching was causing upper secondary school students to use a counterproductive, slow and detail-focused approach to the reading of English (Hellekjær, 1992). Later this became a serious problem for the early implementation of Content and Language Integrated (CLIL) instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school, although the students' reading skills improved rapidly when given relevant reading instruction (Hellekjær, 1996). A later survey of 145 first-year university college respondents confirmed that the same slow, careful, word-by-word reading of English texts that was typical of upper secondary school students persisted in higher education (Hellekjær, 1998). Finally, there was the 2004 large-scale European comparative study of English proficiency comprising representative samples of Norwegian, Danish, French, Finnish, Dutch, German and Spanish 16-year-olds (Bonnet, 2004). While Norwegian students did well, closer analysis showed that the Norwegian scores had the highest standard deviations, in particular for reading comprehension. Ibsen (2004, p. 35) concluded that this high, in-class variation for English, mirrored the findings for L1 reading in the recent OECD/PISA survey (see Lie, Kjærnsli, Roe, & Turmoe, 2001).

This brings us to the present study, where, in the light of the importance of EAP reading proficiency for higher education, the available research on L1 and L2 reading clearly indicated the need to further investigate this issue. This led to this doctoral study, where the main research aim was: *Whether, and to what extent, Norwegian students in higher education have problems reading the English texts and textbooks on their reading lists*. As mentioned, it compared university with senior upper secondary school student reading scores.

METHOD

The present quantitative study, comprising three sub-studies with surveys and tests of three different samples, used a quasi-experimental, one-group, post-test research design (see Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002, pp. 106–107). See table 9.1 for a more detailed overview.

MATERIAL

Three questionnaires were used to collect data. All included items tapping into the dependent variables English and Norwegian reading proficiency, into the independent variables expected to co-vary with reading comprehension such as English reading habits, media use, and the handling of unfamiliar words when reading. They also included items providing information about student backgrounds, such as university students' study experience. Sub-study 1 used self-assessment items that could be merged into additive indices to measure reading proficiency; sub-study 2 combined these and an IELTS Academic English Reading Module, part of an English proficiency test used by UK and Australian universities for admission purposes, to validate the self-assessment items; and the IELTS Module was used for sub-study 3.

The use of self-assessment items to measure the reading proficiency of university students in sub-study 1 was to ensure that the survey could be answered quickly during the last ten minutes of a lecture. Research shows that self-assessment surveys can provide a reliable and valid picture of skills and/or levels of proficiency in low-stakes situations, such as in a survey (Bachman, 1990; Oscarson, 1997). Drawing on the construct definition of reading, I therefore developed a number of self-assessment items testing different aspects of the reading process. Items 40, 41 and 42 tapped into bottom-up processing, and 43, 44 and 45 into top-down processing when reading. To allow for comparisons there were identical items for Norwegian and English. Those for English are presented below:

40. How **quickly** do you **read English** texts on your reading lists? (Give only one answer)
41. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 **how many words you do not understand** in the **English** texts on your reading lists.
42. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to what extent you find the **sentences in the English texts** difficult to understand.
43. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to what extent you **find the English texts coherent** when reading.
44. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to what extent the **information in the English texts is so densely presented** that it hinders your understanding of the contents.
45. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to what extent you find **the contents of the English texts understandable**.

All the items used seven-point scales from 1 (highly difficult) to 7 (no difficulties). Following reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), these six items were merged

into additive indices and used as dependent variables – as measures of academic reading proficiency.

I was granted permission to use an Academic English Reading Module specimen test that IELTS said was identical in difficulty to comparable tests (UCLES, 2001a, 2001b). It comprised a Geology, a Business, and a Technical text, each about 900 words long (UCLES, 2001a). The tasks – in this case, 38 multiple choice items – require respondents to read strategically, to make use of previous knowledge, both of content and text type, to interpret and understand the texts, to draw upon the ability to make correct inferences needed for understanding, and to monitor and realign comprehension while reading. The one-hour time limit served to give an indirect measure of reading speed – the more slowly the respondent reads, the more unanswered items. IELTS uses conversion tables to score the items from Bands 1 to 9, Band 6 being the most common minimum requirement for admission to most UK and Australian universities, although some also require Band 7. The IELTS conversion table with the weightings of the different items was not available; instead I used the IELTS guideline in the accompanying booklet (UCLES, 2001a) to determine band levels. For this specimen text, IELTS set Band 6 to 23 of 38 points.

PROCEDURE AND SAMPLES

For the first university-level study (sub-study 1), I first had to identify undergraduate courses with English texts on their reading lists, which precluded random sampling. Either the lecturer or I handed out the questionnaires to students during the last ten minutes at the end of the lecture. This resulted in 578 undergraduate level respondents from three faculties at the University of Oslo.

Next, for sub-study 2, I contacted Computing, Business and Administration and Political Science students at Østfold University College, Geography and Social Anthropology students at the University of Science and Technology in Trondheim (NTNU), and with the help of an assistant, Biology students at the University of Bergen. The students were given 80 minutes to answer the questionnaire and complete the IELTS Academic Reading Module. Even though the students were paid for their time, it proved difficult to get volunteers, so I stopped after 53 students.

Finally, for sub-study 3, I contacted ten upper secondary schools, three because they had single-subject, sheltered Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes. Seven schools agreed to participate. The teachers handed out and collected the questionnaires with the IELTS Academic Reading Module, and the senior GS branch students were given roughly 80 consecutive minutes to answer.

This resulted in a convenience/purposive sample of 217 students. An overview is provided in Table 9.1.

TABLE 9.1. Overview of the survey samples, time of surveying, type of survey, respondent affiliation, respondent numbers and instruments used to assess English reading proficiency.

| Sub-study | Time of survey | Type of survey | Respondent affiliation | Number of respondents | Instruments used to assess reading proficiency |
|-----------|---------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | Spring 2001 and fall 2001 | Survey of university level students' reading proficiency | University of Oslo, the Faculties of Education, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences | 578 | Self-assessment items |
| 2 | Fall 2001 | Validation test of university level students' self-assessment scores | Østfold University College and the Universities of Bergen and NTNU, Trondheim | 53 | Self-assessment items and an IELTS Academic Reading Module |
| 3 | Spring 2002 | Survey of senior (third year) upper secondary level students' reading proficiency | Seven upper secondary schools from different parts of Norway. 39 students had CLIL instruction, 178 EFL only | 217 | An IELTS Academic Reading Module |

Of the 578 respondents in sub-study 1, 159 (28%) were from the Faculty of Education, 266 (46%) from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, and 53 (26%) from the Faculty of Social Sciences. Of these, 45 (8%) did not have Norwegian as their L1. The majority of students were female, 427 (74%). The courses in questions had 1,125 registered students, giving a 51% reply rate, rising to 65% if the 894 completed examinations were used as a baseline.

Sub-study 2 comprised 53 respondents, 44 from Østfold University College, seven from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), and two from the University of Bergen. Thirty-one (58%) of the respondents were male and 22 (42%) female. Only one respondent (2%) did not have Norwegian as his or her L1. The reply rate could not be determined.

Sub-study 3 comprised senior upper secondary students, 217 in all. Thirty-nine of these had a single, sheltered CLIL subject from three different schools, either History or Physics taught in English. The remaining 178 had different EFL courses, 45 (34%) with the first-year Foundation course, 30 (17%) with English I, and 100 (56%) with English II courses. It was not possible to determine the reply rate.

DATA ANALYSES

The statistical analyses focused on mean scores, score and respondent distributions, and analysing co-variations between dependent and independent variables using correlation analysis (Pearson's r) and multiple regression (linear). I also carried out reliability analyses (Cronbach's alpha) of the self-assessment and IELTS items prior to merging these into additive indices for use as dependent variables.

RESULTS

This doctoral study aimed to examine: Whether, and to what extent, Norwegian students in higher education have problems reading the English texts and textbooks on their reading lists. The three studies showed that about 32% of the university level respondents had difficulties reading English texts and textbooks and that 66% of the upper secondary school GS students also had difficulties, scoring below Band 6 on the IELTS Academic Reading Module. Interestingly, 74% of the students with a CLIL course managed Band 6 or better. A more detailed analysis is presented in the following.

SUB-STUDY 1 – THE MAIN UNIVERSITY LEVEL STUDY

This university-level study used a set of self-assessment items to investigate reading proficiency in English and Norwegian. After a reliability analysis, these were merged into the additive indices *Enindex* and *Noindex* to provide measures of reading difficulty in the two languages. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were high, $a = .84$ for *Noindex*, and $a = .94$ for *Enindex*. This made it possible to compare the scores for reading difficulty between the two languages, and next to examine reading difficulty in English. The mean score for *Enindex*, $\bar{x} = 4.6$ ($SD=1.1$), was clearly below the $\bar{x} = 5.7$ ($SD=0.73$) of *Noindex*, and with a markedly higher standard deviation than for *Enindex*. The score distribution of is presented in Figure 1. The scores to the left indicate higher levels of reading difficulty, on a scale from 1 (difficult to understand) to 7 (no difficulties).

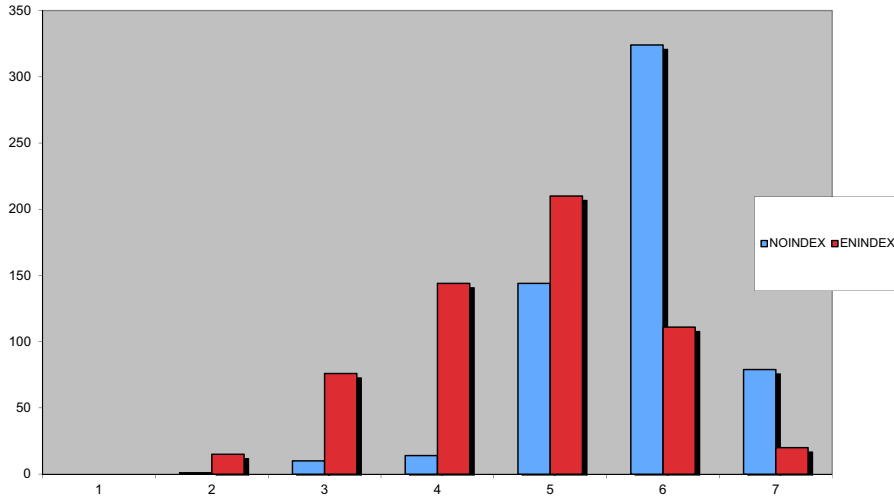


FIGURE 9.1. Distribution of self-reported Noindex and Enindex additive indices scores displaying reading proficiency scores. The scale is from 1 (difficult to understand) to 7 (no difficulties). For display purposes, values from 0 to 1.49 being counted as 1, from 1.5 to 2.49 as 2, etc.

As displayed, while the scores for *Noindex* are skewed to the right around a median value of 5.8, while those for *Enindex* are more evenly distributed with many well below the median value of 4.7 and with a markedly higher SD, clear indications of greater perceived reading difficulties for Norwegian. As I will return to in sub-study 2, a comparison of the IELTS and self-assessment scores in this study indicated that self-assessment scores of 4 or below also fell below IELTS Band 6. In other words, the 185 (32%) of 578 respondents that scored below 4, and who would most probably not achieve Band 6 on the IELTS Reading Module, are those experiencing moderate to serious difficulties reading English texts and textbooks. As for main sources of reading difficulty, I investigated this question through a more detailed comparison of the unmerged items used for the *Noindex* and *Enindex* indices. The comparison is presented in Table 9.2.

TABLE 9.2. Comparison of reading difficulties between English and Norwegian, mean scores and standard deviations (SD) for items 34 to 39 for Norwegian, and the equivalent items for English, 40 to 45. Scoring is on seven-point scales from 1 (lowest) score to 7 (highest).

| Items | Norwegian mean scores and standard deviations | English mean scores and standard deviations |
|--|---|---|
| 40. How quickly do you read the texts on your reading lists? | 5.43 (SD= 1.2) | 4.31 (SD= 1.4) |
| 41. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 how many words you do not understand in the texts on your reading lists. | 5.91 (SD= 0.8) | 4.47 (SD= 1.1) |
| 42. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to which extent you find the sentences in the texts difficult to understand. | 5.81 (SD= .1.0) | 4.63 (SD= 1.2) |
| 43. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to which extent you find the texts coherent when reading. | 5.83 (SD= 0.9) | 4.73 (SD= 1.3) |
| 44. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to which degree information in the texts is so densely presented that it hinders your understanding of the contents. | 5.42 (SD= 1.0) | 4.58 (SD= 1.3) |
| 45. Indicate on the scale from 1 to 7 to which extent you find the contents of the texts understandable. | 5.79 (SD= 0.8) | 4.88 (SD= 1.2) |

As can be seen in Table 9.3, the fairly low scores for reading speed (Item 40) goes to show that this is a challenge in both languages. The next source of difficulty in English is unfamiliar vocabulary (Item 41), with complex sentences (Item 42) and with texts with densely presented information (Item 44) following close behind. Finally, the higher standard deviations for reading in English give evidence of greater variation in reading proficiency. To further investigate the problem of unfamiliar vocabulary in particular, a number of items asked how the respondents handled unfamiliar items of vocabulary when reading. How these correlate (Pearson's r) with reading proficiency, as measured by *Enindex*, is displayed in Table 9.3.

TABLE 9.3. Bivariate correlations between *Enindex* and ways of handling unfamiliar words when reading in the Study 1 survey. $n=527$ (51 missing answers).

| Independent variables | r |
|---|-------|
| Dictionary use | -.17* |
| Guess meaning of word using subject knowledge | .17* |
| Guess meaning of word using context | .27* |
| Ask lecturer | -.01 |
| Ask other students | -.11* |
| I just keep on reading | .04 |
| I give up reading altogether | -.50* |

* $p < .01$

This overview shows that only the ways of handling unfamiliar words that avoided disrupting the reading process, such as guessing word meaning, had positive correlations. Those that disrupted the reading process, such as using a dictionary or asking fellow students, had negative correlations – meaning that the more frequent their use – the lower the *Enindex* score. Interestingly, the highest negative correlation, $r = -.50$, was for the item “I give up reading altogether” is a clear indication of serious reading difficulties that are most probably due to poor English proficiency.

FURTHER ANALYSIS

Given the two indices tapping into reading in the L1 and L2, this gave the opportunity to examine the Interdependence Hypothesis – the expectation that if a respondent read well in Norwegian as the L1, they would also read well in English as the L2. This was supported by a correlation (Pearson’s r) between *Enindex* and *Noindex* of $r=0.43$ ($p>.01$, $N=528$), with the caveat that there is no clear indication of direction. Next, cross tabulation revealed a considerable number of respondents who fell below the Linguistic Threshold Level due to poor English skills, with high scores for *Noindex* but very low for *Enindex*.

There were also a number of background questions: about study experience, advanced English courses taken in upper secondary school, and about extracurricular reading and exposure to English. When correlated with *Enindex*, the item for completing the third advanced upper secondary school English course gave only

a low correlation of $r = 0.13$ ($p = .01$, $N = 572$). With regard to study experience, where reading difficulty might be expected to decrease with time, no significant correlation between study experience and reading proficiency was found. Instead, extracurricular reading gave a positive result. Analysis showed that many students read extensively, about half having read 16 novels or more, and of these 108 (18%) having read 51 or even more. This gave a fairly high and positive correlation with *Enindex* of $r = .47$ ($p = 0.01$, $N = 573$), while for magazine reading the correlation was $r = 0.43$ ($p = 0.01$, $N = 574$), and for internet reading $r = 0.4$ ($p = 0.01$, $N = 576$). Furthermore, multiple regression analyses with these three variables (for reading novels, magazines and periodicals, and on the Internet), with *Enindex* as the dependent variable, gave an explained variance of $R^2 = .29$, accounting for 29% of the variation in the reading scores.

SUB-STUDY 2 – THE VALIDATION STUDY

The main aim of this survey was to validate the self-assessment indices used to measure English reading proficiency in sub-study 1, and if possible, benchmark these against the IELTS Academic Reading Module scores. The questionnaire included the same self-assessment items for reading in English and Norwegian as in sub-study 1, and the same items on reading habits, the handling of unfamiliar vocabulary, upper secondary English courses, and study experience. As in sub-study 1, the self-assessment items for Norwegian and English could be merged into additive indices. For this sample the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for *Enindex* was a high $\alpha = .9$, and for *Noindex* a moderate to high $\alpha = .7$. With a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .9$, the 38 IELTS scores could also be merged into the additive index *Alltext*.

The IELTS test results

The distribution of the IELTS Academic Reading Module scores (*Alltext*) for the 53 respondents are displayed in Figure 9.2.

As can be seen, 44 of 53 (83%) respondents scored Band 6 (24 points) or better, with 40% achieving 34 of the 38 points or more, a clear indication of a ceiling effect, and this should be considered an acceptable outcome. However, these were volunteer respondents, as likely as not fairly confident about their English skills – one respondent mentioned that many who did not feel proficient did not volunteer. In addition, the 25 (48%) Computer Science respondents from Østfold University College were at the outset above-average students because of heavy competition

for admittance to their study program. It is therefore probable this particular sample had a higher level of proficiency than would be the case with a representative sample of Norwegian students.

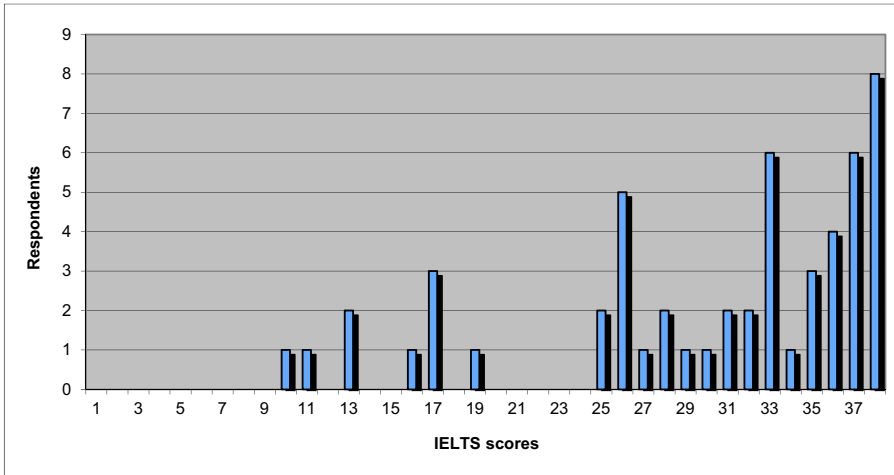


FIGURE 9.2. IELTS Academic Reading Module scores. The maximum score is 38, the mean, $\bar{x} = 30$, and standard deviation, $SD= 8.0$, $N= 53$.

However, the main goal of this study was to validate the self-assessment indices used to measure reading proficiency in sub-study 1. I therefore correlated the index for the English self-assessment items, *Enindex* with the IELTS index *Alltext*, and (Pearson’s r) correlation between these was $r= 0.72$ ($p<.01$, $N= 53$). This fairly high correlation gives reason to claim that the self-assessment index *Enindex* gives a useful and reasonably valid picture of student reading difficulties in English.

Next, in an attempt to benchmark the self-assessment index for English against the IELTS scores, further analysis showed that the (relatively few) respondents who scored below Band 6 on the IELTS test also scored below 4 on *Enindex*. This gives reason to argue that the 32% with *Enindex* scores below 4 in sub-study 1 also fall below the IELTS Band 6 level.

Finally, further analyses gave largely the same results as in sub-study 1. For study experience, correlating the number of completed ECTS credits (29) with *Enindex*, *Noindex*, and IELTS scores gave no meaningful or significant correlations. Once again, only extracurricular reading gave positive correlations; when correlated against IELTS scores (*Alltext*), book reading gave $r=0.58$; periodical reading $r=0.38$; and Internet reading $r=0.47$, all statistically significant ($p=0.01$,

$N=53$). Multiple regression analysis with IELTS scores as the dependent variable and the three items for book, periodical and internet reading as independent variables gave an explained variance of $R^2 = 0.40$, clearly higher than for sub-study 1. With regard to the handling of unfamiliar vocabulary, the pattern largely reflected that of sub-study 1, but with non-significant correlations, most probably due to the small sample.

Sub-study 3–The upper secondary school study

Having found that about a third of the university students had difficulties reading English, the next step was to examine the proficiency of senior GS upper secondary school students. As mentioned, this sample comprised 217 students, of which 39 had a single CLIL (the CLIL sub-sample) while the remainder, 178 respondents had EFL instruction only (the EFL sub-sample). The questionnaire had roughly the same items as in the university surveys and the same IELTS Academic Reading Module used for sub-study 2. The IELTS items were again combined into an additive index (*IELTS*) to serve as a dependent variable. For the EFL sub-sample, reliability according to Cronbach's alpha was high, $\mu = .95$; as for the CLIL sub-sample, $\mu = .92$. An overview of the IELTS scores for the different sub-samples, and according to English course, is presented in Table 9.4.

TABLE 9.4. An overview of the IELTS mean scores with standard deviations, and of the percentages who achieved 24 points/Band 6 or better for the EFL and CLIL sub-samples, and for the EFL sub-sample according to completed English courses. $N=217$

| Sample and subsamples | Mean IELTS scores (\bar{x}) | SD | N | Percentage who achieve 24 points/ Band 6 or better |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|------------|---|
| EFL sub-sample | 21 | 9.03 | 178 | 33 % |
| Foundation Course | 22 | 9.36 | 45 | 47 % |
| Advanced English I | 19 | 9.17 | 30 | 33 % |
| Advanced English II | 21 | 8.92 | 99 | 29 % |
| CLIL sub-sample | 28 | 7.9 | 39 | 74% |
| Total | | | 217 | |

As can be seen from this overview, only one third (33%) of the EFL sub-sample achieved the Band 6 level or better. Closer examination of their IELTS scores for

the EFL sub-sample revealed a consistent pattern where respondents apparently read and worked quite slowly, for the most part answering correctly, but leaving many items unanswered.

Furthermore, in the EFL sub-sample completing the Advanced English I and II Courses, each representing one or two extra years of English teaching with five lessons per week, did not give higher mean reading scores ($\bar{x} = 19$ and $\bar{x} = 21$ respectively). In fact, the scores for this group are somewhat lower than those with the Foundation Course only ($\bar{x} = 22$), perhaps due to many of the better students opting for the Natural Science subjects instead of English. In comparison, the CLIL subsample, which had had a single CLIL subject taught in English, scored far higher, with 74% achieving 24 points/Band 6 or better ($\bar{x} = 28$). In Figure 3 the EFL sample scores are compared with those of the CLIL sub-sample.

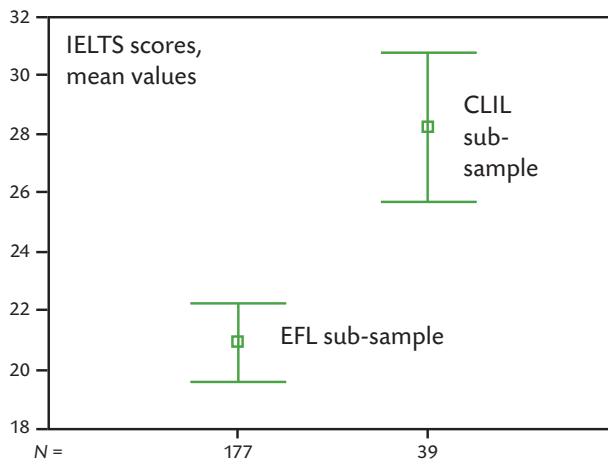


FIGURE 9.3. Confidence intervals for the IELTS scores of the EFL sub-sample with 178 respondents, and the CLIL sub-sample with 39. The interval between the group means is statistically significant at the 95% level of certainty. Maximum IELTS score is 38.

As can be seen, the confidence intervals in Figure 9.3 also show that the interval between the IELTS mean scores for EFL and CLIL sub-samples is about seven points, and this is statistically significant at the 95% level.

Extracurricular reading and unfamiliar vocabulary

With regard to reading habits, further analysis of the EFL sub-sample revealed that the great majority had read little beyond the minimum requirements in the current R94 curriculum, which can probably explain the low correlations for reading

books, $r = 0.21$ ($p = .01$, $n = 177$), periodicals $r = 0.15$ (not significant), and on the Internet $r = 0.21$ ($p = .01$, $n = 177$). With regard to how the EFL students coped with unfamiliar words when reading, the correlations between these items and the IELTS scores are displayed in Table 9.5.

TABLE 9.5. Ways of coping with unfamiliar words correlated with the IELTS test scores in the EFL sample. $N = 177$.

| Independent variables | r |
|---|--------|
| Dictionary use | .00 |
| Guess meaning of word using subject knowledge | -.03 |
| Guess meaning of word using context | .10** |
| Ask teacher | -.20* |
| Ask parents | -.24* |
| Ask other students | -.31* |
| I just keep on reading | -.11** |
| I give up reading | -.28* |

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .05$

As can be seen, the correlations for guessing the meaning of unknown words and otherwise not disrupting the reading process are quite low, lower than for the university students in sub-study 1. There were also higher negative correlations for interrupting the reading process to consult their teachers, peers or parents, but interestingly, not for dictionary use.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

I would contend that the doctoral study presented in this chapter presented a serious, empirically based challenge to the Norwegian assumptions about the quality of Norwegian EFL instruction in general, and for reading proficiency in particular.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

One of the main empirical contributions of this study was that upper secondary school English instruction failed to prepare all-too-many students for the reading

of English texts in higher education – as indicated by as many as two thirds of the senior upper secondary school students not achieving the minimum Band 6 IELTS score required for admission to most UK and Australian universities.

The next contribution was to show that that these difficulties persisted in higher education, with both sub-studies 1 and 2 indicating that about one third of the surveyed university level students experienced difficulties. Interestingly, further analysis found no correlation between study experience and reading scores, which means that one cannot take it for granted that student reading proficiency improves with experience, and cannot explain the performance gap between education levels. Instead, either student attrition and/or selection factors stand forth as probable explanations. It may be that many upper secondary school students who are poor readers either do not go on to higher education, choose studies where English textbooks are not used, or drop out of their first university-level courses. Third, the many respondents who struggled with unfamiliar words to the point where they gave up reading altogether clearly show the need to pay greater attention to vocabulary development.

Finally, to return to upper secondary school EFL instruction, the IELTS scores of the EFL sample – one-third achieving Band 6, and that the advanced elective English courses did not contribute to higher scores while a single, sheltered CLIL courses clearly did, clearly showed the need to improve reading instruction. Closer examination showed that the low scoring students at both levels tended to read and work very slowly, often answering IELTS items correctly but leaving many or most unanswered due to the lack of time. Correlation analysis also indicated that many gave up reading due to unfamiliar words, probably either due to inadequate vocabulary knowledge, and/or the inability to handle unfamiliar words without unduly interrupting the reading process. However, while English proficiency, and vocabulary in particular, can in part explain these challenges, another explanation might be weaknesses in the respondents' L1 reading proficiency, given the arguments for transfer from L1 to the L2. One indication was that the 2001 OECD PISA study revealed that many Norwegian 15-year-olds were poor readers in their L1. Another was the contemporary criticism of lack of emphasis put on teaching Nordic students *reading to learn* (Bråten, 2007; Bråten & Olausen, 1997, 1999). Furthermore, the IELTS test data reflected those of Fjeldbraaten's (1999) study, which showed that university level students under pressure used counterproductive reading strategies in the L1, first and foremost the tendency to read carefully for detail. In other words, and paraphrasing Alderson (1984), the reading problems found in this thesis are most probably due to reading as well as language problems.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

One of the theoretical contributions of this study was its support of the Interdependence Hypothesis, given the positive correlation between L1 and L2 reading scores found in sub-study 1. Cross tabulating these same scores also gave support for the Threshold Hypothesis, since it revealed a considerable number of respondents who were good readers in the L1 but among the poorest in the L2. Among other issues there were the clear and consistent positive correlations between reading of books and periodicals and reading scores, a clear argument for the importance of extensive reading. Finally, the lack of any positive correlations between study experience and reading scores at the university level indicates that little incidental acquisition is taking place, unless, as Fjeldbraaten (1999) shows, that this is a reading problem, not a language problem. This in turn clearly indicates the need for consistent, long-term reading strategy instruction in the L1 and L2.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

With regard to the methodological contributions, the main contribution of this doctoral study was the development of, and subsequent validation of, using the IELTS Academic Reading Module, a set of self-assessment items that can quickly and easily be used to measure EAP reading difficulties, in part by benchmarking this against reading in the L1. The other methodological contribution is that it clearly demonstrated the utility of and need to use validated language tests to assess student language proficiency – in this case, reading.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS L2

A key implication of this study for EFL instruction was the need to focus on the teaching of reading strategies, and to teach students to accept uncertainty when they encounter unfamiliar words and guess from context or using their previous knowledge in order to avoid disrupting the reading process. Another was the need for a far more systematic approach to improving students' vocabularies to prepare them for higher education. Improving reading proficiency as well as developing vocabulary entails the need to read far more extensively as part of EFL instruction, and requires going beyond the textbooks to the reading of a variety of longer texts (novels, biographies, documentaries), including technical and academic reading. A crucial part of this approach would be to allow students to choose challenging texts on topics that they are interested in. Last, and by no means least, the study

showed the need for an overhaul of the content and teaching of the Advanced English elective courses.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis was defended at the same time that a new curriculum (*Knowledge Promotion*) was under development, intended to address the problems found by this doctoral study and the OECD PISA “shock” study (Lie et al., 2001). A crucial change made in the new curriculum was to make reading one of five basic skills that were to be taught across the curriculum in the L1 as well as L2. The new curriculum also designated clear competency aims for reading to be achieved after grades 4, 7, 10, and after the Vg1, Vg2, and Vg3 courses. The need to teach reading strategy use was also made clear, and the curriculum was quite explicit about the students’ learning to adjust their “reading according to reading purpose”. National reading tests for English after grades 5, 8, and the Vg1 level were also developed to support changes in teaching². Finally, the new English curriculum acknowledged far more clearly than did its predecessor R94 the role of English instruction in preparing for higher education.

A number of Norwegian studies have evaluated English reading instruction since 2005, including Master’s theses. At the upper secondary school level, one of the first follow-up studies was a Master’s thesis where Faye-Schøll (2009) found that the teachers interviewed seemed quite unaware of the Knowledge Promotion English curriculum requirements regarding the teaching of reading and strategy use. However, a later doctoral study, Brevik (2015), found clear improvements in reading strategy instruction. She also found that teachers needed help to articulate their tacit knowledge of reading strategy use.

Another follow-up study by Hellekjær and Hopfenbeck (2012) investigated whether upper secondary school GS student reading proficiency had improved following the 2006 curriculum. It used the same IELTS Academic Reading Module and many of the same questionnaire items from sub-study 3 that is reported in this chapter. They found a clear improvement among upper secondary GS students with only EFL instruction, with 57% of the students achieved 24 points/Band 6 compared to the previous 33%. However, despite the new curriculum, they also found that completing the Vg2 and Vg3 elective English courses still did not give improved reading scores, and since these students had the same Vg1 English grades, this effectively countered the common assumption that the poor results

2. The Vg1 tests were so-called mapping tests from 2010–2016, and have since 2017 been replaced by tests designed to support learning.

were due to negative selection. While single-subject, sheltered CLIL classes still gave better results, this varied according to the extent of English use for instruction. Hellekjær and Hopfenbeck (2012) found it difficult to explain the generally improved IELTS scores, first and foremost because they found little increase in student reading. They therefore speculated about the improvement observed being due to increased internet reading, to increased extracurricular exposure to English (e.g., Brevik & Hellekjær, 2018), due to the mandated focus on the teaching of reading strategies at the lower secondary level, or due to greater student familiarity with multiple choice tests due to the introduction of national examinations.

A number of newer studies have highlighted the growing importance of extracurricular English as an explanation for many students' often impressive English skills (Brevik, 2016; Brevik & Hellekjær 2018; Garvoll, 2017). Still, this is an issue in urgent need of further research, in particular to explain the poor outcomes from the Vg2 and Vg3 elective English courses.

In higher education, a number of recent studies have found that many students still struggle with English. With regard to EMI lecture comprehension, Hellekjær (2010) found that as many as 40% of the students had comprehension difficulties. With regard to Academic English reading, a Master's study, Arnsby (2013), used the self-assessment items developed in sub-study 1 in combination with student interviews to investigate university students' EAP reading. She found that the students' reading proficiency had improved only marginally in comparison to sub-study 1. She concluded that further improvements in upper secondary school reading instruction are still needed. Another Master's thesis is by Busby (2015), in which she compared the reading speed, comprehension and vocabulary knowledge of Norwegian students with native English-speaking students, finding that Norwegian students were more likely to have a native speaker-like proficiency in general-language English proficiency than in academic language English, particularly with regard to vocabulary comprehension. She concluded that students needed further help in developing their Academic English proficiency. In her doctoral study, Busby (on-going) continues work on this topic, using a combination of reading and vocabulary tests to investigate Norwegian university students' Academic English proficiency. In a recent article comparing student metacognitive strategy use in the L1 and L2, she found little difference between languages, although she concluded that for the L2 "students may benefit from additional training in the use of higher-level reading strategies to improve their comprehension of L2 academic texts" (Busby, 2018, p. 1).

While some issues have been addressed, further research is still called for. The perhaps most urgent project would be to investigate possible beginner student

attrition in higher education – to find out whether many of the poorer readers drop out of their beginner courses either due to L1 or L2 reading difficulties. Another would be a follow-up of Hellekjær and Hopfenbeck’s (2012) study. By surveying a new sample of upper secondary students with the same IELTS Academic Reading Module that was used in this thesis and in the 2012 study, it would be possible to see whether there has been any improvement. A comparable study of university students would of course also be useful, as would investigating why the advanced elective English courses do not improve reading proficiency. Yet another, and quite ambitious project would be an intervention study where lower or upper secondary students were to read a larger number of longer texts than usual (novels or documentaries), and their development monitored with pre- and post-tests. This would also develop our knowledge about how best to implement additional reading in the English classroom.

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10

PhD revisited: How teachers teach and readers read

Developing reading comprehension in English in Norwegian upper secondary school¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Brevik, 2015) that investigated the practices involved in developing reading comprehension in English as a second language in upper secondary school; focusing specifically on reading strategy instruction and use. The chapter describes how strategies were taught and used markedly differently in general and vocational study programmes, and addresses recent developments related to reading comprehension instruction across contexts in Norway, with suggestions for further research.

KEYWORDS English as a second language (L2) | reading comprehension | strategy instruction and use | reading proficiency

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Brevik, 2015) from the University of Oslo. This is an article-based thesis, with three published articles (Brevik, 2014, 2017; Brevik, Olsen, & Hellekjær, 2016). The thesis in its entirety can be found here: <http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-48331>

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INTRODUCTION

At the heart of this doctoral thesis is scaffolding of reading comprehension – its nature, instruction, and student proficiency. It is an article-based thesis comprising three articles. At the initiation of this doctoral study, in 2011, little was known about how English teachers in upper secondary schools in Norway worked with reading skills in their instruction, or how students developed as readers of English. What we did know was that Norwegian students were among the best readers of English as a second language (L2) in Europe in 2000 (Ibsen, 2004), but that their reading skills were not good enough to enable acceptance into universities abroad (Hellekjær, 2005). We also knew that based on the current educational reform (*Knowledge Promotion*), teachers reported working with reading skills on a regular basis across subjects (Aasen, Møller, Rye, Ottesen, Prøitz, & Hertzberg, 2012). However, we had little knowledge of whether this was true for the English subject, and if so, whether the development of reading skills in English was scaffolded by reading comprehension strategy instruction and use, or supported by the use of other basic skills. This lack of research on English reading comprehension and strategy instruction in Norway at the time, compared to international reading comprehension strategy research, indicated a need for such research in upper secondary schools in Norway.

With this as a backdrop, I aimed to investigate practices involved in developing reading comprehension in English in Norwegian upper secondary school. I sought to identify what a sample of teachers did in their reading instruction, whether they included reading strategies, and how they perceived their instructional practices. I further aimed to investigate reading comprehension among these teachers' upper secondary students (16–17 years old), focusing on their use of reading comprehension strategies in the classroom and their perceived purposes for using the strategies, along with their levels of reading proficiency. Thus, the overarching aim was *to investigate the practices involved in developing reading comprehension in English as the L2 in Norwegian upper secondary school*.

REVIEW

Research has confirmed that strategy instruction improves reading comprehension (e.g. Bernhardt, 2011; Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke et al., 2011; Grabe, 2009; National Reading Panel, 2000). However, research has also suggested that reading comprehension strategy instruction is not carried out in the majority of classrooms (Duke et al., 2011). Through guided strategy instruction, teachers can help stu-

dents to overcome reading comprehension problems by using a small repertoire of reading strategies flexibly (e.g. Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke et al., 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2008), and to develop as independent L2 readers also without the direct guidance of a teacher (Bernhardt, 2011).

One question is which strategies to teach and use, and Grabe's (2009) summary of research on reading strategies over the past two decades revealed that the same strategies are to a large extent used in the L2 as in the L1. He further found that all readers use many strategies, and while good and poor readers seem to use the same types of strategies, good readers use these more effectively than do the poor readers (see also Bernhardt, 2011; Bunch et al., 2014). The argument is that all readers experience comprehension problems at some point, and that knowledge about strategies is not enough, they need to learn how to use strategies effectively to monitor and repair their developing L2 comprehension. For L2 reading, Bernhardt (2011) has also emphasised the relationship between reading in L1 and L2, arguing that L1 reading and L2 language knowledge together explain 50% of L2 reading comprehension, with an unexplained variance accounting for the remaining 50%. Based on this prior research, I identified a need to observe whether English L2 instruction in Norway included reading comprehension strategy instruction, and to what extent the L2 students used such strategies. Furthermore, I included a dual-language perspective on the students' reading comprehension within and across Norwegian L1 and English L2.

THEORY

Reading comprehension, according to the L1-focused RAND Reading Study Group (2002) model, is "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 11). The construction of meaning requires interaction between the *reader* who is doing the comprehending, the *text* that is to be comprehended, and the *activity* in which comprehension is a part, occurring within a *sociocultural environment* (RAND, 2002). One goal of reading instruction is to help readers understand the immediate text at hand, while another is to help the students develop into independent and active readers who use a small repertoire of reading comprehension strategies (RAND, 2002). In this doctoral thesis, I integrated reading comprehension theories with a Vygotskian framing: considering reading comprehension as a process that moves from the internalisation of reading strategies as tools to understand written texts, to the externalisation of how reading comprehension of such texts

manifests itself for the L2 readers, comprising a process where they ideally develop strategic reading.

Thus, the general theoretical and conceptual framing of this thesis is that reading instruction and reading comprehension in Norwegian upper secondary school take place within a sociocultural environment where students actively participate in their own learning and development. The thesis draws primarily on Vygotskian thinking on the importance of the active learner and the teacher who supports such learners, the internalisation and use of reading comprehension strategies as tools for learning, and reading proficiency as an externalisation of reading comprehension. This approach is influenced by the legacy of Vygotsky (e.g. Vygotsky, 1981, 1986), and later interpreters such as Claxton (2007), Daniels (2008), and Edwards (2015).

In brief, the theoretical concepts of my thesis that relate to a Vygotskian legacy are thus: (a) the adolescent L2 reader as a Vygotskian learner, (b) the L2 teacher in the Vygotskian classroom, (c) reading strategies as tools for developing reading comprehension, and (d) internalisation and externalisation of reading comprehension. Vygotsky's learner is active, ideally propelling herself forward in a process of learning and development (Edwards, 2015). These learners are not passive receivers of information, but actively engage with the task, trying to make sense personally and culturally. Participating actively in the learning environment enables Vygotsky's learner to relate meaning-making in the classroom to his or her individual consciousness, and to make personal connections between the task at hand and other topics within and beyond the classroom, consequently repositioning herself in these practices. Thus, in the Vygotskian sense, teachers and students might learn to teach or use reading strategies as tools that are culturally valued within education, for example how to summarise important information in a text or how to integrate new textual information with prior knowledge (e.g., Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2008; Grabe, 2009). In this sense, learning about a tool, such as a reading comprehension strategy, is not enough; it also needs to be used.

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this doctoral thesis used a mixed methods approach to study the qualitative *and* quantitative aspects of practices involved in developing reading comprehension in English (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2013). The study moved from investigating the teacher perspective on strategy instruction, with observations of such instruction in the classroom, to the student perspective, in order to obtain a better understanding of their personal purposes for strategy use.

RESEARCH DESIGN

I designed my mixed-methods approach in three phases, as shown in Figure 10.1, commonly recognised as a multiphase design (Creswell, 2013).

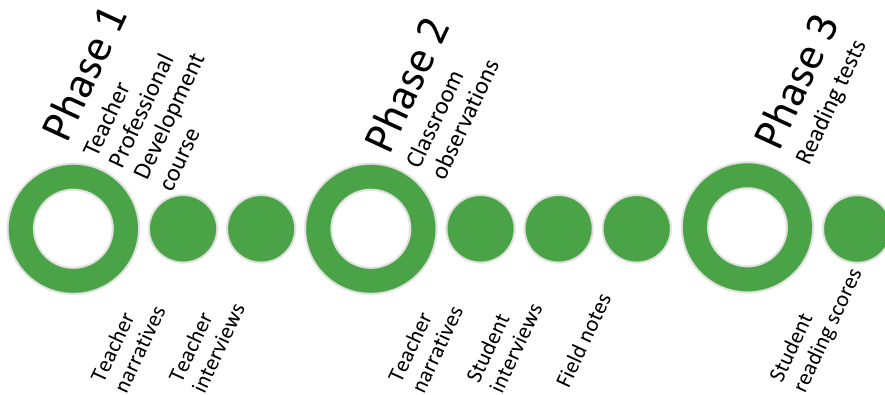


FIGURE 10.1. The research design.

I combined qualitative (teacher and student interviews, teacher narratives, classroom observations), and quantitative (reading test results) data sources. In Phase 1, I studied teachers' reported reading instruction during a teacher professional development (TPD) course, which I facilitated. First, I used teacher interviews and narratives. In Phase 2, I combined classroom observations with student focus groups and teacher narratives to determine how the teachers taught English reading comprehension one year after the TPD course, how their students used the strategies offered to them, and how they reflected on the strategy instruction and use. Phase 3 was a large-scale quantitative study in which I used two national reading tests (Norwegian and English) and analysed the students' results across both languages.

SAMPLE

The participants in Phase 1 were 21 teachers at 11 different upper secondary schools. In Phase 2, I asked all 21 if they would like to invite me to observe their reading instruction. Twenty of these were positive, and five were randomly chosen for participation. I followed these five English teachers and their 64 students one year after Phase 1; see Table 10.1 for an overview.

TABLE 10.1. Overview of the participants in Phase 2.

| Schools | Teachers (pseudonyms) | Study pro- grammes | Students in each class |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| School A | Magne | General | 9 |
| School B | Petter | Vocational | 9 |
| School C | Linda | Vocational | 20 |
| School D | Ruth | General | 19 |
| School D | Andreas | Vocational | 7 |
| Total | | | 64 students |

In Phase 3, I used a national sample of all students in upper secondary school (vg1) who participated in both the English L2 reading test and the Norwegian L1 test ($N=10,331$), including students in general and vocational study programmes.

DATA

The data used in this doctoral thesis was collected from 2011–2012 (see Table 10.2).

TABLE 10.2. Overview of the phases, including methods, sample, data, analytical concepts.

| | Phase 1 TPD course | Phase 2 Classroom observations | Phase 3 Reading tests |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Methods | Qualitative | Qualitative | Quantitative |
| Sample | Sample 1 (County): 21 upper secondary teachers | Sample 2 (County): Five of the English teachers from Phase 1. Sample 3 (County): 64 students | Sample 4 (National): 10,331 upper secondary students (including students in Phase 2) |
| Data | Teacher narratives and teacher interviews | Teacher narratives, student interviews, and field notes | Student reading scores in the L1 and the L2 |
| Analytical concepts | Reading instruction Reading strategies Metacognitive awareness | Reading instruction Reading strategies Metacognitive awareness | Reading proficiency |

Phase 1 combined two teacher interviews with their written narratives. The TPD course took place over two separate days, with a four-week interval in between. The pre-interview was conducted at the beginning of the first day, with the narratives and the post-interview conducted during the last course day. In Phase 2, I conducted classroom observations that included field notes, a new set of teacher narratives, and student interviews. As a participant observer, I developed knowledge of reading instruction and reading strategy use in each English lesson, which helped enhance my semi-structured interviews with the students and my use of classroom observation as validation of the teacher and student data. The reading tests introduced a shift from Phase 2, which combined different types of qualitative data from a county-based sample, to Phase 3, which built solely on quantitative reading test data from a national sample of 10,331 students. The test scores were collected from a print-based test in L1 and a digital test in L2. I collected the L1 data directly from each upper secondary school, while the L2 data were provided from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Research.

DATA ANALYSIS

To increase the methodological transparency of my research, I present some examples of how the data analyses were carried out for the various data sources.

Teacher interviews: In analysing the teacher interviews, I analysed my notes to see whether they revealed metacognitive awareness concerning their instruction in terms of how the teachers reflected on their strategy instruction in the classroom. *Teacher narratives:* I analysed the written narratives to identify how the teachers described their reading instruction, which reading strategies they reported teaching, and when, how, and why they taught them. To identify reading strategies, I searched for the specific names of the strategies, as well as descriptions of these strategies using other words. To identify reading instruction, I searched for descriptions of how the teachers had introduced the strategies, provided tasks, and assessed strategy use in each lesson. I also compared the narratives with my field notes in Phase 2. *Field notes:* I validated the findings in the Phase 2 narratives with information from my field notes. There was a general consistency across these data sources, suggesting overlapping perspectives from the teachers and myself as researcher, and across Phases 1 and 2, which provided corroborating findings of the strategies that were instructed and used.

Student interviews: I transcribed and analysed the audiotaped student interviews to identify metacognitive awareness in terms of how the students reflected on their strategy use in and out of school. *Student reading tests:* I analysed the reading test

scores using the quantitative software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The two reading tests were merged by using Student ID as a variable to create one data file for both tests, with each students' L1 and L2 test results linked together. This procedure was used to enable identification of the students' reading proficiency across L1 and L2, using frequency, reliability, and regression analyses. The reading tests are standardised, with closed items only, in terms of all questions having more than one fixed answer to choose between, with no open-ended rubrics.

RESEARCH CREDIBILITY AND ETHICS

I took a number of steps to minimise the credibility threats to my research through *multiple validities* (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). The use of a mixed-methods approach contributes to validity in and of itself by each phase influencing the design of the next (*sequential validity*) and by comparing multiple data sources throughout the phases (*triangulation*). Figure 10.2 illustrates this relationship, with the two validity procedures placed in the centre of the figure, where the three phases overlap. In addition, I have used *sample integration validity*, *emic-etic validity*, *peer-debriefing*, and *external audit* in all three phases. I addressed additional validity procedures in the separate phases; *member-checking* in Phases 1 and 2, *reactivity* in Phase 2, and *internal validity* and *construct validity* in Phase 3 (see Figure 10.2).

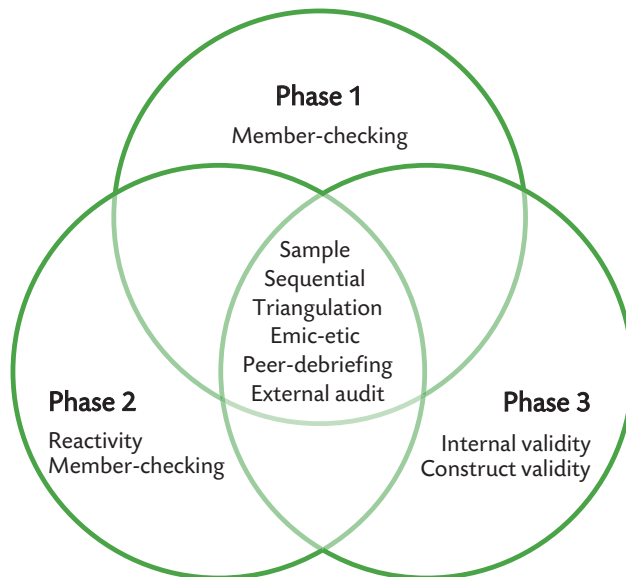


FIGURE 10.2. Multiple validities addressed in each of the three phases, and integrated across.

Furthermore, I employed three measures of reliability: *reliability of results* (as seen in replication over time showing similar results), *intra- and inter-rater reliability* (as in consistent coding over time), and *measurement reliability* as a psychometric property (e.g., test-retest reliability). When analysing the narratives and interviews, I coded and reanalysed the data three times in each phase, after two, six, and 18 months, and comparisons of the coding into categories indicated satisfactory overlap (intra-rater reliability). For the reading tests, all analyses were conducted several times by myself and one of the co-authors (inter-rater reliability). Finally, all participants gave their voluntary consent to participate after being informed that they could withdraw at any time (e.g., Busher & James, 2012), in line with the ethical guidelines compiled by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), who assessed and approved the data collection situations that needed approval.

FINDINGS

A main finding of this doctoral thesis was that reading comprehension strategy instruction and use actually took place in English lessons in upper secondary school. In Phase 1, I found that the teachers' description of their reading comprehension instruction changed over time, and the findings suggested a more active teaching of reading comprehension strategies than what the teachers themselves initially articulated. Most of the English teachers first reported that they did not teach reading comprehension strategies, but that their students "just read". Based on their descriptions, I developed the Mode of reading continuum (Figure 10.3).

The main idea in the *Mode of reading continuum* is to see strategies as powerful tools to enhance comprehension when needed, in order to bridge gaps in comprehension. In the "Nike mode of reading", students read as suggested by the Nike slogan "Just do it!" without analysing the task or considering how to read, making it difficult to know whether they understand what is read or whether they "just read" to finish the task. The Sherlock Holmes mode of reading has a broader vision of a deliberate puzzle resolution, where students use strategies in order to read like a detective by analysing the task, searching for clues not explicitly stated in the text, and monitoring their comprehension before, during, and after reading in order to understand, and to initiate other strategies to repair comprehension when needed.

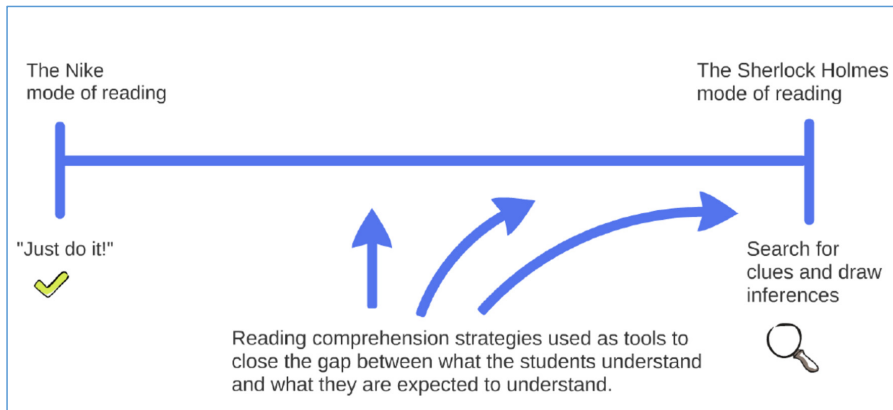


FIGURE 10.3. Mode of reading continuum²

After participating in the TPD course, the teachers' descriptions changed, and they made their implicit practices of reading comprehension strategy instruction explicit, along with explanations of how and why they included strategies in their reading instructions. Based on their descriptions, I identified a small repertoire of strategies (Figure 10.3) that they seemed to use in their English lessons. To a large extent, they used the same reading comprehension strategies in English L2 as in Norwegian L1. In Phase 2, one year after the TPD course, I found evidence in the five observed classrooms that reading strategies were considered valuable learning tools that helped the students develop reading comprehension in English. I also found that these five English teachers to a large extent prompted the use of the same strategies in 2012 as they had reported using in 2011 (Phase 1). Figure 10.4 provides an overview of the reading comprehension strategies used in both years.

The main difference between the interactions in the teacher and student interviews was the explicitness and the way in which participants talked about the strategies. While the teachers provided little information in the first interview and explicit information in the second (Phase 1), the students richly revealed why, when, and how they used reading comprehension strategies, both in the environment of the English lessons and individually (Phase 2). The classroom observations offered further details of *how* these strategies were instructed and used. Of note was that the teachers' reading comprehension strategy instruction was very

2. The *Mode of reading continuum* was created by the author, based on the "Nike mode of reading" and the "Sherlock Holmes mode of reading" provided by Professor P. David Pearson in a private conversation in 2013 at the University of California, Berkeley (see Pearson, 2012).

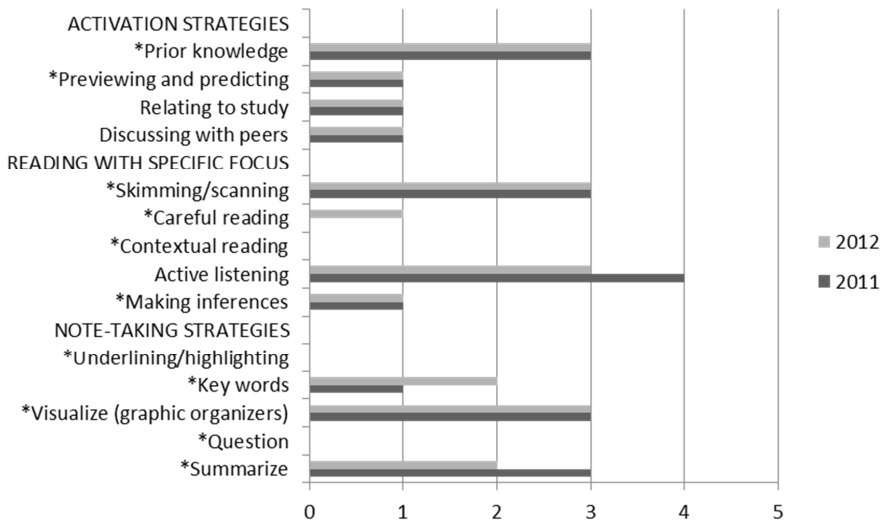


FIGURE 10.4. Overview of reading comprehension strategies reported by the five English teachers in 2011 and observed in the English lessons in 2012.

Note. * = strategies taught in the TPD course.

different in general and vocational programmes. While the teachers in vocational programmes demonstrated a gradual release of responsibility for the strategy use to their students, for example by offering students time to practise strategy use, the teachers in general programmes did not. These differences were also reflected in the students' own explanations. The vocational students found that using reading strategies made them better readers and that they used strategies even when the teachers did not ask them to (see Excerpt 1, translated from Norwegian). In contrast, the students in general programmes revealed that they used the strategies to meet task and teacher demands only (see Excerpt 2, translated from Norwegian).

Excerpt 1. Vocational studies

Researcher: Do you use strategies when the teacher does not ask you to?

Student 1: Yes.

Student 2: Yes. It depends on which task I am going to do, and then I choose reading strategies myself. If we get a task where I need to find a year, then I search until I find it.

Researcher: And you do this without the teacher asking you to do so?

Student 2: Yes. Then I don't have to read five pages.

Student 3: I make questions. And then have others ask me questions. I read until I find something that I think is important in a text. Then I stop and then I ask another one a question about it. And see if they remember it. And then the opposite; they ask me about what they find important.

Excerpt 2. General studies

Researcher: Okay, so you usually open the book and read the heading. But you said if you had to read it, so if you're sort of instructed, [that] this is something you should read, then you read the heading? And then start reading?

Student 1: [nods]

Researcher: Okay. What if you read at home and no one has told you to do it?

Student 1: Then I just read.

Thus, while the vocational students saw a personal relevance of using reading comprehension strategies to help them understand texts, the students in general programmes mainly used the strategies to meet their teacher's demand or to be assessed on their strategy use.

The second main finding concerned the large-scale quantitative analysis of data from the two national standardised reading tests (one in Norwegian L1 and one in English L2) among 10,331 students. The regression analysis indicated that the observed differences between the students in general and vocational classrooms seemed to vary with their English reading proficiency based on their test results. In short, the reading test results showed that the students in general programmes, who used strategies because the teacher asked them to, achieved better reading results than the vocational students, who used strategies because it helped them understand. This difference indicates that vocational students chose to use strategies in the classroom because they were poorer readers, and experienced that strategy use helped them understand better.

The test results also demonstrated that although girls achieved higher results than boys did when reading in Norwegian, the boys achieved almost as good results when reading in English as the girls did, and that the majority of the poor readers were boys in vocational study programmes. The findings further showed that their reading proficiency in English was statistically related to their reading proficiency in Norwegian, as well as to their study programme – with up to 49% of the variance in students' reading proficiency in English being explained by their reading proficiency in Norwegian, in addition to their study programme.

However, the relationship between the two languages was not linear for all students. An unexpected finding was that although three-quarters of the students read almost equally well (or poorly) in English as in Norwegian, a small group of students were among the poorest readers in Norwegian (20% score or less) and simultaneously among the best readers in English (60% score or more). Most of these students were boys in vocational studies, and based on this unexpected profile, this group of students was labelled “Outliers”.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

In my doctoral work, I had the opportunity to study teacher and student learning in the area of English reading comprehension. The main contribution of this doctoral thesis is knowledge about how teachers teach and readers read when developing reading comprehension in English in Norwegian upper secondary school.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main empirical contributions of this doctoral thesis are the acknowledgement among teachers and students that reading strategies are considered valuable learning tools that help readers develop their English comprehension, that the teachers do indeed teach such strategies, and the confirmation that reading proficiency in English is closely related both to reading proficiency in Norwegian and to the students’ study programme.

First, I found evidence that teachers in fact *do* teach reading strategies in the classroom to help their students develop reading comprehension in English, contrary to what we had learnt from prior research (e.g. Pressley, 2008). The English teachers prompted their students to use a repertoire of reading strategies flexibly, typically including a combination of the following strategies: setting purposes, activating prior knowledge, previewing and predicting, skimming and scanning, active listening, careful (close) reading, making inferences, noting key words, visualising, summarising, relating to study, and discussing with peers. Most of these reading comprehension strategies have been identified as effective strategies in international studies (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke et al., 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2008; Grabe, 2009). The teachers’ written reflections concerning their own English instruction indicated that they found these strategies to be effective tools for developing their students’ as strategic L2 readers.

Second, this thesis portrays how the design and instruction of English reading comprehension strategies is quite different in general and vocational programmes.

All five teachers introduced the strategies, by naming and describing them, or modelling them in action, and the strategies were then used independently or collaboratively by the students, with guided teacher practice, in tightly structured tasks. However, after these introductory reading activities, a marked difference emerged; in general programmes, the teacher either continued to suggest the use of strategies or asked the students to work with a new set of tightly structured tasks, while in vocational programmes, the teacher offered more open tasks, prompting the students to apply strategies to texts when needed, releasing the responsibility to the students, and providing opportunities to practise strategy use and develop comprehension. This finding showed how vocational teachers are aware that their students might struggle as L2 readers, and that they might need to see personal relevance of strategies by experiencing that strategy use actually helps them understand. In contrast, the general studies teachers seemed to be aware that their students were good readers, and focused on reading more texts instead of more complex texts that would demand the use of strategies to understand.

A third contribution is knowledge that upper secondary students' reading proficiency in English L2 is, for most students, closely related to their reading proficiency in Norwegian L1. The only available data for upper secondary school students up until this doctoral thesis in 2015, were overall achievement and examination grades in the English school subject at the end of Vg1, which means that this doctoral thesis provided new information about upper secondary students as *readers* of English. An important contribution here was that although girls read better than boys in Norwegian, boys read almost as well as girls in English, which challenges the view on languages and gender among adolescents in Norway (Kjærnsli & Jensen, 2016). Also, while the test results in this thesis showed that most students achieved almost similar results on both tests, a small group of students – mainly boys in vocational programmes – was identified as markedly better readers in English than in Norwegian, and therefore labelled “Outliers”. This was an unexpected finding among a group of students that is at risk of dropping out of school, both in Norway and internationally, which might contribute to a more positive view on vocational boys as good readers of English – contrary to popular opinion.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The first theoretical contribution of this thesis is the *Mode of reading continuum*, which I developed based on the teachers' reported strategy instruction in Phase I (see Figure 10.3).

Another theoretical contribution is the use of a Vygotskian framing to reading research. In my thesis, this framing has contributed to expanding our knowledge about readers being active in their own reading development, how they use strategies as tools, and how teachers can support this process (Claxton, 2007; Daniels, 2008; Edwards, 2015; Vygotsky, 1981). The need to focus on how the reader engages with tools is what the Vygotskian approach adds theoretically to the L2 reading research. This contribution is particularly important if we want to develop the view on strategies from mainly a cognitive tool to seeing reading in a socio-cultural framing, as a school activity and as a lifelong endeavour – where students engage in strategic reading in English on their own initiative, without being explicitly asked to do so, whether in higher education, in future work, or in the private sphere.

A third theoretical contribution of this thesis is the confirmation of the cross-linguistic aspect of Bernhardt's (2011) *Compensatory model of second-language reading*, where L1 is said to account for up to 20% of L2 literacy. My analysis not only confirmed the model, but did so with large-scale data from 10,331 readers; it also applied Norwegian L1 and English L2 to the model for the first time, and showed that L1 explained up to 49% of the overall reading proficiency in English L2.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main methodological contribution of this thesis arises from my mixed-methods approach, obtaining the teachers' *and* the students' perspectives on the development of English reading comprehension and integrating this knowledge with information about the students' reading proficiency. Another methodological contribution is a template I developed for data collection (Figure 10.5). The template functioned as an essential methodological tool in all data collection situations in Phases 1 and 2; as interview guide, narrative structure, and observation protocol. Using the same template enabled comparison of data across time, situations, and perspectives, which minimised the threat to reliability. A final methodological contribution is the merging of large-scale student reading scores from the tests in different languages by using the same student ID across the two datasets. The use of this approach argues that national assessments could profit from using the same student ID on different tests, thereby enabling comparisons across not only reading in two languages, but also with results for numeracy, which students at various levels participate in annually in Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2009).

| |
|---------------------------|
| Subject and year |
| Comprehension strategies: |
| School: |
| Teacher: |
| Topic: |
| Duration: |
| Learning aim |
| Preparations |
| Instruction |
| Before reading: |
| During reading: |
| After reading: |
| Didactic reflection |

FIGURE 10.5. Template for data collection: interview guide, teacher narrative, observation protocol.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since 2011, when the data collection for this thesis began, I have been constantly reminded of the lack of reading research in Norwegian upper secondary schools *in general* – and particularly in English L2. My doctoral thesis was the second one in Norway to address this situation. Since my thesis was finalised in 2015, one more doctoral thesis in English reading has been published; namely Charboneau (2016). While in his thesis Hellekjær (2005) studied reading comprehension in higher education and upper secondary school (see Chapter 8), and my thesis studied upper secondary school, Charboneau (2016) studied reading instruction in primary school (see Chapter 11).

Together, these doctoral studies have left a research gap concerning English reading instruction in lower secondary school, a gap I have addressed in a recent study (Brevik, 2019b) investigating what was being done in the name of reading comprehension across two school years (9th and 10th grade) in 60 video-recorded English lessons in seven classrooms. Key findings showed that across these lessons, students worked with text more than half the time (56%), using a variety of print, digital, and online texts. Most texts were authentic narratives (56%) or informational texts (44%), with few non-authentic ones (8%). Teachers who prioritised reading comprehension instructed their students in close reading of texts, offering guided strategy practice based on student needs, and encouraged daily use of known strategies instead of explicitly teaching new ones. This article builds on and extends the classroom research in my doctoral work, and findings also indicate that in lower secondary classrooms, reading comprehension strategies are instructed and used to a greater extent than indicated by prior research.

Based on my doctoral thesis, I have also looked into the potential existence of an Outlier profile of students who are markedly better readers in English L2 than in Norwegian L1. Thus, in order to find out *why* the Outliers were such good readers of English, I designed the project *Vocational and General Students' Use of English* (VOGUE) in 2015. Findings from VOGUE research has confirmed that the Outlier profile indeed exists both in national and local samples (Brevik, 2016, 2019; Brevik & Hellekjær, 2018), and that while most are vocational boys, there are also some girls in vocational programmes and a few students in general programmes. Findings show that it is important to the Outliers to be good readers of English, and that they considered their English use outside school, particularly in online gaming, surfing on the internet, and using social media, to be the main reason they were markedly better readers in English than in Norwegian (Brevik, 2019a).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

Not only my doctoral thesis, but also classroom practice and international research demonstrate that the use of reading comprehension strategies improves reading comprehension. The importance of strategy *use* cannot be overemphasised. It is not enough for teachers to teach strategies, or for students to use strategies “just” because they are instructed to do so by the teacher. Students need to consciously choose to use a reading strategy, they need to do so to repair a comprehension problem, and they need to experience that the strategy use helps them understand aspects of a text that they did not understand without using the strategy. In short, learning *about* a reading comprehension strategy will not easily propel the active learner forward as such, while *using* it in the dialectic process of internalisation and externalisation to expand learning capacity might promote and repair reading comprehension.

This thesis highlights the notion that while using reading strategies will not transform a poor reader into a good reader, helping students to see the potential of using reading strategies as tools might develop their reading comprehension, thus contributing to their development as active and strategic English readers. This requires that teachers offer students the time to practise strategy use, to actively engage with text demands, to both acquire and use the strategies as tools, to make mistakes, get stuck and make an attempt at meaning. This means to create what Claxton (2007) called “potentiating environments”, where “there are plenty of hard, interesting things to do, and it is accepted as normal that everyone regularly gets confused, frustrated and stuck” (p. 125). In other words, more importantly for

teachers than explicitly teaching new reading comprehension strategies is to give the students opportunities to practise using the strategy, whether it is a new strategy or a known one.

Another implication of strategy use is to establish the need for a strategy. In short, if students are asked to read a text that they understand without much effort, there is no need for strategies. As shown above in the *Mode of reading continuum* (Figure 10.3), to “just” read a text – or a text the students easily understand – does not require strategies. What students need is to experience authentic reading situations, where they are asked to read a text that offers some challenges, and to acknowledge that this is normal for everyone, in any reading situation, as long as the text is not known to them already. In fact, even known texts might be challenging depending on the situation and the reading task. These are the situations the students should be prepared for. Such situations should make students consciously choose a reading strategy – because they have experienced that strategies help them understand.

A final implication is the need to highlight for the students that independent and flexible use of reading strategies depends greatly on them seeing personal reasons for doing so. In my doctoral study, the vocational students saw strategic reading as useful to them personally, while the students in general studies primarily used strategies to respond to teacher and task demands. The latter group of students will not become strategic readers if this is the only reason and situation in which they use strategies. If strategies are to be a means to an end, their potential as tools for learning must be realised. This argument suggests that English teachers should not expect proficient readers to uncritically embrace strategies as tools for learning. The indications here are that students might not be able, by themselves, to see how strategy use is useful to them. However, by explicitly pointing to students’ personal purposes for using strategies as tools, the teacher can create what Vygotsky (1981) called *active learners*, where the tools help the students propel themselves forward as learners (Edwards, 2015).

On the basis of my thesis, I would like to emphasise the importance of taking the cross-linguistic aspect of reading comprehension into consideration in English reading instruction. Teachers could for example compare their students’ results from reading tests in Norwegian and English, instead of keeping them separate between Norwegian and English teachers in their discussions with the students. Doing so will offer insight into whether a student is a good (or poor) reader in both languages, or whether the students is a more (or less) proficient reader in English, as this might give a broader picture of the student as a reader.

Thus, these are the situations I suggest teachers should prepare their students for; (1) offering students authentic texts that are challenging, (2) prompting students to use known reading strategies to help them close the gap between what they are expected to understand and what they understand on their own, (3) offering students the time to try, and fail, and try again, possibly using another strategy that might be more helpful to them in the situation, (4) helping the students become conscious of the strategies they know, and when, how, and why to use them, and (5) when necessary, explicitly teach new strategies that might be useful for the students. By carefully designing reading instruction in such a manner as to make strategic reading relevant for the students, the teacher can frame reading strategy use in motivating ways, regardless of whether the purpose is related to the students' own interests or the formal English curriculum.

My doctoral work has made me value actions over words, and I would like to encourage English teachers to emphasise students' activities as readers and their agency over their static understanding of texts. I propose that teachers, too, should be agents with choice and voice in enacting quality reading comprehension instruction. My doctoral work bridges research, theory, and practice in the area of English reading comprehension, hopefully benefiting students, teachers, and schools.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To build on and develop the work in my doctoral thesis, researchers could study curricularisation work at the local school level concerning research-based reading comprehension strategy instruction in English. This could be done by studying (i.e., by observation, interviews, or surveys) how English teachers plan their reading comprehension and strategy instruction, with an eye toward whether these practices reflect research findings. Researchers could study how teachers develop their ideas into curriculum plans and materials, with the goal of making research-based reading strategy instruction a regular part of their English lessons.

My doctoral study was the first one to systematically analyse reading proficiency across Norwegian L1 and English L2, and to the best of my knowledge, this has not been repeated later. There is a need to follow up on the knowledge about students' reading proficiency across languages in secondary school, and I suggest future research in this area on three levels, both as separate studies and as longitudinal research. First, using the national reading tests in Norwegian and English, research could compare reading proficiency across the two languages in 5th grade and/or 8th grade. Second, results in English reading from 5th to 8th grade could be

compared over three years among the same readers. Third, in upper secondary school, the English mapping tests I used have now been replaced by new standardised tests (Norwegian: *læringsstøttende prøver*) in English reading, listening, and productive use of English, and comparing results across these three skills for the same readers would be of utmost interest to the understanding of students' strengths in English reading compared to their proficiency in the two other English areas.

English reading comprehension is challenging but critical on many levels. It is challenging for teachers to teach comprehension strategies, and for students to use such strategies; it is also challenging for researchers to collect and analyse evidence of comprehension strategy instruction and use. However, it is vital for students of all ages, regardless of their English reading proficiency, to develop as comprehenders of texts and their world. Thus, it is vital to continue research in this field.

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11

PhD revisited: Approaches to English as a foreign language (EFL) reading instruction in Norwegian primary schools¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Charboneau, 2016) that investigated the use of four approaches to EFL reading instruction in Norwegian 4th–5th grades. The study used a mixed-methods approach comprising a questionnaire sent to teachers throughout Norway and a case study of four schools. The results suggest it was challenging to provide differentiated teaching to meet students' abilities and needs. The chapter discusses implications for EFL reading instruction, and suggestions for future research.

KEYWORDS Reading instruction | materials | practices | differentiation | interaction

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study, *Approaches to English as a foreign language (EFL) reading instruction in Norwegian primary schools* (Charboneau, 2016) from the University of Stavanger, focusing specifically on its practical implications for the teaching of English in Norway. The doctoral thesis in its entirety can be found here: <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/2578213>

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this doctoral study was to investigate the teaching of reading among English foreign language (EFL) learners in the 4th and 5th grades in Norway, specifically the use of different reading approaches for EFL reading instruction. These grades cover the important transition from basic primary (4th grade) to the intermediate (5th grade) levels. It was a descriptive mixed-methods study combining quantitative and qualitative research data sources: a teacher questionnaire, student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations.

Despite great emphasis on reading and writing skills in *L97* and *LK06*, many English primary teachers have no subject-specific training in English (Drew, Oostdam, & van Toorenburg, 2007). The need for increased competence and pre-service education of language teachers is widely acknowledged (Drew et al., 2007; Hasselgreen, 2005; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research [KD], 2007b). The demands on qualified teachers are great, since *LK06* refrains from mentioning teaching methods or approaches, placing the responsibility on teachers to use appropriate methods and approaches to help students attain the competence aims (Hasselgreen, 2005). Additionally, reports have questioned whether students have the necessary EFL skills to succeed in higher education given the current English demands (Hellekjær, 2005; KD, 2007a). As few studies have explored EFL practices in primary schools, especially the development of reading skills, it is important to study how reading skills are taught in primary classrooms.

This doctoral study aims to increase knowledge about teacher competence and instruction, in this case EFL reading at the primary level. The overarching research question for this study is:

How is reading taught in Norwegian 4th and 5th grade EFL classes?

This overarching question is divided into four sub-questions:

RQ1. What materials, activities, and instructional practices do 4th and 5th grade teachers use to teach English reading?

RQ2. To what extent do the reading approaches enable differentiation in reading instruction?

RQ3. What differences are there in the reading interaction between teachers and students in the different reading approaches?

RQ4. What are teachers' perceptions of their English reading instruction and best practice?

THEORY

First, in the context of this study, reading is understood as engaging with and creating meaning from texts in order to understand, find, interpret, reflect on, assess, and acquire insight and knowledge from them. Reading, according to Coltheart (2005), is “information-processing: transforming print to speech, or print to meaning” (p. 6). Reading comprehension, as defined by the RAND Reading Study Group (RAND, 2002) is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Comprehension has these elements: the reader, the text, and the activity, or purpose for reading” (p. xi). Intensive reading is reading with a focus on details of language in short texts used to exemplify specific aspects of the language or for targeted reading strategy use (Nation, 2009). Extensive reading, in contrast, is reading for comprehension with few or no specific language tasks to perform (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989), and reading for pleasure usually associated with reading for longer periods of time and often longer texts (Day & Bamford, 1998). A large body of research has shown the benefits of extensive reading for developing language skills (reviews by Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen 2004) and the importance of time spent reading (Taylor et al., 2000).

Additionally, learners are expected to develop the use of reading strategies. The aim is for the reader to choose appropriate strategies depending on the reading aim and purpose (Grabe, 2009). In order for students to improve their reading skills, they should be reading at their instructional reading level (texts where 90–95% of vocabulary is known when reading with support) (Nation, 2009).

Second, differentiation is defined as adaptations made to reading instruction (including practices and materials) for groups or individual students (Arends & Kilcher, 2010) – for example, grouping arrangements during reading instruction, including whole-class, small group, and individualized instruction (Taylor, Peterson, Rodriguez, & Pearson, 2002). Third, interaction is defined as the communicative exchanges in the classroom. Generally, this applies to interactions between teacher and students while working with texts or talking about reading, or student interactions, in group work.

Finally, teachers’ beliefs have shown a relationship between classroom practice and language teacher cognition, defined as “what teachers believe, know, and think” (Borg, 2006, p. 81). Within the current study, the following aspects of teachers’ perceptions of reading instruction are explored: priorities related to teaching, policy statements regarding teacher qualifications, EFL reading practices, and factors that influence their teaching.

REVIEW

Reports claim little is known about English instruction in the early school grades in Norway (KD, 2007b). Results of a 2003 questionnaire among primary EFL teachers showed that almost 60% of teachers either had little or no formal English education (Drew, 2009).

Previous research on EFL teaching practices at the primary level (Drew et al., 2007) found that schools primarily use textbooks and “traditional” teaching practices (e.g., grammar translation and direct methods). These include reading in unison, teachers reading aloud, and use of translation and assessment based on texts, especially vocabulary and comprehension testing based on recall questions. A few studies (Drew et al., 2007; Hellekjær, 2005) found that when teaching reading and working with texts, teachers primarily adhere to intensive reading.

Studies have found most classroom interaction to be between teachers and students, both in L1 contexts (Littleton & Mercer, 2013; Taylor et al., 2002) and foreign-language contexts (Moon, 2005). Educational studies have found a typical teacher-led pattern to classroom interaction: often teacher-initiated, followed by student response, and responded to by teacher feedback (Littleton & Mercer, 2013), commonly referred to as IRE/F. This is often manifested as a “recitation script”, where teachers ask closed questions, followed by brief student answers where students are expected to report others’ thinking rather than thinking for themselves (Hardman, 2008).

The results of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) project on effective reading instruction in elementary schools indicated a clear difference between teachers with a strong teacher-directed stance and those with a student-support stance (Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2005; Taylor et al., 2002). Overall, teaching practices that have been found to be effective include teachers who engaged students in on-task behaviors, who modeled for students, and used a student-support stance. This allows for a participatory approach to engaging with text, where students actively interact with a text, which may in turn trigger reading strategy use (RAND, 2002).

Research has shown that comprehension skills and strategies are important in reading instruction (Goldenberg, 2011). Reading strategies can be taught effectively, strategy instruction can improve reading comprehension, and should be included in reading comprehension instruction (Grabe, 2009). Teaching reading strategies in the students’ L1 and helping them apply these to their L2 is an effective instructional practice (Goldenburg, 2011). Within this field of research, the distinction between reading skills and strategies is made, allowing the researcher to distinguish between teaching a strategy and teaching or applying comprehension skills to a specific text (Taylor et al., 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The data from this study was collected from October 2010 until June 2011. Due to the complexity of teaching, classroom context, and classroom research, a mixed-methods approach was adopted in order to strengthen the validity of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). The data collection proceeded in two stages. First, a national questionnaire was created and disseminated among 4th and 5th grade teachers (quantitative data, autumn 2010). Second, based on the questionnaire findings, four case study schools were selected for lesson observations based on variation in reading approaches, and interviews with teachers and students were conducted during a six-month period in 2011 (qualitative data).

RESEARCH DESIGN

For the purposes of this study, I have defined a reading approach as the core materials used by teachers, their practices related to the development of reading ability, and reading-related activities. Reading approaches are categorized as those that use one of the following:

- ▶ a textbook-based approach
- ▶ a combination of textbook-based approach and the use of graded readers (leveled texts, often short books in a series)
- ▶ primarily extensive reading through the use of graded readers
- ▶ an approach adapted from an Australian/New Zealand literacy program, for example the Early Years Literacy Program (EYLP)
- ▶ other approaches

The reading approach categories were derived deductively based on theory and the literature review concerning the use of reading materials and practices used in Norway. These approaches were the categories used for the teacher questionnaire. As a mixed-methods study, the research questions are addressed using a combination of different research methods and data sources.

SAMPLE

The target population was defined as 4th and/or 5th grade English teachers. Schools meeting certain criteria were excluded (special schools, medical institutes, schools without students in these grades); 583 schools were excluded, with 2,572 schools remaining. Three stratification variables were chosen to aid in selecting a nationally representative sample: geographic location, school type, and number of students. A

questionnaire was sent electronically to 1000 randomly selected schools, with 370 responses from 4th and 5th grade teachers at 310 schools.

Potential schools for the case study sample were contacted based on the following criteria:

1. Follow-up from the questionnaire
2. Invitation letter to local schools
3. Reading approach used by one or more teachers at the school
4. Geographic location and size of school

Four schools were selected for the *case study*, representing various reading approaches: textbook-based approach (School 1); combination of textbook-based and graded readers (Schools 2 and 3); and EYLP approach (School 4). Two schools were located in Oslo and two in Rogaland. At each school, one teacher was recruited in the 4th and 5th grades respectively, totaling eight teachers. The backgrounds and experiences of these teachers varied. The teachers ranged in age (23–56), teaching experience (1–20 years), and English teaching qualifications (0–60 study points, i.e., a year of full-time study). Two teachers taught both 4th and 5th grade English, three only 4th grade, and three only 5th grade. In addition, several students were interviewed from each class (a convenience sample of students recommended by the teachers; see Table 11.2).

TABLE 11.1. An overview of the data and analyses used in the doctoral study.

| Quantitative data | | | Qualitative data | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Data | Analysis | Research question | Data | Analysis | Research question |
| Questionnaire <i>N</i> = 370 | Descriptive and inductive statistics | RQ1 RQ2 RQ3 RQ4 | Classroom observations of reading instruction 4 schools; 2 classes at each school | Coding for classroom observation analysis of frequencies of observation coding | RQ1 RQ2 RQ3 |
| | | | Teacher interviews (12 formal interviews, average length 45 min, additional informal interviews) | Transcription of recordings; Content analysis | RQ1 RQ2 RQ3 RQ4 |
| | | | Student interviews (37 interviews, average length 4 min) | Transcription of recordings; Content analysis | RQ2 RQ3 |

QUESTIONNAIRE

The teacher questionnaire contained 48 questions; 46 closed and 2 open ones. It was divided into three main sections: (a) teachers' background, educational qualifications, and school information, (b) the teachers' practices in EFL reading instruction, and (c) teachers' perceptions of EFL reading instruction and language learning. The questionnaire data was analyzed using PASW Statistics 18.0. Procedures were performed to compute descriptive (means, percentages) and inductive statistics (Chi-square) for data regarding teachers' qualifications, reading approach, materials, and practices used in English instruction.

TABLE 11.2. Summary of research participants' data.

| Case study schools and teachers | | Visits | Lessons observed in 4 th grade | Lessons observed in 5 th grade | Formal teacher interviews | Informal teacher interviews | Student interview | Additional data sources |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|---|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| School 1 (textbook) | Teacher 1 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 7 | E-mails |
| School 2 (combination) | Teacher 2 | 5 | 5 | – | 2 | 3 | 8 | E-mails |
| | Teacher 3 | 5 | – | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | E-mails |
| School 3 (combination) | Teacher 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 5 | E-mails Teaching materials |
| School 4 (EYLP) | Teacher 5 | 1 | – | 2 | 1 | – | – | E-mails |
| | Teacher 6 | 1 | 2 | – | – | 1 | 8 | |
| | Teacher 7 | 2 | 4 | – | 1 | – | 8 | |
| | Teacher 8 | 3 | – | 7.3 | 2 | 2 | – | E-mails Student work |

OBSERVATION

Data was collected from the following sources at the case study schools:

1. Observation of lessons ($n = 45.3$ class hours)
2. Interview with teachers ($n = 12$ formal, 13 informal)

3. Interview with students ($n = 37$)
4. Texts used during reading activities and instruction in the lessons

An observation coding system, CIERA (Taylor et al., 2002, 2005; Taylor, 2004), was used to support the collection of consistent data from the case study schools during the classroom observations. The system had the following areas of focus for data collection: (1) who led the instruction, (2) grouping, (3) general focus and (4) specific focus of literacy events or activities, (5) material, (6) teacher interaction styles, and (7) expected student responses to literacy events (Table 11.3). During the observations, two types of data were collected: qualitative note-taking (a narrative of what was said and done in five-minute increments), and quantitatively oriented coding based on the previously mentioned categories. As it was possible for more than one code to be observed in a five-minute segment, some increments were coded more than once at the same level within the same segment. After the observation, the codings were tabulated and entered into a coding tally sheet. The possibility of multiple coding within a segment level consequently meant that the coding tabulations could also equal more than 100% within each level.

TABLE 11.3. Codes for classroom observation.

| Level 1 – Who led instruction | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Classroom teacher (C) | Special education | Reading specialist |
| No one | Other specialist | Other |
| Not applicable | | |
| Level 2 – Grouping | | |
| Whole class/large group | Small group | Pairs |
| Individual | Other | Not applicable |
| Level 3 – General focus of literacy event or activity | | |
| Reading | Composition/writing | Other language |
| Other | Not applicable | |
| Level 4 – Specific focus of literacy event or activity | | |
| Reading connected text | Listening to connected text | Vocabulary |
| Sight words | Word recognition strategies | Comprehension skill |
| Comprehension strategy | Writing | Word identification |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Meaning of text, lower m1 for talk m2 for writing | Meaning of text, higher m1 for talk m2 for writing | Phonics P1= letter sound P2=letter by letter P3=onset/rime P4=multisyllabic |
| Phonemic awareness | Letter identification | Spelling |
| Other | Not applicable | |
| Level 5 – Material | | |
| Narrative | Informational | Student writing |
| Board/Chart | Worksheet | Other |
| Not applicable | | |
| Level 6 – Teacher interaction | | |
| Telling | Modeling | Recitation |
| Coaching/scaffolding | Listening/watching | Reading aloud |
| Assessment | Discussion | Other |
| Not applicable | | |
| Level 7 – Expected student response | | |
| Reading | Reading turn-taking | Orally responding |
| Oral turn-taking | Listening | Writing |
| Manipulating | Other | Not applicable |

In addition to notes taken during the observations, the lessons were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The coding was also analyzed for inter-rater reliability with an external coder who was trained in the coding system (one observation from each school). Inter-rater reliability was calculated using percentage of agreement and Cohen's kappa (Posner, Sampson, Caplan, Ward, & Cheney, 1990), with an overall initial inter-rater reliability of 88% and a kappa score of .66.

INTERVIEWS

During the case study period, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and a small selection of students (Table 11.2). During the formal interviews, which were conducted before the first observed lesson and following the final observed lesson, the teachers were asked about their reading approach,

materials used, how these were used, types of reading assessment, and their opinion regarding certain language policies, such as the national test in English. Informal interviews were used to follow up after some observed lessons. Semi-structured interviews with students addressed their exposure to various texts and teaching methods, and how these affected their motivation and learning outcomes of the lessons.

The interview data was transcribed and processed using qualitative content analysis. During the transcription process, content categories were created based on the questionnaire categories (which were based on relevant topics from theory and the Norwegian EFL context) related to the topics covered in the interviews: their reading approach, teaching, materials, differentiation, reading levels, reading assessment, lesson aims, curriculum aims, and the national test. The interviews were coded and summarized within these categories.

RESULTS

Overall, the results showed that most teachers used a textbook as their primary reading material, and many teachers had few other reading materials available. Teachers generally did not use differentiated reading material or allow students choice of what to read. However, most teachers felt differentiated materials were important and differentiating teaching was difficult.

READING INSTRUCTION RESULTS FROM THE NATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

First, 48.3% of the teachers did not have *English teaching qualifications* (30 ECTS is the minimum level for teaching in primary school; KD, 2009). However, higher education in English did not appear to be significantly associated with a particular reading approach, $\chi^2(4, 357) = 8.498, p = 0.75$. This means that the teachers' English teaching qualification was not reflected in their choice of reading approach.

Regarding *reading approaches*, the questionnaire found that 62% of teachers used a textbook as the basis of English reading instruction, whereas a combination approach was used by 30%, and 8% used graded readers or the EYLP. Only half as many teachers used a textbook in their Norwegian reading instruction ($n = 102$) compared to English ($n = 212$); over half of the teachers reported using a combination of textbook-based and graded readers in Norwegian ($n = 199$) compared to a third in English ($n = 103$), yet most of them used the graded readers and EYLP infrequently both in Norwegian ($n = 42$) and English ($n = 28$). However, there was

a significant relationship between the languages; namely, when the teacher used one approach in Norwegian they were likely to use the same approach in English ($\chi^2(4, 343) = 83.599, p < .001$). This is an important finding related to the potential for transfer of reading practices and skills from one language to another.

TABLE 11.4. Crosstable showing reading approaches of teachers in Norwegian and English classes (actual numbers, expected numbers, adjusted residual).

| Norwegian reading approach | English reading approach | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| | | Textbook (<i>n</i> = 212) | Combination (<i>n</i> = 103) | Graded readers/ EYLP (<i>n</i> = 28) |
| Textbook (<i>n</i> = 102) | Actual | 97 | 4 | 1 |
| | Expected | 63 | 30.6 | 8.3 |
| | Adj. res. | 8.3*** | -6.9 | -3.2 |
| Combination (<i>n</i> = 199) | Actual | 98 | 85 | 16 |
| | Expected | 123 | 59.8 | 16.2 |
| | Adj. res. | -5.6 | 6*** | -1 |
| Graded reader/EYLP (<i>n</i> = 42) | Actual | 17 | 14 | 11 |
| | Expected | 26 | 12.6 | 3.4 |
| | Adj. res. | -3 | .5 | 4.6*** |

Note. ***= significance level 0.1%. Expected numbers are calculated using probability theory.

Regarding *reading materials*, 47% of the teachers had no other English books than the textbook in their classrooms, and 21% had no English books in their library. There appeared to be a lack of information available to teachers as to how they could best work with different text genres, texts at different comprehension and ability levels, reading for different purposes, and incorporating reading strategies into their teaching.

Concerning *teaching practices*, the majority of teachers most often used a whole-class teacher-led reading session where all students read the same text. The most common reading practices were reading aloud by the teacher (64% three or more times per month), chorally by the class (53%), or students reading aloud individually to the class (56%). Students reading in groups (23%) or individually (28%) were not commonly applied.

Concerning how they *differentiated* and incorporated learner autonomy into text choice, 63% did not allow students to choose which text to read, 59% used

differentiated texts fewer than three times per month, 52% never organized students in ability groups, 48% did not enable students to use English reading computer programs, and 86% did not enable students to use online books.

Regarding their *collaboration* on reading instruction with other English and Norwegian teachers, it tended to either be frequent (weekly: 44% grade 4; 24% grade 5), or almost never (35% grade 4; 51% grade 5). Similarly, a majority never (50%) or almost never (53%) collaborated with other English teachers regarding reading instruction.

Related to teachers' perceptions of *teaching EFL reading*, feeling prepared to teach English reading was related to whether teachers had English teaching qualifications, $\chi^2(10, 347) = 89.551, p < .001$. In addition, the majority of teachers felt that mixed-ability classes were the greatest challenge to an English teacher (56%), but only a quarter of them felt they were able to provide differentiated instruction to all students.

Related to teachers' *perspectives on reading materials and their use*, nearly all reported being strongly in favor of differentiated reading materials (96%), yet few actually had their students read level-differentiated texts on a regular basis (18%). More teachers reported a paucity of teaching hours as influencing their reading teaching (45%), compared to a paucity of materials (20%). However, satisfaction with reading materials was related to the quantity available (classrooms $\chi^2(6, 360) = 26.426, p < .001$, school libraries $\chi^2(6, 360) = 25.172, p < .001$). Thus, those with fewer materials felt this influenced their teaching more than other factors. Some teachers felt that their schools were unwilling to invest in reading materials (37%).

READING APPROACHES AT THE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

Although the teachers using the combination and EYLP approaches appeared to be more satisfied with their reading approach because they were able to choose from both the textbook and other reading materials, as well as a variety of teaching practices, the teachers from all three approaches saw room for improvement. Observations found that although there was some focus on reading strategies in the EYLP approach, none of the approaches had an explicit focus on transference of strategies from L1 to L2.

Textbook-based approach (School 1)

The textbook-based approach appeared predictable and easy for the teacher and students; providing topics, written language input, and structure for the EFL

teaching, in addition to support from the teacher's guide, including curriculum aims. However, the teacher supplemented the textbook, most commonly with YouTube videos and music. This school practiced differentiation by grouping students into two groups; lower-level students reading the simplest texts, and the remaining students reading all of the texts in class, only differing texts for homework. Students were not given choices among other types of texts or books to read.

The predominance of whole-class teacher-led instruction, broken up with short episodes of pairs of students reading aloud or translating texts, meant that the majority of the students were often passive in class with only a few participating by speaking or reading aloud. The teacher primarily interacted with the students through telling and recitation in 4th grade, but telling, listening/watching, and giving feedback in 5th grade. The aim of the lessons often appeared to be getting through the text and learning vocabulary, rather than interaction or discussion of the text, content, or theme. One exception was one 4th grade lesson focusing on the English national test (which tests English reading comprehension), where the teacher modeled reading strategies and thought processes as she answered the reading comprehension questions. Reading comprehension strategies were addressed in one lesson only, separate from their class reading texts, and not addressed in any other observed lessons in 4th or 5th grade.

Combination approach (Schools 2 and 3)

The combination approach schools used a variety of reading materials for independent reading, but primarily the textbook for whole-class interactions and activities. There were differences between the schools concerning quantity and access to other books. The School 2 teachers purchased books themselves or ordered them from the library. Therefore, there were more authentic children's books than graded readers. In contrast, School 3 had invested in graded readers and authentic children's books. The 4th grade teacher at School 2 (who attended an in-service course) occasionally read authentic children's literature aloud. The School 3 teacher designed a book project using *Fantastic Mr. Fox* by Roald Dahl. The students at both schools appeared to benefit from these experiences, in terms of reading engagement and reported reading motivation. At these schools, differentiation was addressed both through materials for individual reading, and through a combination of whole-class and pair work.

When working with textbook texts, there was a predominance of teacher-led instruction, in the form of choral reading or students taking turns reading aloud, which led to lower student activity and incorporated fewer other activities.

The most common types of teacher interaction were telling and recitation at School 2, and telling and listening/watching at School 3. Modeling and coaching (i.e., the teacher prompting or providing support that would transfer to other situations as students attempted to perform a strategy to answer a question) were rarely employed, except the 4th-grade teacher at School 2 who used coaching once or twice in most lessons.

In 5th grade, the use of comprehension skills and strategies was not common, except at School 3. In 4th grade, the teachers mentioned and used comprehension strategies occasionally, and occasionally modeled comprehension skills, without any explicit expectation that the students use these in subsequent reading.

Early Years Literacy Program approach (School 4)

At the EYLP school, students worked at stations, in ability groups. The school primarily used graded readers at the teacher station, and a combination of graded readers and other children's literature at the individual reading stations. At the individual reading station, students chose books and read extensively, focusing on comprehension. At the teacher station, they read intensively, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and translation into Norwegian. There was also a focus on comprehension and discussion of the text, but this supplemented the intensive reading and did not constitute extensive reading.

In the 4th grade class there was no strategy modeling. However, on two occasions the teacher reminded the students to use the comprehension skills they had learned, namely looking in the text for answers and using pictures for comprehension support. In 5th grade, the teacher expected the students to explain their thinking based on evidence in the text or pictures, which was unique among the four schools. At the teacher station in 5th grade, comprehension skills were used during 40% of the reading segments, whereas comprehension strategies were presented to the students during nearly 15% of the segments. At this school there was a strong focus on translation of the texts read at the teacher station. This was not only time-consuming, but also appeared to be challenging for the students, who usually spent more time translating than reading the original English text. The teachers primarily used recitation at the teacher station to initiate conversation about the texts. Modeling was infrequent, but coaching occurred in 28% of the 5th grade teaching segments, which was more frequent than at the other schools. For example, the teacher coached the students in the use of comprehension skills and reminded them about appropriate reading aloud behavior, including taking pauses and using intonation.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

This has been a large-scale doctoral study of EFL reading in Norwegian 4th and 5th grades where four different approaches to reading instruction have been identified to analyze teaching materials, practices, interactions, and differentiation.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The focus on comparing different approaches to EFL reading instruction has contributed to new knowledge regarding teachers' practices and the use of various reading materials. This has helped to create a more complete understanding of current EFL reading instruction at the primary level and to highlight the use of research-supported practices (e.g., greater use of a wide range of materials and grouping differentiation) and areas where there is need for improvement (e.g., teacher modeling reading strategies for students). Furthermore, this research has included an understanding of how the EYLP approach is both similar to and different from other approaches being used by EFL teachers.

The questionnaire findings confirmed that the majority of teachers used a textbook as the primary *reading material* in their English lessons. Additionally, 47% of the teachers had no English books other than the textbooks in their classroom, and 20% had none in their library. These findings indicate a lack of reading materials available to support differentiated reading instruction.

Regarding class *practices*, the case study data shows a predominance of teacher-led, whole-class instruction, with the exception of the EYLP approach school. Most of the classroom interaction was between the teacher and the students. Teacher recitation (Hardman, 2008; Taylor et al., 2002, 2005) was used frequently at all of the case study schools, as was teacher telling. Additionally, reading interactions at these schools were predominantly teacher-initiated and teacher-dominated, with few examples of students asking questions (Van der Meij, 1993). In contrast to recitation, coaching was infrequently employed at all of the schools. However, this did not mean that the teachers did not support students and employ interaction techniques such as elicitation, but rather that these occurred infrequently.

This study has found that intensive reading is the most common practice in Norwegian schools, normally using textbook texts. Although the questionnaire data revealed that the teacher reading aloud was still a common practice, it was nevertheless an uncommon practice among the case study teachers. The frequent use of student translation of texts, repeated choral reading, and taking turns reading aloud, which were practices found in the case study schools (and to some extent among the questionnaire respondents), were somewhat disappointing findings.

Although these practices had previously been common in EFL instruction, they are generally associated with more traditional methods of instruction compared to a more recent focus on communicative language learning. However, how this was conducted varied by approach. Generally, when students take turns reading aloud, most of the class is passive. In contrast, when interaction takes place in small groups, students are usually more active, such as at the EYLP approach school where students interacted with the teacher at the teacher station (guided reading) or with other students at the other stations.

Another reading practice, individual silent reading, although not a common practice in the questionnaire answers, was used at three of the four case study schools (occasionally by the two combination approach schools and regularly by the EYLP approach school). Individual extensive reading has a strong basis in reading and language learning research and was thus considered a strength of these two approaches.

Comprehension skills and strategies was an area in which there were differences among the reading approaches in the case study schools. Among the 5th grade classes, the teachers in the EYLP school used and talked about comprehension strategies and skills more than the other approaches. The comprehension strategies included using pictures, applying background knowledge, using contextual clues to guess unknown words, and using a dictionary; some of these strategies were also used at the other case study schools. Generally, there is greater focus on comprehension strategies and applying higher-level comprehension skills² in guided reading, which is used in the EYLP approach.

Although presented as a specific reading approach, the combination approach is just that, the use of a combination of different reading materials, and in this case reading practices. The teachers at the two case study schools could have chosen to add more differentiated interaction or focus on reading skills and strategies. However, the strength of their implementation was in the greater use of individual reading, even if it was more intensive in approach at School 3 and extensive at School 2. Thus, although this approach incorporated a greater use of differentiated materials, primarily through graded readers, there was still room for improvement, especially in terms of greater differentiated interaction between the teacher and students and more focus on reading skills and strategies.

The EYLP approach appears to have many advantages. For example, the extent of differentiated interaction between the teacher and students at the teacher station

2. Higher-level comprehension skills are defined as comprehension that is at a high-level of text interpretation or goes beyond the text, such as with generalization, application, evaluation, and aesthetic responses (Taylor, Peterson, Rodriguez, & Pearson, 2002).

meant the teacher had fewer students to interact with at any one time. Other advantages were the differentiated materials for extensive reading, both graded readers and children's literature, and the overall focus on reading skills and development of strategies through guided reading at the teacher station. However, although this may be considered an ideal program from the perspective of reading development, from an EFL perspective, one drawback is its lack of focus on oral communication skills. Oral communication could be featured at the other stations besides the teacher station, although there is no specific station intended for this purpose. This is because the EYLP program was taken from an L1 reading and writing program, which, accordingly, did not require a component focused on oral language development. This is one area in which the EYLP program in Norwegian schools may not have been adapted well enough for EFL learning, and therefore it could be further developed.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The study presented here has contributed to EFL research through a mixed-methods study of teaching and learning in 4th and 5th grades. The application of mixed methods was comprised of quantitative and qualitative data from two primary sources: a national questionnaire sent to teachers and a case study of four schools.

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher specifically to address teachers' reading practices, use of materials, and their perceptions of reading instruction and best practice. In terms of a research instrument, the questionnaire could be further developed and used in other countries as a means of international comparison.

Related to the qualitative data collection at the case study schools, the mixed-methods approach allowed first for systematic observation, which could be tabulated and compared. This research has shown that the observation coding scheme developed by Taylor et al. (2000) for L1 reading instruction can also be applied to an L2 context with minor adaptations. This can be an effective tool for evaluating and tracking changes in reading instruction. Second, the mixed-methods approach has also enabled the researcher to view EFL reading instruction from multiple perspectives, (e.g., both teacher and student perspectives on reading instruction).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

Based on the results and discussions of the current research, three main implications appear to emerge from this study. First, there is a need for a greater focus on

reading skills, purpose, and strategies within EFL reading instruction in 4th and 5th grades. This includes helping to raise students' and teachers' awareness of transferring reading skills from Norwegian to English. Second, there is a need for greater use of differentiation and different types of differentiation to support reading development. Finally, there is a need for more teacher professional development.

Reading skills, purposes, and strategies

Reading skills in all subjects are a focus in the *LK06* curriculum. Additionally, further clarification of the reading construct is addressed in the Framework for Basic Skills. These documents specify that students need to develop lower- and higher-level comprehension skills, reading strategies, and knowledge of how and when to apply these skills and strategies. Since students are introduced to English reading and writing early in their school careers, it could be beneficial to view Norwegian and English reading development as complementary rather than supplementary. For example, the frequent focus on comprehension skills and strategies in the EYLP approach school is likely to have benefited the students' reading development (Taylor et al., 2000), despite less focus on transfer of L1 strategies.

There was little indication, based on the case study data, that teachers actively promoted the use of knowledge and strategies from the Norwegian subject in English reading instruction, even though most also acknowledged the connection between reading abilities in the two languages. Collaboration among English and Norwegian teachers is important because, although research has shown that L1 reading strategies can be transferred to L2 reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002), teachers need to actively support students in practicing transference of the strategies (Goldenberg, 2011). Since both lack of time and difficult transitions between grades were mentioned as a problem by teachers in the questionnaire, greater focus on time to discuss English teaching content, how to improve transitions between grades, and the transfer of skills from L1 to L2, would be beneficial for both generalist and specialist teachers in planning and promoting English development.

Differentiation

The need for increased differentiation related to materials, practices, interaction, and teacher expectations for students is a second implication of the study.

The research implications on extensive reading, and its ability to differentiate reading, is that one needs to reassess the popular approaches to EFL reading instruction that rely heavily on textbook use and traditional teacher-led methods of reading instruction (Drew, 2004). Since differentiated reading instruction depends on teachers having materials appropriate to the different needs of their students, this is an important issue.

Although research has found teacher recitation to be a common type of teacher interaction, it is limiting for student learning because of its focus on display of knowledge and teacher evaluation rather than opportunities for knowledge building, engagement, and dialogue (Littleton & Mercer, 2013). The interaction at the teacher station at the EYLP school, namely reading in small groups using guided reading, came closest to a balance of recitation and dialogic discourse (cf.).

Although the three teaching approaches studied in the current case study research appeared to be teacher-dependent, the EYLP approach may be considered even more so than the others, partially because some of the greatest benefits of the program come through the scaffolded and guided interactions at the teacher station. This is where the teacher can best support individual students' reading development. A teacher who is less aware of differentiation, or how best to model and provide scaffolding for using reading strategies, will be less effective in this setting.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous benefits of the EYLP approach (Drew, 2009). In the opinion of this researcher, it is possible to take some of the positive aspects of the EYLP approach and combine them with other approaches, such as the combination approach. Increasing the amount of time students work in smaller, level-differentiated reading groups with the teacher, focusing on comprehension skills and strategies development, and creating opportunities for extensive reading, especially of level-differentiated texts at home, could arguably lead to improvements in students' reading motivation and development.

Teacher professional development

The need for increased qualifications and training for language teachers in Norway has been widely acknowledged (Drew & Vigrestad, 2008; Hasselgreen, 2005; KD, 2007a). The findings from the questionnaire confirmed that almost half of 4th and 5th grade EFL teachers have no formal qualifications to teach English. Thus, there is a continuing need for more support for teachers through English planning teams, professional development, and in-service and further education courses. These findings indicate a gap in what teachers perceive as challenging, namely

differentiating for the wide range of ability levels among primary school students, and what they feel they can manage in their teaching. It is therefore important that this gap is addressed, for example through in-service training and additional materials and teaching methods that support teachers in differentiating English lessons, especially when teaching reading. Additionally, it could promote a greater degree of teacher collaboration between Norwegian and English teachers and among English teachers to support the transfer of and better progression of reading skills.

Reading approaches

Some final words about the approaches studied. First, the use of the EYLP in EFL education is innovative in its focus on reading development and differentiation. As far as this researcher is aware, Norway is the only country that uses this program for L2/FL teaching. Its use has increased in the past decade and it should thus receive more attention in future research. However, although interest is growing, it is still only used in a small percentage of schools. It is important to consider that the actual implementation of the EYLP approach will always be teacher-dependent and influenced by the skills and focus of the individual teachers. Second, the combination approach, as described in this research, offers a middle way for teachers to incorporate aspects of various materials and practices. This has real potential given that nearly a third of the teachers describe their teaching as using a combination approach. However, even within this approach there is room for improvement in how teachers can differentiate practices and reading aims, and how they can interact with the students. This is an area that, if given priority in future teacher training or in supportive materials for teachers, could potentially have a large impact on current EFL practices. Finally, there is large untapped potential in helping the nearly two-thirds of teachers who use a textbook-based approach to move towards a more varied and differentiated way of teaching. This is important in order to create discussion and meaningful interactions with texts, which are both included in the curriculum definition of reading (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013).

In conclusion, a focus on reading skills, greater understanding of the possibilities for differentiation, and teacher training and collaboration, would greatly enhance the state of EFL primary education in Norway.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In terms of future research, this doctoral study has indicated numerous areas for follow-up. First, a more thorough analysis of the interaction patterns used while

reading texts in class could yield interesting data about how differentiation is implemented, and the extent to which students are active in English lessons. As there is evidence that much EFL instruction is still teacher-led, it would be useful to look into effective ways to increase teacher modeling and scaffolding, rather than primarily teacher recitation and telling types of interactions.

Second, collaboration between language teachers, whether L1, L2, or other languages, is important for students to apply language learning skills and other skills in multiple languages. Therefore, a study of practice among teachers who have been actively supporting students in applying cross-linguistic reading and language strategies could support language teachers.

A third potential area for research is how to train and inform teachers about how to implement research-supported practices into their teaching. Specifically, it would be interesting to compare the guided reading instruction students at EYLP schools receive in their L1 and how, if at all, this is used to support L2 reading. It would also be interesting to investigate to what extent L1 graded readers written for L2 students are more or less supportive for language learning.

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12

PhD revisited: Questions of culture and context in English language textbooks

A study of textbooks for the teaching of English in Norway¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Lund, 2007) that investigated four English textbook series for lower secondary school, published 1997–1999. The 1997 national curriculum introduced new perspectives on the role of cultural questions for teaching and learning English. The chapter describes how textbooks followed up these ideas only to a limited degree. It also describes recent developments related to questions of context and culture in foreign language education, and suggests further research.

KEYWORDS English language textbooks | culture | context | curricular guidelines

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Lund, 2007) from the University of Bergen. The doctoral thesis can be found here: <http://bora.uib.no/bitstream/handle/1956/2421/Dr%20Avh%20%20Ragnhild%20Lund.pdf?sequence=1>

INTRODUCTION

My doctoral study was inspired by the new perspectives in the 1997 Norwegian national curriculum (L97) on the role of cultural questions in the teaching and learning of English (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research [KD], 1999). The curriculum pointed to the fact that successful communication “is not a matter of language skills alone”. Students also need to develop the ability to use the language in different contexts and to “communicate across cultural differences” (KD, 1999, p. 239). The curriculum argued further that foreign language learning provides an opportunity to become acquainted with other cultures. Such insight, it says, “lays the foundations for greater respect and tolerance, contributes to new ways of thinking, and broadens [the students’] understanding of their own cultural roots. This gives them a stronger sense of their own identity” (KD, 1999, p. 237).

Since the 19th century it has been customary to teach cultural topics as part of a foreign language course (Stern, 1983). Focus has most often been on the country’s (or countries’) history, literature and institutions (Hadley, 1993). The topics were often referred to as “background studies” (Risager, 1989), and the objective was to contribute to the students’ general education (Risager, 1987; Nelson, 1995). However, cultural issues can also have other, more central roles to play in foreign language education. Research has shown how a whole range of contextual and cultural factors are in play whenever language is used (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). In order to be able to communicate in a foreign language, then, learners should learn to cope with these factors (Kramsch, 1993). Furthermore, since a foreign language is used first and foremost in situations when people from different cultural backgrounds meet, learners need to be prepared for cultural encounters and at least some of the challenges that they may involve. In order for successful communication to happen, learners need to develop cultural awareness and attitudes of curiosity and openness (Byram, 1989; Corbett, 2003).

To me, these new perspectives were reflected in the 1997 English subject curriculum, and in my doctoral study, I was interested to find out how they were interpreted and followed up in the textbooks that were written in accordance with the curriculum. My main research question was:

How are questions of context and culture dealt with in present-day textbooks for the teaching of English in Norwegian lower secondary education?

THEORY

Traditionally, learners have worked with the words and the systems of the foreign language without considering the contexts in which the language can be used (Stern, 1983). In the 20th century, however, a new awareness developed of the role that context plays in determining the meaning of language. The anthropologist Malinowski (1923) introduced the terms “context of situation” and “context of culture” and claimed that outsiders need insight into the context of a text or an utterance in order to be able to understand it. The linguists Halliday & Hasan (1985) pointed out how language only makes sense if it is placed within a context, and that texts and contexts are in fact two sides of the same coin. As soon as we hear or read a piece of text, we simultaneously interpret the context in which we encounter it.

For learners of a foreign language, it is obviously beneficial to acquire knowledge about the contexts in which the language can be used. However, while one may be able to identify some relevant situations of language use, it is impossible to prepare learners for all possible contexts. Therefore, it is just as important to help learners become aware of the role that different aspects of context play in any communication situation, and to prepare them to be able to cope with the complexity of it (Kramsch, 1993). English language skills will open for contact with different groups of people, from many different cultures. For users of a foreign language, insight into the interlocutor’s “context of culture” will be useful both in order to understand the references that are being made and to be able to use the language appropriately (Kramsch, 1993). However, “culture” is a complex phenomenon, and different perspectives can be taken when selecting the areas to be dealt with in a foreign language classroom.

Some scholars differentiate between “high culture” and “everyday culture”, or “big C Culture” and “small c culture”. While “big C Culture” refers to visible and often elitist manifestations of culture, such as intellectual and artistic achievements, “small c culture” refers to everyday practices of a specific group of people. “High culture” had precedence in foreign language classrooms up to the 1960s (Hadley, 1993). With the increased focus on the students’ practical language skills in the 1960s and 1970s, however, more topics related to “small c culture” were introduced. The idea was to prepare the learners for communication in everyday situations (Risager, 1987).

In foreign language education, as well as in common discourse, the notion of culture has often been related to specific countries and their populations (Stern, 1983). This understanding has been contested for several reasons. First, any nation state is the home of people from a variety of nationalities and cultural and linguistic back-

grounds, in addition to members of sub-cultures that may identify to varying degrees with the dominant culture (McLaren, 1995). Secondly, there is a movement away from the understanding of culture as something static, with clear boundaries between different cultural groups. Rather, culture has come to be seen as something which changes continually, and which is constantly renegotiated in meetings between people. Bhabha (1994) talks about the enunciation of a hybrid culture in a “third space”. Situations of communication between people from different cultural backgrounds constitute one arena where such a “third culture” can be built (Casmir, 1999).

In other words, there seems to be a movement away from the understanding that culture is something monolithic, linked to nation states. Many people – at least in the western world – will identify themselves with several cultural groups. Therefore, it can be argued that communication can be just as challenging between people from different cultural backgrounds *within* a nation state as it is between people from different nationalities. Rather than different *cultures*, one can talk about different *discourse systems*, and the challenges can be related to *interdiscourse* rather than *intercultural* communication (Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

However, from the perspective of foreign language education, the difference between intra-cultural and inter-cultural communication is significant (Byram, 1997). In working to develop new language skills, learners will necessarily meet interlocutors, texts and other cultural expressions from backgrounds that differ considerably from their own. Preparing learners for cultural encounters therefore emerges as a crucial ingredient in a foreign language course. Moreover, since different languages and different cultures represent different ways of conceptualizing and understanding the world, foreign language education has come to be seen as a golden opportunity to expose learners to expressions of “otherness” and to increase their awareness of – and openness towards – cultural diversity (Fantini, 1997; Geertz, 1973).

However, in order for learners to become engaged in issues related to cultural encounters, they must be able to recognize the descriptions as realistic, believable and relevant. The presentation of “real” representatives for other cultures is seen as a central ingredient here. In order for learners to become interested, engaged and feel the need for further contact, Risager (1991) suggests that they should meet *real people* from the foreign country in *micro level texts*. Her notion of micro level texts refers to texts that present people who come to life as believable human beings with “feelings, attitudes, values and perceived problems” (Risager, 1991, p. 183).

REVIEW

Earlier research has shown that textbooks for the teaching of English have often included information about the two countries that have, traditionally, had the closest links to the language, namely the United Kingdom and the United States. Some textbooks, however, have included countries where English is used as a second language, and some have referred to countries where English is learnt as a foreign language. With reference to the fact that learners will need English language skills to be able to talk about their own experiences, other textbooks have prioritized topics from the learners' own culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). At the same time, some textbooks have used cultural topics merely as "carrier content" in order to provide foreign language learners with something to relate their language use to (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

While both "high culture" and "everyday culture" topics have been included, textbooks have been criticized for a random selection of topics and for providing only a superficial picture of other cultures (Risager, 1991). Learners are often seen as potential tourists to the country in question, and the destination comes across as conflict-free and glossed-over (Byram, 1989). Research has also shown how many texts seem to take place in a "culturally neutral universe" (Henriksen, 1995, p. 119, my translation), or reflect the learners' own cultural references more than those of the target language community (Kramersch, 1988).

Therefore, voices have been raised for the need for foreign language textbooks to focus explicitly on cultural issues, so that learners can meet expressions of "otherness" and thereby learn about other cultures as well as about their own (Kramersch, 1993). A parallel argument has been linked to the development of the learners' language skills. Aspects of context also need to be examined and explored in order for learners to be able to understand how language is used differently in different situations (Vellenga, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on qualitative as well as quantitative methods. I analyzed the English subject curriculum and the textbook materials in terms of perspectives that address different aspects of my research question. The prose texts for reading and listening, which constitute the bulk of the material in the textbooks, were subject to quantification.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As a point of reference, I investigated the 1997 Norwegian national curriculum and the guidelines for work with questions of context and culture that the English subject curriculum provided (KD, 1999). In order to provide some historical background, I also investigated earlier curricula (from 1885, 1911, 1925, 1939, 1957, 1960, 1964, 1974 and 1987). My main material consisted of the four English language textbooks series that were produced in accordance with the 1997 national curriculum for use in Norwegian lower secondary school. These were *Catch 8–10* (Aschehoug), *Flight 8–10* (Cappelen), *New People, New Places 1–3* (NKS-forlaget) and *Search 8–10* (Gyldendal). The books were all approved for use in grades 8 through 10 by Norwegian authorities.² I investigated the textbooks, workbooks (*Flight*), Teacher's Guides, and CDs.

PERSPECTIVES IN THE ANALYSIS

The materials were analyzed in terms of four perspectives; (1) Culture-specific reference, (2) Countries, cultures and content areas dealt with, (3) Focus on questions of context and culture, and (4) The objectives linked to the material. All four perspectives were used in the analysis of the textbooks, while only perspectives 2, 3 and 4 apply to the analysis of the English subject curriculum (KD, 1999).

1 Culture-specific reference

Textbooks have been criticized for portraying a seemingly “culturally neutral universe” (Henriksen, 1995; Kramsch, 1993), and I wanted to investigate the degree to which this is a trait in the textbooks in my material as well. I coded the prose texts for reading and listening in the textbooks as having culture-specific reference, which means that they refer to a specific and identifiable cultural context, or as texts that refer to an unidentifiable and seemingly culture-neutral context. The texts in the former category refer explicitly or indirectly to a specific geographical area and/or a specific group of people, such as Native Americans.

2 Countries, cultures and content areas dealt with

With reference to the tradition of focusing on “big C Culture” topics from the United Kingdom and the United States (Hadley, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), I looked for references to specific countries and topics in the English subject cur-

2. The system of official certification of textbooks was abolished in June, 2000 (Selander & Skjelbred, 2004).

riculum. The textbook texts with culture-specific reference were coded in terms of which countries and content areas they deal with.

3 Focus on questions of context and culture

With reference to Kramsch's (1993) call for an explicit focus on aspects of context and culture, I looked for specific references to such issues in the goal formulations and the guidelines and requirements in the national curriculum. In the textbooks, the commentaries, introductions, tasks and activities attached to the texts were investigated in terms of the degree to which – and the ways in which – they encouraged the learners to work with questions of context and culture.

4 The objectives linked to the material

As shown in the theory and the review sections, different objectives can be – and have been – related to work with cultural issues in a foreign language course, as English was in the 1997 curriculum. I therefore investigated the objectives related to the cultural material as they are expressed in the goal formulations and the requirements in the English subject curriculum (KD, 1999). In the textbooks, I looked for statements of intention in the prefaces and in the introductory texts in the teacher's guides. I also investigated the texts, the commentaries to the texts and the activities linked to them in terms of the ways in which learners are encouraged to relate to the textbook materials and the positions they seem to be offered. Here, I built on the notion of the *model reader*, the reader that the authors had in mind when they put the book together (Eco, 1984).

DATA ANALYSIS

Initially, I identified the guidelines in the 1997 English subject curriculum related to the choice of cultural material. I also identified explicit and implicit references to objectives linked to work with such material.

Next, in order to get an impression of the relative distribution of textbook texts and topics, I counted the lines in the prose texts in each textbook, and coded them as belonging to different categories. First, I coded texts that referred to a specific cultural context in one group and texts that referred to a “culturally neutral universe” in another. Then, I coded the texts with culture-specific reference in terms of which countries and content areas they dealt with. The fictional and the non-fictional texts were coded separately. The length of the lines varied from text to text, and from one textbook to another, so a word count would have given a more precise quantitative rendering. However, for my purposes, the line count provided

a sufficient impression of the content of the texts. Based on the grouping of texts into different categories, my main analysis was a qualitative one. I did not see any reason to quantify the different tasks since it is only natural that the majority of them focused on linguistic issues. Instead, I looked for and identified examples of tasks that addressed questions of context and culture. I also identified the use of open versus closed questions, as this difference could impact on the learners' positions vis-à-vis the cultural material.

While I wanted to investigate how questions of context and culture were dealt with in the national curriculum and the textbook series, I also wanted to shed light on the rationale behind the choices that had been made. I regarded my empirical material as part of a larger discourse, where the curriculum and the textbooks constituted a manifestation of the discourse at the same time as they contributed to maintaining certain structures of meaning. However, discourse analysis can reveal and counteract such perpetuation (Neumann, 2001). In order to reveal the sometimes-tacit understandings on which choices are being made, I looked for indications of these understandings in the objectives that seemed to be linked to the material.

RESULTS

The results showed that the curriculum's requirements for each grade level and the textbooks only followed up the intentions expressed in the introduction to the English subject curriculum to a limited degree. While the introduction describes objectives linked to the learners' cultural awareness and ability to communicate cross-culturally, the requirements and the textbook materials focus primarily on the development of the learners' knowledge about "big C Culture" topics.

THE 1997 ENGLISH SUBJECT CURRICULUM (L97)

The introduction to the 1997 curriculum describes English, first and foremost, as a language for international communication, and it argues that learners need English language skills in a variety of different domains and settings.

Countries, cultures and content areas dealt with

In the curriculum requirements for each grade level, however, the scope is limited to "the English-speaking world", with a particular emphasis on the United Kingdom and the United States. Learners are to work with central texts from these

countries' literary canon, and 36 specific literary texts are mentioned (or, in some cases, non-specified texts by specific authors). Only *Gulliver's Travels* by the Irish author Jonathan Swift is mentioned from a country other than the UK or the US. When it comes to cultural topics, students are expected to learn about "historical and current developments in English-speaking countries" (KD, 1999, p. 244). The requirements for grade 8 mention "schools and education, current affairs and art", while grade 9 should provide knowledge about "geographical conditions, important events and people, and music, films, and graphic art" (KD, 1999, p. 245). These topics can be said to reflect the tradition of "background studies" (Risager, 1989), with an emphasis on the presentation of the countries' "high culture".

Focus on questions of context and culture

L97 provides specific requirements when it comes to the literary texts and the cultural topics that students should acquaint themselves with. In addition, the introduction to the curriculum makes explicit references to the objectives linked to the students' work with questions of context and culture.

The objectives linked to the material

The goals presented in the introduction to L97 are, as already mentioned, linked to the development of the students' ability to "communicate across cultural differences" (KD, 1999, p. 239). Encounters with other cultures are expected to broaden the students' understanding of their own cultural roots and lay "the foundations for greater respect and tolerance" for those of others (KD, 1999, p. 237). The requirements for each grade level, however, seem to signal that the objectives have to do with the development of the students' general knowledge. The requirements do not refer to the goals presented in the introduction, nor do they indicate the relevance of the texts and the topics in relation to these goals. It therefore remains unclear how students should proceed in order to develop their intercultural communication skills and attitudes of cultural understanding. It is stressed, however, that learners should be allowed to "meet", "discover" and "explore" texts and other cultural expressions. These references, along with repeated reminders of the need for learners to talk about their own experiences and express their own views, can be said to open for learners' personal engagement with the cultural material.

THE TEXTBOOK SERIES

The textbooks provide a wealth of texts and topics about the English-speaking world. The main intention seems to be to balance central information about the different countries with topics that the learners will find interesting and motivating.

Culture-specific references

When deciding whether a text refers to a specific cultural context or not, I looked for the use of place names, names of well-known people and culture-specific terminology such as “A-levels” (UK) and “the great Irish famine” (Ireland). Introductions that inform readers about the author of a piece of fiction and illustrations also helped place a text in a culture-specific context. The coding of the prose texts for reading and listening shows that all four textbook series have relatively few texts without culture-specific references. *Flight* has the highest proportion of such texts, 29 per cent, while the figures for *Search* and *Catch* are 14 and 16 per cent, respectively. Only 12 per cent of the texts in *New People, New Places (NPNP)* cannot be placed in a specific cultural context. However, the culture-specific reference was often quite vague and difficult to detect. One reason for this lies with the books’ obvious desire to appeal to the learners and their interests. Many texts deal with topics such as leisure activities, friends and relationships. The characters portrayed have dogs as pets, they enjoy listening to American popular music and going to the movies, and they have parents who embarrass them. Despite the use of English names, many of these texts may come across as reflecting most Norwegian learners’ own cultural background.

Many texts present people with experiences, interests and concerns that the learners will recognize from their own everyday life. This goes for example for texts that describe relationships between children and parents and between men and women. No mention is made of the fact that some of the situations would be rather unlikely in many parts of the world and that the language used may not be equally inappropriate in any context. Since most of the commentaries and activities linked to such texts do little to point out the culture-specific traits, many opportunities for learning about questions of context and culture would probably be lost.

Countries, cultures and content areas dealt with

Most of the non-fictional texts with culture-specific references deal with issues in the United Kingdom and the United States. An obvious explanation for this lies in the close ties between these countries and Norway and in the countries’ central posi-

tion in the English-speaking world. Since the learners already know quite a bit about these countries, it is natural to think that it will be motivating for them to learn more.

Many other English-speaking countries are presented as well, with a main emphasis on Australia, India, Ireland and South Africa. The intention here seemed to be to show how English is used in a variety of countries around the world. It is worth noticing, however, that issues related to differences in language and language use are not given priority. Only *New People, New Places* makes a point of preparing learners to talk about Norway and typical traits of Norwegian culture. In a series of “Norwegian pages”, the learners are provided with illustrations and vocabulary that can be used as the starting point for oral and written activities.

The content areas fall into three categories, namely History and cultural heritage, Contemporary issues and general information, and Presentation of individual people. The great majority of texts fall into the first category, and many of these texts present information about the authors of fictional texts. The textbooks apparently aimed to contribute to the learners’ general education in providing information about famous authors, such as William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and Ernest Hemingway. Learners can also read about historical people and events such as Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement (*Search 10*). There are many anecdotal stories about famous people, and there are also historically oriented texts about phenomena such as Levi’s jeans (*Flight 8*) and Coca-Cola (*Search 10*).

A considerable number of the texts that deal with contemporary issues and general information are written from a tourist’s perspective. This goes for typical destinations in the UK and the US, but famous sights in Australia and India also receive due coverage (*Catch 9, NPNP 1, Search 8, Search 9*). The intention seemed to be to provide the learners with varied and motivating glimpses of different places in the English-speaking world. *Search* is the textbook series that emphasizes cultural information to support the development of the learners’ communication skills. Here, learners are helped to distinguish between the terms *British* and *English*, for example, and they are told about the significance that *4th of July* and *Thanksgiving* have for speakers of American English. The textbook series provide few opportunities for learners to meet non-fictional presentations of individual people from other countries. Dialogues, interviews and even monologues are often designed to provide factual information or exemplify vocabulary and structures rather than to provide encounters with “real people”.

Approximately 40% of the fictional texts are excerpts from well-known literary works. Canonical texts from the UK and the US are well represented, but the textbooks go beyond the suggestions from the English subject curriculum (KD, 1999) and include many literary texts from other parts of the English-speaking world as well. The

fictional texts present many “believable” representatives from other cultures. More than half of these texts are excerpts from children’s or young adults’ fiction, and deal with issues that seem to link up with the learners’ interests and concerns. In this way, they provide good opportunities for the learners to relate to and possibly become personally involved with the characters portrayed. At the same time, many of the texts have only vague references to other cultures. Rather than opening the students’ eyes to cultural diversity and helping them develop the respect and tolerance that the English subject curriculum asks for, then, these texts may convey the understanding that young people’s experiences are essentially the same wherever they live.

Other fictional texts are presented in connection with information-focused ones. Here, learners are informed about an issue such as immigration to the United States, the conflict in Northern Ireland or the history of Native Americans. Then, a fictional text provides them with insight into the same issue from a personal perspective. In appealing to the learners’ emotional involvement, the latter texts can probably add much to the learners’ understanding.

Only *New People, New Places* has a section which explains the phenomenon “literary classic” and dwells a little on ways in which canonical texts often make their way into other domains, such as the film industry. One chapter in *Search* focuses on what good literary texts can offer in terms of inspiration and models for the students’ own writing. Other than this, little emphasis is given to providing learners with insight into the literary quality of the texts. There is also a lack of information about the texts’ and the authors’ significance in the society in question. The textbooks also include a small portion of crime and mystery stories, fairy tales, legends and myths. These seem to be chosen in order to fit in with the topic of the chapter, to add an element of entertainment, and to provide examples of different types of literary texts. The myths and legends are typically linked to information about indigenous peoples such as the Aborigines in Australia and the Native Americans in the United States. Poetry and songs are spread out throughout the textbooks. They fit in with the chapter topic, but they also provide encounters with the different countries’ cultural heritage. In a chapter about animals, for example, learners can read “To a Squirrel” by W.B. Yeats, and “Little Lamb” by William Blake (*Search* 9). In a chapter about love and friendship, they can read “My love is like a red, red rose” by Robert Burns (*Catch* 10).

Focus on questions of context and culture

The table of contents and the chapter headings in the textbooks signal that knowledge about the English-speaking world is a central ingredient in the course. Each

textbook in each series contains one or more headings, such as “Cool Britannia” (*NPNP* 1), “The Land Down Under” (*Search* 8) and “Going Places – USA” (*Catch* 9). However, the Teachers’ Guides and the prefaces to three of the series do not dwell on the reasons why the students should work with these topics. Rather, the inclusion of cultural material seems to be regarded as such an obvious part of learning English that it needs no further justification. Only the *Search* Teacher’s Guide refers to the new perspectives in the 1997 curriculum and explains what the formulations there about language, context and culture imply.

Relatively few of the introductions and the commentaries to the textbook texts help draw the learners’ attention to issues of language use in different contexts or to the cultural content of the texts. Rather, a common strategy is to appeal to the students’ curiosity, or to establish a link with their own experiences. Before a text about the Tower of London, for example, learners get these questions: “Do you believe in ghosts? Would you like to meet one?” (*Flight* 10, p. 32). Before a text about King Henry VIII, they are asked to consider royal scandals that they have read about (*Search* 9).

Most of the introductions that do address cultural content provide extra information. In connection with fictional texts, students often get to know about the author or, if the text is an excerpt, about the rest of the work in question. Sometimes, the introduction helps place a text in a specific cultural context, for example when it provides background information about the people involved. Other introductions provide information that gives the learners a head start when it comes to understanding the text that follows. In this way, these introductions also help underline the importance of the cultural content of the texts.

Some information-focused texts are followed by comprehension questions. Although most of them ask for detailed pieces of information that can be “lifted” directly from the text, they do provide an opportunity for learners to go through what they have just read and to reinforce learning. On other occasions, questions and tasks focus on the learners’ own experience at the expense of the cultural information provided in the text. After a text about a South African girl’s experiences in school, for example, students are asked to talk and write only about their own school experiences (*Search* 10).

The objectives linked to the material

The textbooks signal that a main objective with the cultural material is to contribute to the learners’ general education. They expose the learners to influential works of fiction from the English-speaking world, and they provide information about some well-known people and central historical events.

Search, however, signals that the students are also expected to develop into knowledgeable and engaged citizens of the world. This is signaled in the textbook topics and, most of all, in the number of open questions, which is higher than in the other series. The learners are encouraged to express their own understandings and interpretations of a range of different issues, and they are asked to present their own opinions and to discuss their own concerns. In this way, *Search* provides many opportunities for the learners to develop their own voice as users of English.

This can be seen as an attempt to meet the curriculum's call for students to acquire "new ways of thinking" and to provide them with "a stronger sense of their own identity" (KD, 1999). Students' opportunities to reflect independently and critically on a number of different issues can also contribute to "the foundations for greater respect and tolerance" mentioned in the curriculum (KD, 1999, p. 237). It remains unclear even in *Search*, however, how students are expected to develop the ability to "communicate across cultural differences" (KD, 1999, p. 239).

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

The doctoral study presented here points to the ways in which one generation of English language textbooks deal with questions of context and culture. It also indicates how these issues could be handled differently in textbooks in the future. In the following, I present empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions of my study, in addition to implications for teaching English, and future research.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

One empirical contribution of my work is to show that the objectives related to the cultural material can be seen in the *model reader* (Eco, 1984) that the textbook authors seem to have had in mind, or the positions that are made available for the learners. It comes as no surprise that students are, first and foremost, addressed as learners of the English language. This is seen in the great majority of exercise material that follows up linguistic aspects of the textbook texts, encouraging various forms of language practice. However, the relatively large number of information-focused texts and excerpts from canonical literature signal that the learners are also expected to develop into knowledgeable and well-educated youngsters. Another obvious position for the students is that of a potential tourist. Many of the presentations of famous sights and attractive destinations are clearly written in order to motivate the students and arouse their desire to travel.

My investigation shows that the textbooks provide considerable amounts of information and encounters with a variety of fictional texts. Most of them have to do with the United Kingdom and the United States, but many other parts of the English-speaking world are represented as well. While the intention must be to provide students with knowledge about the texts and topics presented, the importance of this knowledge is undermined by the fact that commentaries and tasks rarely follow up the cultural material. As a result, one gets the impression that it is not very important whether the learners remember much of the material presented or not. The juxtaposition of significant and rather insignificant issues also seems to reduce the importance of the information provided. Central texts and topics are often presented next to “fun facts” and inconsequential stories, seemingly in order to motivate the students and to provide an element of entertainment.

The textbooks contain many dialogues that exemplify language which can be used in different situations, for example at a dinner table or when buying tickets for a show. These dialogues present useful vocabulary and structures, and the intention is clearly to provide learners with “core” language that they can use in similar situations. At the same time, many of them show different conventions of language use, for example related to polite ways of addressing someone or showing gratitude. However, the commentaries and exercises to these dialogues rarely follow up these aspects of language use. The same thing can be said about the questions and tasks related to the fictional texts, which hardly ever draw the students’ attention to the many, varied examples of language use that these texts provide.

It may only seem natural that the great majority of tasks focus on linguistic aspects of the texts, since the primary objective of the textbooks is to contribute to the development of the learners’ language skills. Still, it seems strange that the textbooks contain so much information about other countries and provide so many encounters with people from other cultural backgrounds when so little is done to help learners remember and reflect on the material. Even texts that represent other countries’ literary canons are, most often, followed up exclusively for linguistic purposes. After having read about Jonathan Swift and *Gulliver’s Travels*, for example, students are asked to practice the genitive *s* on the basis of sentences like these: “*Gulliver’s Travels* is read all over the world. It’s Swift’s most famous book” (*Flight 8 Workbook*, p. 179).

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Previous research has investigated textbooks’ selection of countries and content areas, the occurrence of culture-neutral texts and the (lack of) focus on questions

of context and culture (e.g. Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Henriksen, 1995; Kramsch, 1988). Research has also investigated the model readers of educational texts (Aamotsbakken, 2006). My doctoral study brought these perspectives together and applied them to an analysis not only of the texts, but also of the introductions, commentaries, questions and tasks in the textbooks.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

In using quantitative as well as qualitative methods, the study indicates which texts, topics and objectives are given priority in the textbooks, linking this insight with a more nuanced discussion of the material. The study illustrates how explicit and implicit requirements in curricular documents can be a point of reference in the analysis of textbooks and other teaching materials. It also shows that in order to get a full picture of teaching resources' affordances, they need to be analyzed from different perspectives.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The investigation was conducted more than ten years ago. Since then, a new English subject curriculum has been launched (UDIR, 2006) and accordingly new textbooks have been written. While the curricular objectives and guidelines related to questions of context and culture remain quite similar, the new generation of textbooks has undergone considerable development.

My own investigation of English language textbooks produced in accordance with the 2006 curriculum shows that the new textbooks for grades 8 through 10 all included more substantial information about other countries and cultures than the textbooks from 1997–1999 did. The choice of texts and topics signaled a will to contribute to the development of the students' cultural insight and understanding, and many questions and tasks encouraged the learners to take a stand when it comes to controversial issues and global challenges (Lund, 2012).

Other investigations show that the cultural content still often consists of superficial facts about the target country. Vatja (2012), for example, found that French language textbooks in Sweden provide a stereotypical and unrealistic picture of France. When investigating textbooks for the teaching of Spanish in Norway, Eide (2013) found that they, too, provide overly harmonious renderings of the target country, and that the learners are placed, first and foremost, in a position as observers or potential tourists. In their investigation of images in English language textbooks for Norwegian lower secondary school, Brown and Habegger-Conti

(2017) found significant differences in the ways white people and people from indigenous cultures were portrayed. They conclude that the visual representation of indigenous peoples contradicts the curricular aims related to cultural issues as they may promote rather than challenge myths and stereotypes.

When it comes to the relationship between language use and questions of context and culture, my investigation showed that the textbooks written in accordance with the 2006 Norwegian curriculum concerned themselves with this only to a limited degree (Lund, 2012). Nguyen (2011) found the same tendency in English language textbooks in Vietnam. She shows that the textbooks fail to provide learners with realistic models for language use and that they also lack sufficient explanations of the pragmatics at work in situations where people from different cultures communicate. According to her, textbook authors need to inform themselves about the growing body of literature on cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics and to make use of this insight in their future work.

The formulations in the 1997 and 2006 Norwegian national curricula echo an increased awareness internationally of the relationship between language, context and culture. Since the turn of the century, much work has been done to describe the role that questions of context and culture can have in foreign language education. Focus has been on *what* to teach as well as the ways in which such issues can be worked with in the classroom.

Summing up the situation in Europe, Byram (2014) holds that policy documents have adopted the view that cultural and intercultural perspectives have an important role to play. He also refers to the substantial work that has been done when it comes to the development of pedagogical principles and practical teaching and learning materials. However, he claims that most teachers still lack an understanding of the significance of intercultural issues and of the relationship between intercultural competence and linguistic competence, and that the issue of assessment is still insufficiently developed.

Intercultural communicative competence has been a buzzword in foreign language education for decades, and Byram's model of five "saviors" has been particularly influential. Byram posits "the intercultural speaker" as the goal for foreign language instruction, and claims that this involves "curiosity and openness" towards other cultures and a "readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 57). The Norwegian scholar Hild Elisabeth Hoff (2014) is among those who have criticized Byram's (1997) model for being not only unrealistically harmonious; it may also be counterproductive in the way that it glosses over the possible challenges involved in cultural encounters. Risager (2007) brings Byram's views a step further in linking intercultural

competence to a sense of global responsibility. The interculturally competent person, she argues, looks at him- or herself as a citizen of the world, with knowledge about the challenges in the world and a willingness to do something about them (Risager, 2007).

Other scholars have discussed the implications that postmodernist views of culture have on work with intercultural issues and on the tradition of “culture studies”. Dervin (2015), for example, warns against focusing on cultural differences, as this may perpetuate rather than counteract stereotypes. Instead, work with cultural issues in education should involve a continuous questioning of appearances and understandings. Kramsch (2013) links culture directly to language use, and claims that culture can only be seen in “the meaning that members of a social group give to the discursive practices they share in a given space and time and over the historical life of the group” (Kramsch, 2013, p. 69). Modern forms of communication, not least digitally, contribute to this understanding of culture. Still, she argues, the teaching of culture will always be marked by a need to “identify, explain, classify and categorize people”. This, however, needs to be balanced with necessary space provided for the changing understandings and positions of the users of the language (Kramsch, 2013, pp. 71–72).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

Byram’s (2014) claim that policy documents have adopted the view that cultural and intercultural perspectives have an important role to play in foreign language education certainly holds for the 2006 Norwegian national curriculum (LK06). The English curriculum here underlines the need for learners to learn how the language is used in different contexts and to be able to “take cultural norms and conventions into consideration” (UDIR, 2006, p. 1). It also stresses the role that the subject has when it comes to promoting “greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds” (UDIR, 2006, p. 1) and the development of “knowledge about, understanding of and respect for the lives and cultures of other people” (p. 2).

However, as recent research shows, adequate teaching and learning materials related to questions of context and culture in English and foreign language education have yet not been developed. There also seem to be deficiencies in the training of language teachers related to such issues and, consequently, in the teachers’ awareness and skills when it comes to implementing work with them in the foreign language classroom (Byram, 2014). The call for increased efforts in order to meet today’s curricular requirements must therefore be addressed to all actors in

the field: teacher educators, authors and producers of textbooks and other educational media, as well as teachers of English and foreign languages, and students.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As the previous discussion shows, the possibilities for further research are many. One area relates to textbooks and other educational media. What kinds of cultural material do they contain? Which understanding of “culture” do the materials convey? How are learners expected to work with the material, and what are the objectives linked to this work? This research could be based on content analysis of existing materials. Another area focuses on teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the role that questions of context and culture can have in foreign language education. Here, it would be natural to use interviews as well as observation, and the notion of teacher cognition (Borg, 2006) can be a central point of reference. Yet another area relates to classroom work. How do teachers and learners work with questions of context and culture as part of foreign language education? Which texts, topics, perspectives and activities are given emphasis? This research could be based on surveys, interviews and/or observation. It can also be linked to intervention studies, where different materials and approaches can be tried out and examined.

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13

PhD revisited: Poetry: Prima Vista

Reader-response research on poetry in a foreign language context¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Wiland, 2007) that investigates the experience of poetry reading in English and aims at revealing what foreign language students experience cognitively and affectively when they read a poem for the first time. By applying an experimental slow line-by-line reading method, the assumption is that the readers will document more thoughts and feelings than when conventional approaches are used. The chapter discusses some of the implications of this research.

KEYWORDS Poetry reading | line-by-line reading method | reader-response | reader autonomy

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1. For the entire thesis and companion volume including the respondents' protocols, see *Poetry: Prima Vista. Reader-Response Research on Poetry in a Foreign Language Context*, Bergen: Bergen University, 2007. The doctoral thesis in its entirety can be obtained through the University of Agder Library, UiA (<https://www.uia.no/bibliotek>).

INTRODUCTION

No doctoral study had been submitted in English didactics in literature in Norway when I defended my dissertation in 2007. However, response studies had been conducted in native language contexts in many countries, particularly in the USA and Great Britain, where some of the most influential theorists have worked and conducted research. Though different, native and second language research may be informed by some of the same methodological and theoretical approaches to produce their empirical material.

If the first encounter with the poetic text, often referred to as the primary level of reading, is uncensored and unconditional, the possibility of forming new and secondary level discourses for the joint classroom experience may not prove to be such an ordeal for the classroom readers and teacher. To create a lasting interest in poetry, the teacher must help to make the student into an autonomous and confident reader, so that when literature is presented in the classroom it can work *for* the classroom reader, not against her. Only then will literature become a valuable means of personal growth and language development. Crediting the real readers with the competence they already have was an important and positive premise for my doctoral research, which was motivated by the lack of insight into what students think or feel when they read a poem in a school context. In case they do react to the poem, what is it that they think and feel about it? My doctoral thesis was an attempt to trace, understand, and interpret student readers' thoughts and feelings during the reading of a poem "prima vista", that is, when they read it for the first time. Teachers are often left with the impression that most readers in their classrooms do not respond to poems at all. Despite negative classroom experiences, there is reason to question such assumptions about the linguistic and literary ignorance of student readers and their lack of engagement when they read poetry in English. Therefore, the research questions of my thesis were the following:

1. Do student readers have richer experiences cognitively and affectively than they are able or willing to express verbally in class? If they do, what does this experience consist of, and how can it be described and interpreted?
2. Can students become engaged in a poem even if they do not understand all the language problems connected to lexis, grammar, and syntax?
3. Is it possible, by means of a productive research method, to enable student readers to express their personal and sincere experiences in a way that classroom reading does not?

The first two questions concern the readers and their competence. It is my contention that the reader needs theoretical support to become visible. For this reason, the reader concept used in my thesis is vital for the outcome of the study. The last question taps into the experimental *research method*, which is crucial and conditional to answer the other research questions.

THEORY

Most of the theories I found supportive of my research were taken from scholars who have worked theoretically and/or practically with issues of reading literary texts. The philosophical justification of reader-centred approaches to literature was dependent on hermeneutic theories developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1998) in *Truth and Method*. In his discussion of literature, he questions the authority of the author and the text by reassessing the value of the reading, and defines literature both as our common canon of “world literature” and as “the process of understanding” it as an aesthetic experience, where “the capacity to read... is like a secret art, even a magic that frees and binds us” (Gadamer, 1998, p. 162, pp. 164–165).

THE READER

Wolfgang Iser (1978, 1993) and his theory of “aesthetic response” (1978, pp. 20–21) and his notion of “prospecting” (1993, pp. 234–235) as an anthropological approach to literature helped me to understand the reader and define the reader concept constructively. However, to engage in practical classroom based reader-response research, it was primarily the American reader-response tradition with Louise Rosenblatt (1981), Stanley Fish (1980), and David Bleich (1975, 1978, 1988) that I found useful in my empirical study. The theoretical support for the “reader” concept was further based on an eclectic selection of reader-oriented theories in various fields such as philosophy, linguistics, and literary theory, represented among others by Roland Barthes (1973, 1977), Jacques Derrida (1997, 1992), I. A. Richards (2001), Hans Robert Jauss (1984), and Jonathan Culler (1994). The reader-oriented theorists in principle, though not always in practice, attribute the control of the meaning creating process to the reader, not to the literary authorities such as teachers of literature.

What kind of meaning can the classroom reader be expected to arrive at? What kind of understanding or experience can be expected during the process of reading? Since the concept was to cover real classroom readers, it must be open in the sense that the range of competences, attitudes, and personalities represented in an

average class were included, and their role as learners, whose main aim was to develop personally and professionally, was taken seriously. The concept coined by me for the study of the classroom reader was the “dynamic prospecting countersignatory”. “Dynamic” indicates movement or development, essential to all learners without requiring a certain standard of linguistic and literary competence. “Countersignatory” implies a restricted freedom on the part of the reader as to how to make sense of the words in the poems and how to express an understanding of them without being hemmed in by the constraints of definitions of the language of poetry as opposed to the language of prose (Derrida, 1992, p. 41). The “dynamic prospecting countersignatory” need not be equipped with the full semantic knowledge of a mature reader and have internalised the properties of literary discourses, according to Fish’s definition (Fish, 1980, pp. 48–49), because this definition limits the possibility untrained readers have for experiencing literature through the language they command. “Prospecting” indicates that there is something valuable to be found (but not necessarily is found), without defining the nature and weight of this object more closely. By asking readers to respond to poetry one line at the time, the notion of experience became wide enough to cover a range of reactions from the readers, from a general indifference to a profound aesthetic experience; from a rudimentary command of lexis and grammar to a well-developed competence of language forms and poetic rhetoric.

COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE ASPECTS OF EXPERIENCING POETRY

In the context of the study, “cognitive” is understood as the analytical, intellectual approach, pertaining to reason rather than emotion, where thinking is based on concepts and ideas or images. “Affective” is used not only as the emotional reaction or approach to language, but as a way of thinking, comparable to ideas and images (Opdahl, 2002, pp. 59–73). To apply the cognitive/affective continuum does not imply a simplification of the complex way readers make use of their combined personal resources, and neither of them is made an ideal for the reading. Nor does it ignore other concepts such as aesthetic experience and the force of imagination, generally applied in the discussion about poetry. Still less does it ignore the existence of the artistic creation, the poetic text, and poetic rhetoric. In *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, Hans Robert Jauss (1984) discusses “aesthetic pleasure and the fundamental experiences of poiesis, aesthesis, and catharsis” (pp. 22–36), saying that “aesthetic experience can be included in the process of the aesthetic creation of identity if the reader accompanies his receptive activity by reflection on his own development” (p. 36). If the reading experience is to be

decisive for the individual reader's aesthetic development, there must be a combination of personal faculties involved in the experience, such as sensitivity to emotions, ideas, and thoughts concerning the primary activity of perception and reception, but not least the reflection about the personal development as a reader.

Affective approaches have been defined in various ways (Opdahl, 2002, pp. 74–96) and often discredited in serious literary criticism (Wimsatt, 1989, pp. 21–39). Both Bleich (1975, pp. 97–105), in arguing for a subjective but responsible approach to literary response, and Richards (*Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement*, 2001, pp. 73–82, 89–93), in trying to develop a more scientific, objective, and balanced approach to literary criticism, are aware of the inescapability and force of emotional reactions to what we read. The question is not whether affective reactions should be totally embraced or avoided, but how to define what we mean by affective responses, as opposed to cognitive ones, and to be conscious of how cognitive and affective reactions are both part of the reading experience and must be treated accordingly.

To Richards (*Practical Criticism*, 2001), “the interference of emotional reverberations from a past, which have nothing to do with the poem” is listed as one of ten obstacles to successful reading (pp. 22–25). To Bleich (1975), emotions are the primary resource in literary response, and they are essential and necessary to enjoy poetry and to write response statements, defined as “a record of the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences” (p. 147), which in turn are a condition for writing critical commentaries on poetry, containing what is referred to as secondary or tertiary readings. To embrace all readers, the researcher needs to be aware of these contesting concepts pertaining to the reading activity (Opdahl, 2002, p. 10).

Rosenblatt's distinction between the efferent or non-aesthetic and aesthetic reading attitude is an attempt to define poetry, not by the nature of the text, but by the attitude of the reader (1981, pp. 22–29). In her transactional theory, *efferent* means *carry away* and describes the kind of reading where the reader is carried away from the reading in the sense that the outcome, in the form of information and knowledge, is the most important aspect of reading. “In aesthetic reading, in contrast, the reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event” (1981, p. 24). The awareness of this continuum may help teachers to guide the learners in reading techniques that facilitate aesthetic reading, so that the efferent reading does not take over and thereby helps to undermine literature as an aesthetic expression of a work of art. For very many readers, the efferent reading is the only one they seem to accept. No wonder this is the most frequent approach, as there is usually something to be learnt from a text, even from a poem.

METHODOLOGY

In my doctoral study an experimental line-by-line method was developed, inspired by Short and Van Peer (1989), aiming at opening up for the student readers' personal and sincere experiences, and permitting me as a researcher to find out what the students experienced cognitively and affectively when they read a poem for the first time. The rationale behind the experimental method was to facilitate responses that are otherwise usually lost in the classroom or never communicated to others.

RESPONDENTS

My doctoral study included 95 respondents in three reader groups; one group of upper secondary school students from five different schools attending the advanced courses in English, and two groups of student teachers in English didactics; one group training to become teachers in primary school, the other practical-pedagogical education (PPU) group training to become teachers in lower and upper secondary school. I have taught English literature and didactics in all three groups, and the method used to collect data in the study was first used as a teaching method for my own teacher students.

References to the respondent groups were made in the text as follows: S = upper secondary school student (40 respondents, 17–19 years old), TT = student teacher of the Norwegian general educational programme (29 respondents, 25–30 years old), and T = student teacher (PPU) (26 respondents of various ages from their late twenties to practicing teachers).

DATA COLLECTION

The participants read and responded to one of five poems by writing down the responses by hand on a sheet of paper handed out by me in class, later transcribed and printed as a companion volume to my thesis, covering 203 pages. Many of my respondents wrote from one or two to seven pages on a relatively short poem. The poems were “Mid-Term Break” (MB) by Seamus Heaney, “He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven” (CH) by W. B. Yeats, “A Birthday” (B) by Christina Rossetti, “maggie and milly and molly and may” (MM) by e. e. cummings, and “Infant Sorrow” (IS) by William Blake. The handwritten protocols (Richards, 2001, p. 13) represented the empirical material of my research, were the only documents I had, and the only means to access the thoughts and feelings of the respondents. References to readers' responses, printed in the companion volume, were made as follows in the text: T7: MB, line 5 = the 7th PPU student teacher responding to line

5 in “Mid-Term Break” by Seamus Heaney. S6: IS, line 4 = 6th upper secondary school student responding to line 4 in “Infant Sorrow” by William Blake, etc.

Infant Sorrow (IS), William Blake

1 My mother groan'd! my father wept.
2 Into the dangerous world I leapt:
3 Helpless, naked, piping loud:
4 Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

5 Struggling in my father's hands,
6 Striving against my swaddling bands,
7 Bound and weary I thought best
8 To sulk upon my mother's breast.

maggie and milly and molly and may (MM), e. e. cummings

1) maggie and milly and molly and may
2) went down to the beach (to play one day)

3) and maggie discovered a shell that sang
4) so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and

5) milly befriended a stranded star
6) whose rays five languid fingers were;

7) and molly was chased by a horrible thing
8) which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and

9) may came home with a smooth round stone
10) as small as a world and as large as alone.

11) For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
12) it's always ourselves we find in the sea

He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven (CH), W. B. Yeats

1) Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
2) Enwrought with golden and silver light,
3) The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
4) Of night and light and the half-light,
5) I would spread the cloths under your feet:

- 6) But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
- 7) I have spread my dreams under your feet;
- 8) Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Birthday (B), Christina Rossetti

- 1) My heart is like a singing bird
 - 2) Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
 - 3) My heart is like an apple-tree
 - 4) Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;
 - 5) My heart is like a rainbow shell
 - 6) That paddles in a halcyon sea;
 - 7) My heart is gladder than all these
 - 8) Because my love is come to me.
-
- 9) Raise me a dais of silk and down;
 - 10) Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
 - 11) Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
 - 12) And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
 - 13) Work it in gold and silver grapes.
 - 14) In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys;
 - 15) Because the birthday of my life
 - 16) Is come, my love is come to me.

Mid-Term Break (MB), Seamus Heaney

- 1) I sat all morning in the college sick bay
 - 2) Counting bells knelling classes to a close.
 - 3) At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home.
-
- 4) In the porch I met my father crying-
 - 5) He had always taken funerals in his stride-
 - 6) And big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.
-
- 7) The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram
 - 8) When I came in, and I was embarrassed
 - 9) By old men standing up to shake my hand
-
- 10) And tell they were "sorry for my trouble".
 - 11) Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,
 - 12) Away at school, as my mother held my hand

- 13) In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.
 14) At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived
 15) With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the nurses.
- 16) Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops
 17) And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him
 18) For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,
- 19) Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,
 20) He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.
 21) No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.
- 22) A four foot box, a foot for every year.

PROCEDURE

The poems were physically chopped up in as many lines as each poem consisted of and handed out individually one line at the time, giving each respondent as much time as desired to complete the work with a single line. Gradually they built up the poem until they finally had the entire text in front of them. Before I handed out the first line of the poem, I presented the students with the following information on an overhead projector:

- 1 Line-by-line reading → line-by-line reactions → interpretation
- 2 Your protocols → detailed reactions to each line: language, style, rhyme, rhythm, theme, emotions, anticipation, the process itself, introspection.
- 3 Use the line numbers to structure your process of reading, nothing else. Your protocols should reflect the “messiness” of the reading process. Arrows, circling etc. may be used.
- 4 The title: “Mid-Term Break” (or the title of one of the other poems, where these were used)

Poet: Name not given.

English/English dictionary may be used.

Further instructions were given orally in plenary and students' questions were answered to secure as open and unprejudiced an attitude as possible. To make sure that the respondents would be able to get started, I supplied them with some of the

meta language they knew from their previous study of literature. So, the concepts like “rhythm”, “rhyme”, and “theme” were not meant as guiding principles for the reading, but simply a possible way into the poem. They did not function as prompts, and only a handful of readers used these concepts in their protocols. Poems of a manageable length for the duration of a double lesson were chosen by me. They were relatively open in the sense that they did not require specific factual information to be understood, at least superficially. This openness did not imply that they were simple, but rather that they were what Umberto Eco (1984) describes as difficult enough to offer resistance and ambiguities. I also used different kinds of poems to elicit responses to various poetic styles and poetic devices. The intention of the method was not to document the optimal reading of the poem, but the realistic first encounter with an unknown text.

DATA ANALYSIS

Since my research took its epistemological point of departure in subjective criticism and the assumption that every reader responds emotionally to a text, it was essential to include a conscious and positive approach to emotion in my interpretation of the protocols. The interpretation of the protocols was based on my knowledge of the school environment and the students, which helped me to understand the language competence of the readers, but also their worldview (Sperber, 1985, p. 16).

My position was also comparable to that of the literary critic in the sense that the textual material was the visible object of study. My long-lasting fascination for students in the process of development and growth made me interpret the misunderstanding of a word like “fiend” (IS), the problems of finding out the identity of the dead person (MB) and line 10 in MM not as weaknesses or mistakes, but rather as interesting information about the emotional aspects of reading. The risk of all hermeneutic practices, of misinterpreting the respondents’ conscious intentions, was present, but it would be a greater offence to the writers of the protocols not to give their “language of thought” (Pilkington, 2000, p. 46) the same sincere treatment as any critic does to a literary text. It was necessary to approach the minds behind the language of the protocols with caution and openness, because it was the respondents’ first attempt to verbalise an experience of great personal impact, and it was a means to find out what potential learners of English had, to develop their literary and linguistic competence further and to grow personally.

RESULTS

The respondents' attitudes to the reading permeated the protocols and revealed how they looked upon the task of reading a poem. The attitude favoured at the beginning of the reading was not necessarily the one they supported during the entire reading process, as their unexpected emotional reactions often contested with the cognitive wish to understand every word.

ATTITUDE TO THE READING

The explicit initial attitude was important as it signalled the respondents' view of poetry and how they intended it to be approached. A recurring reaction in most protocols pertained to the value of information about the content of the poems, defined here as plot and motif,² and knowledge about lexis, grammar, or semantics, either when the respondents' anticipations were confirmed (see first two extracts below); or when it was "difficult to place" the information with what the readers already knew (see third extract):

I don't have much more to write now. I still think it is about a baby that has just been born. (S2: IS, line 6)

"Whispers" – typical form of communication when something sad, tragic has happened. No raised voices. Precise information about the main character – eldest in a flock of children. Is there a bit of sarcasm, disapproval from the main person because of how people are reacting? (T1: MB, line 11)

Change of person, scene. Difficult to place this information with what I know already. Mood has changed again. The word "embarrassed" describes uneasiness but whether this is to be understood as totally negative or not we'll not know until we read more of the poem. Is it to do with shame or shyness? (T1: MB, line 8)

When Rosenblatt (1981) describes the efferent reading attitude as what the reader "will carry away from the reading" (p. 24) in terms of information, this description aptly covers the wish many of the respondents expressed when they tended to

2. Content is a vague concept, often used in schools to denote the dichotomy between form and content. In this context, it comprises both plot and motif in line with the respondents' own understanding of these concepts. Form covers the poetic rhetoric and structure.

postpone what they called the “meaning” or “message”, until there was a break in the poem, or when the reading was completed:

Finally I know why this person is so happy. He has found love. And then his heart want to sing of joy. (TT1: B, line 8)

I was right. It all sums up neatly. (TT3: B, line16)

Despite the intention inherent in the line-by-line method, the efferent attitude is the explicit attitude taken by most respondents at the beginning of their reading, and it pertains to all five poems:

What is this? It doesn't look too promising – because of the word sick, I think And I really don't understand what “college sick bay” means We'll see what comes out of it, but the person seems to be in a bad mood/depressed. (T7: MB, line 1)

The title – Capital letters – why emphasize? What is the Cloths of Heaven? Who is he? The line ? a wish, language – “embroidered cloths” ? what does the writer mean? Alliteration – had, heaven. A very nice line – I like it. I am curious about “heaven's embroidered cloths”! I have to get the next line now! I can't wait! (T2: CH, line 1)

rhyme and rhythm About four girls, Kind of “childish” poem, easy to read and to remember. The four girls are probably on theyer way somewhere. (S2: MM, line 1)

Something nice have happened, may be someone has fallen in love, or someone has got pregnant, or become parents. Singing bird is something nice, something you hear in the morning, it her/his heart is like a singing bird he/she must be happy. (S5: B, line 1)

The frequent use of “understand”, “know”, and “meaning” in the protocols signals an efferent attitude. However, expressions like “*I don't know what has happened, why they react in this way*” (IS: T1: line 1) do not imply that the readers do not experience the poems affectively or enjoy the poems as sources of pleasure, confusion, and pain. Generally, a lack of enjoyment is not documented in my material, but the way the readers balance the efferent attitude against their cognitive and affective competence demonstrates different personal preferences in their read-

ings. The efferent reading attitude has some obvious positive functions that are a necessary and valuable resource in all reading. At the same time, it has clear limitations, particularly as regards the reading of poetry.

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT CONTENT AND CHARACTERS

How far can the efferent reading attitude carry the readers towards an understanding of the poems as it is displayed in the protocols? The respondents knew that they read poetry, even though they were prevented from taking the traditional approach to poetry reading used in classrooms. The results pertaining to reader identity revealed how this knowledge of reading sometimes made them feel unequal to the task when they experienced problems during the reading. Some of these problems were associated with what the readers defined as “meaning” or “message”, and in many cases difficulties were explained as a consequence of poor vocabulary, as in these protocols:

Frustrating not to understand this 100%. Am I the only one with this poor vocabulary? (T5: MB, line 22)

Vair? The lines become more difficult, I'm not really sure what this line means because I didn't find the word vair in the dictionary, and this word, I feel, is important to understand what the line is all about. It has to do with the silk. (TT2: B, line 10)

I do not understand the meaning of the word: enwrought. But if I only think about – wrought the line may have something to do with the cloths being forged or prepared with “golden and silver light. (S3: CH, line 2)

What's fiend? Devil...HUH!?!? Why is the baby like the devil hid in the cloud? I'm confused. That certainly was unexpected. I like the rhyme. The language is good, but there are some key words that I don't understand, and that ruins a whole lot. I have to look it up in the dictionary, and that is not something that you want to do when you read a poem. It sort of ruins the harmoni around the poem. I enjoy reading poems. I am curious of what this devil is to do next! (S7: IS, line 4)

When the explicit attitude is that it is desirable and possible to find a clear semantic meaning, and to understand what happens in the poem, the experience of frustration and confusion is unavoidable. This is a major cognitive challenge to the

readers, as they consider this information necessary to understand, experience, or interpret the poem. In other protocols, success in this respect translates the experience as a combined cognitive and emotional challenge, often sustained from the very first line of the poem, as in this protocol, where the afterthought contains an emotional reaction and an existential conclusion:

He did not get old only four years. A victim. It is a very sad poem, it involves a lot of emotions, you can sent (føle) that it's a sad poem from the first sentence. It tells me that there is just a fine line between life and death. Suddenly you can be on "the other side. (S1: MB, line 22)

Of all the poems, "Mid-Term Break" is the one leaving the readers with the most confused understanding of content and characters, which the frequent use of questions indicates:

Who is Big Jim Evans? Big and black? A friend? Why is he saying that? Is he saying it right now, while the father is crying? A hard blow? Blowing his nose? Has the funeral already been? (T5: MB, line 6)

The respondents invest a lot of cognitive energy in trying to decide the plot they anticipate in the poem, but without being able to sustain a consistent idea during the reading and through to the end. The identity of the dead person causes problems for many students as they try to apply a predominantly efferent attitude to the reading. Even though the wish to make use of an efferent reading attitude is conspicuous in all the poems, the individual poems encourage cognition in various ways. In addition to MB, IS is the poem that makes the readers focus mostly on the story aspect and how important it is for the reader to come to terms cognitively with content and cultural context. Contrary to the case in MB, most of the IS readers generally feel they are able to grasp the content at the end of the reading, as is demonstrated in the two following quotations, with the student teacher (TT1) being satisfied with finally having found the answer, and the student (S2) adding her reflections in her responses to the same line:

The last sentence makes the whole sence – it is a birth of a baby. Things fall together; the poem is complete. Partially the sentence can mean lots of things together they mean one thing. Rhyme here, too. Words express different ways to interpret. Maybe the poem has a hidden meaning? (TT1: IS, line 8)

I was right!!! It's a sweet poem, but I [it] also makes me think of how right it is that we are all very naked and helpless when we are born. (S2: IS, line 8)

As the title of the poem was intentionally left out for a random number of the IS readers, it is likely that this has affected the wish to approach context and content cognitively. It is interesting to notice where the discovery of the birth takes place in the reading process to see what significance this awareness has for the total experience of the poem.

The students (S) and student teachers (TT) that identified with the narrator at an early stage during the reading referred to the birth at an early stage in their protocols. This implies that most of the youngest readers (five out of eight students, and six out of ten student teachers) find out that the poem is about a birth. The youngest readers (S) draw their conclusions on average at an earlier stage than the older students (TT) do. The young readers seem to need less evidence in the text than the older readers do to follow an inkling that perhaps can be explained as a non-rational and emotional reaction. They are greater risk-takers than the student teachers, who seem to need more textual proof to conclude in a similar way. Of the three older student teachers (T) that were given the title, only one suggested the birth after reading line 6, and the two other readers did not even mention it.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Regardless of the difficulties the readers expressed in understanding the semantics, the content, and context of the poems, the efferent reading attitude was fruitful for its insistence on understanding these elements and for the effort the readers were willing to invest, also when they felt there was little to “carry away” (Rosenblatt, 1981, p. 24) from the reading. A comparison of the first and last line responses gave interesting perspectives on the readers’ approaches to poetry as the last line was often a summing up of content, as opposed to the more complex and richer cognitive and affective experience the respondents revealed during the process itself. The readers themselves often attached such great value to the information to be had at the end of the reading, that other important aspects of the reading experience were underestimated and neglected, particularly the affective aspects, sense impressions, and the aesthetic value of reading poems. This applied to all the poems, but “Mid-Term Break”, “Infant Sorrow”, and “maggie and milly and molly and may” encouraged and challenged the efferent reading attitude particularly clearly because of the expectations raised by the use of finite verbs, which promised a story to be told. In “He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven” and “A Birthday”, the students’ frequent complaints about difficult vocabulary did not seem to

prevent them from enjoying the poems. Still, their engagement in all these aspects far surpassed the level seen in the poetry classroom.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTIC FIELD

The doctoral study presented in the present chapter explored and documented the train of thoughts and feelings of English language students that to my knowledge had never been conducted academically before.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

It is evident that the readers' reactions confirmed the problem associated with trying to apply a firm but false distinction between what is cognition and what is emotion in response (Opdahl, 2002). It is also evident that the readers themselves experienced that the efferent reading attitude contested with the aesthetic attitude when they clearly enjoyed the poems, despite problems of understanding lexis and semantics. The empirical data discussed in my doctoral thesis showed sincere commitment to the task of reading poetry and great enjoyment in the encounter with the texts. Despite the fact that the self-awareness of many readers was low, they still experienced pleasure, reflected existentially on what they read, and were able to express their ideas in a personal discourse. Their protocols are what I would call examples of interliterature, students' documented authentic encounters with poetry in an average class without peer pressure and teacher expectation to direct and disturb individual reactions.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The methodological and theoretical contributions of my doctoral study concern the line-by-line design, specifically offering an alternative to efferent reading attitudes, and possibilities for authentic reader responses. The three aspects of the method I used – that the readers read a poem *prima vista* in privacy without discussing it with anyone; that they read it line-by-line in a slow process where they were deprived of an overall view until the end; and that they wrote down their immediate reactions to each individual line – have proved an effective means to understand more of the complex reading process of students of English. First, the readers in this doctoral study lacked certainty of cognition and therefore hesitated to decide the meaning of the poems, even though they had clearly experienced emotions worth while expressing in their protocols earlier during the reading.

According to Rosenblatt (1981), this tendency is typical of non-aesthetic or efferent readings, as “the reader’s attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue *after* the reading – the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out” (p. 23). From her description of the efferent or non-aesthetic reading attitude, it is easy to get the impression that this is something negative and that an efferent reading attitude destroys the possibility of enjoying a poem as an expression of art. In principle, this initial attitude contests with the slow “reading event” (p. 24) inherent in the line-by-line method, but reveals more clearly how the readers balance the two attitudes.

Second, the line-by-line design encouraged authentic reader responses. In this respect, my research differs from other response studies. Usually, the readers are given optimal conditions during the reading, in the sense that they are presented with the unity of the text and are explicitly or implicitly assessed according to a master interpretation. The students are commonly given ample time to read, study, and discuss the poem to get the most out of it (Richards, 2001, pp. 13–14). Even in more recent research, where the form of response differs from the traditional form of academic poetry analysis, the objective is to find out how much the readers can get out of a text when given optimal conditions. However, optimal reading conditions do not necessarily result in the most advanced understanding of a poem, and my concern has not been the optimal reading conditions, but the first authentic approach. Therefore, the development of my new reader concept, the “dynamic prospecting countersignatory”, as well as my concept of “interliterature” (see *Implications* below) have been decisive for the constructive view of the respondents and their protocols.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LITERATURE

Making students literate is one of the primary objectives of the school system. Some students seem to find the forms of literacy that the school system prioritises difficult and fail in their attempts to move from an oral discussion of texts to the kind of literate community that literary analyses presuppose. The protocols in my doctoral study represent a crossbreed between orality and literacy, a written dialogue between poem and reader (Ong, 1999) that teachers of English can use in their own instruction. Students of literature need a field of experimentation, a field of interliterature, comparable to interlanguage (Selinker, 1972), where they should be allowed to experiment with reading on their own premises. Therefore, my intention was not to document the optimal reading of the poems, but to examine how the students’ realistic first encounter with the text might be conducted.

The protocols reveal uncertainty about what knowledge of poetry implies, most of all through the fact that the student teachers (T and TT) do not show more analytical and cognitive approaches to the reading than the upper secondary school students (S). In many classrooms, students and teachers have vague notions about what kind of knowledge is necessary or desirable when reading poetry and for what purpose. The findings show that the respondents reveal little need for an understanding of poetic rhetoric when they write their protocols, even though it has been demonstrated that the protocols contain secondary level responses, where cognition and reflection ought to encourage the use of critical vocabulary. However, knowing literary rhetoric and meta-language is perhaps not the only way to expand knowledge cognitively and to increase reflectivity. The protocol findings suggest areas, pointed at below, where such knowledge can be developed in English classroom teaching.

The study of literature requires conceptual frameworks as a means of orientation and memory. The most motivating way of introducing students to theoretical questions is to let them see the need for concepts to describe their experience through the reading of texts. Some of the issues taken up by the respondents in this doctoral study are complex, such as the relation between the poet and the voices of the poem, the address of the poet, the function of poetry, the function of metaphors, what is a good poem, how to respond to poetry, and how to write about it. Even though the respondents do not discuss these issues in an academic way, they point to them as crucial to the experience of different aspects of the poem they read. If teachers introduce their students to the line-by-line reading, the slow method gives the readers time and opportunity by induction to voice these issues in a personal way, which is the first step towards increasing knowledge about poetry cognitively. Perhaps the challenge of literature teaching cannot be ascribed to the students' lack of cognitive curiosity, but to the fact that the student readers are not given time to process their reflections properly and become confident readers. If teachers of literature do so, knowledge, including useful conceptual frameworks, might not be a stumbling block to the students, but a natural extension of their own reflections. In this way, knowledge would be more than the rote learning of interpretations conveyed by the teacher.

The most important motivating factor in education is the students' own need and wish for knowledge (Simensen, 1998). Knowledge of literary theory does not necessarily mean quoting well-known academics for their opinions on literary texts. If teachers plan their lessons in such a way that the students can contribute from personal need to defining some of the aspects of literary knowledge in their first encounter with a text, as is demonstrated in my research, perhaps their will-

ingness and ability to accept the conceptual frameworks of traditional poetic and general literary rhetoric may become greater.

Measured against the findings concerning reader identity, there is reason to believe that all readers would profit from a greater consciousness about their own attitude to reading and how this attitude can decide or guide, but also restrict the outcome and enjoyment of poems. It is necessary to accept the conflicting attitudes to reading as a natural part of a reader identity and to realise that the efferent reading attitude is not enough to enjoy poetry and develop a positive and confident identity.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In my more recent work, I have argued that, “Considering the extensive place English has had for more than a century in Norwegian schools and at universities, relatively little research has been conducted into the effect of teaching” literature, but also culture in the English foreign language classroom (Wiland, 2013, p. 13). One study that has looked into this field is Juliet Munden’s (2010) doctoral study, *How students in Eritrea and Norway make sense of literature* (see Chapter 14 in this anthology). She suggests an interesting field of research, where literature and multicultural issues overlap to inform the readers of similarities and differences between students from two ethnic groups when they approach the same literary text and seek to interpret it. Aspects of these doctoral studies could be replicated with new student groups to inform educators about the function of literature in the present multicultural classroom.

The multicultural communities in Norway have likewise challenged me to conduct a response study in the overlapping fields of American literature, religion and feminism based on protocols written by female students of English from the majority and minority cultures in Norway, representing Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and atheist backgrounds (Wiland, 2013). The project was initiated with an equal number of female readers from the majority and minority cultures and with an equal number of representatives from university and upper secondary school students. They responded to books thematising various versions of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. My aim was to “start exploiting the potential there may be in literary texts for achieving some of the subtler aims and general objectives of the national curriculum, such as tolerance and international understanding in a research context” (Wiland, 2013, p. 14). Although interesting findings were documented, the empirical material was difficult to produce. Reading two books in addition to their regular schoolwork proved to be beyond the capacity of most

of these upper secondary school students. Moreover, some of the interesting voices from minority cultures dropped out of the project at an early stage for various personal reasons. I urge future researchers to exploit this field further, perhaps covering more minority students and showing greater geographical spread than my research displays in order to examine whether literature still matters and can make a change in the lives of young people.

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14

PhD revisited: Content in Nordic pupil narratives in instructed EFL

A Norwegian Perspective¹

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ABSTRACT In this chapter, the results of a doctoral study (Larsen, 2009) of thematic content in Nordic pupil narratives in EFL² are presented. A literary analysis of pupil texts focussing on intertextual references was applied. The findings suggest that the pupils' narratives formed a discourse in which these narratives explored the power aspects of the parent–child relationship, rebelled against teachers, and ridiculed the perfectionism ideals of popular culture. Implications for teaching English in Norway and suggestions for further research will also be discussed.

KEYWORDS Pupil narratives | Instructed EFL/ESL | English as a global language | Intertextuality

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1. This chapter presents some of the results of a doctoral dissertation (Larsen, 2009) from the University of Tromsø, Norway. <https://munin.uit.no/handle/10037/11035>
 2. The term EFL was used in the doctoral thesis on which the present chapter is based and is therefore used throughout, even if it has often been replaced by the term ESL in more recent research.

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INTRODUCTION

The English language has developed into a language that the individual citizen needs to master in a number of fields, not only professionally and socially, but also in the personal sphere. Worldwide, pupils with cultural backgrounds other than the typically British or American ones use English as a means of communication (Graddol, 2006). The emphasis on “communicative competence” (Savignon, 2000), which has influenced EFL learning and teaching during recent decades, has made the pupils’ roles constantly more active and makes their contribution meaningful in a new way. Pupils’ EFL narratives take on traditional mother tongue qualities of self-development and the content of their narratives thus gain importance. According to Barthes (1966), “narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (p. 46); pupils’ narrative texts could be seen as part of this collection of narratives. What pupils communicate in their texts becomes relevant; and, in this respect, the phenomenon of intertextuality is important. As Lodge (1992) puts it, “some theorists believe that intertextuality is the very condition of literature, that all texts are woven from the tissues of other texts, whether their authors know it or not” (pp. 98–99). In an intertextual approach to language, the individual writer is seen to contribute to what has already been written by other writers in previous texts; something novel is formulated from another position by the pupil writer. Pupil narratives may be seen to form a discourse by young people who are in the role of Nordic EFL pupils when they write English narratives.

Within the broader field of social constructivism, the doctoral study reported here put forward two main research questions:

1. What characterises the discourse that is developed in the narratives?
2. What aspects of identity are expressed in this discourse?

Previously, this interest in thematic and discursive content was not at issue in English didactics. According to Tornberg (2000), it was rather the language-practising potential of pupil texts that had so far been emphasised within modern foreign language teaching (p. 132). Substantiating the content-wise meaning seemed somewhat unusual, and this reflected the relative novelty of the research topic. The reason for studying pupil narratives in this way was based on the need to enhance knowledge about what pupils communicated in their role as EFL pupils.

THEORY

The theoretical basis involved multidisciplinary research areas within pedagogy and literature studies, and it was relevant to integrate perspectives from different research disciplines. The actual writing was seen as both an individual (Piaget, 1923) and a social act (Vygotsky, 1962). The ideas of some poststructuralist theorists who see language as intertextual (Kristeva, 1974) and dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981), and who see discourse as institutionalised practices in communication (Foucault, 1986), were seen as relevant. The study leaned upon the concept “discourse” not as defined in linguistics, but as it is defined in social science as an institutionalised way of communication characterised by the absence or presence of power. Scollon and Scollon (1995) distinguish between two major categories of discourse relevant to the understanding of pupil discourses; firstly, “those into which one becomes a member through the natural processes of birth and growth within a family and a community (one’s gender and one’s generation, for example)” (p. 136); and, secondly, those one enters for utilitarian purposes, such as one’s professional specialization. In the second category, individuals are seen as able to choose how they express their membership in various group identities.

According to Foucault (1977, 1985), this freedom of choice is restricted. The pupil identity is formed, by not only the individual pupils’ background, but also the role that pupils are objectified into. What is possible within a particular discourse is defined by the rules of the discourse system in which any identity is located. The concept “identity” is ambiguous; it denotes the ego-identity of individuals in psychology (Erikson, 1958), but is in sociological studies to be understood, “not as the core of an individual’s being, or as a set of fixed characteristics, but as changing, fluid and multiple” (Hawkins, 2004, p. 18). Nevertheless, the identity of someone who communicates his or her emotions, cognition and knowledge, is inherent in that person’s voice whether in spoken or written form (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). The personal identity or signature of the writer will rub off in some way (Ivanic, 1998). Within this view, identity can be perceived as both constructed and negotiated in language; the pupils negotiate their role with each other and with society in general.

The composite relationship between the text and its writer and reader is multi-faceted. The notions of text versus intertext step up the complexity of this relationship. Kristeva (1974) coined the concept “intertextuality”, where she sees the text in relationship to two axes, the horizontal one and the vertical one. She charts a three-dimensional textual space as intersecting planes whose three coordinates of dialogue are: 1) the writing subject, 2) the addressee, and 3) exterior texts. The horizontal axis relates the writer of the text (the writing subject) to the reader of the text (the addressee). The vertical axis relates the text to other texts. The words in the text

belong to both writing subject and addressee. The meaning of the words in the text is oriented towards a preceding or synchronic literary corpus. Any text is the absorption and transformation of other texts and constructed as a mosaic of quotations, “the term inter-textuality denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another” (Kristeva, 1974, pp. 59–60). The intertextual nature of any new text implies that the new text is a conversion of at least one text already written.

The pupil narratives in my doctoral study belong in such a textual universe. The influences from other texts are thus central in the analysis of the pupils’ narratives. A Bakhtinian perspective on language allows the identification of novel elements in pupil texts. The doctoral study used the somewhat inaccurate term “novel elements” to denote the alterations that the pupil text made to elements in the inter-texts, where the novel is seen, not only as something new, but also as a force that operates in language (Bakhtin, 1981). The novel “was formed and matured in the genres of familiar speech, found in conversational talk language (genres that are as yet little studied) and also certain folkloric and low literary genres” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 50). Given that any text is in essence intertextual, the somewhat parodic nature of any textual production is thus given emphasis in a Bakhtinian view. Pupil narratives may be seen as stratified into what Bakhtin would perhaps have called a pupils’ professional jargon, a pupil discourse. In this research connection, a non-mother-tongue discourse, which is fictional and narrative, is formed. The term “the low language of contemporaneity”, applied by Bakhtin (p. 21), denotes the type of authentic language that this may invoke. The term “speaking subject” may elucidate how identity operates in narrative texts. “Behind the narrator’s story we read a second story, the author’s story, he is the one who tells us how the narrator tells stories, and also tells us about the narrator himself” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 15). The speaking subject, who is behind the narrator, is here defined as the author of the narrative (i.e., the pupil participants in my doctoral study). When the narrative is seen as an intertextual text, the speaking subject may involve the positions of several subjects in the production of the narrative; the speaking subject may constitute multiple subjectivities.

REVIEW

Most of the studies of both Nordic and other EFL pupil narratives that had been carried out before my doctoral study concentrated on the linguistic aspects of writing (Tornberg, 2000). Linnarud (1986) studied vocabulary in Swedish upper-secondary level texts and claimed that poor lexicon was to blame when Swedish pupils wrote “dull and uninteresting compositions with repetition of high fre-

quency lexical items” (p. 42). In Albrechtsen, Evensen, Lindeberg, and Linnarud (1991) the various aspects of Scandinavian pupil writing with regard to discourse-level properties, such as superstructure and cohesion, were examined, and Lee (2003) compared their results to Chinese English as a Second Language (ESL) students’ discourse development, finding a consistent pattern of superstructure even though their first languages are different. Rahbek (2005) compared the outcome of text exchange for pupils who exchanged texts internationally, to texts written in an ordinary classroom context. She found that the “authenticity and the demands for a tangible product” (Rahbek, 2005, p. 220) that developed through international interaction with peers was beneficial.

Backlund (2005) studied gender contrasts in the use of adjectives and found that pupils who took part in an international exchange program “improved in their ability to write descriptively” (p. 59). In Larsen (2005), the thematic content of pupils’ text production was interpreted with a focus on “*what* the pupils say in English, as opposed to focusing on, for instance, their range of vocabulary, their grammar or their spelling” (p. 121). Flognfeldt (2005) examined the use of lexical chunks in pupil narratives and found, for example, that “there is a great chance for a pupil to learn idiomatic English if he or she internalises chunks like *make a mistake* and *What does ___ [NP] look like?* as functional wholes rather than through item-by-item processing” (p. 86). Guldal and Raaen (2007) studied linguistic characteristics of Norwegian seventh graders’ written English.

Broadly speaking, the linguistic aspects, as opposed to the meaning of the genuine content of EFL texts, were dealt with in the above-mentioned studies. Apparently, analysis of substantial content of pupil texts in EFL was not a well-documented field outside the Nordic countries either (Tornberg, 2000). Within an EFL paradigm, the focus on linguistic, and not thematic content, was prevalent.

METHODOLOGY

In the doctoral study, a qualitative document analysis design in which pupil narratives were approached as literary texts was developed. First, quantitative data were collected from a text corpus in the Nordplus project Teaching and Learning English (TALE)³, (Hansson, Kjartansson, Larsen, & Lassen, 2005). Qualitative

3. TALE utilised a commercially available teaching platform provided by Blackboard Inc. for several of its basic functions, including the protection of the TALE corpus according to the security policies specified for TALE. Access rights to the corpus were granted by the University of Southern Denmark to the TALE partners, depending on the stated purposes of the access.

methods were then used in the assessment of the various text types. They involved thematic and literary analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In the doctoral study, a mixed-method, qualitative-dominant research design was used consisting of document analysis methods that were purposeful for the different parts of the study. Determining which of the text submissions were narratives called for an initial quantitative approach to the data (Grønmo, 1982). From an estimated 400 texts in the open fictional genre, 15 pupil texts were randomly selected for further study. Because of deviation in submission procedures applied by the approximately four hundred 12–14-year-old pupil users, it was difficult to determine the exact number of texts and categorize the different tasks that constituted the doctoral study's material; some texts were submitted as Messenger files, not as Word documents in attachments. Firstly, thematic analysis was applied by the researcher to delineate the material. The number of target texts was reduced from a corpus of 5,000 pupil entries – consisting of messages, narratives and response to narratives – to a corpus of 400 pupil narratives (see Table 14.1). Secondly, the 178 narrative text types in the corpus (i.e., fictional and biographical) were evaluated to select the textual contributions in which the level of pupils' own content was high. The fictional narratives provided more pupil-produced content than the biographical narratives, which were often cliché-ridden and standardized. Open fictional narratives provided a higher level of the pupils' own content than hometown descriptions and chain stories, which were often standardized. Pupils' open fictional narratives were selected for further study, and 15 narratives were randomly selected. Thirdly, a literary analysis was used by the researcher to interpret the 15 selected narratives.

In the literary analysis, each pupil text was juxtaposed to its relevant intertext(s) (see Table 14.2); the analysis was then focused on an interpretation of novel elements in the pupil's narrative (see the theory section). These novel elements were seen as an important part of the pupil writer's own content. In the doctoral study, the wide term "element" was applied to account for the variety of literary devices, for example, character portrayal, setting, plot and motif that this could involve. The change that the pupil made to an established element of the intertextual reference was seen as significant. Each text was interpreted on its own terms; the pupil texts were not compared to each other, only to the intertexts.

TABLE 14.1. Data and analyses used in the doctoral study.

| Step | Quantitative data | | Qualitative data | |
|------|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------|
| | Data | Analysis | Data | Analysis |
| 1 | 5,000 pupil entries | Thematic analysis of entry category | | |
| | 1,200–1,600 narrative pupil texts | Thematic analysis of narrative category | | |
| | 400 pupil narratives | Thematic analysis of task type | | |
| 2 | 178 open fictional narratives | Thematic analysis of narrative genre | | |
| | 45 open fictional narratives | Random reduction 1/3 of target texts Gendered representation | | |
| 3 | | | 15 open fictional narratives | Literary analysis |

MATERIAL

The writing sessions in which the pupils had written the 15 narratives that comprised the material of the doctoral study took place in various Nordic classrooms. Following an introduction by a student teacher, the texts were written on computers and exchanged in an international e-network in transnational groups, each comprising three pupils with different first languages (L1). In the following, three pupil narratives from the sample are presented; (1) target text 4, Pou's Comeback, (2) target text 10, The hippo, and (3) target text 15, The three trolls.

Pou's comeback

Once upon a time it was a show called the teletubbies on TV. It was 4 of the teletubbies, but one of them got kicked out of the show because she had ugly clothes. The show was in Las Vegas but Pou was in Mexico. So she had to walk... so she walked and walked. She walked for years. After 100.000.000.000.000.000.000.000.000 years she had come to Las Vegas. Now she had to get a job. She hadn't eat at all on the time she walked so she was pretty hungry. Tingky Vinky was another of the teletubbies so he gave Pou a job on burger king with he owned. But the evil Lala had her plan to take over da world. So she didn't thought that if Pou would get the job her plan would be destroyed! So she gave Tingky Vinky 16,12\$ if he would not give Pou the job. So now Pou was whiteout a job... she thought that she can sell her self on the street. Many men come to her for a little bit of the thing she sold. She took only 2\$ for one night. After 100.000.000.000.000 ears she had enough money to new clothes. So now she can go to the show. She got in to the show and they started play in new programs. Butt... one minute after they started play in the show a very, very big bomb exploded. Every living thing on the planet earth died and the planed vent to very, Very small pieces.

THE END

FIGURE 14.1. Pupil narrative (target text 4).

The hippo

Once uppon a time there was a hippo that wanted to marry a hippo girl so he went to a girl and said "möööööööööööh" and the girl said "im so not interested" so he said the same thing to every girl in the river but nobody wanted to marry him. Then when he saddly swimmied in his privet pond he heard some bullets and ran to the river. He saw hippos runing in every direction and behind them where some hunters so the hippo stod in there way and burpd. He burpd so hard the hunters flew to china. Now the hippo is surrounded by girl hippos that want to marry him so he marryd the fatest hippo and they lived happily ever after.

THE END

FIGURE 14.2. Pupil narrative (target text 10).

The three trolls

Once upon a time there were three, very big and ugly trolls! The trolls were left from there family and they were all alone in the scary forest! Their task was to find the witch, because she knows were the parents of the trolls was, but the three trolls was not so nice as you think they are! They didn't like their parents because they were mean with the trolls, and they want to kill them! But they have to find the witch first! She lived in the scary forest! They start their task, and till the end they have find the house, the house was big and little scary. They knock on the door, and there is no answer, they knock on the door for the second time and there is still no answer. They knock on the door for the third time and finally the witch open the door, and they ask were their parents are, and she answer: they live in a cottage, deep done in the forest! They say they have to begin the trip. And of they go. After four hours with Woking they finally see the house! They knock on the cottage, and some big trolls open the big door! And they ask, "who are you"? They answer "we are your children, when we were baby trolls, you was not so nice to us! And we are for revenge! And it was then the fights start! And a while after that their parents was dead!!! And they have got their revenge! They wanted to find the witch, and give her something, because she help the trolls to find their parents! They walked to her house, and they knock on the door, and she opens the door, and they go " thank you for helping us, and they gave her some magic boots! And they began the travel home! And finally they got their revenge..

And they live as trolls happy ever after!!!!!!!

FINISH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!..

FIGURE 14.3. Pupil narrative (target text 15).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To evaluate the relationship between the narrative and the pupil writer was difficult, and an ethical dilemma was related to the information the narrative provided about its writer. Rather than being perceived as informative about their individual writers, the narratives were seen to provide information about a pupil discourse. My interpretation did not necessarily provide information about what the pupil writer had intended to tell; as researcher, I could hardly prove that my interpretation was correct or true, but by showing the procedures for the interpretation, I substantiated that it was trustworthy. Thus, the text analysis was not meant to be a reconstruction of what the individual pupil had meant to narrate, but more what the text communicated when applying the method of interpretation developed in the doctoral study.

FINDINGS

Popular culture constituted a common frame of reference in the texts. This was evident in the multitude of intertextual reference to films and TV shows, for example, *The Karate Kid* and *Teletubbies*. Presumably, screen and game versions of literary works were also part of the intertextual framework included. Although biblical texts and literary heritage texts were also referred to, what can somewhat summarily be called a “global entertainment culture” dominated this framework (see Table 14.2).

TABLE 14.2. Overview of the 15 pupil narratives and their intertexts.

| | Pupil narrative (target text) | Intertexts |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | The ugly princess | Sleeping Beauty Snow White |
| 2 | The superworm | Superman |
| 3 | The karate dog | The Karate Kid |
| 4 | Pou’s comeback | Teletubbies |
| 5 | The three bugs | The Three Billygoats Gruff |
| 6 | The three bears | Goldilocks and the Three Bears |
| 7 | The witch as lifesaver | Jonah and the Whale Hansel and Gretel |
| 8 | The boy and the magic word | Jack and the Magic Beanstalk The Princess and the White Bear East of the Sun and West of the Moon Rumpelstilskin |
| 9 | The fairytale about the big fat boy | The Prodigal Son |
| 10 | The hippo | Various fairy tale motifs |
| 11 | Philip the fox | The Fox Widow |
| 12 | The biggest battle | Star Wars Lord of the Rings |
| 13 | A day in the school | Various popular cultural references |
| 14 | Hero - monster | Various popular cultural references |
| 15 | The three trolls | The Hobbit Hansel and Gretel |

The literary interpretation of pupil narratives 4, 10 and 15 are presented in the following:

LITERARY ANALYSIS OF TARGET TEXT 4: POU'S COMEBACK

The headline is succeeded by a grey shadow repeating the headline and thereby pointing to the denotative meaning of the word “comeback”. The shadow headline suggests that this is a parody of something well known already, a shadow narrative slightly altered. The pupil text refers to the *Teletubbies* quite explicitly and uses almost identical names for the dolls, Tingky Vinky, Lala and Pou. The deviant spelling might be misprints or deliberate modifications. The BBC television show about the four Teletubbies, Tinky Winky, Laa-Laa, Po and Dipsy – the fourth teletubby is not mentioned by name in the pupil’s version – was produced from 1997 to 2001. *Teletubbies* features mechanical figures who repeat simple activities. For example, Laa-Laa throws a ball repeatedly, and the phrase, “Laa-Laa throws the ball”, is repeated while one sees the action performed by the doll.

In the pupil’s narrative version, the idea of the original work is parodied. So when Pou was in Mexico, “she had to walk... so she walked and walked” (lines 4–5). The repetitious activity typical of the action in the original TV series is slightly exaggerated: “She walked for years” (line 5). The BBC’s *Teletubbies* are nice entertainment figures aimed at entertaining babies and preschool children, but the pupil’s teletubbies are corrupted power-seeking scoundrels whose actions are described, for example, in the following way: “Lala had her plan to take over da world” (line 9). The use of the word “da”, taken from the hip-hop culture’s modern slang instead of “the”, underlines the rebellious attitude portrayed in the narrative. The innocent *Teletubbies* are turned into prostitutes and terrorists, and although the tone is ironic, the narrative is rather depressing. Pou is kicked out because of her ugly clothes, and when she tries to get a decent job, she fails. She earns her money through prostitution to get new clothes.

In the BBC’s *Teletubbies*, the dolls do not wear specific clothing. The novel element in the pupil narrative, of having modern designed clothes on the teletubbies instead of the original jumpsuits may allude to the focus on dress and individuality in modern media. The promise of success if one dresses stylishly, and the finding of one’s own personality through clothing is ridiculed; Pou has to sell her body in order to get clothes that will fulfil this desire. The narrative seems to deal with the idyllic portrayal of society that some TV series for children present. The text satirises the escapist content of modern media and disassociates itself from society as it is portrayed in unrealistic TV shows such as *Teletubbies*. The irony is sus-

tained to the very end. There is no happy ending to this story. The mimicking of the repetitious style is maintained throughout when the “very, very big bomb exploded” (line 20), and the planet turns into “very, Very, small pieces” (lines 21–22). In “Pou’s Comeback”, the superficial focus on appearance does not pay. When the girl is corrupted into selling sex to promote her career, everything else in society is corrupted as well, and the world falls apart.

LITERARY ANALYSIS OF TARGET TEXT 10: THE HIPPO

The title denotes the big, fat African mammal, and the main character is a fat male hippo. The romantic topic of courtship is suggested in the introductory line. The hippo wants to marry a hippo girl, but when he tries courting, he is constantly rejected by the opposite sex. The modern slang of negation, “im so not interested” (line 3), locates the hippos in the younger generation of modern society (Drange, Kotsinas, & Stenstrøm, 2002). His pick up line “möööööööööööh” (line 3) is not appreciated by his fellow hippos. The fact that there is no particular hippo girl he fancies, and that he tries to pick up all of them, helps portray an unromantic hero who is desperate in his search for a mate. Luckily for the hippo, a moment of crisis occurs in the hippo gathering: an opportunity to demonstrate his true heroic nature occurs. Hunters attack the hippos, and panic breaks out. The hippo gets an opportunity to show off. He burps heavily, but his malodorous burp is so powerful that it blows the hunters to China. By chasing the hunters away, the hippo saves his fellow hippos. Afterwards, he is surrounded by female admirers.

Alliterations such as in the misspelled introduction, “Once upon a time there was a hippo”, are frequent, and regardless of their faultiness they help to create a poetic style. The moment of crisis is conspicuously alliterative: “Then when he sadly swimmmed in his privet pond he heard some bullets and ran to the river”. “Sadly swimmmed”, “privet pond”, “pond he heard” and “ran to the river” (lines 5–7) are sequences of alliterative language that may soften the vigorous edge of the action.

This narrative seemingly has no particular intertext, but does refer to predominant plots in popular culture in general: the male has to carry out a heroic deed to attract the attention of the female. However, the main character does not fit into the formula of the archetypal romantic hero (Radway, 1984). He lives in hippo-land, a different society, like a hippy gathering, perhaps. In the alternative culture, other values apply. In hippo-land, there is no point in being the slimmest hippo-girl around; quite the opposite is the ideal here. Fatness is approved of and made into a positive attribute. The novel element of twisting the significance of corpulence affects the way in which identity can be constructed and negotiated. By por-

traying an alternative setting, this narrative suggests that fatness can be attractive. The hippo chooses the fattest hippo-girl. His choice is self-evident in hippo-land.

LITERARY ANALYSIS OF TARGET TEXT 15: THE THREE TROLLS

The title may connote Tolkien's character Bilbo Baggins' encounter with the three trolls in *The Hobbit*. Bilbo Baggins somewhat unwillingly accompanies Gandalf and the thirteen dwarfs to reclaim a stolen fortune from the dragon Smaug. On their way to the Lonely Mountains, they encounter various threatening creatures, and among them are the three trolls. Bilbo Baggins is taken prisoner by the three trolls and has to tell stories to be released.

The pupil's text depicts the story of three siblings who are searching for their parents. The trolls are "very big and ugly" (line 1) and have been left by their family and are "alone in the scary forest" (line 2). Thus they may earn sympathy, even though they are trolls. They want to find the witch because she knows where their parents are. Connotations of Hansel and Gretel in the wood create an impression of their underlying wish to become united with their parents in a happy ending. The trolls disapprove of their parents because they were mean to the trolls when they were little. The three trolls seek revenge, and they actually want to kill their parents.

The novel element of dealing with the parent-child relationship in a troll universe makes it possible to elaborate on aggression and hatred in a safe frame. They need the assistance of the witch, who lives in the spooky forest. The witch knows where their parents reside. "After four hours with Woking they finally see the house" (lines 11–12). The parents do not recognise their children: "who are you" (line 13). The crisis implied by not being recognised forms a climax in the narrative. Who are we when we are not even recognisable to our own parents? The three trolls are full of revenge: "we are your children, when we were baby trolls, you was not so nice to us" (lines 13–14). The confrontation in the doorway ends with a fight between the parents and their children. To be vindictive is not necessarily an honourable sentiment; however, this is a troll's universe with its own ethical codes. Human ethics are adjusted to suit the troll world. One is led to feel that justice is done. This is possible since the three siblings are not children, but trolls. Here it is possible to play with identity, put on a tail, become trolls and deviate from common ethics.

SUMMARY OF THE LITERARY ANALYSIS

The persistent demand for beauty from popular culture was dealt with in several narratives. "The ugly princess" (Target text 1), for example, can be read as an

example of revolt against the beauty ideal and portrays a society that does not accept girls who are not beautiful. Quite the opposite is portrayed in “Philip the fox” (Target text 11). Philip is excluded because he is too beautiful. In “The fairy tale about the big fat boy” (Target text 9), the main character is excluded because he is too fat. There is no way that he can go back home before he has lost weight.

Most narratives dealt with the relational sides of human existence. Different family situations were portrayed. The single parent family was often favoured, but the conventional family, with two parents and two children, was not represented at all. The modern extended family was also absent. Some narratives dealt with the absence of one or both parents. The sibling relationships in the narratives were genuinely happy; siblings were often wandering about on their own with little parental support. Brothers and sisters were joined in their fight against possible threats that grown-ups in different roles represented. Friendship was portrayed as demanding but generally worthwhile. Identity was explored mainly through the portrayal of a multitude of different main characters where the individual’s struggle to fit in was a frequent topic. The individual’s role in the group was often portrayed. On the surface, the demands from the group with regard to individual exterior success were portrayed as merciless.

Both male and female heroes struggled to fulfil individual goals. Their heroic deeds were often portrayed with humour and intelligence and questioned conventional gender roles. As to the portrayal of heroes, they operated both on an individual basis or as part of a group. The heroes and heroines struggled to obtain acceptance, peace, love, even revenge, but heroic deeds were ridiculed and parodied in the narratives. The traditional simplification of good/bad conflicts between princesses and witches, heroes and villains were confused. In “Hero – monster” (Target text 14), the question of distinguishing between good and bad was challenged through irony. Although narratives such as “The biggest battle” (Target text 12) confirm the belief in the heroic deed, several narratives’ playful approach to this motif implied an ironic distance. Finally, the distribution of power between generations was also dealt with in several narratives.

DISCUSSIONS: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

The two main research questions in this doctoral thesis were: What characterised the discourse that was developed in the narratives? What aspects of identity were expressed in this discourse?

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main empirical contribution in this doctoral thesis is that the narratives suggest that the pupils did not necessarily turn to the mother tongue to write about topics from the personal sphere, but did so using English. The pupil narratives formed a discourse where certain aspects of identity were explored. For example, the narratives idealised the relationship between siblings and stressed the importance of friends. Moreover, the narratives explored the power aspects of the parent-child relationship. The pupils seemed to make English into their other tongue, a language which is not their mother tongue, but which still provided them with a different position for the exploration of identity. One might expect texts to be less locally marked since their intertext basis was fairy tales, hence identity was almost denationalised. The pupils' frames of reference constituted content that is readily expressible in English in such a way that the non-local and non-national interlocutor or reader can understand.

The pupils wrote their image of the generic narrative in another language, which in Bakhtinian terminology could be referred to as other-languageness. The notion of other-languageness may imply that the pupils parody the narrative genre in which they write their narratives. It may also suggest that the language they employ is different, as "one's own language is never a single language: in it there are always survivals of the past and a potential for other-languageness" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 66). The pupils write in the global language English, which, to these pupils, is a language that is not their mother tongue. Although Nordic EFL pupils do not necessarily engage in "a deeply involved participation in alien culture and languages" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 369) when they write narratives in English, they write in another language from a different perspective from that of their mother tongue. When pupils write in another language, it may provide another outlook on the world. Their texts are part of an intertextual repositioning which involves a different perspective. Their texts are intertextual according to Kristeva's (1974) definition of the term; a possibility to take on a different position and to formulate something novel within the given genre is thus provided. The concept of other-languageness may be applied to the EFL pupils' narratives to suggest this other perspective that is involved in their non-mother-tongue writing.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

The main theoretical contribution concerned the identification of a Nordic EFL pupil discourse. The doctoral study involved multidisciplinary research areas within pedagogy and literature studies, and it produced knowledge about the thematic con-

tent of pupil narratives. It also demonstrated that pupils' language-practising texts could be viewed as literary texts to be analysed with literary methods. The interpretation of pupil texts and their various intertext(s) substantiated that the pupil narratives could be perceived to form a discourse, a Nordic EFL pupil discourse.

When the pupils wrote narratives in English, the expressions of identity seemingly moved away from the national and the local into the direction of global popular culture and the personal sphere. Thus, a Foucaultian discourse, in which the fight for power is central, was formed (Foucault, 1986). In general, the grown-up parental world was often made into an enemy. "A day in the school" might be read as a protest against the ageing and feminised teaching profession. In this fight for power, the good/bad distinction was zero-grounded. Troll children can do terrible things to gain power; the end justifies the means. In order to become independent of parental power, anything goes.

It was symptomatic that national, regional and local identities were de-emphasised. Primarily, the relational aspects of human existence were dealt with. The pupil narratives addressed topics that were significant to the authors' age group; a generational pupil discourse was formed. The identity that was formulated in such settings was disengaged from nationality. It was disengaged from a specific Nordic culture. The exploration of local identity was likewise difficult to trace in the narratives. The international, global language did not promote the constitution of national identity.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

The main methodological contribution concerns the method developed in this doctoral study, which attempted to identify novel elements as the interface between the pupil's text and its intertext(s). The novel elements were seen to provide insights into the pupil-produced contribution in the narrative. The identification of the novel elements in the pupil narrative provided information about which aspects of identity were expressed. In this research context, the pupils wrote their novel content in EFL. Pupils' intertextual references in the narratives involved a new or novel mode of expression of, for instance, motifs and characters.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

The pupils in this doctoral study seemingly reflected on matters of genuine interest to themselves and fellow pupil readers in their narrative discourse. Thus, the networked text exchange may be beneficial for teaching English as L2, not only

to develop pupil proficiency in English, but also to develop as human beings. The participating pupils' textual contributions were influenced by intertexts, rendering it important for English teachers to pay attention to which selection of texts is at their pupils' disposal in the school setting. Vestli (2008) discusses the development of the didactics of literature in foreign languages and argues in favour of an action- and production-oriented approach to literature. Such an approach would include practising creative writing to achieve what she calls "literary competence", here understood as part of pupils' cultural formation, such as the ability to read and interpret a literary text and recognise various literary devices (p. 14).

With regard to the content of texts that pupils read in school, English teachers' search for high quality literature suitable for pupils will possibly continue. The canonical texts from cultural heritage have seemingly paved the way for pupils' literary production, but input from popular culture is overpowering. To include more popular culture in the English school subject's reading list is perhaps not required since such input is overwhelming in society, regardless of what happens in the classroom. However, pupils may be able to master this input overflow. They are not entirely mesmerised by popular culture. The literary interpretation in this doctoral study demonstrated that pupils do manage to resist popular culture content. For instance, if given the opportunity in English lessons, they may construct a narrative discourse together in which criticism of such content appears.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Firstly, the pupil narratives were shared with peers, teachers, and student teachers; however, a subsequent study of response activity in the same corpus (Larsen, 2012) showed that there was little evidence of pupils paying attention to peer and teacher responses to their linguistic performance. The pupils were to some extent more open to making minor revisions to the thematic content, but even the response on content was generally ignored in subsequent versions of the texts. Further research into the response phase in pupils' written narratives is important, considering the amount of time and energy spent on making it worthwhile for both teachers and fellow peers. There is a need for more research into the form that literary feedback might take.

Secondly, the doctoral study suggests that learning and teaching critical analysis of a great variety of texts may be worthwhile. Future studies in this field might address questions related to the quality of the input. Does the intertextual nature of pupil writing require high quality model texts if one aims to support a high level of language proficiency and promote pupils' development as human beings? It is also

relevant to study if and how pupils may benefit from deep learning (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2016) about the origin of the literary formulas they are surrounded by. Another point worth researching more fully is the learning and teaching of critical analysis. The fact that a number of pupils in their texts indirectly expressed a critical attitude to their parents needs to be approached critically.

Furthermore, a comparison of narrative content in pupils' texts in L1 and L2 might study whether there are differences in the type of thematic content that is taken up in the L1 versus in L2 English. The analysis in the doctoral study suggested that pupils took the opportunity to question the power of grown-ups in society. They were critical towards both teachers and parents. To study whether there are qualities in L2 English language narrative practices that allow pupils to express criticism would be an interesting research question to pursue.

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15

PhD revisited: How students in Eritrea and Norway make sense of literature¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter summarises a doctoral study (Munden, 2010) that describes, compares and explains how student teachers make sense of literature. The twenty-two participants were student teachers of English in either Norway or Eritrea. They first wrote answers to a questionnaire and then to assignments based on three literary texts. How and what they wrote provides insight into their cultural and academic expectations and socialisation, both as members of an interpretive community and as individuals. These insights can contribute to raising English teachers' awareness of how differently learners make sense of texts in their own classrooms.

KEYWORDS Norway | Eritrea | English-language literature | reader response

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1. The chapter presents the main findings of a doctoral study (Munden, 2010) from the University of Oslo. The thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be found here: <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/132010>.

INTRODUCTION

The anthropologist Fredrik Barth once wrote:

If we want to understand something of other people's lives, we have to accept *their* perceptions of what is important in life; we must listen to them and their priorities. [...] about justice and belief and love and death and violence, on freedom and what they count as personal fulfilment. (1991, p. 8, my translation, original italics)

The premise of the research presented in this chapter is that literature can help us “understand something of other people's lives”, because how readers respond to literature tells us a great deal about the values, attitudes and experiences of their everyday lives. The empirical data comprised a questionnaire and student teachers' texts written in response to three literary works. It was collected from students at two institutions offering teacher education, one in Norway and one in Eritrea. Furthermore, a review of the cultural, social, and educational contexts in which these two groups of students were embedded was undertaken in order to offer an answer to the question

How is Eritrean literature in English read in Norway and Eritrea?

The differences between the two sets can be discussed in relation to many factors. One of the more important of these is the conventions and preoccupations of the media in Eritrea and Norway. Newspapers, television and radio in Eritrea, all of which are state-run, are adulatory of the nation and of the president, and news coverage is predominantly made up of success stories. Problems, if mentioned at all, are consistently dismissed as misinformation or foreign propaganda. In Norway, national and local public media tend to be problem-oriented, contributing to a perception of the world as somewhere where individual and collective agency is often overtaken by events beyond popular control. This mediated world view necessarily contributes to the interpretive strategies available to Eritrean and Norwegian readers.

By exploring the role and functions of culture and context, this study ventures not only to describe, but also to *explain* how people understand the world. By comparing the texts of the Norwegian and the Eritrean respondents, a researcher resident in Norway can establish a distance to the world of the Norwegian students, identifying values and assumptions that are otherwise so familiar as to be taken for granted. It also allows for the exploration of values and assumptions in

a less familiar cultural and national setting. Particularly in the years following 9/11, people have demanded explanations for alternative systems of collective meaning (Griswold, 2008). In fact, Wendy Griswold reports that the increased research interest in culture and context dates back forty or so years, and can be understood as an aspect of globalisation, which generates a pressing need to understand groups of people who seem to think differently from “us”.

THEORY

In an interdisciplinary study such as this, theory – understood as a way of making sense of complex empirical material – must draw on different fields for different purposes. Theory is needed to develop an understanding of what readers do when they make sense of, or interpret, literary texts. It is also necessary in order to establish a workable definition for the terms “culture” and “nation”, and to understand the implications of talking about individuals as representatives of a group. Finally, literary and discourse theory supply categories for the description of student texts as culturally situated. In what follows I sketch some of these theoretical gatherings.

READERS AND WRITERS

Louise Rosenblatt is credited with launching the claim that a text does not exist without a reader, and that readers are therefore as important as the texts they read (1983, p. xiv). Rosenblatt sees readers as integrated subjects who bring their sensitivities and experience to each reading event. “Every time a reader experiences a work of art, it is in a sense created anew” (1983, p. 113). A literary text, she says, will have “very different meaning and value to us at different times or under different circumstances”.

J. A. Appleyard (1991) describes becoming a reader as a set of developmental stages, where the university student has reached the advanced stage of systematic interpreter. This role in Appleyard’s schema is higher than the role of the adolescent reader, who looks to find a message about how to live his or her life. The first is arguably a more sophisticated reading, but it is not “higher” or better.

Rosenblatt and Appleyard are, in their different ways, concerned with how individual readers make sense of texts. Stanley Fish (1980), on the other hand, is primarily concerned with collective strategies. Although he describes interpreting works of literature as an individual activity, it is, he says, authorised and constrained by the various interpretive communities to which a reader belongs. The

idea of interpretive communities was central to this research project, but so was the nitty-gritty of how these communities were constituted and maintained – something Fish himself had little interest in, beyond acknowledging the central role of ideology.

These various understandings of what it means to be a skilled reader represent competing ideological positions if we understand ideology to be “seemingly coherent representations and explanations of our social practices, and the language by which we describe and thus try to perpetuate them” (McCormick, 1994, p. 74). Kathleen McCormick stresses that both texts and readers are ideologically situated (1994, p. 60). Stuart Hall describes how ideology prescribes the way we can make sense of our social reality. As individuals we “speak through” a particular ideology of which we are often not aware, because we understand the categories that we use to be common sense (Hall, 2006). This matters, because how we talk about things determines how we understand ourselves in relation to everybody else, both locally and globally. Hall offers a way of dealing with ideology in texts by considering how groups share, adapt or resist the ways in which information is presented (Hall, 2001). These positions he calls “dominant”, “negotiated” and “oppositional”, and they provide a framework for the discussion of the students’ response to *The Other War*, the most ideologically loaded of the three literary texts.

Peter Rabinowitz (1987) argues that an author always writes features into a text with the expectation that the reader will find them. For Rabinowitz, this “authorial reader” is an imagined someone who shares the author’s understanding of these features. Very often it will involve an assumption of values and particular historical or cultural knowledge, knowledge that the contemporary reader was assumed to have, but that today’s reader, at some distance of time or space, may lack. The student texts had themselves an authorial reader, and were written in relation to differing traditions of academic socialisation (Lea & Street, 2006). As Ken Hyland explains, “writing is a social act, and every successful text must display its writer’s ability to engage appropriately with his or her audience” (2001, p. 571).

CULTURE AND NATION

“Culture” and “nation” are two hypercomplex terms that had to be beaten into shape and put to work in order to analyse the material in this study. The term “culture” is extremely complex, and can be as misleading as it is helpful. Clifford Geertz usefully describes culture as that which has meaning for a group of people

– attitudes and values that are held in common (1973). Geertz claims that culture is observable as actions in the public domain, and such actions would include the writing of texts. Culture can therefore, he says, be described and studied. This relatively stable definition has been challenged by a more recent emphasis on cultural repertoires. Thinking of culture as a repertoire of possible patterns, perceptions and behaviours allows us to ask not only what someone has in their repertoire, but why they perform some items more frequently than others, and under what circumstances (Swidler, 2001, p. 25). Swidler argues that we are too inclined to regard culture as internalized meanings and practices rather than as people’s knowledge of which cultural repertoires are appropriate in the public domain (2001, p. 180).

The term “nation” also has different connotations in different contexts (Oliphant, 2004). My use of the term acknowledges that both Norway and Eritrea are imagined and constructed as nations, though at different times and in significantly different ways. Norway and Eritrea share the idea of “a deep, horizontal comradeship” as constitutive of their respective national cultures (Anderson, 2006, p. 7). A relatively new nation state such as Eritrea, which gained independence in 1993, will typically seek to create a discontinuity with other nations by underlining some few, clearly contrastive symbols and signs (Barth, 2001, p. 840). This theorisation of what it means to be a nation sees the writing of history as a struggle about who has the resources to represent the past (2001, p. 836), and literature is a key site where this struggle can be played out.

REVIEW OF EARLIER RESEARCH

This review focuses on two areas: studies of how literature has been received in Eritrea and Norway, and studies that compare how the same text is received in two or more different nations.

RECEPTION STUDIES IN ERITREA AND NORWAY

I found only one published article that focussed on the reception of Eritrean literature. It was written in defence of a widely criticised novel (Negash, 2003). The marginal position of reception studies is not particular to Eritrea. In *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (Quayson & Olaniyan, 2007), there are 97 articles by scholars of African literature; not one of them addresses how readers respond to literature.

In Norway there were two doctoral theses of particular importance to the present study. Their importance lies both in the questions they ask and answer, and, not least, in their focus on the diversity of the students in their classes. Both deal with the reception of Norwegian literary texts in upper secondary schools, and both follow the pupils over several years. Jon Smidt's (1989) fascination with and empathy for his pupils and his interest in the insights they provided into his own didactic assumptions functioned as a model for my own writing. So too did Rita Hvistendahl's (2000) study, which sensitively investigated the socio-cultural experience and value systems of her immigrant pupils. She argued for the importance of "where" as a didactic category, defining it as "the cultural context in and around the individual classroom" (200, p. 364, my translation). Unlike these two researchers, however, I was interested not in the readers' development, but in the national and cultural contexts to which their responses provided access.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF READER-RESPONSE

There are only a handful of qualitative comparative studies of reader response, and this is perhaps because it has been regarded as a challenging research field (Greaney & Neuman, 1990). Two-nation studies include those by Yousef (1986), Ibsen & Wiland (2000), Smith (2000) and Brutscher (2007). There are also several cross-national studies (Kovalala & Vainikkala, 2000; Hirsjärvi, 2006; "Devolving Diasporas", 2008). The studies suggest significant national and gender differences between readers. However, inter-researcher variation in cross-national studies makes it difficult to claim that the findings would be reproduced if the studies were to be replicated. To improve reliability was therefore a central concern of the present study, with a parallel design for the collection of both sets of material, and a stringent reporting of any variations in methodology.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study set out to answer the question "How is Eritrean literature in English read in Norway and Eritrea?" Empirical research in Eritrea must take into account extensive and largely invisible systems of surveillance. The research design had therefore a transparent format: Eritrean and Norwegian student teachers completed a questionnaire about their experiences and attitudes to literature, and then wrote a response to three literary texts, a fable, a short story and a play, in that order. The research design required

- ▶ an understanding of the challenges of comparative qualitative research
- ▶ an awareness of the project's ethical dimensions
- ▶ selecting, finding out about and describing respondents in the two countries
- ▶ choosing suitable literary texts
- ▶ eliciting response to these texts
- ▶ establishing how to analyse and present the material

A challenge in any qualitative, comparative project is that it sets out in the hope of finding similarities and differences. The researcher must therefore be careful not to construct difference on flimsy evidence, nor to fall into the trap of what Edward Said (1978) calls “othering”, taking the culture with which one is most familiar as the norm against which other cultural behaviour is measured.

RESPONDENTS

The respondents are “Norwegian” or “Eritrean” on the basis of attending colleges in Norway or Eritrea. They were recruited from classes to which I already had access (Norway), or to whom I was allowed access (Eritrea). Most of the first group were born in Norway, and spoke Norwegian as their first language. Most of the second group were born in Eritrea, and spoke Tigrinya as their first language. All the same, it is an epistemological, educational and ethical absurdity to construct one group of “ethnic Norwegians” and another of “ethnic Eritreans”. The students are described as Norwegian or Eritrean by virtue of their being educated and encultured in Norway or Eritrea.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Only the twenty-two who completed a full data set were included in the analysis. These student teachers – ten from Norway and twelve from Eritrea – first completed a questionnaire and then, over the course of three or four lessons, wrote a response to each of the three literary texts. These sessions were an intervention in Eritrea negotiated with individual members of the teaching staff. For the Norwegian students, they were an integral part of a course on contemporary African literature. The same classroom procedures for data collection were used in both countries, and approved by the respective authorities.

To draw an accurate picture of the contexts in which the material was collected, an extensive literature review was undertaken, and supplemented by informal and unrecorded conversations in Eritrea over six visits.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The protection of participants' anonymity and the need for a method where a large amount of data could be collected in a limited amount of time were crucial considerations in the choice of method. Dörnyei (2003) contests that the unprecedented efficiency of questionnaires allows the researcher to collect "a huge amount of information in less than an hour" (p. 9). Questionnaires in a classroom setting also increase the likelihood of a high response rate (Bernard, 2002, p. 250).

A four-page questionnaire with closed- and open-ended questions was administered, in slightly different versions, in Norway and in Eritrea. There were three main areas of enquiry:

- ▶ educational and language background
- ▶ experience of literature in and outside formal education
- ▶ attitudes to literature

Both groups wrote in intelligible English and took time, answering the questions with apparent care. The answers were anonymised, transcribed and analysed. The results from Likert scales were represented in simple figures or bar charts. Answers that are deemed socially or academically desirable are sometimes over-represented in self-reporting questionnaires, and a certain caution is in order with regard to the validity of the answers in the present study.

WRITTEN RESPONSES

Table 15.1 provides an overview of how the student texts were elicited.

I made sense of the students' texts in much the same way as the students made sense of the literary texts. Like them I put my culture to work, using the literary repertoire and the interpretive strategies available to me. As Fish (1980) argues, the presuppositions we bring to every new textual encounter are necessary for understanding to happen at all. Taking literature as a socially-constructed category, I focussed on how ideology encoded in each literary text was decoded in the student texts; on the extent to which the students were authorial readers; and on the students' written relationship to the reader of their own texts.

TABLE 15.1. The literary texts and the associated writing assignments.

| Literary text | Genre and date of first publication | Form of presentation | Written assignment |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| “The Monkey and the Crocodile” | fable | written text supplied and read aloud by researcher | a) What is the message of this story? (very short answer) b) <i>Either</i> your thoughts about the story; <i>or</i> a different story with the same message |
| “Anisino” | short story, 2005 | written text supplied and read individually in silence | a) Complete three sentence fragments which begin “This story is about...”. b) If there is anything else you would like to add, please do. |
| <i>The Other War</i> | 5-act play, 1984 | written text supplied, and a recorded amateur dramatisation played, one act at a time | A four-part response log written immediately after Acts 1, 2, 3 and 5, each entry initiated with a short prompt |

Since the literary texts in this study were written by Eritrean authors and set in Eritrea, assumptions about the authorial reader (Rabinowitz, 1987) provided a productive area of analysis and comparison. Also useful was the concept of “the institutional conditions for the reading of literature” (Westerberg, 1990, p. 91), to explain how a text introduced in a classroom setting is read under the micro and macro conditions prevailing at that particular school.

The analysis moved between the microscopic – examining small details of language – and the telescopic – making far away things apparent. At the linguistic level I looked at particular words and phrases and how they functioned in their immediate co-text. At a discursive level I looked at how textual features were used to express certainty and ambivalence, and to position the writer in relation to their reader. I identified the information that they as writers provided to orientate their readers, and developed the concepts of owning, hosting and visiting literary texts. At an interpretive level, I categorised and explored the messages, themes and ideas that the students identified. Descriptive categories were generated by reading and re-reading their texts over a period of many weeks. The process involved continually revising the identifying features of each category, as well as finding the most apposite name for them. In this chapter, it is this interpretive level which receives most attention.

CHALLENGES TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Despite the symmetrical research design at the outset, the realities of working in Eritrea and Norway led to increasing asymmetry as the data collection progressed. This was to a large extent due to factors beyond my control such as whether the students themselves gave informed consent (Norway), or whether it was given on their behalf (Eritrea), how anonymity was perceived and ensured, the supplementary explanations required for the written assignments, the amount of interaction I had with the two groups over and above the data collection sessions, the way the project was understood, facilitated and valued in the two academic contexts, the freedom with which the students could express themselves, and the very different consequences of perceived inappropriate behaviour.

FINDINGS

THE ERITREAN RESPONDENTS AS READERS

The group was made up of ten men and two women, a distribution similar to the overall gender distribution on the campus, where rather less than 20% of the students were women. Eight of the respondents were between twenty-two and twenty-seven years old; two were younger and two were older. Most of these twelve Eritrean student teachers came from farming families where the parents were illiterate. At school their English teachers would not have had textbooks, nor any English books in their homes (cf. Wright, 2001). The students would probably have had little reading material in their schools, none in their home environments, and little opportunity for reading otherwise since decentralised libraries had only developed since about 2005.

Several of the Eritrean students reported that poetry was their literary world until they encountered written literature at university. One wrote, “From my early childhood, I have an interest in literature. In my mother tongue, I compose poems and try, though not perfect, songs and sings before audience”. In defining “literature”, the students often used striking metaphors, such as the following:²

Well when I see the word “literature” I feel like it’s the only key to a house full of words, ideas imaginations ... which no other subject can do. With literature you can go everywhere visit every-body, even the dead, just by sitting in your house and writing. I think this defines the term.

2. All quotations from student texts are reproduced as originally written.

When asked to select a favourite from amongst the literary texts that they had studied, the students referred to canonical British poetry, which they knew, I was told, in a pedagogical version presented by their teacher. Although a few students mentioned that literature provides affective involvement, identification, entertainment and escape, learning was by far the most frequently given reason for valuing literature. Strongly disliked were texts where nothing positive could be learnt. The examples they listed dealt with but did not condemn negative behaviour and anti-Eritrean values such as betrayal, violence and licentiousness.

THE NORWEGIAN RESPONDENTS AS READERS

The student teachers in Norway came from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Their tertiary level studies in English were voluntary, something that was probably not the case for all the Eritrean students. The three men and seven women in the Norwegian group reflected the overall gender distribution on the campus. Most of them were between twenty-two and twenty-seven years old; one was younger and two were older. So whilst the gender distribution was very different to that in the Eritrean group, where the majority of student teachers were men, the age distribution was very similar.

When asked to give examples of literature that they had read or seen performed, the Norwegian students mentioned a broad range of works, naming thirty-four different authors. Novels made up the bulk of their reported reading, and only two mentioned poetry. When asked what the term “literature” meant to them, the Norwegian students tended not to use metaphor. Instead, they demonstrated a facility with definition:

Literature to me is a written text, it can be divided into formal and informal categories, but I automatically think of great novels and poems that have made an impression on me personally ...

Literature is tradition, it is culture and it is a way to identify with the author and the context. When it came to works of literature that they had particularly enjoyed, or *not* enjoyed, novels were the dominant genre. Fiction, sometimes with the proviso that it must be “good” fiction, was seen as useful, and the main reason was again because of what one could learn. However it was not the reinforcement of moral or social wisdom, but learning something new that gave value to reading literature. One student wrote:

... it makes us think, sometimes in *new* and different ways than we normally do. It makes us think about *new* themes, personalities and etc. It shows us *new* and interesting point of views and storylines. (italics added)

Let us now turn to the three literary texts, and how the student teachers made sense of them.

“THE MONKEY AND THE CROCODILE”

This story exemplifies a type of fable, familiar from many cultures, that is termed a trickster tale. In the tale, a crocodile offers to carry a monkey across a river, with the intention of stealing its heart, but he is outwitted by the ingenuity of the monkey.

In writing about the story, the students assumed various roles, including those of storyteller, learner of life skills, and literary commentator. The two groups differed significantly in the discursive positions and interpretive strategies they employed. The Eritreans demonstrated a strong degree of ownership. The Norwegian respondents were more inclined to position themselves as interested visitors, expressing their thoughts and personal associations, or commenting on the story at a meta-textual level. The students used a range of discursive strategies to show either interpretive certainty or ambivalence, with the Eritrean respondents demonstrating interpretive certainty to a far greater extent. This finds expression in value-laden language that offers the reader no other position than agreement, as the following example illustrates:

This shows how the monkey is honest towards the crocodile, but the disloyal and dishonest crocodile tells the monkey that his heart will be taken. At the end of the story it is revealed that the honest monkey is very wise and cunning to cheat the false friend.

The Norwegian students, on the other hand, demonstrated an awareness of competing ways of understanding a text and the world, as when one wrote:

I've hear it [the story] different places and every time the message changes a bit. I might be because I change my opinion all the time, but I also like to believe stories like this have different messages.

Respondents in both groups identified a message about friendship. They warned, reminded or taught their reader that friendly behaviour may not be what it seems.

Trust and risk were key concerns when the Norwegian respondents wrote about friendship; honesty and compatibility were key concerns for the Eritrean respondents. A Norwegian student, for example, writes that “trust is fragile, it can easily be broken”. The identification of a message about how important it is to react appropriately in threatening situations, on the other hand, showed a significant difference in distribution. It was a major concern only for the Eritrean respondents, as here:

Both [the monkey and the crocodile] are very cunning, but much more the monkey is cunning [...] So generally from this what we can understand is the one who think evil or cunning is always at lost.

The dilemma for this student is clear: both the good and the bad animal demonstrate cunning. He resolves this dilemma by telling his reader that cunning is only a desirable character trait when in the service of good purposes.

“ANISINO”

The second literary work, “Anisino”, was published in 2005 in a slim volume of prose and poetry called *Some Sweetly Kept Thoughts*. The author, Rahel Asghedom, was born in Eritrea in 1976. During the period of this research she was the only in-country author writing and publishing fiction in English. The very short story is set in the capital city of Asmara, and describes a carefree but intense friendship between the Christian narrator, who was then a thirteen-year-old girl, and a Muslim boy. This friendship, however, was abruptly ended when the boy is sent away to Yemen. Looking back ten years later the narrator reflects that the loss of this first friendship may account for her unwillingness as an adult to make commitments that might end in a similar experience of loss.

The responses were more different than they were similar. Firstly, some Eritreans referred to specific places in the text. This suggests that for them the setting served a dramatic purpose, whereas for the Norwegians it was only a somewhere for a something to happen (cf. Shaw, 1983). Another difference was the way that the respondents completed the sentence fragment, “The story is about...”. All the Norwegians completed the sentence with a noun phrase. The Eritreans tended to write longer sentences that retold part of the story, one of several indicators of differing genre expectations and school writing traditions. A third difference was that when invited to write “anything else”, eight of the ten Norwegian students, but only three of the Eritrean students, did so. This suggests that such invitations were more familiar in Norwegian academic socialisation.

The responses to “Anisino” demonstrate that the story is open to the construction of many meanings. On the basis of how the students completed the opening sentence fragment, seven thematic categories were identified. These categories were “friends”, “innocence”, “together despite difference”, “religious equality”, “occupation”, “disruption” and “loss”. Both Norwegian and Eritrean respondents contributed to all the thematic categories, with the exception of the Norwegian-only category about religious equality, and the Eritrean-only category about occupation. The distribution of the categories, however, varied considerably between the groups. The Eritrean respondents tended to write more about positive themes from the beginning of the literary text – friendship, innocence, and especially the way friendship can develop despite differences in religious background. Though what the Eritrean students wrote may properly reflect their response, it is also a politically appropriate way of negotiating the texts and acknowledging that religious differences do exist and that they have significance. The Norwegian respondents were more concerned with the divisive and damaging uses to which religion and social convention can be put, and the psychological effects of loss.

THE OTHER WAR

Alemseged Tesfai’s *The Other War* is probably the most significant work by an Eritrean author that is available in English. The Norwegian students were told about the circumstances in which this play was produced and first performed. It was originally written in the Tigrinya language in 1984, and was commissioned and performed to promote a nationalist agenda in areas under the control of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF). The government of Ethiopia was at that time involved in a full military war against the EPLF. The “other war” of the title refers to the Ethiopian strategy of producing interracial children by marriage or rape, children who were to become a new generation of mixed Eritrean-Ethiopian heritage.

The play has five short acts, each set in the family home of Letiyesus in Asmara. Her daughter Astier has herself a teenage daughter by a violent marriage. Now Astier has married again, this time to an Ethiopian who, it transpires, has fathered her baby son as part of the other war. The fraught cohabitation of the family is resolved when the grandmother and granddaughter leave to join the community of fighters in the field, taking with them the baby boy. The Ethiopian husband is outwitted and rejected, and Astier is left a lonely, abandoned woman. This movement from community to excommunication consolidates the play’s political message: the inevitable abandonment of Eritreans who collude with the enemy.

The Other War was created in the expectation of sharing knowledge and values with its audience. In an interview the author later explained:

Fighters had to be glorified, the enemy's "invincibility" had to be cut to size, the equality of women was to be promoted, the inevitability of the final victory despite the odds had to be inculcated into the psyche of men and women; in short, art had to serve revolutionary objectives. (Dhar, 2006, p. 7)

The war of independence has been woven into the fabric of Eritrean thought and language to such an extent that the interpretive strategy most readily available to the Eritrean students more than twenty years later was still very much in line with that of its authorial audience. For young Norwegians the war was not only distant in time, but also in place and context. By their own accounts, the Norwegian students had no previous knowledge of Eritrean history. On the other hand, they brought to the play their extensive exposure to film and television dramas. They were, therefore, far removed from the authorial audience both in what they did not know, and in what they did know. The students' various experience of and expectations of drama, combined with the institutional conditions of reading, the context of the research situation and, most importantly, the cultural and social contexts of the two groups, resulted in two very different sets of decodings.

In their responses, the Eritreans took the discursual position of hosts – providing contextual information, expressing pride in the author and the play, and using the discourse of the text in their own construction of meaning. The Norwegians, by contrast, took the position of visitors by hedging, distancing and occasionally asking questions. When it comes to ideological assumptions and how the students judged and allocated motives to the characters, all the Eritrean students made use of a dominant decoding, namely one that accepts and reinforces the position offered to the authorial audience (Hall, 2001). They did so despite the playwright deliberately drawing rounded characters with complex motivations. Here is one example of such a decoding:

Here in this play the main and foremost theme is to know the plans of the enemies (Amhara) the way the[y] have been using to *treat* or *tame* the *united* people of Eritreans whiles they were trying to *force* them on wars parallelly by making racial mixing with the Eritrean *unarmed* people or civilian... (italics added)

An *oppositional* decoding explicitly rejects the position offered to the authorial audience, but may be more or less defiant. None of the students offered such a reading. A *negotiated* decoding neither accepts nor rejects the position offered to the authorial audience, but presents an alternative interpretation. Typically, the Norwegian students negotiated the text by focussing on psycho-social relations between the characters. Thus for the Norwegians, Astier's behaviour is tentatively explained in the light of her previous experience, whereas the Eritreans understand Astier's fate as the inevitable consequence of her mistaken choice of husband and her betrayal of "her own people".

The play's resolution is seen by the Eritrean students as morally correct and uplifting. By joining the EPLF fighters in the field, the grandmother, her granddaughter and the little grandson achieve participation in a bigger and greater community. The prospect of belonging to this community resolves and gives meaning to the turmoil which the family has lived through. The Eritrean students accept and reiterate the allocation of the roles of hero, villain and traitor. The Norwegian students, by contrast, do not to judge any of the characters, but bemoan the break-up of the two families, and the difficult choices they faced.

DISCUSSION

So far I have presented relatively specific findings of this doctoral thesis. In this last section I consider the bigger claims that these findings authorise. I suggest how the thesis can offer methodological and theoretical insights that may be of use to other researchers, and some research questions that build on the present study. Perhaps most importantly, I argue that the detailed exploration of what student teachers in two very different contexts wrote about literary texts can contribute to teachers' understanding of the very significant role that culture plays when their own pupils make sense of texts and the world.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Eritreans, as a group, valued "The Monkey and the Crocodile" for its educational import, and showed great facility in identifying a lesson to be learnt from it. Their response reminded me of the African proverb, "When an old person dies, it is like a library burning down". The Eritrean students could perhaps be described as members of this library of oral literature, and their assertiveness explained by their familiarity with fable as a genre. However their confidence in reading the story also reflects patterns of rhetorical uniformity in the country at large, as well

as an academic socialisation where facts are facts and individualised opinions do not count for much. Their certainty can be contrasted with the relative uncertainty of the Norwegian students when they identified the message of the story. The students in Norway were more likely to point out the individuality of their responses, and the possibility of there being other interpretations.

The response to “Anisino”, especially, invites the conjecture that the Eritrean respondents were more inclined to look for what is positive in a narrative text about Eritrea, and disinclined to write about problems, whilst the Norwegian respondents were inclined to find and name problems. An example of these different ways of negotiating a text is the concept of Christian-Muslim equality, a cornerstone of Eritrea’s nation-building project and a crucial factor in the fight for independence. The Eritrean students negotiated the friendship between the Muslim boy and the Christian girl under the theme “together despite difference”, whereas the Norwegian students explicitly addressed themes of religious intolerance and loss.

The students in Eritrea consistently reproduced an understanding of the Eritrean nation that was not available to the students in Norway, most clearly in their response to *The Other War*. The preferred strategy of the Norwegian students was to interpret the fable, the short story and the play in terms of the characters’ intentions, emotions and earlier experiences. This strategy required neither insight into the Eritrean social and political contexts, nor a moral standpoint. As these examples show, the foremost empirical contribution of this study lies in detailing how fundamentally *learnt* are the different ways in which we respond to literature and, I argue, to the world. Were the student texts to lose their national tags, and quite aside from idiosyncrasies of English, I dare claim that it would be possible to sort them correctly into two piles, one Eritrean and the other Norwegian.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Firstly, the study illustrates that student teachers’ texts, also those written in English where student teachers are “making do with a limited amount of someone else’s words” (Kramsch, 1983, p. 246) can provide rich research material. They were well suited to a situation where the researcher was herself under observation, and where it was important to make clear that the respondents were not being invited to respond to controversial or provocative questions. A second methodological benefit of analysing student teachers’ texts was that they are in a sense observable behaviour, making accessible the culture and the codes of the student teachers’ academic socialisation, as well as their individual voices. Finally, and

perhaps most importantly, this study illustrates that it is feasible and fruitful to compare cultural repertoires, also across national contexts, and that in so doing one can achieve insight into the complexities of cultural difference.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The study develops “where” as a didactic category. It does so by exploring the dominant ideas of two interpretive communities situated in their respective national, cultural, social and institutional contexts. And it does so while avoiding the parallel and false allurements of attributing causation to context, and essential characteristics to respondents.

A second theoretical contribution is the application of concepts derived from the field of cultural studies to the field of reader response. In particular Hall’s (2001) concepts of the dominant encoding of ideology, and the dominant and negotiated *decoding* of ideology, proved fruitful. A lesser but more innovative contribution is my identification of the discursal positions of owning, hosting and visiting a literary text.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

The study has particular relevance for the teaching of diversity, culture, society and literature. It demonstrates that what students of English write in response to a literary text can provide insight into how they put to use national, educational and political agendas, collective values, interpersonal relationships and gender expectations. It can therefore contribute to an understanding of how different interpretive strategies are constructed, how they are brought into play, and, not least, how teachers of English can use literature to go about exploring divergent agendas, values, relationships and expectations. At the same time we must remember that students are not only representatives of their respective and many-faceted cultures, but individuals for whom the process of engagement with unfamiliar texts can play a part in their own development, as Signe Mari Wiland’s study (2007, see chapter 12 in this volume) demonstrates.

Literature can provide a relatively safe point of departure for the discussion of sensitive and ideologically loaded issues in the very diverse classroom contexts in which English, and indeed all subjects, are now learnt in Norway. The study can also serve as a reminder that even though English is the language of instruction in secondary and tertiary education in Eritrea, it “is someone else’s words” to a greater extent than is English for most Norwegian learners.

In the original research design, the two groups of respondents were to comment on each other's texts with a view to gaining insight into their own and each others' perceptions and cultural contexts. These sharing sessions could not be implemented in Eritrea for a variety of practical reasons, and in Norway only three or four of the more articulate and enthusiastic students entered and posted on the digital forum in which they were invited to comment on each others' texts. This led me to conclude that if student texts are to fulfil their considerable potential for promoting intercultural understanding, both tertiary and secondary students need clear guidelines in order to engage effectively with them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There was, and still is, very little published research in Eritrean-based humanities, or indeed in other fields. Tricia Hepner (2009, p. xi) writes that "ethnography is needed perhaps nowhere so urgently as it is in Eritrea today. As access to information and the country itself becomes increasingly restricted, it is vital to record and reconstruct people's actual encounters with the past, present, and future". This urgent need has to do with the enduring dominance of the state-controlled narrative. Eritrea is an extreme instance of a country where people's actual encounters with their past, present and future are not a subject for public discourse, let alone the object of systematic study.

In a freer setting, the didactic category "where" can provide a rich and relatively unexplored field for further research. Studies could also usefully continue to explore the interface between cultural studies and reader response, and the ways that media practices influence literary interpretation. New comparative studies of reader response could consider the significance of such factors as gender, linguistic background and genre. Finally, further detailed studies similar to the one described in this chapter, exploring how readers make sense of texts in the light of their various cultural, social and institutional contexts, could be of considerable educational interest, and contribute to a deeper understanding of diversity.

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16

PhD revisited: Meaning in English

L2 attitudes, choices and pronunciation in Norway¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Rindal, 2013) that investigated L2 practices in a English language teaching (ELT) context using a theoretical and methodological framework at the intersection of linguistics and education. The results suggest that Norwegian learners can express local and individual identity through English. The chapter discusses the implications of such L2 social meanings for the teaching of English in Norway, and presents suggestions for future research.

KEYWORDS pronunciation | language attitudes | social practice | English as a global language

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Rindal, 2013) from the University of Oslo. This is an article-based thesis with three published articles (Rindal, 2010, 2014; Rindal & Piercy, 2013). The doctoral thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be found here: <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/65151>

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalised world, English has become the foremost global language of communication. English is not only the result of a more economically, culturally and professionally interconnected world; it also provides the transnational contact language that enables these connections. Because of this function as a transnational *lingua franca*, between one and two billion people are learning English around the world (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006), and the status of English in the world is increasingly characterised by those who use it as a second or later language, rather than by its native speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2010a). English is not merely spread around the world, but appropriated by speakers in different communities. The global development of English is thus characterised by variation and diversity, as more and more speakers negotiate English in their local environments. Speakers enact English to meet communicative and situational demands – in this way, the globalised English is being constantly *localised* through its use.

In Norway, as in most other European countries, English has traditionally been labelled a *foreign language*, acknowledged for international travel, business and education, and taught at scheduled hours in the classroom. However, following increased out-of-school exposure and English language proficiency, English no longer feels *foreign* to Norwegians. Young Norwegians are frequent users of entertainment and social media, from which they are exposed daily to English. They travel on holiday or to study in countries with both native and non-native speakers of English. Almost half of the younger population (age 25–34) undertake higher education (OECD, 2011) where a considerable amount of written material and lectures are given in English (Ljosland, 2008; Schwach & Dalseng, 2011). English language competence is increasingly considered a basic *skill*. And yet, Norwegians do not qualify as speakers of English as a *second* language as these are often described in the literature (e.g. Graddol, 2006); they are neither speakers of New Englishes in postcolonial countries nor immigrants to a native-English-speaking country, and English is not an official language in Norway. For young Norwegians, then, English is neither a first, second or foreign language.

It was in this social reality, where English is characterised by diversity and variability globally, and without any clear status to its L2 speakers locally, that the participants of the present doctoral study practised English as L2. The primary research question was:

What are the social meanings of L2 English as used by adolescents in Norwegian ELT?

In order to access potential social meaning in the English of Norwegian adolescents, the study investigated different aspects of their L2 behaviour: their pronunciation of English, their L2 choices, and their social evaluations of the target language.

THEORY

In the sociolinguistics of *style* (Coupland, 2007; Eckert & Rickford, 2001), language is a *practice* – an activity of creating social meaning. Speakers pick from a range of linguistic resources to generate new meanings or reorganise old meanings. *Stylistic practice* concerns “adapting linguistic variables available out in the larger world to the construction of social meaning on a local level” (Eckert, 2004, p. 44). In order for language use to be meaningful, speakers must have a shared idea of the potential meanings that are associated with linguistic forms. Such meanings can be accessed by investigating language attitudes (Garrett, 2010; Irvine & Gal, 2000).

A much-used definition of *attitude* for language attitude research purposes is taken from Sarnoff (1970, p. 279): “a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects”. As a “disposition”, attitudes are not directly observable, and can be difficult to access. They must be inferred from more obvious processes, such as statements, language behaviour, or reactions to other people’s language behaviour. Language attitudes are therefore often elicited using a matched-guise test, which is designed to elicit spontaneous reactions, as was also the case in the doctoral study reported here.

In the social sciences, there is considerable agreement that language *attitudes* are dynamically related to language *behaviour*, but the link between them is not a direct one (Garrett, 2010; Kristiansen, Garrett, & Coupland, 2005); a positive disposition towards certain speakers does not mean that one necessarily wishes to behave like them. In order to predict behaviour, attitudes are probably best investigated at the right level of specificity (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Therefore, in addition to investigating evaluations of native accents of English, this doctoral study also accessed language choices related to participants’ *own* use of English pronunciation.

REVIEW

The global spread and local appropriation of English has elicited a growing body of research that describes and discusses the new and developing Englishes around the world. Most of this research has been conducted in postcolonial settings where English has official language status alongside one or more national languages and bilingualism has led to creole or indigenised Englishes (e.g. Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2010b). Furthermore, an emerging research trend has been the investigation of English used as a *lingua franca* by non-native speakers (e.g. Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2010). However, very little research has focused on environments where L2 speakers are proficient enough to use English as part of their linguistic and identity repertoire, but where English does not have status as an official second language or is used as a necessary language of communication. It is this sort of L2 environment that was the context for the study presented here.

Prior to the doctoral study, an increasing number of studies had investigated attitudes of non-native speakers towards varieties of English (e.g. Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, & Smit, 1997; Evans & Imai, 2011; Ladegaard, 1998; van der Haagen, 1998). Among the non-native speakers in European studies, Standard Southern British English (henceforth SSBE) had been considered superior to both General American (henceforth GenAm) and so-called “non-standard” varieties (Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997; Ladegaard, 1998; van der Haagen, 1998). Learners in Europe had also considered SSBE the most attractive model of pronunciation (Ladegaard, 1998; van der Haagen, 1998). However, scholars had suggested avoiding the so-called “standard” accents such as SSBE or GenAm as models for learners (e.g. Bex, 2008; Dürmüller, 2008) because these accents are “imbued with the cultures of their origin” and following these norms might mean “implicitly signalling that they wish to convey the values of such native speakers” (Bex, 2008, p. 233).

However, although scholars were questioning native-speaker standards, there had been little research into alternatives for English language learners. Research related to social aspects of language learning in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field seemed to focus mostly on how the learner’s identity develops (or refrains from developing) when taking on another’s language (e.g. Norton & Toohey, 2011), not how they create meaning with language. However, following the developing status of English globally and locally, it became relevant to investigate the meaningful use of linguistic resources by L2 speakers of English, which was the endeavour embarked upon by this study. Nonetheless, SLA research had shown that learning is enhanced when the teacher engages the learners’ identities,

encouraging educators to take social context into account when developing curricula and instructional design (Menard-Warwick, 2005). This educational concern from SLA was also central to the doctoral study, giving it an interdisciplinary nature with a foot in both sociolinguistics and language education.

METHODOLOGY

Although this study was conducted within the field of English didactics and clearly had educational concerns, sociolinguistic methods seemed the most appropriate for the purpose of investigating social meanings of language, and were therefore predominant in the methodological approach. As what was most likely the first sociolinguistic investigation into L2 practices in a Norwegian ELT context, the study was *exploratory*, using both quantitative and qualitative methods and analyses. The project was a mixed-methods study (as defined in e.g. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which pragmatically used the methods necessary to meet its research objectives, and in which the purpose of using mixed methods was complementarity and expansion.

PARTICIPANTS

Ninety-seven students from four different classes at four different upper secondary schools in Oslo participated in the study. Similar data was collected at two different stages, allowing for the methodology to be developed further after the first stage. Data set 1 comprised 23 students from one school (School S), while Data set 2 comprised 74 students from three different schools (Schools A, B and C). All students (58 females and 39 males) were approximately 17 years old and in their second year of upper secondary school (Vg2). All the students in Data set 1 and 90% of the students in Data set 2 reported having attended Norwegian school from year 1, which means that most of them would have learnt English in Norwegian society and would have had English as a school subject for 11 years at the time of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design consisted of methods which were appropriate for the different parts of the study; L2 pronunciation, attitudes and reported choices – as well as for the study as a whole; social meaning in the L2 of this specific context. Table 16.1 gives an overview of the methods and analyses used in the study.

TABLE 16.1. An overview of the data and analyses used in the doctoral study.

| Quantitative data | | Qualitative data | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Data | Analysis | Data | Analysis |
| Audio recordings of speech in two situations Data set 1: <i>N</i> =23 Data set 2: <i>N</i> =70 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ auditory analysis ▶ pronunciation across situations (paired sampled t-tests) | Questionnaire Data set 1: <i>N</i> =21 Data set 2: <i>N</i> =70 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ thematic analysis of accent aim reasons |
| Matched-guise test (MGT) Data set 1: 21 Data set 2: 70 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ principal components analysis ▶ comparison across attitude dimensions (ANOVA) | Interviews Data set 1: 5 Data set 2: 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ discussion of language choices in social context |
| Questionnaire Data set 1: <i>N</i> =21 Data set 2: <i>N</i> =70 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ accent aims ▶ effects of accent aim on pronunciation (Kruskal-Wallis test) | | |

Note. Two students were absent when the questionnaire in Data set 1 was administered. Two audio recordings with a total of four students from Data set 2 could not be analysed because they were inaudible, and four students (not the same students) were absent when the MGT and questionnaire was administered. The quantitative and qualitative data come from the same questionnaire.

AUDIO RECORDINGS

The participants were recorded while reading a word list and while having a casual conversation in English with a classmate of their choice for approximately 10 minutes.

In Data set 1, four different pronunciation variables were chosen for examination; the quality of the vowels in the lexical sets LOT and GOAT, the presence or absence of non-prevocalic /r/, and the presence of intervocalic /t/ voicing. In Data set 2, another three variables were added; the quality of the vowel in the lexical set BATH, the presence or absence of post-coronal /j/, and the realisation of voiceless *th*. The first six variables are salient distinguishing differences between the reference accents of GenAm and SSBE (e.g. Trudgill, 1986), and the seventh (*th*) is pronounced as a dental fricative /θ/ by speakers of both GenAm and SSBE, but sometimes replaced with /t/ by learners of English, since most of these, Norwegians included, do not have dental fricatives in their L1 (e.g. Cruttenden, 2008).

The variables were analysed using auditory analysis. The participants' realisations of phonological variables were classified with reference to GenAm or SSBE accents. The analysis in Data set 2 was more detailed than in Data set 1, combining realisations that defied categorisation into one of the two main variants into an "Other" category, and adding a fourth category for Intervocalic /t/. In total, 10,864 tokens were analysed. Paired sampled t-tests were performed to investigate differences in pronunciation across the situations word-list reading and conversation speech.

MATCHED-GUISE TEST

A matched-guise test (MGT) was used to investigate participants' reactions to different English varieties. In a matched-guise test (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960) recordings of two or more varieties produced by a single speaker are evaluated by listeners who are under the impression that they are listening to different speakers, thus allowing for evaluation of accents when individual voice attributes are the same. A total of 4 recordings in Data set 1 and 11 recordings in Data set 2 of speakers with four different accents were used as stimulus: the "standard" accents SSBE and GenAm, as well as the "non-standard" accents Scottish English and Leeds English. The students who participated in the study were asked to evaluate the stimulus recordings by filling out evaluation forms with semantically labelled scales. The scales were chosen from those employed in previous and comparable studies (e.g. Ladegaard, 1998; van der Haagen, 1998), but were moderated and supplemented after pilot tests and conversations with comparable raters. Students were asked to evaluate a set of person-related qualities, as well as three language-related qualities (see Table 16.2). Students were asked to rate stimulus speakers on scales from 1 (low) to 5 (high), reporting their first impression.

A principal components analysis (PCA) was performed in order to investigate whether the evaluations patterned into dimensions as in previous language attitude research based on the students' ratings. A PCA with Varimax rotation was therefore performed on the ratings given to each individual quality on the evaluation form. A one-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA with Bonferroni-adjusted post-hoc comparisons) was then conducted to compare the attitude dimensions that emerged from the PCA.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS

In a questionnaire administered after the audio recordings and the matched-guise test, the students were asked to report which pronunciation they aimed towards when they spoke English. For Data set 1, the students were asked to report either *American English*, *British English*, *Other* or *I don't care* as their “accent aim” in a closed-end question. The results from this data set called for two additional accent aims to choose from, and in Data set 2 students were also given the alternatives *Norwegian* and “*Neutral*”. *Norwegian* was included as an alternative because the results from Data set 1 suggested that students had an idea of such an accent. “*Neutral*” was given as an alternative following results from Data set 1, as well as an additional pilot study where students reported that instead of aiming towards any of the well-known native accents, they preferred a geographically unrecognisable English accent. In both data sets, in an open-ended question in the questionnaire students who had chosen British English were asked why they had not chosen American English, and vice versa, in order to explore the differences between them.

The students’ reported accent aims were counted, and a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed in order to investigate the effect of accent aim on pronunciation, i.e. whether the students were using the pronunciation they reported to target. A thematic analysis was conducted on their reported reasons to aim towards either a British English or an American English accent; 26 answers by American English aimers (henceforth AmE aimers) and 21 answers by British English aimers (henceforth BrE aimers) produced a total of 66 reasons, which were grouped and labelled according to content.

Furthermore, in order to explore and discuss the rationale for the choice of target accents in social context, focus-group interviews with students were held at each of the four schools (two interviews at School S, one interview at each of the Schools A–C). For Data set 2, interviews were held with students who had reported a “*Neutral*” accent aim, since the questionnaire did not focus on this accent choice. A detailed analysis of the interviews is beyond the scope of this chapter, but quotes are included to illuminate the quantitative data. While questionnaires were administered and responded to in English, interviews were held in Norwegian and quotes from these are translated into English by the author.

RESULTS

The results from the matched-guise test showed that SSBE was evaluated as the accent with highest linguistic quality and the most status and competence qualities

compared to any other native-speaker accent. However, American English was more popular than British English as target accent, and some students reported to avoid native accents as targets altogether. Furthermore, results from the auditory analysis showed that GenAm phonological variants largely dominated students' pronunciation.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATIVE-SPEAKER ACCENTS OF ENGLISH

The principal components analysis (PCA) generated three categories of attitudinal dimensions. Two of them are prevalent in language attitude research, namely *Status and Competence* and *Social Attractiveness*, while *Linguistic Quality* is a common category in evaluational research in non-native speaker contexts. Table 16.2 shows how the qualities from the matched-guise test (MGT) were loaded into these three components.

TABLE 16.2. Attitudinal dimensions generated by the Principal Components Analysis (PCA).

| Status and Competence | Social Attractiveness | Linguistic Quality |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Educated | Attractive | Model of pronunciation |
| Formal | Pleasant | Intelligible |
| Intelligent | Modern | Aesthetic |
| Ambitious | Cool | |
| Authority | Interesting | |
| Reliable | | |

The matched-guise test (MGT) in both data sets gave the same result: SSBE was rated significantly higher than GenAm for *Status and Competence* and for *Linguistic Quality* ($p < 0.001$ with an ANOVA with Bonferroni-adjusted post-hoc comparisons). This means that the students found speakers of SSBE to be more educated, formal, ambitious, etc. than speakers of GenAm, and the SSBE accent more intelligible and aesthetic and a better model of pronunciation than GenAm. In Data set 2, which included Leeds and Scottish English accents, GenAm was rated similarly to these. There were no significant differences in the evaluations between any of the accents for *Social Attractiveness*, which means that speakers were found equally attractive, pleasant, etc. regardless of accent.

ACCENT AIMS

Table 16.3 gives an overview of the reported accent aims. 11/21 (52%) students in Data set 1 and 23/70 (33%) students in Data set 2 chose *British* as their accent aim. 8/21 (38%) students in Data set 1 and 30/70 (43%) students in Data set 2 reported *American* as their English pronunciation target. Nobody chose the option *Norwegian*. One student from each data set reported an *Other* aim, and one participant in Data set 2, here also in the *Other* category, circled both British and American and wrote *It can be useful to learn both*. “Neutral” was only given as an alternative in Data set 2; 11/70 (16%) students chose this alternative.

TABLE 16.3. Overview of responses to the question “Which accent/pronunciation are you aiming at when you speak English?”

| British | American | Norwegian | Other | I don't care | “Neutral” | Total N |
|---------|----------|-----------|-------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| 11+23 | 8+30 | 0 | 1+2 | 1+4 | 11 | 21+70 |

Note: Norwegian and “Neutral” were only included as alternatives in Data set 2.

Students who had chosen either British English (BrE) or American English (AmE) as their accent aim were asked why they did not choose the other accent as aim. A thematic analysis of their answers produced a total of 66 reasons (Table 16.4). Italics refer to quotes from the questionnaire and interviews.

TABLE 16.4. Motivations for accent choices with examples given by AmE aimers and BrE aimers.

| Reason | AmE aim | BrE aim | Description | Example |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---|--|
| Access | 16 | 2 | Accent feels more natural, easier, more accessible | <i>Because I find American English easier to pronounce and it's talked more on TV, so it's the language I hear the most.</i> |
| Linguistic quality | 4 | 12 | Accent more aesthetic (n=15) or intelligible (n=1) | <i>I think British English sounds better</i> |
| Status and Competence | 6 (neg) | 10 | Accent associated with/not associated with e.g. formality, class, intelligence, education | <i>because British English is more classy, and sounds nicer and less vulgar I feel that American English is more relaxed, and not VERY Formal.</i> |

| Reason | AmE aim | BrE aim | Description | Example |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---|---|
| Validity | 0 | 4 | Accent is the <i>real</i> and <i>original</i> English | <i>Well, I do think British English is and was the original English while American just “happened”.</i> |
| Authenticity/ Markedness | 4 | 0 | Accent sounds <i>right</i> or <i>appropriate</i> and not <i>fake</i> / Accent is more <i>neutral</i> | <i>[British English is harder], and if you don't quite get it right, you would just sound stupid, and people would think you are trying hard to be something you are not.</i> |
| Other | 2 | 3 | Audience or social attractiveness reasons | <i>because I think American english [is] not so boring such as british</i> |

Note: Examples are copied verbatim from the questionnaire. (neg) refers to reasons not to choose this accent as aim.

A few main patterns are identifiable in the reasons given for accent aims. First, the most common reason to aim towards an American English accent was accessibility. Two of the AmE aimers who gave Access as reason pointed out that British English nevertheless *sounded better*. Another two AmE aimers in this category explicitly reported TV to be the reason for accessibility. Second, the most common reason to aim towards a BrE accent was aesthetics. One of the BrE aimers in this category pointed out that AmE was easier, but *a ugly language*. Third, another common reason for aiming towards BrE was that this accent was associated with status and competence qualities such as education, formality or class. These associations to British English were also a common reason not to choose this accent (cf. “(neg)” in Table 16.4), but rather the less formal American English. Finally, in addition to reasons related to status and competence and linguistic quality (mostly in favour of BrE), and accessibility (mostly related to AmE), there was also a matter of markedness: British English is considered the *original* English, but L2 speakers of this accent might easily sound like they are *trying too hard*, and American English is the more *neutral* choice.

L2 PRONUNCIATION

Table 16.5 shows the overall results for the production of the six variables that are known to distinguish GenAm and SSBE for both data sets. The production results show that for almost all the variables, the variant also found in GenAm English is favoured. The speakers are mostly rhotic, they tap or voice Intervocalic /t/, use [æ] for BATH, [ɑ] for LOT, and have a back onset for GOAT. One exception to this

pattern is Post-coronal /j/, which is present in the majority of tokens. The most frequent realisation of Voiceless *th* (as in e.g. *thing*, *thought*) was a voiceless fricative [θ] (76%), but there was a large minority of variants pronounced with a stop [t] (17%).

TABLE 16.5. The pronunciation results for the six phonological variables that distinguish GenAm and SSBE.

| Phonological variable | Examples | GenAm variants | | | SSBE variants | | | Number of tokens | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| | | Vari-ant | Data set 1 | Data set 2 | Vari-ant | Data set 1 | Data set 2 | Data set 1 | Data set 2 |
| Rhoticity | <i>sister</i> , <i>farm</i> | [ɹ] | 72% | 83% | ∅ | 28% | 16% | 1470 | 2280 |
| Intervocalic /t/ | <i>little</i> , <i>atom</i> | [ɾ] | 50% | 66% | [t] | 49% | 32% | 582 | 396 |
| (GOAT) | <i>code</i> , <i>only</i> | [oʊ] | 82% | 82% | [əʊ] | 18% | 12% | 869 | 972 |
| (LOT) | <i>job</i> , <i>possible</i> | [ɑ] | 52% | 55% | [ɒ] | 48% | 34% | 565 | 868 |
| (BATH) | <i>dance</i> , <i>fast</i> | [æ] | n/a | 67% | [ɑ:] | n/a | 33% | n/a | 346 |
| Post-coronal /j/ | <i>new</i> , <i>student</i> | ∅ | n/a | 19% | [j] | n/a | 81% | n/a | 123 |

Note: Other variants than those found in GenAm or SSBE have been excluded from the table. n/a = not applicable.

However, although there is a preference for GenAm variants, Table 16.5 also shows that there is considerable variation in the pronunciation of each variable; no single variable is pronounced entirely like GenAm or like SSBE. This variation existed for each individual speaker; all participants used variants found in both GenAm and SSBE, no one had an entirely native-like pronunciation. Patterns are found in this variation in the pronunciation across word-list reading and conversation speech; especially related to Non-prevocalic /ɹ/, Intervocalic /t/, LOT, and GOAT. The word list elicited more rhotic variants, more [t], more [ɒ], and more [oʊ]. This is not a pattern of specific accents; the variants that are preferred in the word list compared to in the conversations are both SSBE and GenAm variants. Rather, these word-list preferences might be accounted for by the effect of ortho-

graphy; in Norwegian, an orthographic *r* is always pronounced, *t* is never voiced, *o* is mostly pronounced similarly to [ɒ], and there is no back-closing diphthong with a mid-central starting position such as [əʊ].

In order to investigate the pronunciation of the phonological variables related to the participants' desired pronunciation, production results were calculated for the three main accent aim groups, namely BrE aimers, AmE aimers and Neutral aimers. For all variables, AmE aimers produced more GenAm variants than BrE aimers and vice-versa. These differences were significant ($p < 0.05$) for all variables except Post-coronal (j). Voiceless *th* was included to investigate possible patterns of L1 influence, but participants seemed to be treating this variable similarly regardless of accent aim. On average, Neutral aimers' L2 production was *in between* BrE aimers and AmE aimers; they produced more GenAm variants than BrE aimers, but less than AmE aimers. However, the production results for each individual participant show that Neutral aimers do not pattern together – some use many GenAm variants, some use few. This would indicate that they are not trying to do something in between GenAm and SSBE, but rather that they are not trying to do either.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

The doctoral study presented here explored three areas of English language practices among Norwegian 17-year-old students; their attitudes towards native accents of English (*responses* to practice), their choices of target accent (*reported* practice), and their pronunciation of phonological variables (*actual* practice). The results formed a continuum of these three practices, which were paired with the methods used to investigate them. This continuum of results and methodologies is shown in Figure 16.1, and will be referred to below in the discussion of empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions. Quotes from the interviews will be used throughout the discussion to illustrate some of the claims, and will be presented with student codes consisting of a letter referring to Schools S and A–C, and a number referring to a student in this school.

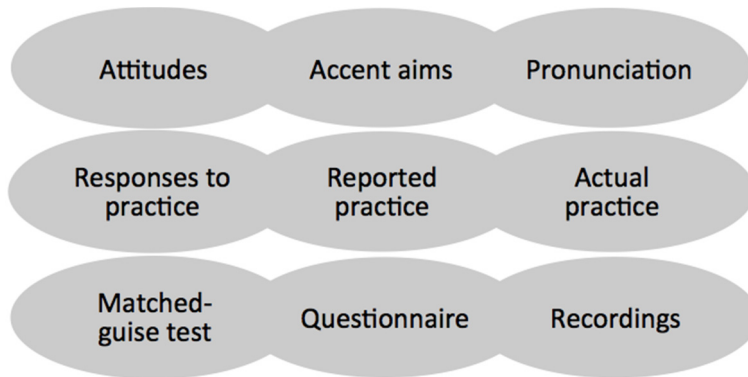


FIGURE 16.1. A continuum of results and methodologies.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: L2 IDENTITY VS. EXPOSURE AND COMPETENCE

At one end of the continuum in Figure 16.1, there is a discrepancy between the participants' *responses* to practice – the attitudes elicited from the evaluation tests, and their *reported* practice – the accent aims given in the questionnaire. While SSBE was considered the most prestigious accent in the matched-guise test, this was not the majority's preferred accent aim. Even though speakers of SSBE were judged positively by the Norwegian adolescents, this did not necessarily mean that they wished to behave like speakers of SSBE. Native accents of English, and perhaps especially SSBE, carry with them social meanings that are transferred to their speakers. In the case of L2 speakers, the social meanings were perhaps even strengthened. The formality function assigned to SSBE was attributed to its speakers, and in the case of the L2 speakers, this function was related to school and ELT, and might signal a student who was *trying too hard* (cf. Table 16.4 above). GenAm might therefore have been a more preferred accent aim, seeing as it was not only more linguistically accessible due to more extensive exposure, but also more socially accessible because it was not associated with formality and school, as SSBE was.

The students' reasoning behind accent choices showed that they could use GenAm or SSBE to project their desired identities – to show who they are (or who they are not), based on the meanings attached to these accents, which they shared with peers and which were elicited in the matched-guise test. Some students also argued that they wished to draw on the function of *both* native-speaker accents, because they were appropriate for different purposes:

A09 If you're going to sit in class and impress the teacher a little then you should maybe try more towards the English – the British

S19 When we hang out with friends [...] we don't want to use the British English we try to learn at school, we would rather do what we think is cool.

Conversely, even though these L2 speakers might have agreed on the functions and meanings of SSBE and GenAm, they might still have avoided both accents as target pronunciation because they were not right for them – a native accent did not reflect who they are:

C21 If I suddenly should have started speaking British then that would just be weird because I don't live in Great Britain, I'm not a Brit, and I'm not influenced by British culture, like, at all, so that would, like, change parts of the identity

[...]

I think many of us want to be neutral because I want to, like, be thought of as someone who actually knows the language [...] I don't want to, like, be thought of as an American or a Brit.

On the other end of the continuum (see Figure 16.1), there was a discrepancy between *reported* practice – accent aims, and *actual* practice – the realisation of phonological variables. The participants' L2 speech was considerably influenced by GenAm pronunciation. Although there was a correlation between the reported accent aims and actual pronunciation, the extent of GenAm-influenced pronunciation vastly exceeded what would be expected from the reported accent aims. This discrepancy suggests that language use is not necessarily always an intentional choice, perhaps particularly in an L2. Other variables that might affect pronunciation are competence and exposure. For instance, some participants reported that they had “settled” for an American accent because British forms were inaccessible.

Furthermore, limited competence might in part explain why most of the participants used more than one variant per variable; they might not have been able to imitate a native accent entirely. Conversely, it could be that variation in pronunciation was deliberate: even though the participants reported a native accent as target, they might not have wished to unconditionally imitate this accent, in an attempt to avoid putting on another's identity. This was one reason behind some

of the participants reporting a “neutral” English accent aim altogether, attempting to blend some of the available resources into an “undetectable” accent:

B03 A cleaner form of English, that there isn't anything dialect-distinctive about it [...] you sort of have to find that thing in between

C02 I speak, in a way, what I've learnt and what I've picked up, a little here and a little there

Notwithstanding considerable variation for each individual speaker, what many participants have “picked up”, regardless of accent aim, seems to be mostly GenAm resources. Although sociolinguists traditionally have been reluctant to accept that television has any effect on language behaviour (Chambers, 1998), this could work differently with an L2. The results in this doctoral study strongly suggest that television is a major medium of English language exposure and a significant source of linguistic resources influencing learners’ pronunciation.

The L2 practices among the Norwegian adolescents – responses to practice, reported practice and actual practice – echo the transitional ELT community in which they are members. In a context where the status of English is hybrid, fluid, in transition from one place to a yet unknown other, speakers’ use of English, too, is characterised by hybridity, negotiation and variability. The variability is used in systematic – and meaningful – ways. This social sensibility and linguistic aptitude can only mean that speaking English is a social practice (Eckert & Rickford, 2001). As participants in social practice, these Norwegian students, regardless of the ELT context, were not primarily learners of a *foreign* language; they did not attempt to access the cultures and opportunities of others (as in SLA research such as e.g. Norton & Toohey, 2011). The empirical contribution of this thesis suggests that L2 use of English among these Norwegian students is not an interlanguage or an “incomplete” learner language, but that they are speakers of English as a *second* language, in line with Graddol’s (1997) description of this as “part of the speaker’s identity repertoire” (p. 11).

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH AND MIXED METHODS DESIGN

The main contribution related to methodology and theory was the (successful) application of sociolinguistic inquiry in an L2 context. This doctoral study shows that it makes sense to describe and analyse L2 use of English in Norway related to standard norms of English by finding and distinguishing a set of phonological fea-

tures used across a group of speakers. By doing so, the study has included Norwegian adolescent L2 speakers of English in English sociolinguistics.

The discussions related to the main objective of this doctoral thesis – the social meanings of the L2 – arose from the combination of methods and pertaining results in Figure 16.1. The combination and integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches enhanced the validity of the results, as the different data sources and analyses both supported and added complexity to the findings. The mixed-methods approach thus accessed social meanings related to the ways in which Norwegian adolescents used English in a way that would not have been possible with qualitative or quantitative methods alone.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

Based on the discussions of the contributions of this doctoral thesis, it seems clear that presenting native accents of English as “correct” and asking adolescent students to imitate these in the English L2 classroom is problematic, as also suggested by scholars within a framework of English as an international language (Bex, 2008; Dürmüller, 2008; Jenkins, 2006). For some students, imitating a native speaker implies not just putting on an accent, but also putting on an identity. Instead, SSBE and GenAm are very useful as reference accents to present as examples or to which students and teachers can compare own and other people’s accents, but they should not be presented as targets that students are expected to reach. Not only is native-like attainment near impossible (Derwing & Munro, 2005), it is also unnecessary. If accent is taught in the English L2 classroom, focus should be on helping students develop an accent of English that shows who they are. This would involve listening to and identifying available (native and non-native) accents of English, reflecting on the functions and meanings they carry with them, and assessing whether they are appropriate for the students’ purposes and contexts of communication. Engaging the learners’ identities in this way can enhance learning, as suggested by SLA scholars (Menard-Warwick, 2005).

As English continues to spread globally and be appropriated locally, the diversity and hybridity of English increases (Mufwene, 2010). This view of English as L2 (and language in general) as diverse and highly variable can be presented to students in Norway, rather than presenting only native-speaker cultures. If students learn how English is used as a *lingua franca*, i.e. how linguistic properties and norms are co-constructed and established in order to achieve a communicative goal, they will be able to adapt their English language to different purposes, whether that is appropriating the local accent in a native-speaking country to

which they move, or making themselves understood when speaking to less competent non-native speakers of English with first languages other than Norwegian. This is not just relevant in Norway, but also in other contexts where the primary goal of learning English is to use it to communicate with native and non-native speakers for a wide variety of purposes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Part of the rationale for the doctoral study reported here was the lack of research on the meaningful use of linguistic resources by L2 speakers. As the status of English continues to develop and the diversity of the English language and English-speaking communities continues to increase, there is still a need for research into meaningful L2 practices by non-native speakers. This study shows that there is reason to study L2 English in Norwegian ELT further using theoretical approaches and methodologies related to language attitudes and stylistic practice.

In relation to *responses* to practice (cf. Figure 16.1), future research should focus on attitudes towards non-native speaker pronunciation rather than native-speaker accents. Considering the deliberate avoidance of native-speaker accents among Norwegian adolescents and the patterned variation in their pronunciation that mirrors the transitional status of English in Norway, it is relevant to treat this pronunciation in itself as the object of investigation. There is some research emerging on this topic (see e.g. Beinhoff, 2013; Hendriks, van Meurs, & de Groot, 2015; Nejjar, Gerritsen, van der Haagen, & Korzilius, 2012), but in Norway this has mainly received attention in MA theses (Haukland, 2016; Hordnes, 2013). The students in this doctoral study explained the variability in their L2 production with a desire to use a neutral accent of English. Of course, there is no such thing as a *neutral accent*. Further research is needed into how these local English language practices are perceived by Norwegians themselves as well as by native and non-native speakers of English. What functions and meanings are associated with Norwegian-accented English?

Related to *reported* practice, there is a need for more research into the nuances of L2 choices. This doctoral study asked participants to report their target accent in a closed-ended question in a questionnaire, taking for granted that it would be possible to anticipate participants' full range of potential answers. Although alternatives to this questionnaire item were developed through two data sets and an additional pilot study, the discussion has shown that accent choice is more complex than circling one of six accent alternatives. Language choices are probably best explored through more open-ended questions and preferably in interviews,

with or without stimulated recall (Calderhead, 1981), so that participants' reflections can be discussed. What kind of pronunciation do Norwegian students want to use if they do not need to conform to variety labels?

Related to *actual* practice, further research is needed into L2 production across situations with different audiences in order to investigate whether Norwegians actually *do* adapt their pronunciation to different contexts and purposes, or if this is only an intention. Furthermore, what happens to their pronunciation when they use English to interact with speakers of other first languages, i.e. when they use English as a lingua franca? Such research should consider the range of language components, not just phonological variables. In particular, the discussions in the present study call for investigations into the individual's L2 strategies and styles. In addition to investigations into intra-individual variation (how individual speakers pronounce the same variables with different variants), there is also a need for further research on intra-variant variation (how different variants are pronounced differently) in L2 production, in order to describe the local appropriation of English in more detail. In short, what does it sound like when Norwegians speak English?

Through the application of sociolinguistic inquiry in an ELT context, this doctoral study has accessed a vast field at the intersection between sociolinguistics and English language education in dire need of investigation. Hopefully, the inferences and discussions presented here will encourage scholars and students to take on the challenge.

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17

PhD Revisited: Young language learners

The acquisition of English in Norwegian first-grade classrooms¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a PhD study (Dahl, 2014) on the effects of English target language input in Norwegian first-grade classrooms, comparing three learner groups with different volumes of input. The results highlight the role of input for acquisition, showing that with sufficient exposure, development in a foreign language can be rapid and similar to other forms of second language acquisition. Overall contributions and practical implications of the study to the field of English teaching are presented.

KEYWORDS second language acquisition | foreign language learning | early start | age of acquisition | target language input

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a PhD study (Dahl, 2014) from NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology. This is an article-based thesis with two published articles (Dahl, 2015; Dahl & Vulchanova, 2014). The PhD thesis in its entirety can be found here: <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/244422>.

INTRODUCTION

An apparent contradiction in language acquisition research is between findings indicating that an early age of acquisition (AoA) for language is normally beneficial for ultimate attainment, and those indicating that an early start with a foreign language in school does not necessarily entail better end results than a later start. The explanation for these conflicting results may be a lack of input in many such classrooms. Since the main benefit of a young starting age has been found in the ability to acquire language implicitly from the input, not from explicit instruction, the observed lack of effects of an early start in a new language at school may be a result of the learning situation being more suitable for older learners. This was the overall hypothesis of the present PhD study.

The main research questions can be summed up as follows:

To what extent and in what ways do different volumes of target language exposure lead to increased language competence in an early-start L2 classroom?

THEORY

An important theoretical question in language acquisition research is the role of age. Research findings imply that there are differences in how young children acquire language compared to older children and adults. With exposure to multiple languages from early childhood, native competence in each language is typical. On the other hand, such competence is extremely rare, if at all possible, in a language acquired after early childhood (e.g., Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003). What constitutes *early childhood* here is not clear. Original proposals of a *critical period* for language acquisition placed the age limit for native-like acquisition at puberty (cf. Lenneberg, 1967; Penfield & Roberts, 1959). However, later proposals outline a more complex picture. Changes in our language-learning capacities seem to start much earlier, and no clear cut-off point for these capacities has been found; there may in fact be multiple smaller periods in which humans are more sensitive to various aspects of language input, or the decline in language learning abilities may even be linear and start at or soon after birth (see for example Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003, for overview and discussion).

The causes of our decline in language acquisition abilities with age are also not clear. Suggestions include lateralization or loss of brain plasticity (cf. de Bot, 2006; Lenneberg, 1967; Penfield & Roberts, 1959; Pulvermuller & Schumann, 1994), or social factors such as inherently better motivation in children, or the

input being more substantial and more appropriate for children (e.g., Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999; Piske & Young-Scholten, 2009). Others argue that adults' use of cognitive problem-solving mechanisms during the learning process inhibit acquisition, or that acquisition is hindered by affective factors in older learners (Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1982; Rosansky, 1975). N.C. Ellis (2006) argues that factors shaped by the L1 hinder L2 acquisition. "Entrenchment" of the L1 system with use in such an account would also result in age effects.

REVIEW

Evidence for the advantage of an early AoA of a new language has been abundant in studies within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (see for example Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011). However, the advantage has been found mainly in the end result; ultimate attainment is more likely to be successful for younger learners, but younger learners are not generally faster than older learners (e.g., Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979; Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1977). Still, with the knowledge that younger learners normally end up with higher levels of L2 competence than older learners, it has seemed intuitively wise to lower starting ages for foreign languages in school.

However, at the time of the PhD study revisited in this chapter, a general finding in studies of the effect of early foreign-language instruction in formal settings was that there is no benefit of an early start, at least in the long run. This was the case in early studies of early-start English in Japan (Oller & Nagato, 1974), French in Britain (Burstall, 1975), and English in Sweden (Holmstrand, 1982). A number of later studies pointed in the same direction, finding no advantage for younger learners, and in some cases even that instructed settings favored later starters (see for example contributions in García Mayo & García Lecumberri, 2003; and in Muñoz, 2006).

On the other hand, in addition to differences in ultimate attainment, younger learners had been found to acquire language differently than older learners and to depend more on substantial input in the target language (see for example Murphy, 2010, for an overview of research). Specifically, findings implied that young children learn implicitly from exposure while explicit instruction and formal learning may be more useful for older learners. Thus, the lack of advantage found for an early start with foreign languages may have been a result of a lack of target language input in such contexts. The question was thus whether foreign language learning could be said to constitute a qualitatively different process such that the advantages of a young AoA would hold for naturalistic second language acquisi-

tion only, or whether foreign language learning might in essence be seen as a type of SLA, where increased exposure to the target language could be effective.

METHODOLOGY

This PhD study investigated English acquisition in first-grade students in different learning contexts in Norwegian schools, where volume of input in English was the main difference.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the study were a total of 82 students in four groups:

A group of monolingual Norwegian students ($n = 29$, mean age at pre-test 6;1) in a Norwegian state school, receiving regular English instruction as mandated by the curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006). The students all attended the same school, but different classes, and a number of teachers were involved in English teaching throughout the school year. Since English teaching in this group mainly relied on Norwegian as the language of instruction, this group is referred to as the “L1-based group” in this chapter.

A group of monolingual Norwegian students ($n = 31$, mean age at pre-test 6;1) in a Norwegian state school, receiving normal English instruction as mandated by the curriculum, but, crucially, where teachers focused heavily on providing English input both inside and outside English class throughout the school day. These students all attended different classes in the same school, which was not the same school as that of the L1-based group. This school was selected because teachers were willing to provide more substantial input in English than what is common. Again, a number of teachers were involved in English teaching; one was a native speaker of English, but she also spoke and taught other subjects in Norwegian. L1 Norwegian was not excluded in English classes in this school, and this group is thus referred to as the “bilingually based group” in this chapter. The two state schools were situated in similar neighborhoods in terms of socio-economic factors, and had previously scored similarly on national tests of English.

A group of students ($n = 7$; mean age at pre-test 6;0) in international schools in Norway, where English is the language of instruction, starting school without competence in English. They were selected based on reports from parents and teachers that they did not know English upon starting school. One of these students was a monolingual speaker of Norwegian, five were bilingual speakers of

Norwegian and another European language, while the third was trilingual before learning English in school. This group is referred to as the “immersion group”.

A group of students ($n = 15$; mean age 6;6) in international schools in Norway who were native speakers of English and served as a control group in the study. Most of these students also had competence in one or more other languages, usually Norwegian, but their parents classified English as a native language for all of them. These students only completed the tests of English proficiency for which no norming existed; see table 17.1 below. This group is referred to as the “control group”.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design consisted of quantitative comparison of the three learner groups (excluding the control group) in a pre-test upon starting school and then again after the first year on a number of measures of English competence. Data collection consisted of a pre- and a post-test session with each participant, each lasting approximately one hour. A number of background and outcome measures of verbal and non-verbal ability and comprehension of English were used to measure English development from the beginning of the school year, approximately in September, to the end of the school year, approximately in May. The English native speakers in the control group were tested once, approximately halfway through the school year, and only on English measures, excluding English vocabulary, since the test used for this measure has been normed for native speakers, i.e. its scores can be systematically compared to what has been found in a large, representative group of English speakers in the USA. Table 17.1 gives an overview of the tests used in the study.

Teaching methods in the classrooms were not carefully controlled, and no lesson analysis was performed, but teachers reported on classroom practices, materials, and time spent on English throughout the year, in particular for the two state-school groups that were otherwise very similar. In the international school immersion group, information about factors such as whether students had attended English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes was collected, but teaching methods were not analyzed.

TABLE 17.1. An overview of tests used in the PhD study.

| Background measures | | Outcome measures | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Test data | Analysis | Data | Analysis |
| PPVT-IV form B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Growth Scale Values (GSVs) ▶ Age equivalents ▶ Within-group and between group comparisons of differences in means ▶ Multivariate analysis of co-variance (MANCOVA) comparing groups ▶ Correlation analysis with other measures | PPVT-IV form A PPVT-IV form B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Growth Scale Values (GSVs) ▶ Age equivalents ▶ Between-group comparisons of differences in means ▶ Within-group comparisons of differences in means with pre-test English vocabulary (form B only) ▶ Correlation analysis with other measures |
| Sentence comprehension test Norwegian vocabulary K-Bit 2 Riddles section K-Bit 2 Matrices section Memo game Background questionnaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Between group comparisons of differences in means ▶ Correlation analysis with outcome measures | Sentence comprehension test Sentence repetition test Delay condition yes/no decision task | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Chronbach's Alpha ▶ Between group comparisons of differences in means ▶ Multiple regression for influence of independent variables ▶ Correlation analysis with other measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Chronbach's Alpha ▶ Between group comparisons of differences in means ▶ Correlation analysis with other measures, and between short and long sentences in the test ▶ Comparisons of differences in means for individual words in the test ▶ Comparisons of differences in means for long and short sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Chronbach's Alpha |

BACKGROUND MEASURES

A background questionnaire was administered to all parents in each student group asking for information about factors such as students' exposure to English-language media, time spent in an English-speaking country, number of siblings, and potential diagnoses which might influence L2 English acquisition. These data were used both to ensure that the two state-school groups were comparable on such factors, and for correlation analysis to check their influence on L2 English development.

Norwegian vocabulary was tested through a test produced specifically for the PhD study, based on form A of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test IV, which is described in more detail below. This test was administered in the pre-test session. Verbal and non-verbal ability was tested with the Matrices and the Riddles sections², respectively, of the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test, Second Edition (K-Bit 2) (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2004). Visio-spatial working memory was tested using a memo game task where participants were asked to find pairs of pictures, where number of attempts and time used to complete the task were recorded. These measures were administered to check that groups were similar on these factors, and for use in correlation analysis in order to investigate their influence on English acquisition.

English vocabulary knowledge at the start of the school year was measured through the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test IV, form B, which is further described below, and sentence comprehension through the English Listening Lesson Library Online game (Eillo, 2013a, 2013b) where pictures of pets and fruits, respectively, were described by a male native speaker of American English, and participants were asked to pick the picture matching this stimuli out of a set of three pictures. Since no norming exists for scores on this game, it was also administered to the control group.

THE PEOBODY PICTURE VOCABULARY TEST

The PPVT-IV is a standardized test of receptive vocabulary normed for native speakers of American English aged 2:6–90. Stimuli consist of individual words, and for each word, the participant selects the matching picture from a set of four. The number of words administered in the test depends on individual participants, as there is a discontinuation rule after a certain number of incorrect responses. The

2. The K-Bit 2 is a test of verbal and non-verbal intelligence. The Riddles section measures expressive (productive) vocabulary, while the Matrices section is a non-verbal pattern-recognition task.

test comes with detailed instructions for administration, as well as for points of reference for comparison with the reference group norms. Notably, raw scores on the test can be compared to both Growth Scale Values (GSV) and age equivalents for the reference group. Since such norming exists for the test, it was not administered to the control group in the PhD study.

THE SENTENCE COMPREHENSION TESTS

The post-test sentence comprehension test was designed specifically by the researcher and the supervisor for the PhD study. It was administered via a computer like the pre-test comprehension test, and consisted of 30 simple sentences read alternately by a female native speaker of British English and one of American English, both using standard varieties. For each sentence, the participant was asked to pick a picture that corresponded to the sentence out of a set of four pictures. Only one of these pictures corresponded completely to the sentence, while two others corresponded to parts of the sentence. The fourth picture was a distractor that did not correspond to any part of the stimulus. The test was designed to measure comprehension of vocabulary in context, and was also administered to the control group. Internal consistency was found to be good through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha=.906$).

THE SENTENCE REPETITION TEST

The second test developed specifically for the study was a sentence repetition test. Its aim was to test grammatical processing, which proved difficult through a comprehension test with the language pair Norwegian/English, since both languages generally mark syntactic roles through (similar) word order. The repetition test consisted of 17 sentences of various lengths, which were read by the researcher and which each participant was asked to repeat one by one. The test session was audio-recorded, and performance was evaluated by two independent raters based on the number of morphemes correctly repeated. Pronunciation was not evaluated as long as it was comprehensible. The repetition test was also administered to the control group. Internal consistency was found to be good ($\alpha=.896$), as was inter-rater reliability as checked with Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC =.953).

THE DELAY CONDITION YES/NO DECISION TASK

The delay condition yes/no decision task asked participants to respond to a total of 14 simple yes/no questions based on pictures that they saw three seconds after hearing the question. The intention was to force language processing by requiring participants to hold the question in working memory before responding. This test was also administered to the control group. However, internal consistency was low ($\alpha=.553$), and since other problems were also identified in this test, its results were not analyzed further.

DATA ANALYSIS

All three learner groups were compared through statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA) with planned comparison on post-test English vocabulary as measured by combined scores on both forms of the PPVT-IV. Scores on the sentence comprehension and sentence repetition tests were compared using the same methods for all four groups, including the control group. The two state-school groups' scores on vocabulary (PPVT-IV forms A and B combined), sentence comprehension, and sentence repetition were compared using t-tests, and for these two groups, multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the impact of group (i.e., volume of input) on sentence comprehension. For scores on the PPVT-IV form B in the two state-school groups, within-group comparison was performed using Wilcoxon signed ranks test, and between-groups comparison using Mann-Whitney U.

Results from the repetition test were analyzed to investigate whether it was a valid measure of language competence, and if so, what subskills it tested. ANOVA with pairwise comparisons compared the success with which participants repeated sentence initial, medial, and final words, respectively, since if repetition only entailed parroting, participants would be expected to repeat sentence final words more successfully. Furthermore, factorial analysis with group as the between-subjects factor and sentence length as the within-subjects factor looked for effects for sentence length, to see whether there was evidence that short sentences could be repeated as acoustic images without any language processing. In order to investigate which specific language ability was tested, ANOVA was performed on the two state-school groups' scores comparing words categorized into three groups. Functional words such as determiners and auxiliaries constituted the first group; the second group consisted of lexical words such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives which were overtly inflected, e.g., for number or tense, and the final category consisted of lexical words which were not overtly inflected, i.e. whose form was identical to their base form.

FINDINGS

On non-English background measures and pre-test English, statistical comparison found no significant differences between the two state-school groups. Thus, any differences in outcome measures between these groups were not likely to stem from differences in background. Between the two state-school groups on the one hand and the immersion group on the other, there was a significant difference for Norwegian vocabulary; pre-test English was not compared for the immersion group.

The overall results on post-test English measures are summed up in Table 17.2 showing the mean scores per group. They imply a relationship between input and performance in the post-test, as the immersion group outperforms the bilingually based group, which in turn outperforms the L1-based group on every measure of English competence in this study after one year of school. Results from the pre-test of vocabulary (PPVT-IV form B) are also provided as a point of reference, as this was the only test that was administered in both test sessions.

TABLE 17.2. Results for all groups on pre-test English vocabulary and post-test measures of English.

| | L1-based group | Bilingually based group | Immersion group | Control group | Maximal possible score |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| PPVT-IV form B pre-test | 23.7 | 25.4 | 47.4 | – | – |
| PPVT-IV form B post-test | 29.1 | 44.1 | 83.3 | – | – |
| PPVT-IV form A post-test | 33.9 | 40.2 | 77 | – | – |
| Sentence comprehension | 14.4 | 18.7 | 28.1 | 29.3 | 30 |
| Sentence repetition | 85.1 | 93.9 | 132.6 | 138.2 | 142 |

Note: For the PPVT-IV, age equivalents and Growth Scale Values as given in the test manual provide more useful points of reference than maximum scores, and these are discussed below.

The ANOVA for combined scores on both forms of the PPVT-IV found significant differences both between the immersion group and the bilingually based group, and between the bilingually based group and the L1-based group. When scores on

the sentence comprehension and sentence repetition tests were compared using the same methods for all four groups, including the control group, significant differences were found between the control group and the immersion group, between the immersion group and the bilingually based group, and between the bilingually based group and the L1-based group. An overall finding is thus that which group participants belonged to, and thus presumably volume of input, significantly impacted their performance in English after one year.

The two state-school groups were compared further, leaving out the immersion group since it was small and heterogeneous, and since this group's performance in English in the pre-test was notably higher than the two state-school groups. T-tests found significant differences between the two groups' performance on all English measures in the post-test sessions, i.e. vocabulary (PPVT-IV forms A and B combined), sentence comprehension, and sentence repetition. An important finding was that for the state-school groups, sentence comprehension showed the largest between-group difference. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the impact of English input in school inside and outside of English classes on this measure compared to the impact of pre-test scores on English vocabulary and on Norwegian vocabulary. Volume of input, i.e. which group students belonged to, was found to account for 24% of variance on the students' test scores, while their scores on the Norwegian vocabulary test and the pre-test for English vocabulary combined only accounted for 14% of variance.

Comparison of student scores on the English vocabulary test (PPVT-IV form B) using Mann-Whitney U confirmed that there was no significant difference between the two state-school groups on the pre-test, while on the post-test, there was. Repeated-measure Wilcoxon signed ranks tests within each of these groups found no significant difference in the L1-based group between performance on the English vocabulary pre-test and the post-test, indicating that no measurable development had taken place in the eight months between the two test sessions. The difference in the bilingually based group, on the other hand, was significant. As already mentioned, the PPVT-IV comes with a test manual with normed score reference points, making it possible to compare any individual or group score to the age at which this would be the average score in the test's native-speaker reference group. Such comparison confirmed that the difference in scores between the pre- and the post-test for the L1-based group was very small: The (non-significant) increase in the L1-based group in the course of eight months is equivalent to three months' vocabulary development as normed for English native speakers. Furthermore, differences in scores can be translated into Growth Scale Values (GSV) using the PPVT-IV test manual, where a difference in GSV of 8 is considered sig-

nificant. In the L1-based group, the GSV difference was only 5, again indicating non-significant difference between the pre- and the post-test. Development in the bilingually based group over the course of the same time span, however, was equivalent to a GSV of 12, and to 10 months' development in age equivalents as normed for the test manual for children who are native speakers of English. This means that the L2 English learners in the bilingually based group in fact developed more rapidly than what is typical for younger native speakers at the same level of vocabulary development in English.

For the immersion group, development on the English vocabulary test (PPVT-IV form B) was found to range from an age equivalent of 11 months to 37 months for individual participants in the course of the eight-month period between test sessions. Measured in GSVs, however, there was still a significant difference in the post-test between this group and the reference group for the test on both form A (GSV difference of 22 points) and form B (GSV difference of 21 points). Since a GSV of 8 is considered a significant difference, this clearly indicates that the immersion group had not reached native averages in English vocabulary comprehension.

Results on the sentence repetition test were analyzed for all groups in the discussion of whether this test constitutes a valid measure of language competence. With Pearson's r , scores on the test were found to be correlated with the other measures of English, and with Norwegian verbal ability, i.e., vocabulary and K-bit 2 Riddles. However, results on the sentence repetition test were not correlated with non-verbal measures, i.e., non-verbal ability as measured by K-Bit 2 Matrices, nor with working memory as measured by the memo game task.

The comparison between scores on initial and final words in the repetition test found no significant differences. Furthermore, the analysis of performance on short and long sentences indicated that performance on short sentences also differed between groups. Together, these findings indicate that participants were not merely parroting an acoustic image, and that the test was indeed a valid measure of language competence. The analysis of how well participants repeated functional, uninflected lexical, and inflected lexical words showed that the bilingually based group was significantly better at repeating lexical words with no overt inflection compared to lexical words with overt inflection and functional words, while in the L1-based group no such significant difference was found. The conclusion was the ability to perceive lexical words was the main advantage of the bilingually based group in this test.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

The contribution of the PhD study lies mainly in exploring the role of input in early-start L2 classrooms, and in new insights into how language acquisition takes place in such a context. Furthermore, the study contributed to developing methods for testing overall L2 proficiency in young, pre-literate learners at low proficiency levels, where receptive competence may be more advanced than productive skills. Finally, although the actual activities that took place in the classrooms in the three groups investigated were not controlled, the findings have some clear implications for teaching.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Empirically, the main contribution of the PhD study is found in the different results in the post-tests in the three groups of early English learners. The within-group analysis of vocabulary comprehension between the pre- and the post-test for the L1-based group demonstrated that in the setting of standard English classes in Norwegian grade 1, acquisition is not guaranteed, revealing a possible problem with such early-start programs. This was evident in the lack of vocabulary development in this group shown in the small, non-significant change in PPVT-IV form B scores between the pre- and the post-test.

In the bilingually based group, the modest increase in language exposure compared to a typical classroom had a significant effect on vocabulary development, which was found to be slightly faster than for competence-matched, younger native speakers of English. This finding is important since it may have consequences for the ambitions of early-start foreign language learning programs. Input in such settings will always be limited, but it seems that there can still be significant benefits from an early start if sufficiently substantial input is provided. The increased input appeared to have a particularly strong effect on sentence comprehension, which means that it is likely in turn to be beneficial for further acquisition from naturalistic exposure.

For the seven children in the immersion group, attending school for a year in a new language led to rapid acquisition, with scores on vocabulary, sentence comprehension and sentence repetition approaching native-speaker means indicating acquisition across the board. Although there was great variation between participants, we see that L2 immersion at such a young age can lead to very fast development. In this group, individual differences are particularly crucial, and important findings include how development on the PPVT-IV form B between the pre- and the post-test ranged from an age equivalent of 11 months to 37 months. There

was no clear pattern to what caused fast development; both the fastest-developing child and the child with the least development were bilingual upon starting school in English, and neither the child with the lowest nor the child with the highest English vocabulary scores in the pre-test showed the fastest development in terms of age-equivalence in months. Although the number of participants in this group is too small to draw firm conclusions, there is no indication here that previous language background is a strong predictor for development in a new language.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The results of the PhD study are also relevant for theoretical questions about the nature of L2 acquisition. In particular, they support the assumption that foreign language learning is essentially a form of SLA. Thus, it depends on the same factors and follows the same trajectories as naturalistic SLA, input plays a crucial role, and a young AoA should in principle be beneficial. The findings are also relevant for the question of exactly what constitutes language competence in an L2. While pedagogical perspectives often focus on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, these describe overt language behavior, not underlying competence. The PhD study is mainly relevant to what would typically be categorized as the listening skill, and emphasizes that this in itself is a multifaceted language ability.

One finding was the speed of vocabulary acquisition displayed by some of the young L2 learners compared to L1 acquisition. This rapid L2 vocabulary development compared to native speaker norms may indicate that L2 lexical acquisition is supported by L1 knowledge. Importantly, the PPVT-IV only tests receptive vocabulary, and vocabulary breadth rather than depth. Jiang (2004), for example, suggests that in early adult SLA, entries for new words initially consist of information about form (phonology and morphology) only, with a pointer to the L1 translation equivalent for meaning and syntax. It is possible that what had been acquired by the bilingually based group in the present study was such a pointer to the L1 lexicon, and this process may be beneficial for early comprehension of new vocabulary in an L2. The rapid lexical acquisition may also reflect that mechanisms that support L1 lexical acquisition in young children, such as fast mapping (Shintani, 2011), are still available to learners in this age group. In combination with support from the already well-developed L1 lexicon, such mechanisms may facilitate L2 receptive vocabulary in young learners in a way that allows very rapid development. Although the use of the L1 in the classroom was not studied here, it is possible that strategic L1 use in teaching may facilitate such processes.

However, the results also highlight how acquisition does not simply entail learning vocabulary items as translation equivalents from the L1, or as isolated items. The results of the sentence comprehension and the repetition test suggest that the main benefit of increased exposure is comprehension of words in context, not isolated lexical knowledge, and thus that processes such as phoneme discrimination, lexical retrieval, and building “good enough” representations for comprehension (cf. Carroll, 2004; Clahsen & Felser, 2006; VanPatten, 2012) are important competencies which constitute early steps in L2 development. The study indicates that these skills develop as a result of exposure.

The results of the PhD study also shed light on the exact role of input in SLA. For example, while it is common to assume a distinction between *input* and *intake*, studies have found that acquisition of various aspects of language can take place in the absence of attention to the input in both children and adults (Saffran, Newport, Aslin, Tunick, & Barrueco, 1997; Schachter, 1998; Truscott, 1998). The children both in the bilingually based group and in the immersion group in the present study had acquired both receptive vocabulary and sentence processing and comprehension skills from naturalistic input, with no systematic effort on the part of the teachers to draw students’ attention to form in this input. Input may certainly have been simplified, but such adapted input is still naturalistic and resembles the child-directed speech that is common in L1 acquisition. There was little evidence in the PhD study to answer the question of whether also more detailed grammar competence can be achieved through naturalistic input without focus on form. However, the fact that some children in the immersion group scored within the native speaker range on the sentence repetition test, which required correct reproduction on functional morphemes, may indicate that also grammatical accuracy can in principle be acquired from naturalistic input in young L2 learners.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The PhD study contributed methodologically in developing tests that may be useful for investigating early stages of acquisition in very young, pre-literate learners. With the exception of the PPVT-IV, test materials in the study were developed specifically for the study. In particular, three methods were developed and tested, namely the sentence comprehension test, the sentence repetition test, and the delay-condition yes/no question task.

Although the ELLLO game (Elllo, 2013a, 2013b) used in the pre-test session probably succeeded in checking that the two main groups had comparable linguistic competence at the outset, there were problems both in difficulty level and in

the odds of guessing correctly in this game, with only three alternative responses per picture. Thus, for the post-test session, a sentence comprehension test was created specifically for the study. This test was found to distinguish well between competence levels, although there was some evidence of ceiling effects in the immersion group.

As reported above, the sentence repetition test also showed good internal consistency and distinguished between the competence levels of the participant groups. The detailed analyses of scores on different items in the test also supported the conclusion that it was a valid measure of language competence, and did not just test parroting abilities. The final test developed for the study was the yes/no question task with a delay condition. This test had low internal consistency, did not distinguish well between competence levels, and allowed some children in all groups to achieve very high scores either by chance or because the test was too easy. Thus, results of this test were not analyzed in the study and the conclusion is that it was not a successful measure of language competence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

In the study, the researcher did not carefully control methods used in the classrooms, and results therefore cannot be used to directly recommend teaching methods. Still, the study has implications for English teaching. First, it is clear that although English was abundant in Norwegian society, at the time of the study young children could not be expected to encounter enough English outside of school for any significant acquisition to take place. Secondly, attending English class from age 6 does not guarantee acquisition unless those classes provide sufficient input, and English classes as mandated by the current curriculum, still in place at the time of writing this chapter with only minor revisions, apparently do not necessarily provide such input. However, third, the study also demonstrates that input need not be unrealistically massive, and that rapid acquisition is possible if teachers focus on providing English input whenever possible both during class and throughout the school day within the existing curriculum.

Thus, those who teach English to young children in Norway should plan activities where they speak English to the students whenever possible. Activities successfully used in the bilingually based group in this study included conducting morning meetings and classroom management throughout the school day in English, with translations into Norwegian when necessary. Importantly, no effort was made to exclude the use of Norwegian, and as speculated above, it is possible that strategic translation and explanation in L1 may have facilitated L2 vocabulary

learning. There was also no specific effort to increase students' productive use of English, although increased production on their part may have been a natural result of the increased input. During English class, frequent activities providing English input included teachers reading aloud or talking about pictures or objects that they had brought into the classroom. An implication of the study is that these kinds of activities are well suited to young foreign language learners, and may be a better choice than some activities included in typical workbooks for first grade.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this PhD study indicated that volume of exposure is a crucial factor in early L2 acquisition. The curriculum under which the study was conducted is still in place at the time of writing this chapter; it is currently being revised and the details of the new curriculum are still unknown, but it is clear that numbers of hours for English teaching will remain low. The challenge of providing enough input for acquisition to take place is thus still highly relevant. The international debate about the interplay between AoA and input in foreign language learning is still ongoing (cf. DeKeyser, 2017), and further studies in the Norwegian context are needed.

Future research would benefit from including more participant groups and different teachers. A larger immersion group would also be beneficial in order to obtain generalizable knowledge about this setting. Future similar studies may also control more closely methods and activities in the different classrooms in order to gain a more detailed picture of exactly what practices lead to successful acquisition, and longitudinal studies may provide knowledge of the long-term effects of the different conditions. The increased input in English in the bilingually based group in this study was maintained through grade 2, and two master studies (Sivertzen, 2013; Strand, 2014) followed up the findings in the years after data collection in the PhD study, finding no advantage of the bilingually based group on the PPVT-IV in grade 4 compared to students who had received regular English teaching from grade 1, but still finding an advantage for sentence comprehension in grade 5.

The study highlights the importance of English Grade 1 teachers having the English proficiency and confidence to use English extensively in the classroom, and it is a step in the right direction that requirements have been introduced since this study was concluded for English teachers at primary level to have formal qualifications in English. However, as an added source of L2 exposure, further research may look into whether input from film and similar media can have simi-

lar beneficial effects for early L2 learners in classroom settings. Interestingly, a recent survey found that young Norwegian children watch English-language media at very young ages (TNS Kantar, 2017), and investigating whether such exposure can be used to promote acquisition in an instructed setting for the youngest learners might be useful. Finding ways to ensure that the early start with English in Norwegian schools is effective is still important.

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18

PhD revisited: What is to be assessed?

Teachers' understanding of constructs in an oral English examination in Norway¹

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ABSTRACT In this chapter, the research design of and main findings from Bøhn's (2016) doctoral study are presented. The study used educational and psychological measurement theory and a mainly qualitative methodological approach to investigate teachers' understanding of what should be assessed in an oral exam in English in Norway. The findings indicated that the teachers generally agreed on the main aspects of student performance to be assessed, but disagree more on the more narrowly defined aspects. On the basis of the results the chapter discusses implications for oral assessment in English language teaching and possible avenues for further research.

KEYWORDS language assessment | spoken English | English language teaching | validity

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Bøhn, 2016), focussing on summative oral assessment practices in Norway. This is an article-based thesis, with three published articles (Bøhn, 2015; 2017; 2018), and the thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be found here: <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/53229>.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment² holds a prominent place in education. It can be defined as “the planned and systematic process of gathering and interpreting evidence about learning in order to make a judgement about that learning” (Isaacs, Zara, Herbert, Coombs & Smith, 2013, p. 1). In the last 20 years or so, assessment has received increasing attention from educational authorities, researchers, teaching practitioners and the general public in many countries. This includes English language teaching (ELT) in Norway, where there has been focus on assessment criteria, teachers’ scoring consistency, and the relationship between the subject curriculum and final assessment, among other things (Directorate for Education and Training, 2010a; Yildiz, 2011).

Assessment is a complex matter, however, and the practice is wrought with a number of philosophical, political, social, ethical and technical issues. Very generally, these issues revolve around broad questions such as *why* a particular assessment is used, *what* is being assessed, and *how* the assessment is designed and used. In the doctoral dissertation reported in this chapter, which investigated the assessment of student performance in an oral English exam, the emphasis was mainly on “what”. This is an important question in the sense that good quality assessment depends on a clear understanding of which aspects of a performance or a learning process that should be evaluated. Research has shown, however, that raters often find it difficult to agree on exactly what should be in focus (Eckes, 2009).

In international language testing, this problem has long since been recognized, and a lot of resources have thus been spent on developing high-quality language assessment (e.g. the Cambridge Assessment English tests or the TOEFL test). In such assessment contexts, raters are always provided with fairly detailed *rating scales*, or “scoring rubrics” (Ginther, 2013). Such scales specify both which performance aspects (i.e. criteria) should be attended to, and descriptions of how these aspects should be rated at each level of performance. Furthermore, in such testing situations raters are *trained* in order to help them know what to look for and how to score performance.

In the Norwegian educational context, however, the situation has traditionally been somewhat different in terms of English oral exams. In these exams there are no national rating scales or rater training. Rather, the authorities have left it to the local level (i.e. the county governors) to administer oral exams. This has led to dif-

2. The terms “assessment”, “testing”, and “evaluation” are frequently used with different meanings. In this chapter, however, I follow Bachman and Palmer (2010), who use them more or less interchangeably.

ferent practices across counties. In some counties teachers have had access to a common rating scale, and have had some rater training. In other counties there have been no common scales and no training. Such differences are potentially problematic for dependable and valid assessment results (see e.g. Nusche, Earl, Maxwell, & Shewbridge, 2012).

Against this background, the doctoral study reported in this chapter explored the following broad research question: *How do teachers in Norway understand the “what” to be tested in an oral English exam at the upper secondary level?* The focus was on the oral English exam taken by students in their first year of the general studies programme (GSP), and in the second year at the vocational studies programmes (VSP).

THEORY

In test theory, the “what” to be evaluated in language assessment is commonly referred to as “attributes”, “constructs” or “traits”. According to Weir (2005, p. 1), constructs can be defined as the “underlying [...] abilities we wish to measure in students’. This means, for example, that when a student gives a performance in an oral exam, it is not the actual words being spoken that we are primarily interested in. Rather, we are interested in the student’s underlying competences or skills, such as vocabulary, fluency, accuracy or pronunciation. These, then, are unobservable entities that cannot be assessed directly. In order to be assessed, they need to be operationalized, i.e. made concrete, before they can be evaluated. Fluency, for instance, can be operationalized by the observable features “pauses”, “fillers”, “false starts” etc. (Brown et al., 2005, p. 23).

According to Bachman & Palmer (2010), constructs are identified on the basis of a “frame of reference”, such as a theory of language, a needs analysis or a syllabus (pp. 212–213). In English language teaching in Norway, it is first of all the latter category which defines the constructs, as teaching and assessment are supposed to be grounded in the English subject curriculum.

As for the operationalization of the constructs to be assessed, this is commonly done with the help of rating scales, as mentioned above. The use of rating scales in language testing is generally believed to enhance the validity of the assessment (Fulcher, 2012). There are different definitions of “validity”, but today most language assessment specialists agree that it concerns the quality of the inferences that can be made from the assessment results (see e.g. Newton & Shaw, 2014). In this sense, validity has to do with *score meaning*. For example, if a student in Norway is awarded a “4” on the oral exam, one may ask what this mark means.

According to the Regulations to the Education Act, a “4” means that the student has “good competence in the English subject” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2009, § 3–4, my translation). But then one could go on to ask: “What kind of competence has been assessed?” Here, the Regulations of the Education Act specify that it is the competence aims of the subject curriculum that decide which competence(s) that are to be focused on. This, however, leads us back to the question of constructs and how these constructs have been operationalized.

Good validity, then, requires that raters only attend to those aspects that are meant to be assessed. Whenever raters fail to take into account performance features that should be tested, this will be a “threat” to the validity of the scores. In such cases the results will be affected by *construct underrepresentation*. Conversely, if raters start attending to performance features that should not be tested, this will create *construct-irrelevant variance* in the assessment results (Messick, 1989). Construct underrepresentation and construct-irrelevant variance are therefore something that should be avoided.

A related question is the issue of reliability, or dependability. Simply put, reliability can be said to indicate the extent to which the same raters would award the same score, or mark, to the same performance. For instance, if one rater gives a performance a “4”, and another gives the same performance a “2”, this would be an example of poor reliability. Differently put, such assessment discrepancy means that the mark “4” does not mean the same thing. In this respect, reliability affects validity since it impinges on the quality of the inferences that can be made from the marks, or assessment scores.

REVIEW

As the main focus of the present investigation is on rater cognition, or raters’ *orientations* in foreign or second language (L2) speaking assessment, it is relevant to consider studies that have looked into this phenomenon. In the assessment research literature there is ample evidence that scoring outcomes (i.e. marks) are often affected by raters’ subjective understanding of how performance is to be judged (Bejar, 2012). This phenomenon is commonly referred to as *rater variability* (McNamara, 1996).

Rater orientation research in L2 language assessment has shown that raters pay attention to both construct-relevant and construct-irrelevant features when judging performance (Hsieh, 2011; Orr, 2002; Pollitt & Murray, 1996). For example, raters have been shown to heed construct-irrelevant performance aspects such as

age and gender (Orr, 2002), effort (Brown, 1995), interest and personality (Ang-Aw & Goh, 2011), physical attractiveness (Pollitt & Murray, 1996) and voice quality (Hsieh, 2011). There is also evidence of construct underrepresentation in a number of tests, as examiners fail to pay attention to criteria that should be considered, such as content-related performance aspects (Cai, 2015).

Although there is a rich body of research on language assessment generally, very few studies have examined English speaking tests in contexts where rating scales have not been provided. Only two international studies (Brown, Iwashita & McNamara, 2005; Pollitt & Murray, 1996) and one Norwegian study (Yildiz, 2011) have been identified. Brown et al. (2005) and Pollitt & Murray (1996) found that raters were attending to performance features such as linguistic resources (vocabulary, grammar, phonology), fluency, and content, whereas Yildiz (2011) discovered that the raters were focusing on “Language competence”, “Communicative competence”, “Subject competence”, “Ability to reflect and discuss independently” and “Ability to speak freely and independent of manuscript”. Yildiz’s study is particularly interesting in this discussion since she investigated an assessment context which is almost identical to the present one, i.e. an oral English exam at the upper secondary level. However, the study was quite small, being an MA study including only 16 teacher informants.

Beyond these studies, there is research indicating that raters may have more or less common perceptions of how performance should be assessed. Some studies, for example, have demonstrated relatively good correspondence between raters’ orientations (Brown et al., 2005), whereas others have recorded substantial rater variability (Orr, 2002). An important question in this respect is how such differences can be explained. Some studies have suggested that the differences may be a matter of rater background characteristics, such as rating experience or first language background (Kim, 2009). Others have indicated that there has not been sufficient rater training (Brown, 2012). Relatedly, there may be problems with how the rating scales are to be interpreted (Eckes, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the teachers’ understanding of constructs, this study used a predominantly qualitative, exploratory research design with an *inductive theoretical drive* (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). This means that the overall direction of the investigation was guided by the inductive analysis of data, which were collected through the use of qualitative methods in the first stage of the project. Two of these constructs, pronunciation and content, were analysed in some more detail, and a

quantitative instrument, i.e. a questionnaire, was used as a part of the study to investigate specific questions related to the pronunciation construct.

DATA COLLECTION

The investigation was carried out in three phases, each representing a separate study. In Phase 1, a student in the Health and Social Care vocational study programme was filmed as she was taking her oral exam. The video-clip was then distributed to a group of teachers who were asked to score the performance and justify their decisions. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the teachers' understanding of constructs when rating oral performance. On the basis of the results from the analysis in Phase 1, it was decided to look further into the pronunciation³ and content constructs in Phase 2 and Phase 3 as there turned out to be noticeable rater variability regarding these two constructs. In Phase 2 another group of teachers were therefore recruited to watch the same video-clip and to answer a questionnaire regarding the assessment of pronunciation and intonation. In addition, semi-structured interviews were used to complement the data collection. Finally, in Phase 3 verbal protocol analysis (VPA) was used to examine a third group of teachers' understanding of the content construct. VPA is a method in which participants are asked to verbalize their thoughts, or "speak their mind", when carrying out a task (Green, 1998). Again, the video-sequence recorded in Phase 1 was used. In addition to the VPA, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data about the teachers' understanding of content. Table 18.1 gives an overview of the studies in each of the three phases.

3. Here the term *pronunciation* covers both segmental (i.e. the pronunciation of individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (such as intonation, stress and rhythm).

TABLE 18.1. An overview of the three phases of the investigation.

| | Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|------------------------|---|---|--|
| Research focus | Teachers' understanding of <i>constructs</i> generally | Teachers' orientations towards aspects of the <i>pronunciation</i> and <i>intonation</i> constructs | Teachers' understanding of the <i>content</i> construct |
| Data collection | Semi-structured interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Semi-structured interviews ▶ Questionnaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Verbal protocols ▶ Semi-structured interviews |
| Number of participants | 24 interviewees (also interviewed in Phase 2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 24 interviewees (also interviewed in Phase 1) ▶ 46 questionnaire respondents | 10 verbal protocol and interview informants |
| Data analysis | Qualitative and quantitative content analysis (Galaczi, 2014) | Qualitative, using magnitude and provisional coding (Miles et al., 2014), and quantitative, calculating descriptive statistics | Qualitative, using provisional coding (Miles et al., 2014) |

PARTICIPANTS

The teacher participants in all the three studies ($n=80$) were fully qualified upper secondary school teachers of English. They were recruited by means of purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013), in order to obtain variation in the samples with regard to age, gender, first language, teaching experience, county and study programme affiliation. There were 25 male and 55 female teachers. Some were involved in the vocational studies programmes only ($n=19$), some were involved in the general studies programme only ($n=14$), and the majority were involved in both programmes. Most participants had Norwegian as their L1 ($n=64$). The rest were L1 speakers of English ($n=6$), Swedish ($n=4$), Danish ($n=1$), Finnish ($n=1$), Mandarin ($n=1$), Romanian ($n=1$) and Russian ($n=1$). Their rater experience in the oral English exam ranged from none to more than six exams.

DATA ANALYSES

The interviews and the verbal protocols were investigated using the computer programme QSR NVivo10. Both interview and verbal protocol data were transcribed,

checked and returned to the participants for respondent validation (Bryman, 2012). The questionnaire data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics.

The data gathered in Phase 1 were analysed using qualitative and quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). Analytical categories were developed from the teachers' statements, by means of coding, without any explicit theoretical framework to support the analysis. In this sense, the analysis was predominantly inductive. For example, a statement like "And if they can't [find the word], they should try to circumvent it, rather than switching into Norwegian" was coded as "Compensatory strategies". The qualitative analysis involved an in-depth scrutiny of teacher statements, and a comparison between different categories and statements, in order to capture the participants' understanding of the constructs and their interrelationships. The quantitative analysis meant that the different categories were subsequently counted in order to give an indication of how prominent the different constructs were.

In Phase 2 both the questionnaire and the interview data were analysed deductively in the light of the theoretical framework centred on the concepts of *nativeness* and *intelligibility*. The starting point for the analysis was the question of whether students need to have a (near-) native accent in order to obtain a top score. In the research literature the idea of learners trying to approximate native speakers is sometimes referred to as the "nativeness principle" (Levis, 2005). Historically, this principle has had a strong position in English language teaching and assessment. However, a competing principle, the "intelligibility principle", has gained ground in later years. This principle holds that the aim of pronunciation teaching and assessment should not be for learners to speak like natives, but rather to make themselves understood, i.e. to be intelligible.

In order to explore the teachers' orientations towards nativeness and intelligibility, these concepts were operationalized in different ways in the interviews and in the questionnaire. In the interviews the following question was asked: "Some teachers say that a near-native speaker accent is important in order to get a top score. What is your comment on that?" In the questionnaire, nativeness was operationalized in three different items and intelligibility was measured with the use of two items. An example of the former was: "Good 'native speaker' accent is important in order to achieve a top score", and an example of the latter was: "If it is difficult to understand what the student says, I will automatically mark him/her down from a 6 [i.e. the top score]". In addition, a set of items relating to four specific pronunciation features which have been found to relate to intelligibility were also included in the questionnaire. These features were *segmentals*, i.e. the pronunciation of individual sounds, *word stress*, *sentence stress*, and *intonation*. An

example of an item measuring segmentals was: “The correct pronunciation of individual sounds is important in order to achieve a top score (for example /hedeik/ and not /hedertʃ/ for ‘headache’; /wɔtʃɪŋ/ and not /wɔʃɪŋ/ for ‘watching’). The responses to all items were given on a five-point Likert scale going from “Completely disagree” to “Completely agree”.

The questionnaire responses were investigated by using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations in order to find out how the teachers rated the importance the different pronunciation and intonation constructs. The interview data regarding nativeness were explored through the use of *magnitude coding* (Miles, Huberman & Saldāna, 2014). It involved the assignment of coded teacher statements along a four-point scale going from “not at all” in agreement with the nativeness principle to “to a large extent” in agreement. The issue of intelligibility in the interview responses were analysed by using *provisional coding* (Miles, Huberman & Saldāna, 2014). This entailed the initial establishment of categories denoting intelligibility, such as “comprehensible speech” and “understanding”, followed by a search for teacher statements that matched these categories.

In Phase 3, conceptualizations from Bloom’s revised taxonomy of educational objectives (Anderson et al, 2001) were mainly used to analyse the data. In this taxonomy content is understood as a two-dimensional construct. It involves a cognitive process dimension and a knowledge dimension. The former refer to students’ cognitive *skills or abilities* and include the following cognitive aspects: “remember”, “understand”, “apply”, “analyse”, “evaluate”, and “create”. The latter concerns *subject matter* and involves “factual”, “conceptual”, “procedural”, and “metacognitive” knowledge (Kratwohl, 2002). The taxonomy was also found suitable as the competence aims of the English subject curriculum in Norway to a large extent reflect this type of thinking. The competence aims typically consist of verbs denoting the cognitive process dimension and noun phrases representing the knowledge dimension. The following competence aim at the upper secondary level (year 1 or 2) illustrates this: “[The student should be able to] discuss and elaborate on the growth of English as a universal language”. In this competence aim the cognitive process dimension is realized by the verb phrase “discuss”, and the knowledge dimension is denoted by the noun phrase “the growth of English as a universal language”.

Bloom’s revised taxonomy was also found relevant in the sense that the different aspects of the cognitive process dimension to some extent reflect a scale of increasing complexity. In this view, “understand” is a more complex cognitive process than “remember”, “apply” is more complex than “understand”, and so on.

Thus seen, the cognitive process dimension can represent an assessment scale going from lower to higher levels.

The data obtained from the VPAs and the interviews in Phase 3 were then analysed in two cycles with the use of provisional coding (Miles et al., 2014). In the first cycle, the statements were coded on the basis of the construct categories developed in Phase 1, such as “Fluency”, “Grammar”, and “Vocabulary”, as well as the analytical framework largely built on Bloom’s revised taxonomy. This framework was used for classifying statements relating to content, where verb phrases represented the cognitive process dimension and noun phrases denoted knowledge, or subject matter. An example is the following statement: *She didn’t get the chance to, sort of, talk about the English language as a world language and an international language.* Here the verb phrase “talk about” was classified as a cognitive process category (cognitive ability), and “English as a world language and an international language” was coded as a subject matter aspect. In the second cycle, all the phrases relating to subject matter were sifted out in order to examine what kind of knowledge the teachers were concerned with, as this was a major focus of the third study.

RESULTS

The analyses of interview transcripts in Phase 1 concerning constructs generally showed that the informants paid attention to a large number of different aspects when assessing student performance. 38 categories were identified in the analyses presented in the doctoral thesis, including both main constructs, sub-constructs and sub-subconstructs. Overall, the results showed that the teachers focused on two main constructs, namely *Communication* and *Content. Linguistic competence* (belonging to Communication) and *Application, analysis, reflection* (belonging to Content) turned out to be the two most significant sub-constructs.

Linguistic competence involved aspects such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, whereas Application, analysis, reflection referred to the ability to apply knowledge, as well as to be able to analyse and reflect on various issues. Table 18.2 shows the results from the quantitative content analysis, where the counts indicate the number of times each category was mentioned. (It is worth mentioning that many of the sub-constructs listed in the table, such as Linguistic competence, comprise different sub-subcategories, like for example Vocabulary, Grammar and Phonology, which are not included in this table.)

TABLE 18.2. Number of reference counts for the different statements pertaining to constructs and sub-constructs.

| Constructs | Criteria | Reference counts |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Communication | (General reference to communication) | 28 |
| | Linguistic competence | 240 |
| | Compensatory strategies | 24 |
| | Listening comprehension | 21 |
| | Take initiative | 15 |
| | Communicative structure | 2 |
| | Adapt communication to situation and audience | 6 |
| | Cohesion | 2 |
| | Ability to repair | 2 |
| | Social competence | 2 |
| | Sum Communication | 342 |
| Content | (General reference to content) | 43 |
| | Application, analysis, reflection | 44 |
| | Comprehension (explain using own words) | 30 |
| | Knowledge (reproduction) | 27 |
| | Addressing task or problem statement | 26 |
| | Elaborated response | 15 |
| | Content structure | 4 |
| | Sum Content | 189 |
| (Other) | Disruptive features | 17 |
| | Preparation | 14 |
| | Effort | 7 |
| | Sum Other | 38 |

As can be seen in Table 18.2, the teachers mentioned categories related to Communication nearly twice as often as they did categories related to Content (342 as against 189). Within these two constructs there were 240 teacher statements relating to the sub-construct Linguistic competence, and 44 statements relating to the category Application, analysis, reflection. It should be pointed out, however, that the number of counts does not directly express the strength of correlation between statements and the significance of a category. Still, it gives an indication of how important the teachers found the different constructs to be.

Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses indicated that there was good correspondence between the individual teachers' understanding of the main constructs, but that there was some more discrepancy regarding the sub-subconstructs, particularly pronunciation. In addition, there were indications that the teachers weighted the content construct differently. The teachers mainly involved in the general studies programme tended to put more emphasis on content, whereas the teachers mainly working at the vocational studies programmes were less concerned with this construct. Beyond this, there was evidence that some teachers heeded construct-irrelevant performance features. For example, there were teachers who listed effort and level of preparedness as relevant assessment criteria. Additionally, it was found that some teachers agreed on which criteria were to be applied, but disagreed on how performance was to be assessed regarding these criteria. For example, two teachers agreed that fluency was a relevant criterion. However, one teacher thought that the performance of the student in the video-clip was "fluent", whereas another found it to be "fairly choppy".

The results from the analyses in Phase 2, which looked more closely at the teachers' assessment of pronunciation and intonation, indicated that there was strong agreement on the question of intelligibility, i.e. the students' ability to make themselves understood. For instance, 37 of the 46 questionnaire respondents strongly or completely agreed that students should be graded down from a top score if it was difficult to understand what they were saying. The analysis of the interview transcripts supported this finding, as 11 out of 24 informants stressed the importance of "clear pronunciation" and "comprehensible speech" in their discussion of general criteria.

As for nativeness, or the importance of speaking with a near-native accent, there was much more variation among the teacher participants. Of the 46 questionnaire respondents six strongly disagreed that it did matter, seven strongly agreed that it did, eight moderately disagreed, and 11 moderately agreed. The largest group of respondents, 13 teachers, neither agreed nor disagreed. Figure 18.1 visualizes the responses to this item.

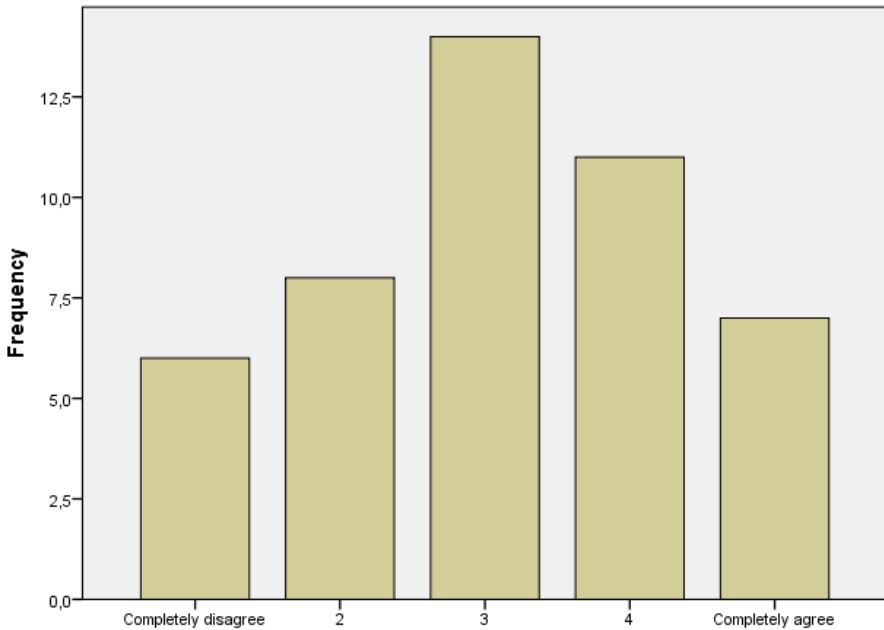


FIGURE 18.1. The distribution of responses to the item: “A strong Norwegian accent will mark the student down from a top score” ($n = 46$).

The interview analysis corroborated the findings from the questionnaires. Five respondents did not at all see nativeness as important, six found it to be of considerable importance, five thought it was of little importance, and five believed it was of some importance. A statement from a teacher who strongly opposed to using nativeness as a criterion said:

I don’t kind of expect Norwegian students to be native speakers. I don’t think it is ethical for the teachers to give a lower grade just because the student hasn’t got a proper British accent, or an American accent. It is my personal opinion.

However, there were also statements from some of the teachers that displayed an ambivalent attitude towards nativeness. The following exchange between the researcher and an informant serves as an example:

Informant: Anyway, I think it is quite o.k. that [the students] don’t speak perfect British English or American English, since English has become sort of a global language. This means that we must accept that pronunciation has been localized in different parts of the world.

Researcher: But [...] would you say that it would be important to have a native speaker accent in order to obtain a 6?

Informant: If you do, that's the best thing, but if you don't ... I don't think it's a must.

Here the informant starts by downplaying the relevance of the nativeness principle. However, when asked specifically about this issue, she admits that native speaker approximation is preferable, although it is not a "must".

Finally, in terms of the four phonology features that were included in the questionnaire, the results revealed that the respondents moderately to strongly agreed that segmentals, word stress and sentence stress were important. As regards intonation, however, the teachers either found this performance aspect less important, or they were uncertain about whether to assess it. On the five-point Likert scale measuring responses to this construct in the questionnaire, the results yielded the average score of $M = 3.07$.

In Phase 3 the VPA and interview analyses supported the findings from Phase 1 that teachers largely view content as a matter of responding well to the task questions, as well as to analyse and reflect on subject matter. Thus, they also confirmed the assumption that Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson et. al., 2001) is a relevant way of understanding content when assessing performance. Regarding what type of subject matter they viewed as important, the analyses showed that the teachers had a very general understanding of this issue. This may reflect the fact that the English subject curriculum does not specify a lot of factual knowledge to be learnt. Rather, it points to a number of wide-ranging subject matter aspects, such as "discuss and elaborate on culture and social conditions in several English-speaking countries". As one informant put it:

Well, if you look at the English subject curriculum, there is no list of facts that you have to remember; absolutely not. You don't have to know that Sydney is the capital of Australia (sic) in order to pass in English [...]. But if you get that task, you are expected to find some information about Australia.

The analysis furthermore indicated that a consequence of this type of thinking is that the cognitive process elements, such as to apply, analyse, and evaluate, become more important than specific subject matter knowledge, since it is unrealistic to expect students to remember details from all kinds of potential topics. A quote from another informant supports this claim:

I had a student in an oral exam once who didn't know anything about the Tea Party [Movement]... and there is nothing [in the curriculum] about the Tea Party in the U.S. But he had to know something. Exactly what that "something" is [...] isn't so important. But it has to be something. And what he or she shows... has to be thoroughly done... and be at a certain level... not just surface level knowledge.

Another interesting point concerning this quote is the formulation "at a certain level... and not just surface level knowledge". This statement supports the hypothesis that the teachers tend to think in terms of a taxonomy, since the goal is for students to reach the higher levels in the taxonomy. In other words, a high score in the exam requires higher-order thinking skills, not just "surface level knowledge".

Two final points are worth making concerning Phase 3. First of all, the study to some extent supported the finding from Phase 1 that teachers at the general studies programmes place more emphasis on content than do teachers at the vocational studies programmes. Secondly, the teachers' understanding of content was fairly consistent with the content constructs identified in the subject curriculum. However, one instance of construct-underrepresentation was found. The informants were hesitant about the assessment of learning strategies, which is clearly defined as a competence aim in the curriculum. As one informant put it: "No, that is not to be tested... It is a meta-science".

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTION TO THE DIDACTICS FIELD

Most importantly, the findings in this doctoral dissertation should be discussed against the backdrop of the study, i.e. the Norwegian assessment context, where no common rating scales or common rater training existed at the time of the data collection. In the language testing literature the lack of such assessment aids is generally thought to be problematic for the validity and reliability of the scores (Brown, 2012; Fulcher, 2012). However, as I will return to below, there may also be arguments against the use of too "standardized" assessment procedures, especially in educational settings where assessment is closely linked to learning.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTION: ASPECTS OF SCORE VALIDITY

Overall, the investigation found that the teachers generally understood the main constructs in the same way. However, there were also examples of construct underrepresentation and construct-irrelevant variance, which threatened the validity of the scores. Four areas turned out to be particularly problematic. Firstly, there was evidence that the teachers in the vocational studies programmes downplayed the content construct, and in doing so, underrepresented it. This may be due to the fact that students in these programmes are, on average, at a lower proficiency level than students in general studies programmes. Therefore, many teachers seem to prioritize language over content aspects, both when teaching and assessing performance, as one teacher in the interview made clear. This suggests that teachers in the vocational programmes see the English subject as more “language driven”, whereas teachers in the general studies programmes see it as somewhat more “content driven” (Met, 1998). Secondly, there were indications that some teachers paid attention to construct-irrelevant features, such as effort and level of preparedness. According to a government circular, these aspects are not to be considered in final assessment, such as in oral exams (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2010b). Thirdly, there was variability regarding the assessment of pronunciation, especially related to the question of whether students need to approximate native speakers in order to achieve a top score. This finding supports Levis’ (2005) claim that teachers either tend to focus on nativeness or intelligibility in pronunciation pedagogy (cf. above). Fourthly, there was the problem of teachers agreeing on the constructs to be assessed, but disagreeing on how performance should be scored with regard to these constructs. Whenever teachers say that, for example, fluency is important, but then fail to agree on what kind of performance is indicative of good fluency, this threatens the validity of the scores. Finally, the fact that teachers in the general studies programme put more emphasis on content than do the teachers in the vocational studies programmes is problematic for validity.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

The main theoretical contribution of this doctoral dissertation relates to its conceptualization of the content construct in language assessment. Largely based on Bloom’s revised taxonomy of educational objectives (Anderson et al., 2001), this conceptualization first of all sees content as a construct comprising a subject matter (or *what*) dimension and a skills (or *how*) dimension. Due to the nature of the assessment context, where the subject curriculum for the most part describes sub-

ject matter in very general terms, it was found that teachers end up emphasizing the cognitive skills dimension since it seems to matter less to the teachers which topic the student has knowledge of, as long as he or she is able to reflect on that knowledge. This relates to the theoretical notion of *higher-order thinking skills*, which becomes important for students who aim for the highest marks in the exam.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND ASSESSING ENGLISH

The findings from this doctoral study are relevant in the discussion of both how to teach and how to assess student performance in ELT. Three aspects are particularly salient and were brought to the fore by the author at the time of the publication of the thesis. Firstly, it was recommended that national rating scale guidelines and better, more systematic rater training are introduced. As mentioned above, there are indications that this will allow for improved validity and reliability in assessment generally. More specifically, it was suggested that rating scale *guidelines*, rather than fixed rating scales, are provided. The reason for this is that fixed scales may make the teachers focus too strongly on the criteria for assessment rather than on the competence aims of the subject curriculum when teaching English (see e.g. Throndsen et al., 2009). As for national rater training, the Directorate for Education and Training could, for example, provide benchmark samples in the form of videotaped student performances in mock exam situations. Such samples could then help teacher raters get a common perception of what characterizes performance at the different grade levels.

Secondly, it was recommended that the pronunciation construct needed to be better defined, both for teaching and assessment purposes. The current subject curriculum is not clear on this score, referring for example to “patterns of pronunciation” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006/2013). Hence, it needs to be decided whether or not the nativeness principle should have relevance in assessment. Research suggests that nativeness is of less importance for communication (Derwing & Munro, 2009), but more research on which features are important for intelligibility is needed before clear recommendations in this area can be given.

Thirdly, since many raters in the study were concerned with the assessment of higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and reflection, teachers were advised to allow for the practice of such skills in the classroom. For example, it would seem efficacious to provide students with tasks that allow for scrutiny, synthesis, contemplation and evaluation, and working on understanding concepts and the relation between them (see e.g. Chamot, 2009).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The starting point for this investigation was the assumption that the lack of rater training and rating scales in the Norwegian educational system can pose validity problems in oral English exams. However, validity and the process of *validation*, i.e. efforts to make assessment processes and outcomes more valid, continue to be challenging in all assessment contexts, since there are so many different aspects that impact the scoring outcomes (O’Sullivan, 2014).

One such challenge concerns the assessment of pronunciation and how, for example, one can understand the relationship between nativeness and intelligibility, and related concepts such as “correctness” and “error”. As has been pointed out in this chapter, teachers struggle to operationalize the pronunciation construct, which is quite understandable given that the curriculum is so vague on this score. One obvious topic for further research would therefore be the assessment of intonation. Another could be the attitudes towards nativeness and intelligibility at the lower secondary school level.

Another underresearched area is the relationship between language and content, and how raters distinguish between these two constructs (cf. Snow & Katz, 2014). In addition, in the Norwegian context, it would be relevant to look further into how Norwegian teachers assess English when giving overall achievement marks. These are also issues related to the validity of assessment outcomes and the quality of assessment practices in schools.

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19

PhD revisited: The professional development of English language teachers

Investigating the design and impact of a national in-service EFL teacher education course¹

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ABSTRACT The PhD study reported here examined the design of a part-time, one-year, blended-mode in-service English teacher education course and its impact on the development of thirty-three experienced primary school teachers. While the teachers became more confident and competent, insufficient opportunities for oral English practice and teacher collaboration were design weaknesses. The chapter includes a discussion of implications for English teaching and design of comparable courses, providing suggestions for future research.

KEYWORDS In-service EFL | young language learners | continuing professional development (CPD) | primary school teachers

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study (Coburn, 2016), focusing specifically on its practical implications for the teaching of English in Norway. The thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be found here: <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2420139/FINAL%20James%20Coburn%20dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

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INTRODUCTION

Different studies (Enever, Moon & Raman, 2009; Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011) show that steadily increasing numbers of children are introduced to English at younger ages, and that EFL instruction is often compulsory in today's primary education as in Norway. However, in a worldwide study of primary EFL teachers' qualifications, training and career development, Emery (2012, p. 18) observes that "[m]any teachers have not been specifically trained to teach English, or to teach the level that they currently teach. This will impact on children's learning and may also lead to teachers feeling stressed in their jobs". Emery concludes that these teachers "need specific training to teach this age group". The PhD project reported here investigated the professional development of English teachers at primary school level, and how such development can best be promoted through an in-service course. The results are therefore relevant both on the national and international level.

In Norway, there has been a shortage of teachers with EFL education in primary schools for decades. A recent survey by Statistics Norway (Lagerstrøm, Moafi, & Revold, 2014), showed that approximately 66% of those teaching English at the 1–4 grade level, and 49% of those teaching at the 5–7 grade level, had not been educated as English teachers. The Norwegian authorities have therefore tried to increase the formal competence of those teaching English in primary schools through an in-service teacher education program called "Competence for Quality" (henceforth: CQ).

The teaching of English at primary school level requires specific skills. Teachers without English teacher education therefore face a number of subject-specific challenges: The use of English has become far more widespread in Norway since these teachers studied English at school. Furthermore, since the introduction of the national communicative curriculum in 2006, English teachers have been expected to teach English in a different way to that in which the language was taught to the middle-aged generalist primary school teachers who comprise the majority of the participants on the CQ courses; there are greater expectations of oral fluency and a broader grasp of active vocabulary. In addition, the ability to adjust language use to various contexts and situations has become a cornerstone of communicative competence.

Teachers who have been accepted for CQ courses have normally continued working three days a week in their own schools while taking the program, with paid study two days a week. The teachers have usually had their own English classes during the year so that they could try out new methods and ideas and reflect on the results during the year. The objectives of the one-year, two-semester

courses have been to develop the teachers' English language knowledge and skills, and their English teaching competence in relation to the goals of the Norwegian curriculum.

This study investigated the impact of one specific CQ course. On this focus course, the first semester was mostly theoretical, concentrating on knowledge of grammar and pronunciation. The second semester focused more on practical methodological knowledge and skills. Each semester there were three two-day face-to-face seminars filled with lectures and group work. The online components consisted of reading through self-study with individual and group tasks, but no synchronous learning activities. Assessment was through an oral exam at the end of the first semester and a two-day home written exam at the end of the second semester.

The objective of the study was to assess the teachers' development, as indicated by changes in their cognitions (beliefs, knowledge, thoughts and emotions), confidence, classroom language use, and the changes in the methodological approaches they employ in their classrooms. The goal was also to investigate the relationship between the design of the course and its diverse impact on the teachers. In other words, the intention was to try to establish to what extent and in what ways aspects of the course design were associated with learning outcomes. The overall research question was therefore:

How does the impact of a Competence for Quality in-service EFL teacher education course on teachers' professional development compare with an analysis of the design of the course?

THEORY

Opfer and Pedder's complexity theory model (2011) proposes that any evaluation of teacher change should take into account the social, cultural and political contexts of school organization. According to this model, the effects of professional development depend on "the individual and school orientations to learning systems that mediate teacher learning and teacher change", where "the myriad of elements within and between these systems poses significant challenges for conducting causal studies of teacher professional learning" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 393). Thus, the theoretical approach in this study not only considered the course design and the impact of the Competence for Quality (CQ) course in relation to the subject matter content and developmental processes, but also in relation to the broader educational context.

The impact of a Competence for Quality (CQ) EFL teacher education course will depend greatly on how receptive participant teachers are to the ideas and processes they encounter on the course. In order for a CQ course for EFL teachers to have a strong impact, it would need to place emphasis on awakening and developing teachers' thoughts and beliefs (cognitions) about teaching by helping participants to reflect both individually and collectively. Borg (2006a) emphasizes the pivotal role that cognitions play in influencing change in teachers' practices (or the lack thereof).

In addition to managing cognitive change, theory suggests that there is a need for an increased focus on improving oral fluency and confidence in oral abilities in EFL education for generalist teachers, in order to meet the demands of modern communicative curricula. Thus, while the subject-matter content of EFL teacher education for less specialized teachers "has typically focused on the development of teachers' methodological skills, it is increasingly the case (...) that improving teachers' language proficiency is the predominant focus" (Borg (2015, p. 548).

Freeman, Katz, Gomez and Burns' (2015) recently reconceptualized the notion of subject-matter knowledge for less specialized EFL teachers, with particular reference to the needs of the increasing numbers of generalist teachers who are being required to teach English. These authors focused on improving generalist English teachers' classroom language, combined with developing their methodological skills, as the most effective solution to improving their language proficiency, while simultaneously exposing them to a wide range of activities and methods for teaching a foreign language.

REVIEW

A number of meta-studies of cross-disciplinary research of professional development and in-service training (e.g. Timperley et al., 2008; Broad & Evans 2006), as well as smaller-scale overviews of comparable studies within the EFL field (e.g. Hayes & Chang 2012; Waters & Vilches 2010), had concluded that certain key factors influence the degree of teacher development resulting from different professional development activities. These factors can be grouped under three main headings: First, *Contextual and Systemic parameters*, second, *Ways of Working* and third, *EFL Subject-Matter Content*. These factors headings are shown in Table 19.1 where each sub-point is briefly summarized.

TABLE 19.1. Critical factors in professional development courses impacting teacher development.

| 1. CONTEXTUAL and SYSTEMIC PARAMETERS | | Examples of studies |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| a. | Coherence of course with broader educational initiatives | Waters & Vilches, 2010 |
| b. | Time frame and number of hours on course | Desimone, 2009 |
| c. | Motivation among participant teachers | Timperley et al., 2008 |
| d. | Appropriately qualified teacher educators | Hayes & Chang, 2012 |
| 2. WAYS of WORKING | | |
| a. | Credible ways of working with new ideas and practices | Postholm, 2012 |
| b. | Working at both collective and individual levels | Broad & Evans, 2006 |
| c. | Ensuring classroom experimental opportunities and feedback | Hayes & Chang, 2012 |
| d. | Active learning, a variety of activities, modelling of teaching | Timperley et al. 2008 |
| 3. SUBJECT-MATTER CONTENT | | |
| a. | Development of teachers' overall English proficiency skills | Graves, 2009 |
| b. | Development of teachers' methodological repertoire | Timperley et al., 2008 |

Within the third group of factors, subject-matter content, EFL research had suggested that a focus on improving teachers' overall English language proficiency (skills and knowledge), together with the development of teachers' methodological repertoire and pedagogical content knowledge, are critical course components (Graves, 2009; Freeman et al., 2015).

In a wide-ranging review of research into the introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT) in primary and secondary school contexts generally involving non-native EFL teachers such as those in Norway, Littlewood (2013, pp. 7–8) identified a number of challenges for teachers, summarized under two main headings: First, “excessive demands on teachers' own language skills”; second, challenges related to the need to adapt traditional teacher-fronted approaches amid “common conceptions that formal learning must involve item-by-item progression through a syllabus rather than the less observable holistic learning that occurs in communication” (Littlewood, 2013, p. 7). Other contextual influences such as resistance from parents or even other teachers may also hinder the successful implementation of a communicative approach (see also Lundberg 2007).

Research into specific challenges connected to in-service foreign language teacher education for primary school teachers showed that a lack of teacher confidence and oral language proficiency is an obstacle to effective foreign language teaching (Chambless, 2012). Other researchers had suggested that teachers who limit instruction mainly to the textbook, relying heavily on translation and cramming, and neglecting the development of oral communicative competence, usually do so because their own lack of fluency prevents them from “orchestrating mastery experiences that foster real life communication” (Chacon, 2005, p. 13).

At the time of the PhD, few studies had previously investigated the design and impact of longer-term in-service EFL training for generalist primary school teachers. An exception was Lundberg’s work (2007) in Sweden. She had documented that for primary school EFL teachers, the English (L2) input they produce is important for the development of learners’ oral production. She had also shown that teachers’ code-switching (between L1 and L2) and overuse of translation seemed to affect learners’ oral production negatively since they became less inclined to try to understand spoken English when expecting a translation, and less able or willing to speak themselves. Lundberg (2007) also noted how the teachers’ lack of language confidence may “rub off” on learners.

METHODOLOGY

The study used various methods in a mixed-methods design in order to investigate the design of in-service teacher education courses and their impact on participants’ beliefs and teaching practices. The role of the researcher throughout the study was solely as an observer, with no teaching responsibilities on the course.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The mixed-methods research design consisted of both parallel (concurrent) and sequential phases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) over a period of two and a half years. The accumulation of knowledge during the progression of the research contributed to a gradual expansion and development of perspectives (Greene et al., 1989). Figure 19.1 illustrates the three-phase progression, with Phase 1 finishing while the two other phases were still in progress, and Phase 2 finishing while Phase 3 continued.

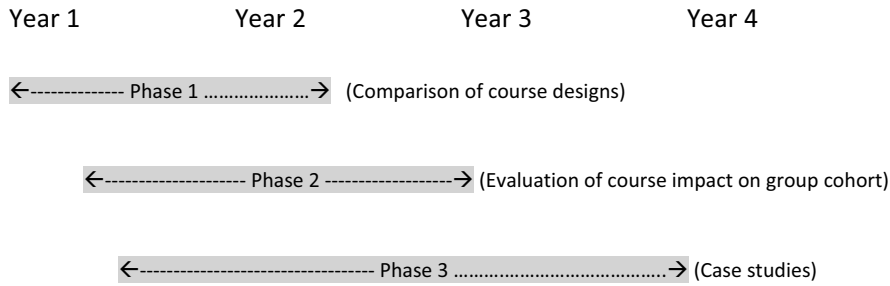


FIGURE 19.1. Overlapping of Research Phases over Time.

The three phases of the project all concentrated on different aspects of the same overall theme; that is, a central concern with the design and impact of the selected CQ course. Phase 1 was qualitative; Phase 2 was mainly quantitative, with supporting complementary qualitative material; Phase 3 was pre-dominantly qualitative, with supporting quantitative data. An overview of the three research phases is provided in Table 19.2, followed by an explanation and then more detailed descriptions of the samples, methods, and analyses used in the individual phases.

TABLE 19.2. Overview of the three research phases.

| | Phase 1: Comparison of different course designs | Phase 2: Evaluation of impact on group cohort | Phase 3: Case studies |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Type of method | Qualitative | Quantitative and Qualitative | Qualitative and Quantitative |
| Main research questions | What characterises the differences in organisation, pedagogical design, evaluation and perceived outcomes of two different Competence for Quality course models vis-à-vis an independent local-regional course model? | To what extent does the in-service training have impact on the beliefs and knowledge, confidence, self-reported classroom language and practices of the teachers? | 1. How did the course impact four teachers' classroom language, teaching practices, beliefs and confidence? 2. What was the longer-term impact on the teachers within their school contexts? |
| Sample and participants | Teacher educators, school and course administrators, teachers | 33 participant teachers on a CQ course | Four volunteers from the sample of 33 course participants |

| | Phase 1: Comparison of different course designs | Phase 2: Evaluation of impact on group cohort | Phase 3: Case studies |
|--|--|--|---|
| Methods | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Document analysis: of course designs, evaluation reports 2. Semi-structured interviews with course designers 3. Field study of local-regional course: interviews with teacher educators, administrators, teachers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identical pre and post-course Likert-scale questionnaires, with four open questions only in the pre-course questionnaire 2. Teachers' written reflections on changes in their answers to the questionnaire items | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early and late course classroom observations and recordings 2. Sequence of interviews during three school visits 3. Analysis of teachers' questionnaire reflections and written course tasks |
| Analysis | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of course design documents and CQ evaluation reports, and of the interviews with teacher educators. 2. Theoretical frameworks for course design | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SPSS analysis of changes in teachers' answers to Likert-scale items 2. Qualitative analysis and content analysis of teachers' reflections on their changes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of transcriptions of classroom language 2. Analysis of transcriptions of interviews, debriefings 3. Analysis of teachers' reflections and other data |
| Credibility of methods, methodology | Triangulation of data sources, member checking, open narrative clarifies researcher's bias | Validity of quantitative data measured through SPSS. Credibility strengthened through qualitative data in the teachers' reflections | Prolonged engagement, triangulation of different data sources, member checking, rich description |

Phase 1 compared the design of the focus course both with another comparable Competence for Quality (CQ) course's design within the same national programme; and also with the design of an entirely separate, locally organized in-service EFL course, organized for the same target group of teachers, but not within the CQ programme. The methods included document analysis, interviews with course designers, teachers and educators, and pilot questionnaires.

In Phase 2, statistical analysis was used to assess the significance of changes in the focus course teachers' responses to identical pre-course and post-course questionnaires concerning their beliefs and self-reported practices. The teachers' own reflections on changes in their responses formed the qualitative material supporting the statistical data.

Phase 3 consisted of case studies of four teachers, each with early-course, late-course, and post-course school visits, classroom observations, and recordings of teachers' classroom language and interviews. The recordings and interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and compared with the teachers' written reflections, resulting in both qualitative and quantitative data.

SAMPLES

In Phase 1, three course samples were selected with the aim of comparing the design of the CQ focus course with the design of another CQ course and with that of a non-CQ course. The purpose was to compare the design of another CQ course with the focus CQ course, and then to compare these with a third point of comparison, a local in-service course outside the CQ framework.

In Phase 2, the sample consisted of the 33 teachers who completed the selected focus CQ course. Of these, 18 taught grade 5–7, while 15 taught grade 1–4. On average, the teachers had five years of English teaching experience and taught in mostly rural schools. Phase 3 of the study consisted of case studies of four of the focus course teachers, who had also participated in the questionnaires and reflections in Phase 2. These teachers had volunteered and were observed and recorded teaching in their classrooms. There were two teachers from each grade level (1–4 and 5–7). Three of these teachers had 10–20 years of experience teaching English, while the fourth had only one year.

METHODS

In Phase 1, the course designs were studied using document analysis, semi-structured interviews with individual teacher educators (course designers) and with small focus groups of teacher educators at each of the three institutions where courses were compared.

Phase 2 of the research investigated changes in the cognitions, confidence, self-reported language, and teaching practices of the group of primary school teachers taking the focus CQ course. These were measured quantitatively through changes in their responses to identical Likert-scale items in pre-course and post-course questionnaires, and qualitatively through the teachers' written reflections on the changes in their responses to the same questionnaire items, and through their reflections on their answers to open questions, which were also included in the pre-course questionnaire.

Phase 3 included three visits to each of the teachers' schools, one early on in the course, one late in the course, with a final visit 16 months after the course. During the early-course and late-course visits, the researcher observed and recorded different lessons that were subsequently transcribed. Conversations with the teachers were recorded before and after lessons, and semi-structured interviews were recorded when the teachers had more time on each visit.

ANALYSIS

In Phase 1, document analysis started with the evaluation reports (Rasmussen and Klewe 2012; Gjerustad and Kårstein 2013) of the national CQ courses commissioned by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (NDET). In addition, unpublished historical documentation providing background for EFL in-service education initiatives in Norway before the CQ program started was analyzed. Finally, interviews with the teacher educators at the three focus institutions were analyzed. The semi-structured interviews with the different teacher educators (who were also the course designers) were organized using a template with prepared thematically based questions as a point of departure.

In Phase 2, the statistical material comprising the changes in the teachers' responses to the 81 Likert-scale questions in the different sections of the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS (Pallant, 2013). A significance level of 95% was set. The qualitative material provided by the teachers through their answers to open questions in the first questionnaire and in their reflections on the changes in their responses to individual questionnaire items was researched using content analysis (Dörnyei, 2007).

In Phase 3, notes were taken during class observation using semi-structured observation forms with categories of activities on one axis and 5-minute time units on the other. Walsh's (2011) theoretical classroom model was used to analyze the classroom interaction patterns. The quantitative data resulting from analysis of the language in the transcriptions of the recordings was compared with qualitative analysis of the teachers' language in the context of the specific lessons. The quantitative data was in the form of comparative analysis of the classroom language used by the teachers in different lessons, early on and late on in the course. Four methods were used to analyze this language: First, the number of English and Norwegian words in each lesson were counted and compared. Second, lexical variation was measured using the Giraud Index (the square root of the number of words divided by the number of word types) to counterbalance the fact that a simple word token/type division would otherwise give a skewed result because it declines

with increases in total word use. Third, the average word speed of spoken English per minute was compared. Fourth, the number of grammatical errors teachers made, as agreed by two independent expert raters, was compared. The resulting quantitative material was used to complement analysis of the qualitative observations and recordings showing how teaching practices and patterns of interaction changed.

RESULTS

The overall research question was:

How does the impact of a Competence for Quality in-service EFL education course on participant teachers' professional development compare with an analysis of the design of the course?

In answer to this question, the following section presents an integrated analysis of the results from the three phases of the research, divided under three headings: *Course design*, *Course impact: changes in beliefs and reported practices*, and *Longer-term professional development*.

COURSE DESIGN

In the analysis of the different types of course designs (Phase 1), one of the main strengths of the organizational design of the CQ courses was found to be the provision of two days a week paid study time over one whole school year, compared with the almost total lack of such a provision on the local non-CQ course. This allowed teachers to study English in depth while continuing to teach English in their own classrooms. These generous conditions meant that teachers could read, try out ideas, and then reflect over new theoretical conceptions linked to a communicative teaching approach.

The three courses compared in Phase 1 all provided school-based learning opportunities through classroom-based tasks as recommended in the research field (Hayes & Chang, 2012). The choice of subject matter content for the three courses differed most in relation to the amount of knowledge about language that was included. On the local course, the linguistics component was limited and not well received by the teachers, who much preferred the presentation of new teaching ideas and methods that could be tried out immediately. In contrast, both CQ courses – especially the focus course – devoted considerable time to teaching

knowledge about language. However, none of the courses gave teachers the opportunity for structured practice of their oral English between the course seminars. There were also very limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate on the CQ courses between seminars.

In the broader educational context, weaknesses in the CQ organizational design were identified as the individualized course delivery, lack of knowledge-sharing in home schools, and the lack of contact between the institutions delivering the courses, the teachers' home schools, and local municipalities, as well as the lack of post-course follow-up. The consequences of these weaknesses became clearer in Phase 3, which focused on the four case study teachers' home school contexts – when the course participants returned to their own schools and local teaching contexts, they faced different challenges since many of their colleagues lacked EFL teacher education and had not shared the ideas and approaches offered on the course.

COURSE IMPACT: CHANGES IN BELIEFS AND REPORTED PRACTICES

On the focus CQ course, the SPSS analysis (in Phase 2) showed that the teachers' feelings of competence in relation to their abilities to help their pupils attain curriculum goals changed significantly in relation to most of the goals for oral communication. The exceptions were for those relating to teaching pronunciation, and for the teachers of pupils in grades 5–7, the goal of helping their pupils to learn to “start, maintain and terminate conversations”.

Further evidence of the teachers' development is implicit in the reported significant increase in the teachers' use of pair work for the grades 5–7 group, with the teachers' qualitative reflections emphasizing their growing realization of the importance of activating pupils orally. These changes were connected with the significant increases in both the teachers' and pupils' use of English in the classroom as reported by the teachers. In addition, the teachers' feelings of efficacy in relation to all but one of the written communication goals also changed significantly. The exception was the curriculum goal “to use digital tools to find information and experiment with creating texts”.

The statistically significant positive changes in the participant teachers' beliefs in their abilities to help pupils achieve curriculum goals for oral and written communication (Phase 2) can be linked to a number of factors in the course design and delivery (Phase 1). As indicated, the generous study provisions and the integration of course tasks linked to classroom practice are conducive to teacher development. In addition, the role of the experienced teacher educator responsible for

methodology must be especially credited. Her systematic efforts to raise teachers' awareness of their own beliefs helped to deepen their understanding as they tried out a wide range of new ideas, practices and resources. This integration of practical ideas backed by simple but powerful explanation (i.e. theory) helped to gradually convince teachers of the increased effectiveness of a more varied and communicative approach to teaching.

There were some differences in the results between the 1–4 and 5–7 grade teachers (phase 2). The 1–4 grade teachers beliefs about their ability to help their pupils achieve curriculum goals for language learning strategies and for developing knowledge about English speaking countries' literature and culture changed significantly, while the 5–7 grade teachers did not experience significant change in these areas. However, both the 1–4 and 5–7 grade teachers reported using significantly less correction.

With regard to the teachers' self-reported classroom language use, both the 1–4 and 5–7 grade groups reported that significantly more English was used in all areas, but especially when explaining vocabulary and grammar, for creating a good class atmosphere, and for assessing learners. In the qualitative feedback consisting of the teachers' reflections about changes in their answers to the identical pre-course and early course questionnaire, it was clear that teachers were using less translation and becoming more confident in their oral language abilities. The results for the questionnaire section concerning teachers' confidence in their oral proficiency also showed a positive significant change, except for some hesitation due to uncertainty about grammar. Furthermore, the move towards less textbook dependence, more varied activities, more active pupils, and the use of a wider range of teaching materials all provide evidence of significant development.

LONGER-TERM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

These findings were corroborated by the case study evidence and analysis (Phase 3), which showed that all of the four case study teachers began to use a more varied repertoire of methods and materials. In developing a more communicative approach, these four teachers spoke more English and their classroom language became less controlled and more spontaneous and interactive. Their word variation increased a little, while their frequency of errors remained the same or increased, probably as a result of the faster and more spontaneous teacher talk and more interactive teaching methods. The significant increases in the amount of English that teachers reported using in their classrooms (Phase 2), together with the reduction in the use of translation, backed by the weight of evidence from the

observation and measurement in the case studies (Phase 3), are also clear signs of the effectiveness of the course.

Nonetheless, the longer-term evidence from the case studies (Phase 3) also suggested that there were a number of factors working against the sustainability of some of these gains in professional development. While three of the four teachers' confidence *as English teachers* increased, the confidence of three teachers *as oral role models* was judged to have decreased or remained the same. Therefore, the longitudinal case study evidence from the four teachers' home contexts indicated that even though teachers' confidence in their oral proficiency and methodological competence had developed during the course, there were signs that the momentum provided by the course input was slowing down. For example, the lack of regular opportunities outside English lessons to practice speaking English seemed to erode three of the four case study teachers' oral confidence over time.

In fact, as shown in Phase 1, the lack of emphasis on practicing oral English between course seminars was identified as a serious weakness of the course design, implying the need for a more targeted concentration on the development of oral proficiency in the design of future courses. In Phase 2, the lack of significant change in the entire cohort of teachers' feelings of competence with regard to teaching pronunciation, as well as the lack of significant change in relation to hesitancy and grammatical errors, can both be related to low confidence in their oral proficiency. Furthermore, in the case studies in Phase 3, both the teachers' fears of making mistakes, as well as their actual mistakes, undermined their confidence.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

This mixed-methods study examined the professional development of a group of experienced primary school teachers who had previously taught English without any EFL teacher education. The study compared the course design and course impact on the teachers. Although the results were generally positive, the research findings raise questions as to what the subject-matter content of in-service EFL teacher education courses for generalist primary school teachers should comprise, how such course programs should be organized and implemented, and to what extent the impact of the courses are sustainable. The results gave clear indications of the areas in which participants faced the greatest challenges. The following discussion therefore focuses on these areas and related challenges for course design.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: THE SUSTAINABILITY OF GAINS IN ORAL FLUENCY AND CONFIDENCE

In the long-term, maintaining language proficiency is a challenge for generalist language teachers (Valmori & De Costa, 2014; Richards, Conway, Roskvist, & Harvey, 2013). This is important because increased fluency can have benefits for increasing the flexibility of the language teacher's classroom practices (Richards 2007). Problems with fluency and oral confidence in the classroom can therefore also affect teaching in other ways, leading, for example, to less experimentation and creativity and greater dependence on textbooks.

While the course generally strengthened teachers' language awareness and confidence in their oral proficiency, and helped them to try out new, more communicative teaching approaches, the longitudinal case study results in Phase 3 cast considerable doubt on the sustainability of the teachers' gains in oral confidence. In the post-course interviews 16 months after the end of the course, three of the four teachers mentioned having difficulties in maintaining their proficiency due to lack of opportunities to practice speaking English.

While the first part of the focus course concentrated on raising the teachers' language awareness (*Language in Use*), and Module 2 concentrated on teaching methodology (*Teaching and Learning English*), neither module included interactive oral language practice outside of the seminars. The research results indicated that there was no significant change in teachers' confidence in their ability to speak without hesitation due to grammatical errors, while the case study results in Phase 3 showed no decrease in teachers' grammatical errors. Furthermore, questionnaire results showed that the teaching of pronunciation was the one area where both the 1–4 and 5–7 grade teachers' beliefs in their own competence to help their pupils achieve curriculum goals did not change significantly. These results may also indicate that there is a need for a greater concentration on how to teach grammar and pronunciation (pedagogical content knowledge) as opposed to the more theoretical linguistic component that comprised the first part of the course. A more concentrated focus on the development of teachers' language proficiency should help to strengthen teachers' confidence in exemplifying and modeling the language when, for example, teaching pronunciation and grammar.

Although the longitudinal results were based on a small number of observations and case studies, the research raised questions about how sustainable the gains in oral proficiency and confidence were; it also showed that the course design and CQ program lack measures which can contribute to sustaining professional development in the long run. The research overview by Timperley et al. (2008, p.219) shows that sustainability resulting from professional development courses

depends on a number of factors including “ongoing opportunities for teachers to deepen relevant knowledge and skills and to work and learn collaboratively with colleagues”. The research results in this study showed that teachers on the CQ course had very few opportunities for systematic collaboration on the course, with no synchronous online communication course-based components between seminars. Neither was there any systematic cooperation with home school or home area English teachers.

The individualized course design and lack of planned collaboration on the CQ courses mitigate against sustainability, especially given the lack of post-course follow-up. Indeed, in Phase 2, one of the questionnaire results showed that only one of the 33 course participants was part of an English teacher network. This is a problem threatening the long-term credibility of the course program since teachers cannot develop in isolation. Indeed, Broad (2015) argues in a recent study of teachers’ continuing professional development (CPD) that:

[t]he most significant barrier to engagement with beneficial and meaningful CPD is the result of teachers operating in impoverished and limited teacher/CPD networks. These impoverished networks do not offer teachers the opportunity to forge links with similar subject-specialist teachers, leaving them to develop subject and occupational expertise in isolation (Broad, 2015, p. 16)

Despite the lack of follow-up or participation in English teacher networks, most of the teachers on the CQ course may still have learned sufficient skills for inquiry and gained sufficient knowledge, skills and momentum to be able to continue developing, albeit sometimes in relative isolation, if they can find sufficient time to seek out new impulses and resources.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The study started with a broad comparison of course designs focusing on the contextual dimension, before the focus was narrowed down to one course group as a whole, finally culminating in a longitudinal study assessing aspects of the impact of the course on individual teachers in their local contexts. By combining the use of mixed methods and a longitudinal design, the three-phase design succeeded in covering a wide field in depth. As such, the study design and research progression can be considered as a contribution to knowledge – the model showing how a single researcher can shed light on a broad research area while taking into account context, before focusing on a course cohort group and then individual participants.

The overall mixed-methods approach, especially in the second phase, allowed insights to emerge that would otherwise have remained hidden. For example, the quantitative data indicated that the amount of translation used by the teachers had reduced significantly. One of the reasons given for this by a teacher was that she was now able to justify not translating when confronted by parents who expected that teachers should always translate words in class in case one pupil did not understand. This is an important finding in relation to, for example, the problems that Lundberg's (2007) research showed that teachers face in conservative local cultures. In the case of the PhD study reported here, the mix of data allowed a greater depth of understanding. Nonetheless, the study had methodological limitations which meant that direct causal claims of the impact of different aspects of course design on teacher development must be treated with caution.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Simon Borg (2015), who has been in the forefront of the research development in teacher cognition within language teacher education, argues that much of the increasing amount of research into teacher cognition (e.g. Fives & Gill, 2014) has unnaturally separated teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. In the research project discussed here, however, there was a deliberate focus on integrating the study of teachers' professional development with the analysis of changes in teachers' classroom language, practices, confidence, and cognitions. In other words, teachers' beliefs were not isolated from their language use and teaching practices. This holistic focus resulted in the combined breadth and depth of the overall findings in this study.

The study also provides examples of the complexity of theorizing teacher development since some cognitive and affective processes do not necessarily progress in a coherent fashion. For example, one case study teacher reflected that her confidence in her own oral English did not increase during the course due to her becoming more aware of her own limitations. Yet, the same teacher answered that she now found it easier to help her pupils achieve curriculum goals because, as she said (original language): "I become more certain about myself". In the same sentence, she reflected: "that surprise me really because I feel more unsure now than I did in the beginning, but when I think about it I become happy". This illustrates how the research sometimes resulted in the emergence of a fuller picture of the complexity of developmental processes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH TEACHING

As documented in the introduction, a high proportion of those who teach English to children in Norway have no specific EFL teacher education. The research in this study indicates that many of these teachers are likely to be strongly lacking in confidence in their oral proficiency and in the range of their teaching methods. The implications are therefore that there is a specific need for the CQ courses to focus on developing these teachers' oral language skills while broadening their methodological repertoire. The results suggest that future CQ courses should more fully utilize the spaces between face-to-face seminars by organizing regular (weekly) conversations between teachers in English, with the support of teacher educators, in order to discuss the implementation of classroom-based tasks as new input and theory is tested out in class, in line with research recommendations (e.g. Hayes & Chang 2012). In this way, not only will course participants practice oral English, but this form of teacher collaboration, supported by teacher educators, will also allow teachers to regularly reflect on and learn from others' experiences as well as to pick up new ideas and resources, as recommended by theory and research into teacher development (Broad and Evans, 2006, Timperley et al.2008).

In terms of classroom changes and improvements, the results suggest that CQ course participants will solidify their English subject knowledge base and expand their English language teaching repertoire. Nonetheless, the study also implies that many teachers will remain lacking in confidence in their own oral English. This is likely to hamper their ability to teach oral fluency, including pronunciation and intonation, in a sufficiently playful or creative manner to ensure that they are able to instill a lasting love of English language learning in their pupils during the vital early years. This is a serious limitation because the nurturing of such an enthusiastic appreciation of the language can help to create a strong longer-term motivational foundation in young learners. Such an affective development can in turn function as an effective buffer when pupils grow older and face the more stringent demands and cognitive challenges of more complex language learning. If pupils have learned to love English, they may, for example, be more receptive to the teaching of language accuracy and grammar in secondary school.

In terms of the overall organizational design of the CQ courses, the implications of the research results are that there is a need to re-organize the CQ courses, turning "the development of competence into a collective responsibility rather than simply a private privilege for individual teachers" (Hagen & Nyen, p. 168). The national program could be substantially devolved to the regional and local levels so that schools and municipalities can assume co-responsibility for collective development, including the creation of English subject teacher networks, in col-

laboration with the universities and colleges delivering the CQ courses. This could potentially lead to the kind of ideal solution identified by the Early Language Learning in English (ELLiE) research project: “When a top-down process is combined with a supportive bottom-up school and home environment, the ideal conditions for sustainability are much more likely to be encountered” (Enever, 2011, p. 25).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results suggest the need for two main areas of research focus, first in relation to changes in subject matter content, course organization, and implementation; and second, but equally important, in relation to longer-term impact and follow-up. Given the expense and dimensions that the CQ in-service EFL (1–7) teacher education programme is now assuming in Norway, it is essential to evaluate how it can become more effective. Such research needs to adopt a multi-dimensional perspective, including using a longitudinal approach, and different research methods, both qualitative and quantitative.

The effect of the introduction of a sustained focus on oral proficiency as the main course subject matter integrated with English teaching methodology should be investigated. Such research would depend on the implementation of obligatory participation in regular online English conversation between seminars. These classes would consist of discussion and reflection on classroom-based tasks, supported by teacher educators. The research would attempt to measure the impact of the course on oral proficiency and confidence. The former would require the conception and use of a specific research tool to measure the development of teachers’ oral proficiency at different points in time. Another important aspect of this research would be to try to establish more clearly how and in what ways the development of oral proficiency and English teachers’ methodological repertoire are connected.

Second, a longer-term research project is needed to assess the effectiveness of developing English subject teacher networks to improve the post-course impact of the CQ courses. This could take the form of action research, designed to find optimal solutions for developing thriving local or regional communities of English primary school teachers.

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20

State of the art: English didactics in Norway

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter is our effort to synthesise the status of knowledge within what we will call “the field of English didactics in Norway”. We have examined 30 years of doctoral work in Norway, building our synthesis on accumulated analyses of policies related to the English subject since 1885 and practices of teaching and learning English since 1988, thus capturing the major trends related to English in Norwegian school. This body of doctoral research includes analyses of teachers, student teachers, students, and documents – mostly in the Norwegian context of teaching and learning English in school and in teacher education, but also comparative analyses with users of English outside Norway.

By presenting accumulated knowledge developed from this doctoral work and discussing how this research has formed the distinctiveness of English didactics as a separate research field in Norway, we bring to light issues that traverse individual studies and that can inform English teaching practices and curriculum development. Finally, by presenting a synthesis of what we now know from the past 30 years of doctoral research related to the teaching and learning of English in the Norwegian educational context, we are also in a position to discuss what we *do not know*, and suggest directions for a research agenda for the coming decades of English didactics research.

DEMARCATING THE FIELD OF ENGLISH DIDACTICS IN NORWAY

English didactics has existed as a component of teacher education programmes in Norway from the 1970s (Gundem, 2008), and developed as an academic discipline in higher education institutions from the 1980s – the same decade as the first doctoral theses in the field. Since then, English didactics has developed as an autonomous field of research, with doctoral work, MA theses, and a vast number of studies conducted by researchers within the field every year. We use the term “English didactics” in the same sense as the Norwegian term “Engelsk fagdidaktikk”, i.e. referring to the field of study related to the teaching (and learning) of English, including theory and practical applications (Gundem, 2008; Simensen, 2018). English didactics is an applied discipline, and as such it is relevant for both research and practice (Gundem, 2008). The main characteristic of English didactic research in Norway is thus that it contributes knowledge that is useful for the teaching of English in Norway.

In English-speaking countries, the term “didactics” has traditionally been associated with an authoritative teaching style and moral education, and has thus been less widely used (Hamilton, 1999; Gundem, 2008). However, the negative associations to the term “didactics” seem to have receded somewhat, and irrespective of such associations, the term has long been widely used in the Nordic countries as well as in continental Europe. Although few authors in this edited volume have used the term English didactics in their discussions of their own research – perhaps due to previous negative associations or in order to associate with existing discourses – we choose to use the term here and elsewhere. We believe a common denomination will strengthen the impression of English didactics as that of an autonomous field of research. Furthermore, English didactics is already commonplace in higher education, particularly in teacher education, and defining our research as precisely that demonstrates its relevance in this context.

The theory of what is relevant for English teaching is often related to beliefs about what language is and, consequently, how languages are best learnt (Jaspers, 2010; Rindal, 2014; Simensen, 2018). Such beliefs are often developed in other academic disciplines such as linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology and psycholinguistics (what Simensen, 1988, refers to as *parent disciplines*). Since such beliefs develop over time, so does the theory and research that informs English teaching practices, which makes it interesting to see how the thematic focus and perspectives have developed over the course of 30 years of doctoral research. While this chapter attempts to synthesise the knowledge that we have gained access to throughout these 30 years in order to position the state of the art of English didactics today, the field will naturally continue to develop in the years to come.

English didactic research in Norway continues to draw on theory related to language learning, language development and language use from various academic disciplines, applying these in investigations related to English as a school subject. Several of the authors who have revisited their doctoral research in this edited volume emphasise that their study is *interdisciplinary* – that they combine theory and perspectives from different academic fields in order to handle their objects of inquiry. Interdisciplinarity, it seems, is a characteristic of English didactic research. Still, in 30 years of doctoral research an understanding of English didactics in Norway has developed as an academic field in its own right, which we believe becomes apparent in this edited volume.

THE SCOPE OF INQUIRY IN ENGLISH DIDACTICS RESEARCH

Providing an overview of the English didactics field in Norway, Figure 20.1 illustrates how the doctoral research in this field has grown steadily over the past 30 years. Whereas there were only three studies in the first decade (1988–1997), four were written in the second (1998–2007), and twelve in the third (2008–2017), with 2016 as the peak year.

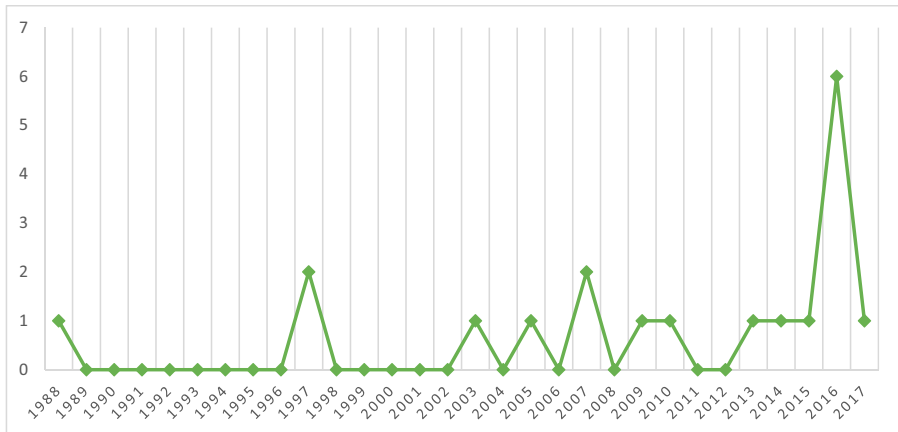


FIGURE 20.1. Doctoral research in English didactics over 30 years (totalling the 19 doctoral theses revisited in this volume).

In these 30 years, three participant groups – teachers, students, and student teachers – have each had their turn as the leading scope of inquiry within English didactics. Since the late 1990s, students have been the primary object of this research, both as the sole object of analysis (Dahl, 2014; Hellekjær, 2005; Larsen, 2009;

Rindal, 2013; Wold, 2017), in the interface between students and teachers (Brevik, 2015; Burner, 2016; Horverak, 2016; A. Lund, 2003; Stuvland, 2016), and between students and student teachers (Wiland, 2007). These doctoral studies have developed knowledge about how primary and secondary school students develop as English speakers, listeners, readers, and writers, both individually and collaboratively. Furthermore, addressing a dual object of inquiry, the latter groups of studies have produced knowledge about students' and student teachers' comparative experiences in English, as well as students' and teachers' comparative views on processes of teaching and learning in the English classroom.

A second scope of inquiry in English didactics research is, of course, the teacher, who somewhat surprisingly did not occur as an object of this research until the 2000s (A. Lund, 2003). Then, it took almost ten years until what seems to have been a more general shift within the English didactics field towards studying the teaching of English, both inside the English classroom, and in the context of English teachers' professional development (Brevik, 2015; Burner, 2016; Bøhn, 2016; Coburn, 2016; Horverak, 2016). Together, these doctoral studies have addressed the perspectives of teachers and teaching in primary and secondary school.

A third, and less frequently chosen scope of inquiry concerns student teachers, who appeared on the English didactics scene in Norway in the late 1990s (Drew, 1997), then reappeared ten years later (Wiland, 2007), followed by Munden (2010), and most recently Røkenes (2016). Given that student teachers generally have limited experiences with teaching, it follows that researching student teachers' learning is of relevance, both in and outside the teacher education context and teaching practices. These four doctoral studies offer insights into student teachers' competencies relevant to the teaching and learning of English, including comparison of their learning with that of other student teachers and students of English as a first and second language.

This triad of student, teacher, and student teacher illustrates three of the primary objects of inquiry in English didactics research. Nonetheless, some researchers (R. Lund, 2007; Simensen, 1988; Skulstad, 1997) have added a fourth object of inquiry – documents (i.e. national English curricula, textbooks, and corporate reports) – that were prominent in shaping the English didactics field in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. These studies showed that it matters, for example, whether one is teaching English as prescribed in the audio-lingually inspired curriculum of 1974 (M74; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 1974) or as suggested in the communicative competence-based curriculum of 1997 (L97; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 1996), and argued the importance of developing English learners' awareness of genre and context.

Among the revisited doctoral studies in this volume, several study more than one educational context. Most educational levels are studied equally often, although upper secondary school ($n = 8$) slightly more often, followed by primary school ($n = 6$), lower secondary school ($n = 5$), and higher and teacher education ($n = 5$). However, few of these studies ($n = 3$) include vocational study programmes. Skulstad (2019) showed how English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses were often referred to as vocationally oriented courses, and in chapter 2 she emphasises how students may benefit from reading and producing material in English in “genres within a central professional domain related to their vocational studies” (p. 54). In line with this view, Brevik (2015) showed how vocational students emphasised the importance of personal interest in texts to develop reading comprehension. In contrast, however, Bøhn (2016) revealed that in the assessment of oral competence, teachers in vocational studies programmes put less emphasis on content in the oral exam situation than teachers in the general studies programmes did.

With the research that has been done over the past 30 years in mind, the revisited doctoral research has suggested that we need to do more research on all these objects of inquiry – students, teachers, student teachers, and documents – preferably on the interaction between these perspectives, participants or elements. Moreover, the comparatively few studies on vocational students indicate a particular need to study this level and educational context.

RESEARCH DESIGN IN ENGLISH DIDACTICS

Internationally, most research uses a quantitative research design. A seminal review by Alise and Teddlie (2010) documents that among 600 publications in 20 renowned international journals; the clear majority was quantitative (70%), with qualitative used second most frequently (19%), followed by mixed methods (11%). The review showed the same to be true within the field of education, with the majority of studies being quantitative (42%), followed by qualitative (34%), and mixed methods (24%). This situation is, however, not the case among the doctoral studies in English didactics covered in this volume, in which mixed methods is the dominant research design, and on which we elaborate below.

Experts have defined mixed-methods research in many different ways (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). There is agreement, however, that mixed-methods research involves an integration of qualitative and quantitative methods:

The investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, *integrates* the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. (Creswell, 2015, p. 2, our emphasis)

Reviews further show that mixed-methods research is more likely to be used in applied disciplines, such as education, that value multiple perceptions (for example, from teachers, student teachers, and students), compared to more theoretically driven fields of research (Creamer, 2016). It might, therefore, not be all that surprising to find several mixed methods studies among the doctoral studies in English didactics in Norway. It is however, surprising to see the distribution, with a clear majority (74%) being labelled either as mixed-methods research (Brevik, 2015; Burner, 2016; Coburn, 2016; Horverak, 2016; Larsen, 2009; A. Lund, 2003; Rindal, 2013; Røkenes, 2016; Stuvland, 2016) or as a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Bøhn, 2016; Drew, 1997; R. Lund, 2007; Simensen, 1988; Wold, 2017). An additional few (16%) are framed as qualitative (Munden, 2010; Skulstad, 1997; Wiland, 2007), with fewest (10%) described as quantitative (Dahl, 2014; Hellekjær, 2005). The field of English didactics thus emerges as an applied field of research that mainly comprises mixed-methods research. This pattern emerges not only on the basis of the frequency of mixed-methods designs, but also on the chronological development, as all doctoral studies in English didactics since 2013 used mixed methods, except one.

Greene (2007) coined the expression “mixed methods way of thinking”, emphasising how the qualitative and quantitative components are brought together specifically to represent multiple perspectives:

A mixed methods way of thinking aspires to better understand complex social phenomenon by intentionally including multiple ways of knowing and valuing and by respectfully valuing differences. (Greene, 2007, p. 17)

The doctoral studies in this volume have reflected the multiple ways of knowing in Greene’s (2007) way of thinking. They all combined more than one type of data, data from more than one set of documents, data from more than one group of participants, or from different contexts. Indeed, the most common forms of data were self-reports, capturing the voices, opinions, and experiences of students, teachers, and student teachers through interviews, focus groups, surveys, narratives, and written responses to literature. In addition, more objective data sources were collected, such as documents, test results, and researcher field notes from *in situ* observations; contributing to the contextualisation of the participant voices.

We now turn from general scope and design to discuss various thematic trends in the field. By reviewing the 19 doctoral studies revisited in this volume, we have carefully examined the main themes of these contributions, as reflected in the topical sections. In addition to these main themes, each chapter has contributed with insights into other English didactic themes that run across several chapters. While we first present the main themes as presented in this volume, we then raise two of the cross-sectional themes towards the end of the chapter, based on their significance for the English school subject; specifically, assessment in English, and the status of English for students in Norwegian classrooms.

READING IN ENGLISH

Throughout the 30 years of doctoral research covered in this volume, encounters with texts in English have been highlighted across genres and contexts and with readers of all ages. One study examined the policies of graded readers in the 1980s (Simensen, 1988), another addressed students' reading proficiency (Hellekjær, 2005), and two quite recent ones observed students and teachers in the English classroom; including their perspectives on reading comprehension instruction and strategy use (Brevik, 2015; Stuvland, 2016). Two additional studies related to culture and literature also dealt with reading to a considerable extent (Munden, 2010; Wiland, 2007). They examined students' and student teachers' cultural and aesthetic experiences with literature, providing valuable information about different ways of approaching texts. Together, these six studies emphasised the importance of carefully considering which texts to offer to students, and the activities and strategies inherent in textual encounters in English.

Two studies analysed reading material, with Simensen (1988) analysing criteria for publishing adapted readers, and Stuvland (2016) observing such material in use in the primary classroom. Both questioned the rationale for using adapted readers for differentiation purposes, and both found these to offer students language on their levels. In chapter 1, Simensen argues that it should be the teacher's responsibility to choose reading material based on student needs. However, Stuvland (2016) found that teachers did not often use the differentiated texts based on students' reading proficiency and comprehension. In chapter 11, Stuvland argues that reading materials should be selected to meet two functions: graded readers appropriate to students' reading level can be used for practising reading skills and reading comprehension strategies, and other types of texts characterised by the communicative value of content can be used to foster a love of reading and literature.

Hellekjær (2005) and Brevik (2015) used standardised reading tests to identify English reading proficiency among students in Norwegian upper secondary school. Hellekjær (2005) used an international English reading test, and expressed concern since only a third of the students in regular English classes seemed to have the required English reading proficiency to be accepted into universities abroad. A decade later, Brevik (2015) used a national mapping test and compared students' reading proficiency in Norwegian and English. She found that a small group of students read significantly better in English than in Norwegian, and that most students read almost equally well in English as they did in Norwegian. A final pattern arose in the two classroom observation studies (Brevik, 2015; Stuvland, 2016). Both observed the importance of offering a variety of authentic texts to students, capturing their experiences of the literature. In chapter 11, Stuvland states that primary school extensive reading, where students read for pleasure and for longer periods of time, is a strength for developing reading comprehension, while both Brevik (chapter 10) and Hellekjær (chapter 9) argue for the importance of allowing upper secondary students to choose challenging texts that they are interested in, and relating these to personal purposes for reading in English.

The studies suggest a need to distinguish clearly between reading proficiency (as measured in reading tests), reading comprehension (extracting and constructing meaning from text), and reading experience (affective involvement in texts) as different facets of reading in English. When readers fail to demonstrate reading proficiency, it is important to recognise this as one aspect of students' reading skills only, not necessarily a lack of reading skills as such. Answering questions about a text, paraphrasing or summarizing key content, using textual information to apply to a new situation, or just enjoying the flow of a narrative, are very different reading activities. These studies showed that when readers failed to comprehend, using reading comprehension strategies might allow them to make the connections required to extract and construct meaning (Brevik, 2015; Stuvland, 2016). These are relevant issues to include in English didactics courses related to the teaching and assessment of reading English.

ENGLISH WRITING

The five doctoral studies on English writing were written almost 20 years apart, with two studies in the late 1990s (Drew, 1997; Skulstad, 1997) and three in recent years (Burner, 2016; Horverak, 2016; Wold, 2017). The studies represented aspects of rhetorical organisation (Skulstad, 1997) and analyses of written-language form (Drew, 1997; Wold, 2017). Furthermore, the studies addressed stu-

dents' writing development in the English classroom as supported by the teacher's instruction and formative assessment of writing (Burner, 2016; Horverak, 2016). In addition to these five studies, another study related mainly to culture and literature also concerned English writing (Larsen, 2009) because the author examined the content of students' written narratives and offered insights into the narrative preferences of lower secondary school students. Overall, the studies demonstrated the importance of giving students opportunities to write frequently, in different genres, and over several drafts.

The two earliest studies focused on characteristics of various written text genres; Skulstad (1997) analysed business reports, specifically in terms of their multimodal and textual aspects, and found these of special relevance for vocational students and ESP courses. In chapter 2, she suggests that genres be taught explicitly, particularly those relevant for vocational studies, at the same time warning against teaching genres mechanistically or instrumentally. Drew (1997) analysed student teachers' perceived ability to teach various genres, and found that they considered themselves most competent to teach written descriptions, letters, notes and narratives. Both authors argue in this volume (chs. 2 and 3, respectively) for the importance of providing opportunities for students and student teachers of English to practise reading and writing numerous genres.

A second focus in Drew's (1997) study concerned the analysis of student texts using a text corpus, similar to what Wold (2017) did 20 years later. Both analysed language forms in narratives, while Drew (1997) also analysed forms in literary appreciation texts. The texts were written by learners at various educational levels: primary and secondary school (Wold, 2017) as well as college and university (Drew, 1997). In chapter 6, Wold argues that students overuse the progressive –*ing*, and that –*ing* forms are used as tense forms, which she suggests should be investigated in further research.

In contrast to these studies on texts as finished products of English writing, two studies focused on the process of writing over time in the English classroom, in lower secondary (Burner, 2016) and in upper secondary school (Horverak, 2016). Both studies examined various voices and perspectives, combining student and/or teacher interviews and questionnaires with classroom observation over time. Furthermore, both studies observed how students' texts developed on the basis of feedback from the English teacher or from peers. While Burner (2016) studied the use of portfolios as a tool for formative assessment during the writing process, Horverak (2016) placed such formative assessment within a linguistic and genre-pedagogic framing. Both conclude in this volume (chs. 5 and 6) by advocating the need for a more frequent and transpar-

ent focus on the writing process, including formative assessment procedures, in the English classroom.

Based on these studies, it seems future research could benefit from an enhanced focus on the content of writing and the link between students' reading and writing, and particularly on how their preferences for texts and genres influence their own writing. This would be of interest not only to assess their writing competence as such, but also their development as English writers.

CULTURE AND LITERATURE

The doctoral theses that have studied culture and literature clearly reflect how culture is intertwined with language and literature, which is also why they are combined in the same section in this volume, as well as often treated together in the English compulsory school subject. Munden (2010) showed how students' cultural backgrounds affected their reading experiences of literary texts, and Larsen (2009) demonstrated how cultural references were visible in written student narratives, and that students' cultural formation (cf. *Bildung*, Norw. *danning*) was part of their literary competence. Furthermore, R. Lund (2007) found that cultural content in textbooks was often used to develop students' language competence instead of offering opportunities to reflect on the actual content. On a related note, Wiland (2007) discussed the difference between reading literature in order to carry away information from it and experiencing literature as an aesthetic expression of a work of art.

The English compulsory school subject encompasses both a language component, i.e. developing pupils' L2 proficiency, and a content component, including cultural content and literary analysis, and it is only natural that these are treated simultaneously in the classroom. However, the discussions in these studies combined suggest that it might be wise to reflect on the balance between language and content. What the following four studies have in common is that they have chosen to focus on *content* or *meanings* in texts, rather than on linguistic aspects. Wiland (2007) argued that students can become engaged in a poem even though they might not understand all the aspects related to lexis and grammar. Larsen (2009) investigated thematic content in student narratives, arguing that most research in the field prior to hers had focused on linguistic aspects of students' writing. R. Lund (2007) found that although the English textbook series she analysed contained a lot of cultural content (e.g. information about other countries and cultural encounters with people from other cultural backgrounds), most of the follow-up tasks presented to students related to the development of their linguistic competence rather than competence to remember and reflect on cultural material.

Related to the authors' focus on content and meanings in texts is an encouragement to take seriously not only students' experiences of authentic texts, but also their own texts. It is valuable to allow students to encounter literature without teacher expectations or peer pressure, and practising creative writing in the English subject can contribute towards developing students' literary competence. Interestingly, the four doctoral studies related to culture and literature were completed within the short time span of four years, and they were all analyses of written texts. One was an analysis of textbooks (and the policy documents that informed their development), while the remaining three were all analyses of student texts, either student narratives or student teachers' written reported experiences and understanding of literature. As such, there has yet to be a doctoral study within English didactics that has investigated the *teaching* of culture and literature, or teachers' and students' perceptions related to such teaching.

ORAL PROFICIENCY

The four quite recent doctoral studies related to oral proficiency, also completed within the short time span of four years, seem at first glance to be very different. While Rindal (2013) explored adolescent (age 17) learners' spoken English, Dahl (2014) studied the effect of spoken input for young (age 6) learners' development of oral English competence, primarily listening skills. Moving from students to teachers, Coburn (2016) looked at the effect of an in-service teacher education course on English teachers' professional competence with a specific focus on oral proficiency, while Bøhn (2016) investigated what English teachers assessed in an oral exam. However, despite their apparent differences in topic and scope, these studies nevertheless bring to the table a set of transcending English didactic issues related to oral proficiency.

There seems to be a gap between teachers and learners of English in Norway reflecting the growth and availability of the English language in Norwegian society. The teachers in Coburn (2016) experienced low confidence in their own oral proficiency and consequently in their role as oral role models to their students. Bøhn (2016), however, did not thematise teachers' proficiency, but his participants showed considerable variation in how they assessed *their students'* oral proficiency, especially related to the importance of nativeness, suggesting discrepancies in teachers' perceptions of the status of English to Norwegian learners. Some of the learners in Rindal (2013), on the other hand, deliberately avoided targeting nativeness and showed patterned variation in their spoken English, suggesting that they have grown up in a society with more exposure and more ownership of English than their teachers' generation.

Dahl (2014), however, argued that exposure out of school is not enough for the development of English proficiency among young learners, showing the effect of the amount of English language input offered by teachers. This finding reflects the importance of language *use* for language *learning*; the young learners in Dahl (2014) did not score better on tests after one year of English teaching in classrooms where there was little actual English language used for communication. In the same vein, Coburn (2016) revisited the teachers who had participated in an in-service teacher education course 16 months later, finding that the lack of regular opportunities to practise speaking English had led to decrease in their oral confidence over time. In Rindal (2013), too, some of the adolescent learners seemed to lack a command of their L2 behaviour in that their pronunciation was clearly influenced by American English, even among the students who targeted a British English or a neutral variety, suggesting that their oral proficiency did not match what they *wanted* to do with their spoken English.

The results of these studies thus thematise the difference between English *subject* competence and English *didactic* competence. It is not enough for teachers to know the theoretical linguistic components of English (e.g. pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary) or even to have the skills to practise these themselves – they need didactic competence in order to *teach* English pronunciation, such as knowledge about nativeness and intelligibility principles and the functions of oral role models. The research presented in these studies – the knowledge and application of the role of input in Dahl (2014), of global English and negotiation of English accents in Rindal (2013), of the consequences of construct understanding for assessment practices in Bøhn (2016), and of the effect of teacher sentiments related to their own competence in Coburn (2016) – can contribute significantly to the development of English teachers' professional practice. These issues are thus obvious topics to include in English didactics courses.

DIGITAL ENGLISH COMPETENCE

Although 13 years separate the two doctoral studies dealing mainly with digital competence in English, A. Lund (2003) and Røkenes (2016) have several aspects in common. They both investigated how teachers or student teachers used information and communications technology (ICT) didactically to support students' learning in English. They both drew on sociocultural perspectives of learning, stressing the importance of *appropriation*. They both used a mixed-methods design in their investigations, including quantitative surveys, classroom observa-

tions and interviews with participants, which thus seems to be a preferred methodological approach for the study of teachers' digital competence.

Teachers' digital competence is crucial because teachers need to critically prepare students for life and work in a globalised and digitalised world. The central role of English as lingua franca on the Internet suggests that the English school subject is particularly relevant for the development of students' digital competence. English didactics might, therefore, be especially relevant for research on language use and language learning in digital environments. A. Lund (ch. 7) argues that digital environments provide a link between language learning and identity; the digital practices that young people engage in today (e.g. virtual reality, imagined communities, online gaming, blogs, etc.) offer not only opportunities for language learning, but also for enacting identities. This link to identity formation can provide a powerful incentive for language learning, suggesting that it can be beneficial for the students' language learning if teachers draw on students' digital English-language practices in their teaching.

Knowledge of this link between identity formation and language learning, and consequently connecting school and out-of-school practices, is part of teachers' professional digital competence (PDC), a competence or construct which received considerable attention in both A. Lund (2003) and Røkenes (2016). In the latter study, student teachers mastered basic digital skills, but did not necessarily know how to use them in their teaching to develop *their* students' digital competence, i.e. there were weaknesses in their PDC. PDC is didactical ICT competence that enables teachers to design learning environments and learning trajectories for their students in a specific subject. This is strongly linked to a sociocultural perspective and its fundamental assumption that learning is a social and cultural phenomenon. A central element of sociocultural perspectives, and a central element in the development of teachers' PDC, is that of appropriation, which involves teachers making ICT competence their own, integrating technologies in their teaching practices. While A. Lund (2003) in his study showed how teachers appropriated ICTs in their English classrooms in different ways and explored their beliefs about such appropriations, Røkenes (2016) showed that student teachers were not given ample opportunity for such appropriation in their teacher education. This suggests that teachers and student teachers need support from institutions such as teacher education programmes and the school in which they teach in order to develop their PDC.

A. Lund argues in his suggestions for future research (ch. 7) that PDC is not yet an established concept or practice, and encourages more research in order to conceptualise this competence. With his focus on the development of English teacher professionalism, Røkenes (2016) might be taking a step in the direction of discuss-

ing the role of PDC in teacher professional development. While both of these doctoral theses focused on teachers and student teachers, we still do not know much about *students'* digital competence related to the English subject, which therefore would be a potential direction for future research.

ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH

Assessment practices in the English subject in Norway have changed considerably over the years (Simensen, ch. 1), and assessment in English comes across as the most frequently studied topic in the 30 years of doctoral research covered in this volume. Assessment in English has been studied in nine of the doctoral studies, with several other studies indicating implications for assessment in English. The studies involved students and teachers in primary and secondary school, as well as student teachers in teacher education.

Simensen (1988) was the first one to place assessment research in English on the agenda, with only two more adding to her seminal research in the next 25 years.¹ The three studies provided a solid foundation for later assessment research through analysis of oral and written national exams from 1964 to 1986 for primary and lower secondary school (Simensen, 1988), the reading module of an international admission test conducted in 2001–2002 for upper secondary and higher education students (Hellekjær, 2005), and self-assessment among student teachers concerning English writing competence (Drew, 1997). Together, these studies covered research on both formative and summative assessment (e.g. Black & Wiliam, 1998), here operationalised in a recent article by Black and Wiliam (2018), as “assessment for learning” and “assessment of learning”, respectively:

The term “assessment for learning” is then used to describe the process by which teachers use assessment evidence to inform their teaching, and “assessment of learning” refers to the use of assessment to determine the extent to which students have achieved intended learning outcomes. (Black & Wiliam, 2018, p. 3)

1. In addition, Hasselgreen (1998) studied assessment in her doctoral thesis. Hers is one of the four doctoral studies in English didactics not revisited in this volume. However, we mention her doctoral study briefly here due to its unique role within oral English assessment, being the only one to study the assessment of oral communication among student pairs. For further information we recommend reading the book published on her doctoral work (see reference in the introductory chapter in this volume).

In relation to this definition, Simensen (1988) and Hellekjær (2005) have both provided examples of research on assessment of learning (summative assessment), such as final exams and an admission test, to determine whether primary and secondary students had achieved the intended English proficiency. In contrast, Drew (1997) offered research on assessment for learning (formative assessment), such as self-assessment, to inform English teaching in teacher education, for instance “to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited” (Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 7). Together, they covered the four main English language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking.

There was a relative explosion in English assessment research in Norway in 2015 and 2016, with six doctoral studies during these two years. One study assessed upper secondary students’ reading proficiency across English and Norwegian (Brevik, 2015), one examined teachers’ assessment of the oral English exam in upper secondary school (Bøhn, 2016), and two examined assessment practices of English writing in lower and upper secondary school (Burner, 2016; Horverak, 2016). The remaining two studied self-assessment: one among student teachers concerning their professional digital competence in English (Røkenes, 2016), and another among teachers concerning their own oral skills (Coburn, 2016). Of these most recent doctoral studies on assessment in English, two can be conceptualised as research on summative assessment, i.e. a reading test and a final oral exam (Brevik, 2015; Bøhn, 2016), aiming to describe teachers’ assessment of students’ proficiency. The remaining four examined formative assessment practices in terms of adapting their teaching to the students’ needs, e.g. teacher and peer feedback and self-assessment (Burner, 2016; Coburn, 2016; Horverak, 2016; Røkenes, 2016). Exploring teacher and student perceptions and practices of formative assessment, both Burner (2016) and Horverak (2016) identified significant differences in how the teachers perceived and acted on formative assessment of writing.

The distinction between summative and formative assessment in separate studies is particularly interesting in light of Black and Wiliam’s (2018) recent emphasis on what they claim is highly relevant *not* to separate, specifically concerning assessment practices in the classroom:

As a result of our work with teachers, we have become convinced that any approach to the improvement of classroom practice that is focused on assessment must deal with all aspects of assessment in an integrated way. For example, while it is possible for researchers to make clear theoretical distinctions

between formative and summative aspects of assessment, for teachers such distinctions are at best unhelpful, and may even be counterproductive. (Black & Wiliam, 2018, p. 2)

The argument here is twofold; one is that summative purposes of assessment can also be supportive of students' learning and needs for further development, and the other is that there ought to be synergy between the two forms of assessment (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Based on this line of argumentation, future assessment research in the English subject in Norway might study assessment in an integrated way. Such integration could simply concern the teacher's use of summative *and* formative assessment for formative purposes and would hold implications not only for research designs, but also for assessment practices in the English classroom, which such studies could then observe and follow over time.

An alternative is to build on signals in the recent *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018). For example, examining the strands of communicative language competence in an assessment perspective (i.e. linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence) would be most relevant, as "teacher- or self-assessments are made on the basis of a detailed picture of the learner's language ability built up during the course concerned" (Council of Europe, 2018 (p. 43)). The CEFR companion emphasises that, "these aspects, or parameters of description, are always intertwined in any language use; they are not separate 'components' and cannot be isolated from each other" (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 130).

Further, in this volume, several authors have explicitly commented on implications of their doctoral research for the future assessment in English. Of particular relevance are assessment practices not studied during the past 30 years of doctoral research in English in Norway; of which one concerns global and digital English competence and another concerns the assessment of literary experiences. Turning first to the assessment of literature, Larsen (ch. 14) argues that "there is a need for more research into the form that literary feedback might take" (p. 311), suggesting the study of criteria that might be relevant for the assessment of literary experience. In line with this view, Wold (ch. 6) states that in assessing learner narratives, teachers should also assess the role of the learner context, suggesting the integration of summative and formative assessment situations. Related to global and digital competence, A. Lund (ch. 7) suggests that the development of global and online Englishes "has consequences for what we consider 'acceptable' or 'functional' practices and how we assess such practices" (p. 152). In line with this com-

ment, Rindal (2013) has studied learner language in English that deviates in one way or other from standard norms, influenced by varieties of English. With reference to this study, Simensen (ch. 1) argues that “in order to ensure equal assessment practice nationwide, this will be one particularly important area for future research and development work” (p. 31). Building further on the status of English in Norway, several authors in this volume suggest including information about learners’ access to and use of English outside the classroom to inform their assessment of English skills and competence observed at school (Brevik, ch. 10; A. Lund, ch. 7; Rindal, ch. 16; Wold, ch. 6). Finally, Dahl (ch. 17) has studied what English competence in the early years entails, and this research points to an area in need of further research that might inform oral assessment of young learners of English.

THE STATUS OF ENGLISH FOR STUDENTS IN NORWEGIAN CLASSROOMS

Similarly to how the English didactics field is referred to with varying terms across the contributions in this volume, there is also variation in the terminology use related to the context of learning English in Norway. The majority of the authors in this volume use the term “EFL” – English as a *foreign* language. However, this is definitely not without exceptions. While one author uses “ESL” – English as a *second* language, many use the more generic term “L2”, and one author opts for simply “English”. One explanation for the majority use of “EFL” could be that authors use the same term to reference the context of their studies as they did in their doctoral theses at the time these were written. In the first doctoral thesis presented in this volume, Simensen (1988) used “EFL” about the context of her own research, but argues in her section on recent developments (ch. 1) that there have been “observations that show that English in Norway has moved from functioning as a foreign language towards gradually functioning as a second language” (p. 30). Still, there is no chronological development of terminology use throughout these 30 years of doctoral research; “EFL” is used in the first study as well as in some of the most recent studies reported in this volume. This variation in terminology use is worth some attention, because it reflects the dynamic status of English for Norwegians.

Due to globalisation processes and the concomitant development of English towards becoming a global language, the traditional labels of EFL and ESL and their definitions might no longer be fully applicable to the current users of English in the world. Many scholars, both internationally (Graddol, 1997; Phillipson,

1992; Wang, 2013) and nationally (Rindal, 2014; Simensen, 2014), have argued that English today has functions for its speakers in nations that traditionally are labelled EFL countries, including Norway, that exceed those of a foreign language. Norwegians learn English from their first year in school, developing English literacy alongside Norwegian literacy, and English is a mandatory subject for 11 years, with its own curriculum separate from the foreign languages also taught in school. There is also considerable exposure to English outside of school, and the revisiting of the doctoral theses in this volume shows that Norwegian adolescents read English, listen to English, and interact in English, especially through digital media (cf. for instance Brevik, ch. 10; A. Lund, ch. 7; Rindal, ch. 16; Røkenes, ch. 8). To some extent, English seems to be “used within the speaker’s community (country, family) and thus forms part of the speaker’s identity repertoire”, which according to Graddol (1997, p. 11) is a characteristic of ESL speakers that distinguishes them from fluent EFL speakers.

At the same time, the status of English in Norway is still different from that in postcolonial countries such as India and Nigeria, where inhabitants are labelled ESL speakers. English is not an official language in Norway, and we do not have a history of colonialism that has led to English and one or more local languages being associated with different social classes and societal functions. Consequently, English in Norway is not a *second* language either, at least not if we choose to use the label as it is traditionally defined in the literature. It is this hybridity of English – no longer EFL, but not qualified as ESL – that has led to Rindal’s (2019) description of the status of English in Norway as *in transition*, “from one place to a yet unknown other” (p. 350). Due to the inconsistency of terminology usage referring to the same context of learning English in Norway, and the suggested imprecision of the EFL-ESL dichotomy, we use the more generic label “L2 English” here and elsewhere, emphasising that this refers to English as *a second or later language*. This description does not specify the order in which a student learns a language, but rather reflects that language proficiency is often developed in more than one language simultaneously.

The transitional status of English in Norway seems to be reflected in some of the doctoral research represented in this volume. For instance, one of the main differences between EFL and ESL learners is that while the latter develop their own English language norms, at least in postcolonial countries, EFL learners have traditionally been presented with native-speaker varieties as models of pronunciation. Although this is not official practice in Norway today, Bøhn (2016) showed how some English teachers could not seem to rid themselves of *nativeness* as a criterion in the assessment of oral competence. Some of the adolescent learners in

Rindal (2013), however, reported a desire to avoid targeting native-speaker accents because these might be associated with the cultures of their origin. This discrepancy between how teachers and students relate to nativeness might cause challenges in expectations and assessment of spoken English, which in turn might have considerable consequences for students, for instance in high stakes assessment situations.

However, avoiding native accents as targets that students are expected to reach is not the same as comparing the development of L2 English proficiency among students in Norwegian school with L1 English users, as is done in some of the doctoral studies revisited in this volume. Drew (1997) compared the writing of Norwegian student teachers to that of a reference group consisting of younger students in England. He found that the writing of the L1 English users was more sophisticated in several areas of lexis and syntax compared to the Norwegian student teachers, and that their writing was generally more fluent, but that linguistic differences were less than expected. Furthermore, Dahl (2014) compared the results of tests of English receptive proficiency among Norwegian 6-year-olds with those of same-age native speakers of English attending international school in Norway. She found that scores among immersion school students were relatively close to native-speaker means, suggesting that considerable exposure to L2 at a young age can lead to rapid L2 development. Finally, on the basis of written assessment of students' texts in the narrative genre, Wold (2017) found that the L2 learners (6th grade and 10th grade) in Norway overused the progressive *-ing* form considerably compared to the same-age L1 users (native speakers of American English). However, when Norwegian learners reached CEFR proficiency level B1 or higher (B2, C1, C2), their use of the progressive was similar to that of native speakers and seemed to be connected with overall good writing skills.

All of these comparisons with L1 English reference groups tell us something about the development of L2 English proficiency as compared to L1 English proficiency, related to both the speed and linguistic details of development. This is relevant because it can help us describe English proficiency among L2 English learners in Norway, and provide knowledge about whether L2 proficiency develops similarly to L1 proficiency (which these studies indicate). Such comparisons will also be interesting to conduct between Norwegian learners and other L2 speaker groups, for the same reasons. Furthermore, comparisons could be useful to conduct between L2 English proficiency and L1 Norwegian proficiency, as suggested by Brevik (ch. 10), in order to give the teacher a broader picture of the students' language proficiency. Another relevant comparison is between L2 English

proficiency and students' first languages other than Norwegian, a focus that could potentially increase our understanding of possible transfer between strategies and skills between languages in students' language repertoire, and which has not been addressed in this collection of doctoral work.

Importantly, comparisons with native speaker reference groups such as those referred to above do not imply that native-speaker language use is the norm for L2 use. As Bøhn (ch. 18) argues, nativeness is of less importance for communication than intelligibility, and Rindal (ch. 16) problematises that this is used as a criterion for L2 proficiency. To communicate in a world where English is a lingua franca, the target model of English is not a native speaker, but a fluent L2 speaker. Acknowledging that English is *more* than a "foreign" language for most Norwegian students also reflects that English is a language that they *use*, also outside the classroom, and that English can have other functions than Norwegian (cf. Gradol, 1997). Munden (ch. 15), for instance, argues that there is a difference between students of English in Norway and in Eritrea, stating that for her Eritrean participants English is "someone else's words" to a greater extent than is English for most Norwegian learners" (p. 331). Larsen (ch. 14) argues that English was given another function than Norwegian in the student narratives she analysed, in which expressions of identity moved towards "global popular culture and the personal sphere" (p. 310), reflecting English as an international, global language. The view of English as a language that is used outside of the classroom and attributed different functions for Norwegian students aligns with those expressed by several authors in this volume, especially in these authors' reflections on recent developments related to their topic or in suggestions for future research (e.g., Brevik, ch. 10; Hellekjær, ch. 9; A. Lund, ch. 7; Rindal, ch. 16; Skulstad, ch. 2). Importantly, the teacher's beliefs about the status of English for their students might lead to teaching practices that do or do not draw on students' use of English outside of school.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have synthesised the research and ideas from the past 30 years of doctoral research in Norway in order to discuss the state of the art of English didactics in Norway today. Importantly, though, there is a considerable amount of English didactic research that is *not* conducted in doctoral projects, and most of this research is not mentioned in our volume. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the field of English didactics in Norway will undoubtedly develop in the years to come. There are a number of challenging topics that emerge from the issues dis-

cussed in this volume, as well as from international research and national demands, that require attention from English didactic research. Such topics include the English subject in the increasing number of multilingual and multicultural classrooms in Norway, English as a lingua franca (ELF) research with focus on the Norwegian context, the global and local attributes of the English language and school subject, the use of challenging multimodal texts in L2 English instruction, and the bridging of adolescents' use of English in and outside school, to mention a few. One of the aims of this volume is that the accumulated doctoral research discussed here, and the challenging topics that emerge from this research, can serve as a baseline for future research in the field of English didactics.

In the sense of being research within the field of English didactics, all the studies revisited in this volume are important to the development of English teacher professionalism. As an applied discipline, English didactics is relevant for both research and practice, and it is key for English didactic research to be useful for the teaching of English. We believe the contributions and implications of the doctoral research discussed here deserve a place in teacher education, and in this state-of-the-art chapter we have aimed to show their role and significance for the development of teaching practices and curriculum content.

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