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# Academic and General English in Norwegian Upper Secondary School

A study of students' proficiency and ability to  
distinguish between the two language styles

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## **Abstract**

Norway is one of the countries with the highest English language proficiency in the world (Bonnet, 2004; MCG, 2009; EF EPI, 2016). Yet, research shows that Norwegian students entering or studying in university or college find the (academic) English language they encounter in higher education challenging (Hellekjær, 2005; 2010; 2012). It has also been found that Norwegian university students are more likely to perform like native speakers in terms of general English than in terms of academic English (Busby, 2015). The current study aims to investigate Norwegian upper secondary school students' proficiency in academic and general English language and their ability to distinguish between the two language styles. The study was carried out by testing final year students in ordinary upper secondary schools and in IB programmes using a test battery specifically designed for this study, and comparing their scores. Results indicated that student in IB programmes have a higher level of academic English language proficiency than students in ordinary upper secondary schools, and that they also have better ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic language styles. Furthermore, results indicate that there is a clearer difference between students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools and students in IB programmes in terms of academic English proficiency than in terms of general English proficiency.

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# 1 Introduction

English is strongly present as a second language in the Norwegian society and is frequently encountered by most Norwegians in their everyday lives, both in personal and professional contexts. Consequently, Norwegians have developed some of the highest English language proficiency levels in the world (Bonnet, 2004; MCG, 2009; EF EPI, 2016). However, it has been found that Norwegian university students are more likely to perform like native speakers in terms of general English than in terms of academic English (Busby, 2015). Furthermore, several studies have shown that Norwegian students, i.e. in both upper secondary school and university, find (academic) English language challenging (Hellekjær, 2005; 2009; 2010; 2012b). Consequently, criticism has been targeted English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction in Norwegian schools and the English subjects' degree of efficiency when it comes to preparing students for higher education (Hellekjær, 2008).

The fact that English is increasingly used in higher education is pointed out in the English subject curriculum's description of the purpose of learning English, i.e. in the subject curriculum used in primary-, lower- and upper secondary school. Thus, English usage in higher education is emphasized as a reason for students in any year to learn English. Yet, the focus of learning about different English language styles is not pointed out until the English subject curriculum used in upper secondary school, particularly in programmes for specialization in general studies. Upon graduation, upper secondary school students in general studies are considered qualified for studies in higher education. English is increasingly used as a language of reading and instruction in Norwegian universities and colleges (Hellekjær, 2008; 2010), hence it is highly likely that students in higher education in Norway need to use English during their studies. Therefore, being qualified for studies in higher education implies having the English proficiency level needed for higher education.

Although various research has been carried out in order to examine Norwegians' English language proficiency, there has, to my knowledge, not been conducted any studies on Norwegians' ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic English language. Thus, the current study aims to investigate Norwegian upper secondary school students' proficiency in academic and general English language, and furthermore, their ability to distinguish between the two language styles.

The thesis initially provides theoretical background information (chapter 2) about English in academia (section 2.1), where English as a lingua franca and academic language is predominately discussed. Then, English as a second language in Norway is addressed (section 2.2), where English as a second language in Norwegian schools, sources of English language in Norway and Norwegians' achievements in English as a second language are considered. Furthermore, the methodology of the current study is described (chapter 3). Thereafter, the study's results are presented (chapter 4). Lastly, a discussion of the test results are provided (chapter 5), followed by a conclusion with suggestions for further research (chapter 6). Then follow appendices, which include the two English tests and the self-report questionnaire used in the study, information given to the participants and a note in which the relevance of the thesis for the teaching profession is explained.

## **2 Background**

### **2.1 English in academia**

English is undeniably a global language (e.g. Fennel, 2001). The spread of English across the globe is a result of various factors, starting with British colonialization in the seventeenth century, and continuing with British leadership in the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Furthermore, the spread continued in the twentieth century due to the emergence of the US as an economic and political superpower with technological domination (Fennel, 2001). Consequently, people worldwide use English as a means to communicate in various international contexts; it is used in professional and academic encounters, companies and industries often use it as their official language (Fennel, 2001), and it has for centuries been the predominant language distributed on the Web (Crystal, 2006). Furthermore, English is by far the most commonly taught foreign language in Europe, concerning nearly all countries and all levels of education (Eurydice & Eurostat, 2012).

Graddol (2006) particularly points out globalization of higher education as one of the most significant drivers of English as a global language, and not without reason. English is unquestionably the main international language of academia (Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2010; Altbach, 2007). People involved in higher education worldwide, either as students, teachers or researchers use English as a means of sharing knowledge and doing research. Hence, English functions as a lingua franca in academia (Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2010). Graddol (2006) claims that one reason explaining the increasing use of English in higher education is universities wanting “to become a center of international excellence” (p. 74). In order for universities to achieve such a wish, they need to recruit international students and attract researches and teachers from different parts of the world. Consequently, the universities’ intellectual climate, prestige and revenue will be enriched (Graddol, 2006). Altbach (2007) similarly claims that academic systems around the world “enthusiastically welcome English as a key means of internationalising, competing, and becoming “world class”” (p. 3608). He explains this worldwide enthusiasm for English usage in academia by referring to the size and wealth of English-speaking academic superpowers, particularly the US. Not only is the US alone spending close to half of the world’s research and development funds, but many of the world’s top universities are located there. Furthermore, major scholarly and scientific journals are published in English, due to the fact that their editors and contributors are part of English-speaking universities. Likewise, most scientific networks and

academic web sites function in English. It is, in other words, evident that globalization of higher education and the use of English as a lingua franca are closely connected.

One of the most notable characteristics of English as an academic lingua franca worldwide is the fact that the language is mainly used by non-native speakers in the global academic network (Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2010). University students studying in countries where English is not the official language are increasingly likely to encounter English at some point during their studies (Graddol, 2006; Pecorari, Shaw, Malmström, & Irvine, 2011). Higher education is in many countries increasingly bilingual, as English and the national language are used in parallel. The number of courses taught in English rather than in the local language is for instance increasing, and English is also often used as a reading language (Pecorari, Shaw, Malmström, & Irvine, 2011). This is also the case in Norway (Hellekjær, 2008; 2009; 2010). Using English as a reading language in higher education is particularly often the case in small language communities such as Norway, where higher education courses require extensive use of English reading material, particularly in specialized courses and at advanced levels (Hatlevik & Nordgård, 2001; Hellekjær, 2008).

There are various reasons which can explain why many countries use English-language textbooks rather than textbooks in students' first language. Pecorari, Shaw, Malmström, & Irvine (2011) point out two reasons in particular. Firstly, English-language textbooks have traditionally been used in circumstances where appropriate literature in the students' first language has not been available. The reason for this is often that textbooks published for the UK or the US markets often have higher production values than materials published locally. That is, there is a larger market for textbooks produced in the English-speaking world, and investing in production of attractive textbooks is thus remunerative. On the other hand, publishers in other countries rarely have resources to develop textbooks that are as attractive as reading materials published in English-language countries. Secondly, English-language textbooks are sometimes preferred as reading material because teachers find them valuable. Some teachers namely believe it is fruitful for students to encounter the English of their subject area while studying at university, i.e. before they start working. Thus, English-language textbooks are often used in preference to textbooks in a country's national language either because English-language textbooks are considered to be more adequate, or because reading English-language textbooks is considered to constitute valuable language learning (Pecorari, Shaw, Malmström, & Irvine, 2011).

### 2.1.1 Academic language

Second language learners often face challenges when attempting to learn academic aspects of the target language. In order to make educators' aware of such challenges, Cummins (1980; 2008) has introduced two conceptual components of language proficiency: *basic interpersonal communicative skills* (BICS) and *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP). Whereas BICS is referred to as "conversational fluency in language" (Cummins, 2008, p. 71) and concerns skills such as oral fluency and accent (Cummins, 1980), CALP is referred to as "students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school" (Cummins, 2008, p. 71). In other words, BICS concerns colloquial language and develops from birth in a first language, and CALP concerns academic language and is specific to the educational system (Cummins, 2008). Thus Cummins' distinction between BICS and CALP is a conceptualization of two distinct components of language proficiency (Cummins, 2008).

Cummins' conceptual distinction between BICS and CALP shows that language proficiency cannot be considered in terms of solely one proficiency dimension. The initial reason why Cummins' found it necessary to make a distinction between BICS/CALP was namely to qualify Oller's (1979) claim that there is only one underlying factor, i.e. a general or global language proficiency, which can explain all individual differences in language proficiency (Cummins, 2008). Cummins (1979) found it problematic that all aspects of language performance or language use can be incorporated into one single language proficiency (Cummins, 2008). He substantiates his point by giving the example of two monolingual siblings, a 6-year old and a 12-year old child, whose native language is English (Cummins, 2008). Both similarities and differences may be identified in terms of the children's language proficiency. Whereas there may be minimal differences in their phonology and conversational fluency, their differences in vocabulary knowledge and ability to write and read English may be great. In other words, the siblings are similarly able to use the language effectively in everyday social contexts, i.e. they understand almost everything that is said to them in such settings and they are able to make themselves perfectly understood. However, in terms of vocabulary, the 12-year old is likely to have more knowledge than the 6-year old. Thus, phonology and vocabulary knowledge exemplify different aspects of language proficiency which cannot be incorporated into one unitary language proficiency dimension.

Vocabulary knowledge exemplifies very well an element which second language learners often find challenging when learning academic aspects of their second language. As

Bialystok, Peets and Yang (2010) state «[t]here is a crucial difference [...] between the vocabulary available for conversational uses of language and the vocabulary that is the basis for the language of schooling” (p. 1). The latter type of vocabulary may be referred to as *academic vocabulary*, which in general terms is defined as vocabulary that frequently occurs in texts used for academic purposes (Coxhead, 2000; Bauman & Graves, 2010). The challenges second language learners often encounter when attempting to learn academic aspects of their second language are indeed evident in vocabulary. In fact, vocabulary is one of the main problems that have been identified concerning challenges which second language learners of English face in academic contexts (Vongpumivitch, Huang & Chang, 2009). One of the reasons why students find academic vocabulary challenging is that academic vocabulary occurs less frequently than general vocabulary (Coxhead, 2000). A number of different lists of frequent English lexical items have been developed. According to Brezina & Gablasova (2015), one of the most widely used wordlists is the General Service List (GSL) developed by West (1953), which consists of the 2000 most frequently used words in English. One of the most recently created wordlists is the New General Service List (new-GSL) developed by Brezina & Gablasova (2015), which consists of 2,494 high-frequency words. Knowing such high-frequency words is essential when learning a language, and they are the vocabulary which second language learners usually learn first. When learners know the vocabulary of the GSL, they are usually assumed to be prepared to learn less frequently occurring words, such as academic vocabulary (Nation, 2001). As a second language learner of English seeking higher education, one needs to learn academic vocabulary. There is a mutual agreement among most teachers of academic English that vocabulary teaching is necessary, but deciding which words are worth focusing on can be difficult (Vongpumivitch, Huang & Chang, 2009; Coxhead, 2000).

Various vocabulary lists have been compiled from corpora of academic texts in order to recognize words relevant to academic contexts (Hyland & Tse, 2007). Similar to the GSL, a common feature of such lists is the focus of so-called *word families*, which consists of “a base word and all its derived and inflected forms that can be understood by a learner without having to learn each form separately” (Bauer & Nation, 1993, p. 253). To exemplify, *develop*, *develops*, *developed*, *developing*, *development(s)*, *redevelop* and *undeveloped* all belong to the same word family. Members of a word family are likely to be similar in meaning. Thus, learning a base word enables the learner to recognize its family members when reading (Bauer & Nation, 1993; Coxhead, 2000).

The most recently compiled academic vocabulary list is the Academic Word List (AWL), developed by Coxhead (1998) in order to provide a vocabulary reference for students studying in English at tertiary level (Coxhead, 2011). The AWL consists of 570 word families which frequently occur in academic texts (Coxhead, 2000). The word families were collected from a corpus of 3.5 million words from 414 written academic texts from various academic disciplines, and were selected according to three principles: 1) they occurred more than 100 times in the whole corpus, 2) they occurred at least 10 times in a selection of subject areas, and 3) they did not cover any of the 2000 most frequently occurring English words, as defined in the GSL. Selecting word families based on these three principles ensured that the words on the list are frequently met in academic texts and that they are useful for all learners irrespective of their study areas (Coxhead, 2000).

There are divided opinions on the extent to which the use of academic word lists is fruitful. Coxhead (2000) claims that the AWL can be useful in various ways when it comes to teaching and learning English: “[a]n academic word list should play a crucial role in setting vocabulary goals for language courses, guiding learners in their independent study, and informing course and material designers in selecting texts and developing learning activities” (p. 214). She points out that the AWL is in particular fruitful in the sense that it shows second language learners of English which words are worth studying when seeking higher education (Coxhead, 2000). On the other hand, others are critical of academic word lists. For instance, Hyland and Tse’s (2007) testing of the AWL exemplifies that there are reasons to be critical of such lists. They examined how its 570 word families were distributed in a corpus of 3.3 million words from various academic disciplines and genres. Their results confirmed that the AWL covers 10.6% of the corpus. However, they also found a difference in individual lexical items’ occurrence and behavior regarding meaning, frequency, collocation and range. Thus Hyland and Tse’s findings challenge the assumption that students are in need of a single core vocabulary for their academic studies. They argue that the usefulness of academic word lists is undermined by the different discourses and practices found within disciplinary communities. Furthermore, they suggest that students should acquire lexical items which are more restricted and based on discipline (Hyland & Tse, 2007). However, although an academic word list such as the AWL may not be sufficient for all students of higher education, it may arguably be fruitful to a certain extent. Upper secondary school students may, for instance, find the AWL particularly helpful in their preparation for higher education. As Nation (2001) points out, it is wise to learn more specialized vocabulary once the words in

the GSL are acquired. Learning the shared vocabulary of several fields of study, such as the AWL provides, may indeed be a useful place to start after learning the general-service words. The specialized vocabulary of one particular field of study can be studied subsequently (Nation, 2001). The question should therefore not necessarily be whether or not the AWL is fruitful, but rather at what point it might be useful to learn more specialized vocabulary of one particular field.

## **2.2 English as a second language<sup>1</sup> in Norway**

Norwegian is the official language and the majority language in Norway. Nevertheless, English is a widely used second language among Norwegians. As Hellekjær (2008) points out, it is crucial to have a good command of English when one is part of a small language community such as Norway, since the ability to master English is essential “in almost all domains, from the purely personal to the domains of public administration, business and higher education” (p. 1). For instance, English is used as a lingua franca when communicating with people from other countries; it is used when searching for information, either in private or professional contexts; and it is encountered in songs, films, literature, sports, products, technology and science (NDETb, 2006). Furthermore, a good command of English has for decades been increasingly important in higher education, as various courses require extensive use of English-language reading materials (Hatlevik and Nordgård, 2001). The ability to use English is also extremely important in the professional realm. This is exemplified in Hellekjær’s (2012a) findings showing that Norwegian firms use English for 95% of their export activities. In other words, English is a language which Norwegians frequently encounter in their everyday lives, both in personal and public contexts. Having a good command of English as a second language is thus crucial.

### **2.2.1 English as a second language in Norwegian schools**

English as a school subject has become increasingly prominent in the school system throughout the years. It became a compulsory subject in Norwegian schools in the 1960s, and was at the time taught from year 5. In 1974 English instruction started in year 3, and it has since 1997 been taught from year 1 (Bonnet, 2004). Today, the subject of English is compulsory in primary school, i.e. year 1 to 7, and lower secondary school, i.e. year 8 to 10. Thus, since children and teenagers are obliged to attend primary and lower secondary school

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis does not consider whether English is best described as a foreign or a second language in Norway, but uses the term “second language” in terms of “non-native language”.



(Lovdata 1 §2-1, 2016), they are also obliged to learn English in schooling for at least ten years. In addition, English instruction is compulsory in all educational programmes in upper secondary school, i.e. the first year of programmes for general studies and the first and the second year of vocational education programmes (NDETa, 2013).

Furthermore, general studies in upper secondary school offer English as an optional subject, i.e. a so-called *programme subject*, in the second and third year of programmes for specialization in general studies (NDE Tb, 2006). The English programme subjects constitute three distinct courses: *International English*, *Social Studies English* and *English Literature and Culture* (NDE Tb, 2006). The two latter subjects build on International English (NDE Tb, 2006), and are therefore typically studied in the third year of upper secondary school. Moreover, English Literature and Culture and Social Studies English can be taken independently of each other (NDE Tb, 2006). Some upper secondary schools do not have the capacity to offer both Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture in the third year of upper secondary school, and therefore only offer one of the two English subjects. This can be confirmed by looking at subjects offered at various upper secondary schools in Norway. Each of the three English programme subjects, i.e. International English, Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture, have a total of 140 teaching hours per year (NDETa, 2013), which equals to approximately 3 – 4 hours per week.

### **2.2.1.1 The English subject curriculum**

There are two predominant English subject curriculums in Norway. The first curriculum concerns English instruction in primary and lower secondary school, and also the first year of general studies and the first and second year of vocational studies in upper secondary school. In other words, the curriculum concerns the compulsory subjects of English. The other curriculum concerns English programme subjects in upper secondary school, i.e. the optional English subjects offered in the second and third year of programmes for specialization in general studies.

Both English subject curriculums' descriptions of the subjects' purposes accentuate the fact that English is a global language as one of the main reasons to learn the language. To exemplify, the curriculum concerning compulsory English subjects emphasizes the opportunities the English language yields in terms of education, profession and social interaction: “[b]oth in Norway and abroad, English is used within higher education” and “[t]he ability to participate in social life and working life, both nationally and internationally,

is dependent on having a command of English at an advanced high level” (NDEtb, 2006). The curriculum concerning optional English instruction particularly points out that attaining high English language proficiency is essential in relation to education: “English is increasingly used in education” and “[t]he subject shall help build up general language proficiency through listening, speaking, reading and writing, and provide the opportunity to acquire information and specialised knowledge through the English language” (NDEtb, 2013).

Furthermore, both of the English subject curriculums point out the importance of attaining knowledge about different language styles. In the description of the optional English subject’s purpose, it says:

[...] it is necessary to [...] have knowledge of how [The English language] is used in different contexts [...] and to be able to adapt the language to different topics and communication situations. This involves being able to distinguish between oral (spoken) and textual (written) styles and formal and informal styles (NDEta, 2013).

However, none of the competence aims, i.e. aims which describe the competence which students are expected to attain by the end of particular years in school, from year 1 (in primary school) to year 10 point out that students are expected to learn about different language styles. It is not until upper secondary school that competence aims in the English subject curriculum point out that students are expected to learn about academic and non-academic<sup>2</sup> language styles. For instance, after year 1 in programmes for general studies and year 2 in vocational educational programmes, students are expected to be able to “understand and use a wide general vocabulary and an academic vocabulary related to [their] own education programme” (NDEtb, 2006). Furthermore, the subject curriculum regarding English programme subjects in programmes for specialization in general studies gives this matter even greater focus. In particular, Social Science English and English Literature and Culture, provide several competence aims which focus on knowledge about different language styles and the ability to distinguish between them. To exemplify, both subjects aim to enable students to “*use suitable language appropriate to the situation* in a variety of oral and written genres” and to “produce texts in a variety of genres *with [...] appropriate style*” (NDEtb, 2006, my emphasis). Moreover, after studying English Social Science, students are

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<sup>2</sup> The terms “non-academic language style” and “general language style” will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

expected to “have a command of formal and informal language in a variety of contexts” (NDETB, 2006). Thus, the curriculum for English programme subjects clearly acknowledge the importance of learning about different language styles within the English language. It is not surprising that the English programme subjects offered in the third and final year of programmes for specialization in general studies seemingly aim to teach students about different language styles and the contexts in which they are used. It should, however, not come as a surprise that the English programme subjects aim to do so. Programmes for specialization in general studies aim to prepare students for higher education (NDETC, n.d.). Consequently, English instruction in that particular educational programme also aims to prepare students for future studies at college or university. Hence, learning about different language styles, i.e. particularly academic language style, is essential in such preparation.

#### **2.2.1.2 International Baccalaureate (IB)**

Several upper secondary schools in Norway are currently offering so-called International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes (IBa, n.d.). The IB is an educational foundation offering four highly respected programmes of international education, i.e. Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, Diploma Programme and Career-related Programme (IBa, n.d.; IBd, n.d.). Any school must be authorized by the IB organization in order to be offered any of the four programmes (IBa, n.d.). The IB cooperates with district, regional and national systems (IBj, n.d.), and more than 50% of IB World Schools, i.e. schools authorized to offer IB programmes, are state-funded (IBc, n.d.). Moreover, the IB collaborates with the higher education community to examine and develop their programmes and thus ensure that they continuously offer the best preparation for studies at university (IBb, n.d.). Hence many higher education institutions in the world give a high level of recognition and respect to students of IB programmes, particularly students of the Diploma Programme (IBa, n.d.). In Norway, 35 schools are currently offering one or more of the four IB programmes, and the Diploma Programme is offered at 25 of those schools (IBk, n.d.). According to IB’s homepage, IB programmes “aim to do more than other curricula” (IBc, n.d.). Whereas IB programme frameworks and national curricula can operate effectively together, the IB programmes differ from other curricula on various levels. Among others, they develop independently of national systems and governments, incorporate practice from their global community of schools, focus on both local and global contexts and develop multilingual students (IBc, n.d.). The IB programmes are currently offered in three languages, i.e. English, French and Spanish (IBe, n.d.). Usually, all subjects except for language subjects, i.e.

instruction in native or foreign languages, are instructed in the language which the IB programme is offered in. That is, in English-language IB programmes, typically 75-100%<sup>3</sup> of the instruction is in English. IB programmes are examples of so-called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) instruction, i.e. an international umbrella term covering all instruction of non-language subjects in a foreign language. The aim of CLIL is to increase competence in both the subject and the foreign language (The Foreign Language Center).

The IB organization accentuates the benefits which IB programmes provide for both schools and students. Benefits in terms of preparation for higher education are particularly emphasized. Among others, the IB homepage states that students in IB programmes develop “notable academic abilit[ies]” (IBi, n.d) and are “likely to perform well academically” (IBf, n.d.). Furthermore, it claims that research shows that IB students are more likely to succeed in higher education than their peers (IBg, n.d.). Graduating from the Diploma Programme is pointed out as particularly beneficial in relation to higher education. The IB homepage namely claims that research indicates that students graduating from that particular programme “feel more prepared for college-level coursework” (IBg, n.d.). Since English is often used for instruction and reading in higher education, it seems reasonable to assume that an acquired high level of English language proficiency and extensive experience with academic English is one of the reasons why IB students feel more prepared for course work in higher education.

### **2.2.2 Sources of English language in Norway**

In addition to being a predominant foreign language in Norwegian schools, English is also “the dominant “other language”” in Norwegian students’ everyday lives (Bonnet, 2004, p. 52). That is, students encounter English language in their everyday lives through various sources in addition to schooling. English-language films and TV shows are for instance common sources of English in Norway. The language transfer practice for audiovisual works in Norway is subtitling, rather than dubbing or voice-over (MCG, 2009). Consequently, more than 90% of the programming time for television broadcasting in Norway is in a foreign language, i.e. predominantly in English, which can be confirmed by looking at Norwegian television programmes. The findings from a survey of 16-year-old Norwegian students (Bonnet, 2004) confirmed that media is generally an important source of contact with English. It was reported that 96.4% of the students watched TV and 82.5% used videos. Furthermore, 65.4% of the students played computer games and 86.5% used the Internet, which also are

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<sup>3</sup> The percentage of English-language instruction may vary from school to school, but this percentage (75-100%) applies for the IB-programmes participating in the current study.

sources in which one are likely to encounter English. In addition, 91.7% of the students listened to more English-language music than Norwegian-language music. Note that these findings were reported in 2004, and the situation may thus be somewhat different today. Yet, since English as a global language is at least as prominent today as it was then, it seems reasonable to assume that Norwegian students encounter at least the same amount of English through media today. In any case, it is certain that media currently provides various sources in which Norwegian students get in contact with general English language.

### **2.2.3 Norwegians' achievements in English as a second language**

Norwegians are known for their fluency in English, which is reflected in various studies. In a comparative study of English proficiency in eight European countries, Norwegian 16-year-old students achieved the best results in oral comprehension and written production when compared to the students in the other countries (Bonnet, 2004). Since these results were reported thirteen years ago, Norwegian 16-year-old students' level of English might very well be somewhat different today. However, it is likely that Norwegian students still have among the highest English proficiency levels in Europe. More recent studies have namely reported similar results among Norwegian adults. According to a self-report survey conducted by the Media Consulting Group (MCG, 2009), the four Nordic countries, i.e. Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, and the Netherlands had the highest levels of second language proficiency among the 33 surveyed countries. Moreover, 86.5% of the surveyed population in the five top countries said that they mastered a second language, i.e. particularly English. These findings are supported by the EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) (2016) published by EF Education First (EF), which shows that Norway is currently one of the countries with the highest English proficiency in the world. EE EPI online tested 950,000 adults from 72 countries in 2015, and thereafter placed the countries into proficiency bands from "very high" to "very low". Norway was placed in the "very high" proficiency band and in the top fourth slot. The four Nordic countries and the Netherlands have in five of six editions of the EF EPI occupied the top five slots, and are thereby "proving themselves to be world leaders in the English language education" (EF EPI, 2016, p. 19). In other words, Norwegians have among the highest English language proficiency levels in the world, and it is therefore reasonable to conclude that English instruction in Norwegian schools develops high language proficiency among students, although the high English input outside of school presumably also contribute to the high English proficiency.

Nevertheless, studies have been conducted that report findings which challenge Norwegians' reputation for their fluency in English, i.e. in terms of academic English proficiency. A study (Hellekjær, 2005) of academic English reading proficiency of final-year high school students in Norway gives reason to be highly critical of Norwegian EFL instruction's efficiency when it comes to preparing students for higher education. The participants had ordinary EFL courses and were part of the general studies programme which aims to qualify students for higher education. Yet, it was found that two thirds of the students would not pass the language requirements of British and Australian universities. In comparison, two thirds of a group of participants with a single CLIL subject achieved the required minimum score or better. These results thus indicate that many upper secondary school students graduate from the General Studies branch with an academic English reading proficiency which is too low in relation to what is needed in higher education (Hellekjær, 2005; 2008). This was confirmed by a study (Hellekjær, 2009) examining the academic English reading proficiency of Norwegian university students, which found that approximately 30% of the students had serious difficulties reading English. Many of the students encountered problems due to poor language proficiency, and difficulties were mainly caused by slow reading and unfamiliar vocabulary. Thus, the study confirmed that EFL instruction in Norwegian upper secondary schools fails to prepare students for higher education in terms of developing academic English reading proficiency.

More recent research indicates that Norwegian upper secondary students' reading proficiency may have improved (Hellekjær, 2012b). By comparing the English reading proficiency of final year students in Norwegian upper secondary school in respectively 2002 and 2011, it was found that the participating students who would pass the language requirements of English-speaking universities had increased from 30% to 57%. However, the study concluded that although the study showed improvement in English reading proficiency, Norwegian EFL instruction still needs to improve further so that Norwegian students develop better reading proficiency in English. Busby (2015) confirms that there may still be challenges in academic English reading proficiency among Norwegian students. The study compared Norwegian university students' reading proficiency in English with native English speaking students. The aspects of reading proficiency which were compared were reading times, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension. The study found that "Norwegian students are more likely to have a native speaker-like proficiency in general-language English proficiency than they are in academic language English, particularly with regard to vocabulary comprehension"

(Busby, 2015, p. iii). These findings thereby confirm that Norwegian students may indeed have high levels of English proficiency in terms of general English language, but may still struggle when it comes to encountering academic English language.

In addition to weak reading proficiency among students of higher education in Norway, research also shows that Norwegian university and college students have difficulties with English oral comprehension (Hellekjær, 2010). As an increasing number of higher education courses in European countries are taught in English, Hellekjær (2010) investigated Norwegian and German university and college students' lecture comprehension in English compared to their first language. Analysis of 365 Norwegian participants' self-assessment scores shows that although there was not a substantial difference between English and Norwegian scores, many students found it challenging to understand the English-language lectures. Identified difficulties were, among others, unfamiliar vocabulary and distinguishing the meaning of words. Hence, the study highlights the need to improve Norwegian students' English proficiency.

To sum up, research shows that Norwegians have among the highest English language proficiency levels in the world. Yet, many Norwegians face challenges when encountering (academic) English in college or university. It is therefore evident that EFL instruction in Norwegian high school does not develop the academic English proficiency needed in higher education. Consequently, Hellekjær (2008) points out a need for serious changes in Norwegian EFL instruction, and provides suggestions for how Norwegian EFL teaching practices can be improved. Among other things, he emphasizes the necessity of instruction in reading and learning strategies. He also points out the need to prioritize reading outside of the EFL textbooks, as they often are several years old. In addition, Hellekjær (2008) points out that it might be fruitful to use CLIL instruction for all students in high school. Hellekjær's study from 2005 showed that whereas traditional EFL instruction is not effective in developing reading proficiency, just a single CLIL subject can indeed be effective. Thus, he concludes that replacing traditional EFL instruction with CLIL instruction should indeed be considered, unless the EFL instruction is improved (Hellekjær, 2008).





## **3 Methods**

### **3.1 Aims and predictions**

The aim of the current study was to investigate Norwegian upper secondary school students' proficiency in academic and general English language and their ability to distinguish between the two language styles. The study was carried out by testing students in ordinary upper secondary schools and in IB programmes using a test battery specifically designed for this study, and comparing their scores. Three predictions were made:

- 1) Students in IB programmes would show greater ability to distinguish between academic and general English language than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools.
- 2) Students in IB programmes would achieve averagely higher scores on the academic English test (see section 4.2) than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools.
- 3) Students in IB programmes would achieve averagely higher scores on the general English test (see section 4.3) than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools. Yet, the difference in average scores between the two groups would be less clear on the general English test than on the academic English test.

The predictions were made based on the fact that IB students encounter English considerably more frequently in schooling than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools do. Language input and output are crucial elements in learning a second language. Thus, since the two participating groups differ in terms of how frequently they use English in schooling, their level of attained English language proficiency is also likely to differ. The difference between the two groups was anticipated to be less clear on the general English test than on the academic English test due to the fact that Norwegians in general are known to have relatively high general English language proficiency.

### **3.2 Participants**

The data were collected from two different groups of participants. The group in focus is referred to as the VG3<sup>4</sup> group and consists of 49 third and final year students (20 male and 29 female) from five different ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools. These participants

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<sup>4</sup> “VG” is an abbreviation for the Norwegian word “videregående” which in English means “upper secondary”. Thus, “VG3” refers to upper secondary school students who are in their third year.

were studying in programmes for specialization in general studies and were taking English as a programme subject, i.e. they were studying either *Social Studies English* or *English Literature and Culture*. The VG3 group thus represents the highest level of English studies in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools. Final year students were asked to participate in the study in particular because they are considered qualified for higher education when they graduate; hence they are expected to have attained the English language proficiency level needed for studies in higher education. All participants in the VG3 group were native Norwegian speakers. The group for comparison is referred to as the IB3<sup>5</sup> group and consists of 22 third and final year students (11 male and 11 female) from five different IB World Schools in Norway. That is, they attended International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programmes (DP) in Norwegian upper secondary schools. 20 participants from the IB3 group were native Norwegian speakers and 2 participants were native English speakers. One of the native English speakers also spoke Norwegian as a native language.

Participants in both groups were recruited by contacting upper secondary school English teachers teaching English to final year students, i.e. both in ordinary upper secondary schools and in IB programmes. The teachers were firstly identified through acquaintances and by contacting school administrations, and thereafter contacted directly by e-mail or telephone. When contact with relevant teachers was established, practical implementation was planned and agreed upon.

Recruiting a group for comparison was a challenge. The initial plan was to recruit control group participants from upper secondary schools in the US, i.e. students whose native language is English. A strenuous attempt was made to recruit such students by contacting various acquaintances and upper secondary school teachers in the US. Despite the earnest effort, the initial plan was impossible to accomplish since only one student was willing to participate. Since recruiting native English speaking participants was not possible, recruiting students in IB programmes was considered a good alternative. Since IB students have CLIL instruction in English, they are likely to attain higher English language proficiency levels, i.e. particularly in terms of CALP, than students in ordinary Norwegian schools who in schooling only encounter English for a few hours per week during traditional English instruction.

A number of participants in the current study were necessarily excluded from the analysis. Whereas the VG3 group initially consisted of a total of 79 students, the IB3 group initially

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<sup>5</sup> “IB3” is used as an abbreviation for International Baccalaureate (IB) students who are in their third year.

consisted of a total of 49 students. Many participants were, due to various reasons, not able to complete all the three parts of the survey. Thus, only participants completing all the three parts were retained in the analysis. Furthermore, some participants were excluded due to incomplete answers on the self-report questionnaire. After excluding irrelevant participants, the final numbers of participants were 49 in the VG3 group and 22 in the IB3 group.

All participants were orally informed that participation in the study included conducting two English tests and answering a self-report questionnaire. Moreover, information about the study was provided in writing at the beginning of each part of the survey. In order to prevent influencing the participants' answers on the two tests, information was not given about the aim of examining academic and general English language proficiency. Furthermore, participants were asked to answer four questions at the beginning of each part of the survey, i.e. the four questions were identical in each part of the survey, in order to create an anonymous code which would be used to link the different parts of the survey together. The written information about the survey and the four questions intended to create an anonymous code can be found in the appendices.

### **3.3 Materials**

The survey consists of two separate tests and a self-report questionnaire. Both the VG3 and IB3 groups completed the two tests in English. The self-report questionnaire was provided in Norwegian for the VG3 group and in English for the IB3 group. All the three parts of the survey were created in SelectSurvey (<http://survey.svt.ntnu.no>). The two tests and the self-report questionnaire can be found in the appendices. The study was registered and approved with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

The two tests and the (Norwegian) self-report questionnaire was pilot tested on 8 native Norwegian speaking adults to ensure that questions were understandable and tasks were feasible. Changes were made and the improved survey was thereafter tested on 2 native Norwegian speakers (1 adult and 1 upper secondary school student). A few more adjustments were then made. Lastly, the two tests were completed by 2 native English speakers (1 adult and 1 upper secondary school student) in order to ensure the validity of the tests.

The tasks in Part 3 and Part 4 of the tests (see section 3.3.1) and some of the questions in the self-report questionnaire are created in the same manner as the survey material used by Busby

(2015). Whereas some of the questions in the self-report questionnaire are identical, others are slightly adapted to suit the current study.

### 3.3.1 Tests

The two tests in the survey are similarly structured and consist of four parts which all entail reading one or more text excerpts and completing following tasks. Whereas one test aimed to examine academic English language proficiency (hereafter referred to as *the academic English test*), the other test aimed to examine general English language proficiency (hereafter referred to as *the general English test*). Consequently, the language used in the text excerpts in the academic English test has an academic language style, whereas the language used in text excerpts in the general English test has a general language style.

The predominant language style in each test is apparent on two levels. Firstly, the different language styles are reflected in the text types which are used in each test. The texts used in the general English test are excerpts from novels, a film review and information about Thomson's Holiday reviews, i.e. text types which have predominantly general language style. Similarly, the texts used in the academic English test are excerpts from factual texts about historical topics, i.e. text types which have a predominantly academic language style. Secondly, the two different language styles are reflected in the texts' vocabulary, i.e. the number of academic words which are included in the text excerpts. Whereas the total number of academic words in the academic English test is 53, the total number in the general English test is 6. Haywood's "AWL Highlighter" (Haywood, n.d.) was used to count the number of AWL words. All the texts used in the two tests were excerpts from actually existing texts (see more information below), and thus some adjustments were needed in terms of vocabulary. In order to emphasize the language style of each test, some AWL words were replaced by general-service words in the general English test in order to decrease the number of academic words. Similarly, some AWL words were added in the academic English test in order to increase the number of academic words. Consequently, due to the text types and vocabulary which were included in each test, the academic English test reflects a more academic language than the general English test.

The text excerpts used in the two tests are considered suitable for third year upper secondary school students. Most of the texts were found at the The Norwegian Digital Learning Arena (NDLA), i.e. a joint enterprise operating on behalf of Norwegian county councils which produces online educational teaching resources for high school subjects (NDLA). The texts

were selected from NDLA's collection of texts for English subjects taught in the final year of upper secondary school to ensure that their level of difficulty was suitable for the participants. The general English test includes, in addition to texts from NDLA, text excerpts from two novels, i.e. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky and *Apple and Rain* by Sarah Crossan. These two novels are also considered suitable for the participants, since they are so-called young adult fiction books, hence aimed at adolescent readers.

The four parts of the two tests are similarly structured, where each part consists of between two and four tasks. Each of the four parts is intended to examine particular aspects of English language proficiency. The following will give an overview over how each part is structured and what aspect of language proficiency the part aims to examine.

Part 1 and Part 2 are almost identically structured. In both parts, participants were asked to read text excerpts which had a missing part. The length of the missing part varied from consisting of a few words to a couple of sentences. Four alternatives followed the text excerpts, where one of the alternatives was in fact the missing part of the original text. In Part 1, participants were asked to select the alternative which they found most and least likely to be the missing part of the text, whereas in part 2 they were asked to rank the four alternatives in the order of which they found the alternatives likely to be the missing part of the text. The four alternatives following each text in Part 1 and Part 2 have the same structural pattern. One alternative has the same language style, i.e. either general or academic English language, as the rest of the text. In addition, the alternative has no errors in terms of grammar, orthography or choice of words. This alternative is the alternative which is in fact the missing part of the original text, and will hereafter be referred to as *the target answer*. A second alternative is identical to the target answer, except that it includes between 1-3 errors in terms of grammar, orthography and/or choice of words. A third alternative has a language style which differs from the rest of the text, i.e. if the text has a general language style then the third alternative has an academic language style and vice versa. In addition, the third alternative has no errors in terms of grammar, orthography or choice of words. A fourth alternative is identical to the third alternative, i.e. in a language style different from the rest of the text, except that it includes between 1-3 errors in terms of grammar, orthography and/or choice of words. This alternative was assumed to be least likely to be the missing part of the text, since it has less suitable language style as well as other types of language errors. This alternative will hereafter be referred to as *the least likely answer*. The order in which the four alternatives were listed was mixed in each task, i.e. the four alternatives did not follow the same order in each task.

Since Part 1 and Part 2 are almost identically structured, they also examine the same aspects of English language proficiency. Completing the tasks requires ability to understand the texts one is reading, which thus makes it reasonable to conclude that Part 1 and Part 2 examine reading comprehension, i.e. receptive skills. In addition, being able to complete the tasks require that one makes a decision regarding how well each of the four alternatives fit into the text. Making such a decision involves considering different options and finally coming to a conclusion on how well each alternative fits into the text as a whole. It thus seems reasonable to conclude that Part 1 and Part 2 also partly examine productive skills. That is, although the tasks do not ask the participants to write something directly, choosing an alternative to fit the missing part of the text may still be considered partly producing text. In addition to examining receptive and (partly) productive skills, Part 1 and Part 2 can be argued to examine participants' ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic English language styles. Completing the tasks namely requires that one is capable of recognizing that the four alternatives have different language styles, where only some fit into the text as a whole. To exemplify, if a participant selects one of the two alternatives with less suitable language style to be the missing part of the text, one can conclude that the participant is not able to recognize that some alternatives suit the text better in terms of language style. Consequently, one can conclude that the participant is unable to distinguish between academic and non-academic language styles. Similarly, if a participant selects one of the two alternatives with appropriate language style to be the missing part of the text, one can conclude that he or she is able to recognize that some alternatives suit the text better in terms of language style, i.e. the participant is able to distinguish between academic and non-academic language styles.

In Part 3 participants were asked to read text excerpts which included underlined words and thereafter select one of four following alternatives which best described the meaning of the underlined words as they were used in the context of the text excerpt. The underlined words in the general English test are words from the GSL, whereas the underlined words in the academic English test are words from the AWL. In Part 4 participants were asked to read text excerpts and thereafter select one of four alternatives which best fulfilled a sentence which commented on the content of the text. In other words, the questions in Part 3 and Part 4 do not concern identifying language style, but rather comprehending the content of the texts. Since completing the tasks in Part 3 and Part 4 requires ability to understand the text one is reading, it may be concluded that those parts also examine reading comprehension.

All the four parts of the two tests close with a self-report question regarding the tasks' difficulty levels. Also, each test closes with a final self-report question which asks how confident one is that one's answers on the whole test (all four parts) are correct. The purpose of the self-report questions was to examine whether participants' test scores conformed to their personal opinion of the tasks' difficulty levels.

The analysis of Part 1 and Part 2 was not carried out like initially intended. Answers in both test groups and by native speaker controls indicated that the interpretation of the *target answer* was achievable. Out of a maximum of 28 tasks in total, one of the native speaker controls selected 6 non-expected answers, whereas the other selected 8 non-expected answers. The number of non-expected answers was so low that the answers were considered variation which had to be expected although the tests were valid. At least one of the native English speakers selected the target answer in each task. On the other hand, very variable answers in both test groups and by native speaker controls indicated that the interpretation of *the least likely answer* may be difficult and that the assumption that the least likely answer would be interpreted as the alternative with inappropriate style *and* language errors may not have been valid. Therefore, *the least likely answers* were not used in the analysis.

When scoring the tests, one point was given for each target answer and zero points were given for any other answer. The maximum possible scores in each part were 2 points in Part 1, 3 points in Part 2, 3 points in Part 3 and 3 points in Part 4. Thus, the maximum possible score was in total 11 points in each test.

### **3.3.2 Self-report questionnaire**

The questions in the self-report questionnaire were predominantly identical in the Norwegian and the English version. However, the IB3 participants were asked some questions which the VG3 participants were not, such as background information regarding their history with English-speaking schools.

The self-report questionnaire aimed to map background information about participants in order to make it possible to examine any potential links between participants' background information and their scores on the two tests. Questions asked in the self-report questionnaire regard background information such as educational background, sources of the English language and English usage habits. Some of the questions which were asked depended on previously registered answers, this in order to avoid asking participants irrelevant questions.

For instance, if a participant answered that he/she planned to study at university or college after upper secondary school, he/she would get more questions regarding future studies.



## **4 Results**

The following provides an overview over the VG3 and IB3 participants' results on the two tests. Firstly, the academic English test results are presented. Thereafter, the general English test results are presented. In both cases the results in each of the four parts of the test are presented.

Mann-Whitney tests were conducted in order to find whether there were significant differences between the VG3 and IB3 participants in terms of average scores on the two tests. Mann-Whitney tests were used because the current study has relatively small samples and the data may not be normally distributed (Field, 2013). In addition to using non-parametric tests, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to double check the results, since non-parametric tests such as the Mann-Whitney test may lack power, i.e. not always find a significant difference even if a real difference exists.

In the following, the results of the Mann-Whitney tests are predominately provided. However, results of independent-samples t-tests will also be provided in cases where those tests found significant differences. One-tailed p-values are provided because the statistical models test a directional hypothesis (Field, 2013).

### **4.1 Self-reported background information**

Among the 22 IB3 participants, 10 participants had been studying at an English-speaking school and/or educational programme between 1 and 2 years, 5 participants between 2 and 3 years, 1 participant between 5 and 6 years, and 6 participants between 11 and 13 years. Moreover, 4 of those participants had taken part of their English-language education abroad.

The participants were asked several questions regarding English usage. When asked how often they write in English (not including writing for school), 71.4% of the VG3 participants and 86.4% of the IB3 participants said that they write in English between 1-7 days per week, whereas 26.5% of the VG3 participants and 9.1% of the IB3 participants said they write in English more rarely than that. Furthermore, 10.2% of the VG3 participants and 18.1% of the IB3 participants reported that they have read seven or more books (non-school books) in their spare time during the past year, where 34.7% of the VG3 participants and 63.7% of the IB3 participants said that more than half or more of those books were in English. Concerning television, 36.7% of the VG3 group and 27.2% of the IB3 group said that they often or always use subtitles when watching English-language films or TV shows. Moreover, 59.2% of the

VG3 participants and 77.3% of the IB3 participants reported that if they had the choice, they would prefer the subtitles to be in English rather than Norwegian. Furthermore, as table 1 shows, a higher percentage of IB3 participants than VG3 participants use English when communicating with friends/partner/family from abroad, when writing for an international audience (e.g. online) and when gaming online. However, a higher percentage of VG3 participants than IB3 participants reported that they use English to communicate with others when traveling abroad and when they are in English class at school. It is important to remember that the results in table 1 only show the types of contexts in which the participants use English to communicate with others, not necessarily *how often* they use English in those contexts. To exemplify, it could be the case that a lower percentage of VG3 participants than IB3 participants use English when gaming online, and yet, VG3 participants are on average more frequently gaming online than IB3 participants. Hence, there is not necessarily a correlation between the context in which participants use English to communicate with others and the frequency of using English in that context.

Table 1 <i>Self-reported contexts in which participants use English to communicate with others</i>		
<i>Contexts</i>	<i>VG3</i>	<i>IB3</i>
Communicating with friends/partner/family from abroad	65.3%	86.4%
Writing for an international audience (e.g. online)	38.8%	59.1%
Gaming online	32.7%	40.9%
Traveling abroad	87.8%	72.7%
English classes at school	93.9%	86.4%
Never	0%	0%

To sum up, the self-reported results above indicate that on average, the IB3 participants were more frequently exposed to English in their spare time than the VG3 participants.

#### **4.2 The academic English test**

The maximum possible score on the academic English test was 11 points. The lowest score was 3 points in the VG3 group and 8 points in the IB3 group. The highest score was 11 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 9.39) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 10.14).

When conducting the Mann-Whitney test, a significant difference was found between the average scores on the whole academic English test, i.e. all four parts, among the VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 10.00$ ) and the IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 10.00$ ),  $U = 385.00$ ,  $z = -1.99$ ,  $p$  (*one-tailed*) = .024. The independent-samples t-test also found a significant difference ( $t(67.22) = -2.59$ ,  $p$  (*one-tailed*) = .006.) between the average scores in the VG3 group ( $M = 9.39$ ,  $SE = .23$ ) and in the IB3 group ( $M = 10.14$ ,  $SE = .18$ ).

As table 2 indicates, the IB3 participants showed more confidence when they were asked how confident they felt that their answers on the whole academic English test (all four parts) were correct.

Difficulty level	VG3	IB3
Very confident	8.2%	13.6%
Quite confident	34.7%	63.6%
Not confident	38.8%	13.6%
Don't know	18.4%	9.1%

#### 4.2.1 Part 1 (the academic English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 1 was 2 points. The lowest score was 0 points in the VG3 group and 1 point in the IB3 group. The highest score was 2 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 1.63) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 1.86).

According to the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on Part 1 of the academic English test between the VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 2.00$ ) and the IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 2.00$ ),  $U = 433.50$ ,  $z = -1.70$ ,  $p$  (*one-tailed*) = .062. The independent-samples t-test did, however, find a significant difference between the two groups ( $t(61.79) = -2.10$ ,  $p$  (*one-tailed*) = .02.), where on average, the IB3 participants ( $M = 1.86$ ,  $SE = .07$ ) achieved higher scores than VG3 participants ( $M = 1.63$ ,  $SE = .08$ ).

As table 3 indicates, the IB3 participants seemed to find the tasks in Part 1 of the academic English test easier than the VG3 group did.

Table 3 <i>Self-reported degree of difficulty of the tasks in Part 1 of the academic English test</i>		
Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	6.1%	0%
Quite difficult	16.3%	9.1%
Okay	42.9%	31.8%
Quite easy	16.3%	40.9%
Very easy	12.2%	18.2%
Don't know	6.1%	0%

#### 4.2.2 Part 2 (the academic English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 2 was 3 points. The lowest score was 1 point in the VG3 group and 2 points in the IB3 group. The highest score was 3 points in both groups.

Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 2.84) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 2.91).

When conducting the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on Part 2 of the academic English test between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ),  $U = 520.00$ ,  $z = -.43$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .383. The independent-samples t-test was also non-significant for this part of the test.

As table 4 indicates, the IB3 participants seemed to find the task in Part 2 of the academic English test easier than the VG3 group.

Table 4 <i>Self-reported degree of difficulty of the tasks in Part 2 of the academic English test</i>		
Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	0%	0%
Quite difficult	6.1%	0%
Okay	28.6%	27.3%
Quite easy	46.9%	40.9%
Very easy	18.4%	27.3%
Don't know	0%	4.5%

#### 4.2.3 Part 3 (the academic English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 3 was 3 points. The lowest score was 2 and the highest score was 3 in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 2.57) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 2.73).

When conducting the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on Part 3 of the academic English test between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ),  $U = 455.00$ ,  $z = -1.24$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .162. The independent-samples t-test was also non-significant for this part of the test.

As table 5 indicates, the IB3 participants seemed to find the task in Part 3 of the academic English test easier than the VG3 group.

Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	0%	0%
Quite difficult	2%	0%
Okay	26.5%	13.6%
Quite easy	26.5%	31.8%
Very easy	44.9%	54.5%
Don't know	0%	0%

#### 4.2.4 Part 4 (the academic English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 4 was 3 points points. The lowest score was 0 points in the VG3 group and 2 points in the IB3 group. The highest score was 3 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 2.35) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 2.64).

According to the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on part 4 of the academic English test between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ),  $U = 450.00$ ,  $z = -1.25$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .118. The independent-samples t-test did, however, reveal a significant difference between the two groups ( $t(62.36) = -1.86$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .034), where on average, IB3 participants ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SE = .10$ ) achieved higher scores on part 4 of the academic English test than VG3 participants ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SE = .11$ ).

As table 6 indicates, the IB3 participants seemed to find the task in Part 4 of the academic English test easier than the VG3 group.

Table 6 <i>Self-reported degree of difficulty of the tasks in Part 4 of the academic English test</i>		
Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	2%	0%
Quite difficult	16.3%	0%
Okay	51%	40.9%
Quite easy	16.3%	40.9%
Very easy	10.2%	13.6%
Don't know	4.1%	0%

### 4.3 The general English test

The maximum possible score on the general English test was 11 points. The lowest score was 3 points in the VG3 group and 5 points in the IB3 group. The highest score was 11 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 8.76) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 9.27).

When conducting the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on the whole general English test, i.e. all four parts, between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ),  $U = 428.00$ ,  $z = -1.41$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .080. The independent-samples t-test was also non-significant for the general English test as a whole.

As table 7 indicates, the IB3 participants showed more confidence when they were asked how confident they felt that their answers on the whole general English test (all four parts) were correct.

Table 7 <i>Self-reported confidence of having answered correctly on the whole general English test (all parts)</i>		
Difficulty level	VG3	IB3
Very confident	16.3%	31.8%
Quite confident	61.2%	59.1%
Not confident	12.2%	0%

Don't know	10.2%	9.1%
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#### 4.3.1 Part 1 (the general English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 1 was 2 points. The lowest score was 0 and the highest score was 2 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 1.04) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 1.09).

When conducting the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on Part 1 of the general English test between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 1.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 1.00$ ),  $U = 519.00$ ,  $z = -.27$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .402. The independent-samples t-test was also non-significant for this part of the test.

As table 8 indicates, the IB3 participants seemed to find the task in Part 1 of the general English test somewhat easier than the VG3 group.

Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	0%	0%
Quite difficult	4.1%	4.5%
Okay	46.9%	36.4%
Quite easy	32.7%	36.4%
Very easy	16.3%	22.7%
Don't know	16.3%	0%

#### 4.3.2 Part 2 (the general English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 2 was 3 points. The lowest score was 0 points and the highest score was 3 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 2.31) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 2.64).

According to the Mann-Whitney test, a significant difference was found between the average scores on Part 2 of the general English test between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ),  $U = 411.50$ ,  $z = -1.82$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .038. The independent-samples t-test was non-significant for this part of the test.

As table 9 indicates, the IB3 participants seemed to find the task in Part 2 of the general English test easier than the VG3 group.

Table 9 <i>Self-reported degree of difficulty of the tasks in Part 2 of the general English test</i>		
Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	0%	0%
Quite difficult	10.2%	0%
Okay	49%	40.9%
Quite easy	24.5%	22.7%
Very easy	10.2%	36.4%
Don't know	2%	0%

#### 4.3.3 Part 3 (the general English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 3 was 3 points. The lowest score was 2 points and the highest score was 3 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 2.73) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 2.82).

When conducting the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on Part 3 of the general English test between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ),  $U = 494.00$ ,  $z = -0.76$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = 0.329. The independent-samples t-test was also non-significant for this part of the test.

As table 10 indicates, the VG3 participants seemed to find the task in Part 3 of the general English test easier than the IB3 group.

Table 10 <i>Self-reported degree of difficulty of the tasks in Part 3 of the general English test</i>		
Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	0%	0%
Quite difficult	2%	0%
Okay	6.1%	13.6%
Quite easy	36.7%	31.8%
Very easy	55.1%	54.5%



Don't know	0%	0%
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#### 4.3.4 Part 4 (the general English test)

The maximum possible score on Part 4 was 3 points. The lowest score was 1 point and the highest score was 3 points in both groups. Furthermore, the average score was somewhat lower among the VG3 participants (mean = 2.67) than among the IB3 participants (mean = 2.73).

According to the Mann-Whitney test, no significant difference was found between the average scores on Part 4 of the general English test between VG3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ) and IB3 participants ( $Mdn = 3.00$ ),  $U = 493.00$ ,  $z = -.75$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed) = .264. The independent-samples t-test was also non-significant for this part of the test.

As table 11 indicates, the IB3 participants seemed to find the task in Part 4 of the general English test easier than the VG3 group, i.e. the percentage of participants who found the tasks quite or very difficult was higher in the IB3 group (81.9%) than in the VG3 group (77.6%).

Table 11 <i>Self-reported degree of difficulty of the tasks in Part 4 of the general English test</i>		
Degree of difficulty	VG3	IB3
Very difficult	0%	0%
Quite difficult	0%	0%
Okay	20.4%	18.2%
Quite easy	28.6%	36.4%
Very easy	49%	45.5%
Don't know	2%	0%

To sum up, a significant difference was found in average scores between the VG3 and IB3 groups in the academic English test as a whole (all four parts), but not in the general English test as a whole (all four parts). Furthermore, a significant difference was found in Part 1 and Part 4 of the academic English tests, as well as in Part 2 of the general English test.



## **5 Discussion**

The current study investigated Norwegian upper secondary school students' proficiency in academic and general English language and their ability to distinguish between the two language styles. As already mentioned, three predictions were made (see section 3.1). In the following, each of the three predictions will be discussed in the context of the reported results.

### **5.1 The first prediction**

The first prediction was that students in IB programmes would show greater ability to distinguish between academic and general English language than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools. The reason for this assumption is that IB programmes provide Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) instruction (The Foreign Language Center), which entails that for students in IB programmes, most subjects are instructed in English, i.e. that only the subject of Norwegian and foreign language subjects are instructed in other languages. Thus, students in IB programmes encounter English considerably more frequently in schooling than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools, who only have English a few hours per week (NDETb, 2006). Consequently, it was assumed that the IB3 students would attain higher levels of English language proficiency, both in terms of interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins 1980; 2008). It therefore seemed reasonable to assume that the IB3 participants would show greater ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic English language when conducting the two tests.

Part 1 and Part 2 of the two tests, i.e. a total of four different parts, intended to examine participants' ability to distinguish between academic and general English language. This was done by asking participants to select the one out of four alternatives which they thought was the missing part of a text. A significant difference was found in Part 1 of the academic English tests, where out of a maximum possible score of 2 points, the IB participants had higher average score (mean = 1.86) than the VG3 participants (mean = 1.63). Moreover, a significant difference was found in Part 2 of the general English test, where out of a maximum possible score of 3 points, the IB3 participants had higher average score (mean = 2.64) than the VG3 participants (mean = 2.31). No significant difference was found in Part 2 of the academic English test and in Part 1 of the general English test. In other words, the IB3 participants showed a significantly greater ability than the VG3 participants to distinguish between academic and general English language in two out of four possible parts of the tests.

Thus, the results may indeed indicate that students in IB programmes have greater ability to distinguish between academic and general English language than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools.

Given the fact that IB3 participants are likely to have higher academic English language proficiency than the VG3 participants, one would think that the results from Part 1 and Part 2 of the two tests would clearly show that the VG3 participants are less able than the IB3 participants to identify *academic* language in particular. That is, the difference between the two groups was expected to be greater on Part 1 and Part 2 of the academic English test than on the same parts of the general English test. The results did, however, not clearly bear out such an assumption. Yet, the fact that a significant difference was found between the VG3 and IB3 groups in Part 1 of the academic English test *and* in Part 2 of the general English test indicates that the VG3 participants found it somewhat more challenging than the IB3 participants to select alternatives with appropriate language styles for the missing parts of the texts, i.e. whether or not the text with a missing part was written in academic or general English language.

One might discuss to what degree the significant differences in Part 1 of the academic English test and Part 2 of the general English test actually reveal participants' ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic English language. Examining which non-target answers the participants selected could further support the suggestion that the IB3 group shows greater ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic language styles than the VG3 group. As explained in section 3.3.1, participants only got points when selecting the target answer, i.e. the answer with similar language style as the rest of the text and no language errors. Among the three non-target answers, there was *one* alternative with appropriate language style and language errors, and *two* alternatives with language styles that differed from the rest of the text, where one alternative had language errors and the other did not. On the one hand, it could be the case that the VG3 participants achieved lower average scores than the IB3 groups because they more often than the IB3 participants selected the alternatives that had appropriate language styles *with* language errors rather than *without* language errors. Such a case would not indicate that the VG3 participants are less able to identify appropriate language style, but rather that they are less able to identify language errors. On the other hand, it could be the case that the VG3 participants achieved lower average scores than the IB3 participants because they more often than the IB3 participants selected the alternatives that had language styles that differed from the rest of the text. Such a

case would indeed indicate that the VG3 participants are less able to identify appropriate language style than the IB3 participants. By examining the non-target answers which had been selected by the participants, the latter case was actually revealed to be true. That is, in all the cases where some VG3 participants selected non-target answers, the percentage of participants who had selected an alternative with less suitable language style, i.e. either with or without language errors, was higher than the percentage of participants who had selected the alternative with appropriate language style *and* language errors. This may indicate that a higher percentage of the VG3 participants whose responses were marked as non-target were not able to identify alternatives with appropriate language style. It should be mentioned that there were also IB3 participants who selected alternatives with less suitable language styles to be the target answer. Yet, in 7 out of 10 tasks the percentage of participants who selected alternatives with less appropriate language styles were higher in the VG3 group than in the IB3 group. Thus, it may seem reasonable to claim that the significant differences which were found between the VG3 group and the IB3 group on Part 1 of the academic English test and on Part 2 of the general English test are due to a relatively weaker ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic language styles in the VG3 group than in the IB3 group. In other words, the prediction that the IB3 participants would show greater ability to distinguish between academic and general English language than the VG3 participants may indeed be argued to be borne out by the results in Part 1 of the academic English test and Part 2 of the general English test.

The self-reported understanding of the tasks' difficulty levels in Part 1 and Part 2 of the academic English test corresponds with the significant difference found in Part 1 and the non-significant difference in Part 2. Whereas 22.4% of the VG3 group and 9.1% of the IB3 group reported that they found the tasks in Part 1 of the academic English test quite or very difficult, 6% of the VG3 group and 0% of the IB3 group reported the same thing for the tasks in Part 2. In other words, there is a greater difference between the VG3 and IB3 groups in Part 1 than in Part 2 in terms of how many percentages found the tasks quite or very difficult. The self-reported results thus seem to correspond with a significant difference between the two groups in their test results. Similarly, the self-reported understanding of the tasks' difficulty levels in Part 1 and Part 2 of the general English test seems to correspond with the significant difference found in Part 2 and the non-significant finding in Part 1. Whereas 10.2% of the VG3 group and 0% of the IB3 group reported that they found the tasks in Part 2 of the general English test quite or very difficult, 4.1% of the VG3 group and 4.5% of the IB3 group

reported the same thing for the tasks in Part 1. In other words, also in the general English test there is a greater difference between the VG3 and IB3 groups in Part 1 than in Part 2 in terms of how many percentages found the tasks quite or very difficult, and the self-reported results thus seem to correspond with a significant difference between the two groups on their test results.

## **5.2 The second prediction**

The second prediction was that students in IB programmes would achieve higher scores on the academic English test as a whole (all four parts) than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools. As anticipated, a significant difference was found between the IB3 participants and the VG3 participants' average scores on the academic English test as a whole, where out of 11 maximum possible points, the IB3 participants (mean = 10.14) achieved a higher average score than the VG3 participants (mean = 9.39).

The significant difference between the VG3 and IB3 groups indicates that students in IB programmes attain a higher level of academic English language proficiency than students in ordinary Norwegian schools. This is not surprising, given the fact that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) develops in the context of schooling (Cummins 1980; 2008). The more one is exposed to English language in educational context, the higher level of CALP one is likely to attain. Thus, given that students in IB programmes have CLIL instruction in English (The Foreign Language Center), they are more frequently exposed to (academic) English language than students in ordinary Norwegian schools, who only encounter (academic) English during English instruction which is a few hours per week (NDETb, 2006). In a world where English is used as the lingua franca of academia (Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2010; Altbach, 2007), success in higher education often requires having a good command of (academic) English. The fact that students in IB programmes are highly recognized and respected among higher educational institution around the world (IBa, n.d.) does indeed suggest that they have developed the level of academic English language needed in higher education. Students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools, on the other hand, often face challenges when encountering academic English (Hellekjær, 2005; 2008; 2012b). Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the VG3 participants achieved lower average scores on the academic English test than the IB3 participants. After all, the competence aims in the curriculum for English as a programme subject in programmes for specialization in general studies involve various aspects of English

language which need to be learnt. As a matter of fact, there are only a few competence aims which explicitly point out that students need to learn about academic language (NDETa, 2013; NDE Tb, 2006), whereas the rest involve other aspects of English, such as for instance literature and culture. Thus, it is not necessarily given that academic language has a very strong focus in English programme subjects. The fact that Hellekjær (2008) points out a need for serious changes in the EFL instruction in ordinary Norwegian schools in order to prepare students better for the English they will encounter in higher education, does indeed support the assumption that academic language does not have a strong enough focus in ordinary EFL. The fact that Hellekjær (2008) even suggests considering replacing traditional EFL instruction with CLIL instruction, indicates that there is indeed a difference between Norwegian EFL students and CLIL students in terms of attained academic English language. In other words, the fact that the current study shows significant difference between IB3 and VG3 participants' average scores on the academic English test as a whole was indeed anticipated.

Despite the fact that the IB3 participants achieved significantly higher scores on the academic English test as a whole, the difference between IB3 and VG3 participants' average scores on Part 3 of the academic English test was not significant. Part 3 of the test implied reading a text and identifying the meaning of underlined words as they were used in the context of the text (see section 3.3.1). It is interesting that a significant difference was not found between IB3 and VG3 participants on Part 3 of the academic English test. The underlined words in Part 3 are academic words which are included in Coxhead's (1998) Academic Word List. Academic vocabulary frequently occurs in academic texts (Coxhead, 2000; Bauman & Graves, 2010), and is thus one element of academic aspects of language which one is likely to learn in educational context. Being part of an IB programme implies getting instruction of non-language subjects in English, which furthermore implies reading more academic text in English than what is the case for students in ordinary Norwegian schools. For this reason, it seems reasonable to assume that the IB3 participants would have attained more extensive academic English vocabulary through reading in school, and therefore also would achieve better scores on tasks which mainly focus on such vocabulary knowledge. The fact that a significant difference was not found between the IB3 and VG3 participants on Part 3 of the academic English test is therefore surprising.

There could be several reasons to explain the non-significant difference between the VG3 and IB3 groups on Part 3 of the academic English test. One explanation may be that students in IB programmes do not necessarily attain more extensive academic vocabulary than students in

ordinary Norwegian schools. After all, vocabulary is one of the main challenges second language learners of English face in academic context (Vongpumivitch, Huang & Chang, 2009). It may thus very well be that both the IB3 and VG3 participants find academic vocabulary challenging, since both groups of participants mainly consist of native Norwegian speakers who learn English as a second language. Another explanation may be that there is indeed a difference between the VG3 group and the IB3 group, but the test is not sensitive enough to find a significant difference between the two groups. In other words, the tasks in Part 3 of the academic English test may have been too easy for both groups, i.e. neither group found the tasks difficult. Of a maximum possible score of 3 points, the average score in both the VG3 group (mean = 2.57) and the IB3 group (mean = 2.73) were relatively high. Thus, this could indicate that the tasks were too easy and therefore did not reveal a significant difference between the two groups. The fact that a significant difference was found between the VG3 group and the IB3 group in Part 4 of the academic English test supports this assumption. Part 4 implied reading a text and completing sentences about the content of the text (see section 3.3.1) and thus examined reading comprehension. The fact that IB3 participants (mean = 2.64) on average achieved higher scores on Part 4 than VG3 participants (mean = 2.35) may indicate that the IB3 participants had a better comprehension of the text they read. Since comprehending a text implies comprehending the vocabulary in it, it seems likely that the IB3 groups' higher average score on Part 4 of the academic English test indicate that they have higher knowledge of academic vocabulary than the VG3 participants.

A higher level of academic English language proficiency was not only evident in terms of reading comprehension, but was also evident in the VG3 participants' ability to identify suitable (academic) language for a missing part of an academic English language text. As already mentioned, a significant difference was found between the VG3 group and the IB3 group in Part 1 of the academic English test, but not in Part 2. Yet, the fact that a significant difference was found in one out of two parts in the academic English test which examined participants' ability to identify academic language may indeed indicate that the IB3 participants had better ability to identify academic language. It is not unlikely that the tasks in Part 2 of the academic English test were too easy for both groups, i.e. the tasks might not have been sensitive enough to reveal a significant difference between the two groups. The fact that both the VG3 group (mean = 2.84) and the IB3 group (mean = 2.91) achieved average scores which were both relatively close to the maximum possible score of 3 points, may indeed indicate that Part 2 might have been too easy for both groups.



To sum up, a significant difference was found between the VG3 group and the IB3 group in two out of four parts of the academic English test, and also in the academic English test as a whole. Hence, the results indicate that the IB3 participants on average have a higher level of academic English language proficiency than the VG3 participants.

The IB3 participants' higher average scores on the academic English test seemed to correspond with the participants' self-reported understanding of own achievements on the test. A higher percentage of the IB3 group (77.2%) than the VG3 group (42.9%) said that they either felt very or quite confident that their answers on the whole test (all four parts) were correct. These findings thus seem to suggest that the IB3 students felt more confident with their completion of the academic English test than the VG3 students did.

### **5.3 The third prediction**

The third prediction was that students in IB programmes would achieve averagely higher scores on the general English test as a whole (all four parts) than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools. Yet, the difference in average scores between the two groups was predicted to be less clear on the English general test than on the academic English test.

Surprisingly, no significant difference was found between the two groups of participants on the general English test as a whole. The non-significant difference is surprising because it seems reasonable to assume that CLIL instruction implies using English in terms of both academic and non-academic language styles, which thus would mean that IB students not only use academic English more frequently than VG3 students, but also use general English more frequently. The reason they are likely to do so is because they can be expected to use English more frequently in conversational context during schooling per week than students in ordinary Norwegian-language schools usually do. IB students are therefore more frequently provided with opportunities in which they can practice and develop their skills related to conversational fluency in English. They may for instance use English in conversations or discussions in class, in communication with teachers and maybe even in conversation with peer students during breaks. In other words, students in IB programmes may in the context of schooling be expected to also further develop their BICS which concern conversational fluency in language (Cummins, 1980). Yet, no significant difference was found between the VG3 and IB3 groups in terms of average scores on the general English test as a whole.

One possible explanation for the non-significant difference could be that there is actually a significant difference between the two groups in terms of general English language proficiency, but that the general English test was not sensitive enough to find such a difference. After all, there was one part of the general English test in which a significant difference was found between the two groups, namely Part 2, i.e. one of the parts in which participants needed to identify suitable (general) language for a missing part of a text. The fact that a significant difference was found between the VG3 and IB3 groups in one out of four parts of the general English test could therefore indicate that there *is* a difference between the two groups in terms of general English language proficiency, but that three of the parts were not comprehensive enough to find a significant difference. It could for instance be that the tasks in the three parts with non-significant differences were too easy for both the VG3 and IB3 participants. After all, of a total of 11 points, the average scores for the VG3 group (mean = 8.76) and the IB3 group (mean = 9.27) were relatively high.

Another possible explanation of the non-significant results of the general English test could be that the VG3 participants encounter English more frequently in their spare time than the IB3 participants do, and that this makes up for the difference in exposure in schools and results in similar BICS in the two groups. However, the results from the self-report questionnaire indicate that the IB3 participants encounter English more frequently in their spare time than what VG3 participants do (see section 4.1). Only in the context of traveling abroad and in English classes at school do higher percentages of the VG3 group than of the IB3 group report that they use English to communicate with others (see table 1 in section 4.1). As mentioned before, it is important to remember that the results in table 1 show the contexts in which participants use English to communicate with others, but not necessarily *how often* they use it in those contexts. Yet it seems reasonable to assume that the IB3 participants use English more frequently to communicate with others, since one is usually gaming online more frequently than one is traveling abroad. Thus, the results do indeed seem to indicate that the IB3 participants encounter English more frequently during their spare time than what the VG3 participants do.

It is interesting that a higher percentage of VG3 participants (93.9%) than IB3 participants (86.4%) said that they use English to communicate with others when they are in English classes at school. Note that the question asked about the context of *English classes* at school, not school *in general*. Hence, if the alternative said schooling in general, more IB3 participants would probably select that alternative since they are part of CLIL instruction and

thus use English more frequently also in terms of communication in the context of schooling than students in ordinary Norwegian schools do. Yet, it is interesting that 13.6% of the IB3 group did not report that they use English to communicate with others in English classes at school. It might naturally be the case that some of the participants did not read the question properly and therefore did not report truthful answers, which thus means that the real percentage of IB3 participants who use English to communicate with others in the context of English classes could be higher. However, it might also be the case that some IB3 participants genuinely do not feel like they use English to communicate with others in English classes. If so, this may suggest that traditional EFL instruction provides more time for communicative exercises than what IB programmes do, which would imply that English classes in IB programmes focuses more on reading and writing than speaking and listening. It is not unlikely that traditional EFL instruction concentrates more on communicative exercise than IB programmes, given findings on Norwegians' achievements in English as a second language. As seen in section 2.3, Norwegians have one of the highest English-language proficiencies in the world (Bonnet, 2004; MCG, 2009; EF EPI, 2016), but often face challenges when encountering (academic) English (Hellekjær, 2005; 2009; 2010; 2012b). Moreover, Norwegians are more likely to perform like native speakers in terms of general English than in terms of academic English (Busby, 2015). Thus it is not unlikely that Norwegians' high English language proficiency levels in terms of BICS (Cummins, 1980; 2008) result from focus on communication in traditional EFL instruction, in addition to various sources of (general) English language in Norway (Bonnet, 2004). After all, Hellekjær (2008) points out the need for serious improvements in Norwegian EFL instruction in order to prepare students for the English they will encounter at university or college level. It would be interesting to examine whether such a change should imply giving less focus on speaking and listening and more focus on reading and writing. To sum up, another explanation for why no significant difference was found between the VG3 and IB3 participants in average scores on the general English test as a whole may potentially be a difference in focus on communicative contexts in English classes. That is, it might be the case that traditional Norwegian EFL instruction focuses more on speaking and listening activities, whereas English instruction in IB programmes focuses more on reading and writing activities. This explanation is additionally supported by IB students' high academic abilities (IBi, n.d.; IBf, n.d.)

The fact that there is no significant difference in average scores between the VG3 and IB3 groups on the general English test as a whole does, however, bear out the prediction that the difference in average scores between the two groups is less clear on the general English test than on the academic English test. That is, there *is* a significant difference between the two groups on the academic English test, but there is *not* a significant difference between the groups on the general English test. Hence, the difference between the two groups is clearer on the academic English test than on the general English test. The results thus seem to suggest that the IB3 students have clearly higher language proficiency than the VG3 students in terms of language proficiency in academic English.

To sum up, the non-significant difference between the VG3 group and the IB3 group on the general English test could be explained by the VG3 participants' high level of BICS, which *could* actually be so high that there is no significant difference between the two groups. However, another likely explanation is that due to the VG3 participants' high levels of BICS, the general English test was simply too easy for both groups to be able to identify any significant difference between them. Thus, a more sensitive, i.e. more difficult, test would be needed in order to reveal a significant difference between the VG3 and IB3 groups. Importantly, though, the non-significant difference found in the general English test as a whole and the significant difference found in the academic English test as a whole do bear out the prediction that there is a clearer difference between the two groups in terms of academic language proficiency than general language proficiency in English.

A higher percentage of the IB3 group (90.9%) than the VG3 group (77.5%) said that they either felt very or quite confident that their answers on the general English test as a whole (all four parts) were correct. These findings seem to suggest that the IB3 participants felt more confident with their achievements on the general English test than the VG3 participants did. Yet, among the participants who felt quite or very confident, the difference in percentage between the two groups was lower for the general English test (13.4% more of the IB3 group than the VG3 group reported that they felt quite or very confident) than for the academic English test (34.3% more of the IB3 group than the VG3 group reported that they felt quite or very confident). The fact that the difference of the VG3 and IB3 participants' self-reported understanding of their own achievements on the test is smaller in the general English test than in the academic English test thus corresponds with the fact that no significant difference was found on average scores between the two groups on the general English test.

It should be mentioned that unexpected findings are uncovered when comparing the average scores and the self-reported confidence on the two tests. The results namely show that although the average scores for both groups are higher on the academic English test (VG3 mean = 9.39, IB3 mean = 10.14) than on the general English test (VG3 mean = 8.76, IB3 mean = 9.27), the groups' self-reported findings are not higher on the academic English test. Whereas 77.2% of the IB3 group and 42.9% of the VG3 groups said that they either felt quite or very confident that their answers on the academic English test as a whole were correct, 90.9% of the IB3 group and 77.5% of the VG3 group said the same for the general English test. In other words, although self-reported results and average test scores have concurred so far in the discussion, these results show an unexpected discrepancy which is difficult to explain and which could indeed be interesting to examine more carefully.

#### **5.4 Summary and limitations**

To sum up, the reported test results may arguably bear out most of the predictions, i.e. the first, the second and half of the third prediction. *The first prediction*, i.e. that students in IB programmes would show greater ability to distinguish between academic and general English language, can be argued to be borne out by the significant differences found in participants' results between the VG3 and IB3 groups in two out of four possible parts (Part 1 of the academic English test and Part 2 of the general English test) examining this ability. *The second prediction*, i.e. that students in IB programmes would achieve higher average scores on the academic English test than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools, was borne out by the significant difference found in participants' average scores on the academic English test as a whole. *The third prediction*, i.e. that students in IB programmes would achieve higher average scores on the general English test than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools, was not borne out since no significant difference was found between the two groups. Nevertheless, the non-significant difference between the two groups in the general English tests did bear out the second part of the third prediction, i.e. that the difference in average scores between the two groups would be less clear on the general English test than on the academic English test.

Furthermore, for the most part the self-reported results concurred with the test scores. That is, there was predominantly a greater difference in how difficult participants found the tasks in the tests or how confident they felt that their answers were correct when a significant difference was found in average scores between the VG3 and IB3 groups than when there was

no significant difference. Yet, an interesting discrepancy was found when comparing VG3 and IB3 participants' average scores on the two tests and their confidence on having answered correctly, i.e. a difference which is difficult to explain.

The predictions were, in other words, predominantly borne out, although the findings were not always as clear as expected. The less clear findings may be explained by various factors. Firstly, the predictions could be incorrect. That is, students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools may actually not find academic English language as challenging as expected, and also, there may not be a difference between students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary school and student in IB programmes in terms of general English language proficiency. Secondly, there might indeed be a clear difference between students in IB programmes and students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools when it comes to academic and non-academic English language proficiency, yet the tests were not sensitive or comprehensive enough to find the differences. That is, more thorough tests than the tests used in the current study might be needed in order to find the differences between VG3 and IB3 groups. Thirdly, students in IB programmes might find academic English language as challenging as students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools. If this is the case, using a native English speaking control group could have resulted in clearer findings.

Lastly, the tests' validity may also explain why some results were not as clear as expected. As already mentioned, both tests were pilot tested on a total of 8 native Norwegian speaking adults in order to ensure that questions were understandable and tasks were feasible. Adjustments were made to clarify identified confusions. Thereafter, the two tests were also pilot tested on two native English speakers. The native English speakers generally gave expected answers on both tests, which thus indicate that the tests are valid. Yet, when asked to select the *least likely answer* in Part 1 and Part 2 of the two tests, very variable and unsystematic answers were provided by the VG3 and IB3 participants. The results thus indicated that the assumption that the *least likely answer* would be interpreted as the alternative with inappropriate style *and* language errors was not valid. Therefore, the *least likely answers* in Part 1 and Part 2 of both tests were excluded from the analysis. Consequently, the results of the tests which eventually were included in the analysis did not seem unsystematic, and it thus seems reasonable to assume that those data from the test battery which were included in the analysis did indeed reflect what the test was expected to test.

## 6 Conclusion

In this thesis, Norwegian upper secondary school students' proficiency in academic and general English language and their ability to distinguish between the two language styles have been investigated. The study was carried out by testing last year students in ordinary upper secondary schools and in IB programmes using a test battery specifically designed for this study, and comparing their scores. The findings suggest that student in IB programmes have a higher level of academic English language proficiency (CALP) than students in ordinary upper secondary schools, and that they have better ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic language styles. Furthermore, the non-significant difference between the two groups in the general English test seems to suggest that there is a clearer difference between students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools and students in IB programmes in terms of academic English proficiency than in terms of general English proficiency.

Various measures can be taken in order to further study Norwegian upper secondary school students' proficiency in academic and general English and/or their ability to distinguish between the two language styles. Firstly, using more comprehensive tests in the study could be useful. That is, more sensitive tests could better detect significant differences between the VG3 and IB3 participants. Furthermore, a greater number of participants in both groups could possibly also contribute to clearer results. Moreover, it could be useful to compare students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools to upper secondary schools students in English-speaking countries, i.e. students who are native English speakers. Using native English speakers as control group could potentially result in different findings than the finding reported in the current study. Furthermore, it could be interesting to more carefully examine correlations of background factors, such as English usage in students' spare time, and test scores. Last but not least, it could be interesting to carry through a more careful study on Norwegian upper secondary students' productive skills. That is, some parts of the tests used in the current study intended to examine not only reading *comprehension*, but also implications for language *production*. Therefore, it could be interesting to carry through a proper study of actual English tests completed by students. In conclusion, the current study has provided results which could be further researched in a number of interesting ways.





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## **Appendix A**

### **The Relevance of the Work for the Teaching Profession**

The English subject curriculums concerning compulsory and optional English instruction in Norwegian schools both emphasize the importance of learning about different language styles and contexts in which they are typically used. To exemplify, the English subject curriculum concerning compulsory English instruction points out that “[t]o succeed in a world where English is used for international communication, it is necessary to be able to use the English language and to have knowledge of how it is used in different contexts [...] [t]his involves being able to distinguish between oral (spoken) and textual (written) styles and formal and informal styles”. In other words, attaining knowledge about different language styles and developing ability to distinguish between them is something which is expected of students in Norwegian schools. Hence, English teachers are obliged to teach about different language styles and contexts in which they are typically used. This may be argued to apply particularly for teachers in programmes for specialization in general studies, since such programmes aim to prepare students for future studies in college or universities. Having a good command of (academic) English language is essential when studying in higher education, as English increasingly is used as the language of reading and instruction in college and universities. The reported results indicate that students in IB programmes have a higher level of academic English language proficiency than students in ordinary Norwegian upper secondary schools, and that they are also more able to distinguish between academic and non-academic language styles. Hence, the results may suggest that students in ordinary Norwegian schools might need to improve their academic English language proficiency levels. The findings and the discussion of the results might therefore remind English teachers that general English language is frequently encountered by students in their spare time, whereas academic English language is typically only encountered in schooling. As an English teacher, it is therefore important to prioritize time to help students develop their academic language proficiency.

Source: <https://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03?lplang=eng>



## Appendix B

### Information to participants<sup>6</sup>

#### Informasjon om testen

#### *Information about the test*

Note: English text further down.

---

Formålet med denne testen er å studere engelskferdighetene hos elever i videregående skole. Resultatene fra undersøkelsen vil bli brukt i min mastergradsoppgave i engelsk ved Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet (NTNU), og de kan bli publisert i tidsskrift e.l.

Det er frivillig å delta, og alle opplysninger behandles konfidensielt. Datamaterialet anonymiseres ved prosjektslutt, senest ved utgangen av 2017. Resultatene fra undersøkelsen vil bli presentert slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes.

Vennligst besvar alle spørsmålene i én økt. Bryter du av underveis, vil du ikke kunne komme tilbake til svarene dine. Du samtykker i å delta i undersøkelsen ved å svare på spørsmålene og sende dem inn ved å klikke på «Ferdig» på siste side.

Takk for at du er villig til å delta!

Thea Selle Opdal  
mastergradsstudent

Anne Dahl  
førsteamanuensis, veileder  
Institutt for språk og litteratur, NTNU

---

*This English test intends to study high school students' English proficiency. The results from the test will be used in my master's thesis in English at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), and may be published in journals etc.*

*Participation is voluntary, and all information is treated confidentially. The accumulated data will be anonymized once the project is completed, at latest by the end of 2017. The study's results will be presented in such a way that no individuals can be recognized.*

*Please answer all the questions in one session. Breaking off before you have completed the whole test prevents you from being able to get back to your answers. You consent to participate in the study by answering the questions and submitting them by clicking "Ferdig" ("Submit") on the last page.*

*Thank you for participating!*

*Thea Selle Opdal  
M.A. student*

*Anne Dahl  
Associate Professor, supervisor  
Department of Language and Literature, NTNU*

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<sup>6</sup>The information in this appendix was provided at the beginning of each part of the survey, i.e. the academic English test, the general English test and the self-report questionnaire. The information was identical in each of the three parts, except for the fact that the headline was adjusted to suit each specific part.

---

For å kunne koble sammen svarene dine på de ulike delene av denne undersøkelsen, trenger vi en anonym kode. Til dette bruker vi følgende informasjon:

Spørsmålene under må besvares - uten dette vil vi ikke kunne koble sammen svarene dine.

---

*We need an anonymous code to be able to link together the different parts of this study. For this we need the following information:*

*The questions below must be answered - otherwise we will not be able to link together your answers.*

---

Dagen i måneden du ble født (ett eller to tegn):

*The day of the month you were born (one or two characters):\**

Første bokstav i navnet til den første skolen du begynte på som barn (ett tegn):

*The first letter in the name of the first school you went to as a child (one character):\**

Første bokstav i etternavnet ditt (ett tegn):

*The first letter in your surname (one character):\**

De tre siste sifrene i mobiltelefonnummeret ditt (tre tegn):

*The last three digits of your cell phone number (three digits):\**

---

NB: Vennligst dobbeltsjekk at det du har skrevet i de fire feltene ovenfor er korrekt!  
Pass på at du har skrevet de tre siste sifrene i mobiltelefonnummeret, i rett rekkefølge.

---

*NB: Please check that your answers in the four fields above are correct!  
Make sure that the last three digits of your cell phone number are in correct order.*

---

Trykk «Neste» for å komme til neste side.  
Merk: du kan ikke gå tilbake til tidligere sider etter du har trykket «Neste».

*Click "Neste" ("Next") to continue to the next page.  
Note: you are not able to return to previous pages once you have clicked "Neste" ("Next").*

**Neste**



## Appendix C

### The Academic English Test

### Reading Comprehension Test 1

Page 2 of 7

#### PART 1

#### Topic: Civil Rights and Black Power

In each task below there is a text with a missing part (marked with "\_\_\_\_\_"). You are given four alternatives. Firstly, read the whole text. Then select the alternative you find *most* and *least* likely of being the missing part.

One hundred years after the Emancipation Act of 1863, African Americans in the US, especially in the South, were still at the receiving-end of gross racial injustice. A "separate but equal" doctrine was enforced in 1896-97, when the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was not discrimination. Some Southern states followed up by passing legislation that prohibited most African Americans from voting. African Americans were not only economically and politically oppressed, but were also often subject to race-induced violence.

In 1954, the "separate but equal" doctrine received its death blow in the Brown v. Board of Education case of 1954: "...We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal..." \_\_\_\_\_ And by now, Black Americans were tired of waiting. The next decade would see the emergence of two different approaches to gaining civil rights for all: a non-violent and a violent approach.

In column **1**, please select the alternative you find *most* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

In column **2**, please select the alternative you find *least* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

	1	2
But the law wasn't very clear on when people should use it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This legislation was, however, very vague as to when it should be enforced.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
But the law wasn't very clear on when people should use them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This legislation was, however, very vague as to when it should be enforced.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

While non-violence helped bring about such important legislation as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, many activists were becoming increasingly discontented with the slow pace of progress. Like the activists of the Civil Rights Movement, their goal was complete racial equality. The main difference between the two movements was that supporters of Black Power were prepared to use violent methods to achieve these goals.

Proponents of the Black Power Movement did not constitute a homogenous group. They divided themselves into two main groups: the pluralists and the nationalists. Those who believed in integration and that it was possible for all races to live together peacefully were called pluralists. \_\_\_\_\_ The man who popularized the term "black power", Stokely Carmichael, started out as a pluralist, but eventually became a nationalist.

In column **1**, please select the alternative you find *most* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

In column **2**, please select the alternative you find *least* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

	1	2
People which were nationalists wanted something else. They believed that white people where better, and that they should treat black people bad. They also wanted to make they're own society because they didn't want to be part of the American society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The nationalists, however, believed that the dominant White culture was bound to oppress Black culture, therefore, they wanted to withdraw from American society and develop their own society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People who were nationalists wanted something else. They believed that white people were better, and that they should treat black people badly. They also wanted to make their own society because they didn't want to be part of the American society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The nationalist, however, believed that the dominant White culture was bound two oppress Black culture, therefore, they wanted to withdraw from american society and develop their own society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How did you find selecting the most and least likely alternatives in the tasks above?

- Very difficult   
 Quite difficult   
 Okay   
 Quite easy   
 Very easy   
 Don't know

The two texts above are excerpts from a text written by Karin Dwyer Loken.

Note: the text excerpts have been slightly adapted.

Neste

## PART 2

### Topic: The Fifties and the Sixties in the USA

In each task below there is a sentence with a missing part (marked with "\_\_\_\_\_"). You are given four alternatives. Rank the alternatives from most to least likely of being the missing part.

**1** is the *most* likely alternative and **4** is the *least* likely alternative.

(Select one answer in each column)

A source of discontent was \_\_\_\_\_ the African American population.

	1	2	3	4
the continued racial discrimination against	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
how lots off people were disrespectful and mean two	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the continue racial discrimination against	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
how lots of people were disrespectful and mean to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The Kennedy administration worked to \_\_\_\_\_ in addition to promoting the Civil Rights Bill to ensure civil rights for African Americans equal to those of the white population.

	1	2	3	4
make sure they took better care of sick people and taught students better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improve medical care and education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
make sure they takes better care of sick people and taught student's better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improved medical care and educasion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The 1960s was also \_\_\_\_\_; in particular within space technology.

	1	2	3	4
a decades on great technological advances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
a time when technology got better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
a decade of great technological advances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
a times when technology get better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How did you find ranking the alternatives in the tasks above?

- Very difficult   
  Quite difficult   
  Okay   
  Quite easy   
  Very easy   
  Don't know

The three sentences above are excerpts from a text written by Åse Elin Langeland and Karin Dwyer Løken.  
 Note: the text excerpts have been slightly adapted.

**Neste**

### **PART 3**

#### **Topic: The Cold War Era - Post War Reconstruction**

Please read the whole text below. In each of the following tasks, please select the alternative that best describes the meaning of the underlined word as it is used in the sentence in the text below.

Until 1939, the USA had a modest army, having practiced a policy of isolationism: avoiding involvement abroad. After the war, this was no longer an option. In the period of World War II, the USA had become a leading world power. Most of the fighting had taken place on European soil and, though the Allies had won the war, they had suffered extensive damage. In 1945, the USA had an industry and an oil production that was virtually untouched by the war, making it the world's richest nation. In addition, it had established a position as a superior military force. No post-war depression occurred, on the contrary; the rebuilding of Europe and the fight against communism kept American industry growing rapidly.

Until 1939, the USA had a modest army, having practiced a policy of isolationism: avoiding involvement abroad.

- something that is more complicated than necessary
- taking part in something
- embarrassment
- a romantic relationship between two people

After the war, this was no longer an option.

- an agreement or contract that gives someone the right to buy or sell something such as property or shares at a future date
- something that causes misfortune
- a number of subjects which a student can choose to study as part of his or her course
- something that you can choose to do in preference to one or more alternatives

No post-war depression occurred, on the contrary; the rebuilding of Europe and the fight against communism kept American industry growing rapidly.

- recovery and success
- a mental state in which you are sad and feel that you cannot enjoy anything
- a time when there is very little economic activity or economic decline
- a surface in an area which is lower than the parts surrounding it

---

How did you find selecting the alternatives that best described the underlined words in the tasks above?

- Very difficult     Quite difficult     Okay     Quite easy     Very easy     Don't know
- 

The text above is an excerpt from a text written by Karin Dwyer Loken and Åse Elin Langeland.  
Note: the text excerpt has been slightly adapted.

**Neste**

## **PART 4**

### **Multiculturalism**

Please read the whole text below. In each of the following tasks, please select the alternative that best completes the sentence.

---

Trends in recent years seem to suggest a twofold approach to multicultural policies. On the one hand, there is an urge to maintain the specialities of the different ethnic groups' distinctiveness, while on the other hand, there seems to be an appeal for all groups in given societies to assimilate and embrace the country's traditions, values and national identity. Many Western countries seem relaxed about the notion of double identity; that there is no problem in keeping the identity from your home country and, at the same time, developing a sense of national identity in the country of habitat.

A twofold approach to multicultural policies ...

- has developed in the past two years
- has developed because of people's recent enthusiasm for fashionable clothing
- is a recent development
- is suggested by stylists

The two approaches to multicultural policies imply ...

- making the identity of different ethnic groups as similar as possible
- encouraging intergration by different ethnic groups
- trying to make as many people from different ethnic groups as possible live in the one and same country
- making different ethnic groups completely leave behind their former traditions and embracing the traditions in the country they have moved to

In the context of the text, a double identity implies ...

- leaving an old identity behind and developing a new identity
- having a very strong national identity
- being unwilling to integrate into a new culture
- feeling a connection to two different countries

How did you find completing the sentences in the tasks above?

- Very difficult
- Quite difficult
- Okay
- Quite easy
- Very easy
- Don't know

How confident do you feel that your answers on this test (all four parts) are correct?

- Very confident
- Quite confident
- Not confident
- Don't know

The text above is an excerpt from a text written by Per Lysvåg.

Note: the text is an adaption of a text from Thomson Holiday Reviews' website.

**Neste**

**Page 6 of 7**

Did you look up the meaning of any words while completing this test?

- Yes
- No

How many words did you look up?

- 1 or 2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- More than 10

**Neste**

**Page 7 of 7**

For å sende inn svarene dine og samtykke i å delta i undersøkelsen,  
vennligst klikk på «Ferdig».

*To submit your answers and consent to participate in the study,  
please click "Ferdig" (= "Submit").*

**Ferdig**



## Appendix D

### The General English Test

### Reading Comprehension Test 2

#### PART 1

#### Topic: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (a novel)

In each task below there is a text with a missing part (marked with "\_\_\_\_\_"). You are given four alternatives. Firstly, read the whole text. Then select the alternative you find *most* and *least* likely of being the missing part.

I can tell you one thing that happened. I was in the shopping mall, because that's where I go lately. For the last couple of weeks, I've been going there every day, trying to figure out why people go there. It's kind of a personal project.

There was this one little boy. He might have been four years old. I'm not sure. He was crying really hard, and he kept screaming for his mom. He must have been lost. Then, I saw this older kid, who was maybe seventeen. I think he went to a different school because I had never seen him before. \_\_\_\_\_ The little boy answered and stopped crying.

Then, the older kid walked away with the little boy.

A minute later, I heard the intercom say to the mom that her boy was at the information desk. So, I went to the information desk to see what would happen.

In column **1**, please select the alternative you find *most* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

In column **2**, please select the alternative you find *least* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

	1	2
The youth had a tough image, due to the fact that he had long hair and wore a leather jacket. He approached the little boy and asked for his name.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anyway, this older kid, which was really tough-looking with a leather jacket and long hair and everything, went up to the little boy and asked him what he's name was.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The youth have a tough image, due to the fact that he had long hair and wore an leather jacket. He approached the little boy and asked for his name.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anyway, this older kid, who was really tough-looking with a leather jacket and long hair and everything, went up to the little boy and asked him what his name was.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The best thing about my psychiatrist is that he has music magazines in his waiting room. I read an article about Nirvana on one visit, and it didn't have any references to any honey mustard dressing or lettuce. They kept talking about the singer's stomach problems all the time, though. It was weird.

Like I told you, Sam and Patrick love their big song, so I thought I'd read it to have something to discuss with them. In the end, the magazine compared him with John Lennon from the Beatles. \_\_\_\_\_ She said he was like Jim Morrison if he was like anybody, but really, he isn't like anybody but himself. We were all at the Big Boy after Rocky Horror, and it started this big discussion.

Craig said the problem with things is that everyone is always comparing everyone with everyone and because of that, it discredits people, like in the photography classes.

In column **1**, please select the alternative you find *most* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

In column **2**, please select the alternative you find *least* likely of being the missing part of the text above.  
(Select one answer)

	1	2
I later informed Sam about the magazines comparison, witch seemingly upset her very much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I told that to Sam later, and she got really mad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I later informed Sam about the magazine's comparison, which seemingly upset her very much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I told that too Sam later, and she get really mad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How did you find selecting the most and least likely alternatives in the tasks above?

Very difficult   
  Quite difficult   
  Okay   
  Quite easy   
  Very easy   
  Don't know

The two texts above are excerpts from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky.  
Note: the text excerpts have been slightly adapted.

Neste

## PART 2

### Topic: *Apple and Rain* (a novel)

In each task below there is a sentence with a missing part (marked with "\_\_\_\_\_"). You are given four alternatives. Rank the alternatives from most to least likely of being the missing part.

**1** is the *most* likely alternative and **4** is the *least* likely alternative.  
(Select one answer in each column)

I know that Pilar isn't my wife or anything. \_\_\_\_\_ other friends. But I can't help feeling jittery with jealousy.

	1	2	3	4
She may be grant having	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
She's allowed to have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
She may be granted having	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
She's allowed two have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



I wish I could tell her \_\_\_\_\_ She's meant to be my best friend. We used to share our biggest secrets with each other.

	1	2	3	4
about recently occurring incidents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
everything that's been happening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
about recent occurring incidents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
everything that's been happening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I call Mum again and again and again, but every time I do, it goes straight to answerphone. \_\_\_\_\_ call me if she gets back before I do, and head out to search for her.

	1	2	3	4
I've got no choice but to stick a note in the front door for Anna telling her to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The only remaining option is to instruct Anna that she must	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've got no choice but to stick a note on the front door for Anna telling her to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The only remaining options is two instruct Anna that she must	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How did you find ranking the four alternatives in the tasks above?

- Very difficult     Quite difficult     Okay     Quite easy     Very easy     Don't know

How did you find ranking the four alternatives in the tasks above?

- Very difficult     Quite difficult     Okay     Quite easy     Very easy     Don't know

The sentences above are excerpts from *Apple and Rain* by Sarah Crossan.  
Note: the text excerpts have been slightly adapted.

Neste

### PART 3

#### Topic: *Avatar* (film from 2009)

Please read the whole text below. In each of the following tasks, please select the alternative that best describes the meaning of the underlined word as it is used in the sentence in the text below.

Once again, Canadian-born producer James Cameron offers an abundance of eye-candy and food-for-thought, to moviegoers. Development of the science fiction film *Avatar* began in 1994 and filming was to take place after the completion of *Titanic*. However, Cameron was not satisfied with the technology which he had at the time and decided to postpone filming until it became advanced enough to portray the world he had created. The latest technology in 3D-filming that Cameron uses will have you jumping off your seat. So if you haven't yet seen this awesome film, put on your 3D glasses and get ready for a journey into space that you will never forget! PS: If you're on a tight budget, the less expensive 2D version is also more than enough to wet your appetite!

Once again, Canadian-born producer James Cameron offers an abundance of eye-candy and food-for-thought, to moviegoers.

- to speak to or give something to a god
- when a product costs less than it used to cost
- to keep away
- to give

So if you haven't yet seen this awesome film, ....

- again
- so far
- to look with your eyes wide open
- even so

... put on your 3D glasses and get ready for a journey into space that you will never forget!

- an adventure
- an empty area that can be used
- what lies outside the earth's atmosphere
- to look into the air without looking at anything special

How did you find selecting the alternatives that best described the underlined words in the tasks above?

- Very difficult
- Quite difficult
- Okay
- Quite easy
- Very easy
- Don't know

The text above is an excerpt from a text written by Catharine Ruud.

Note: the text excerpt has been slightly adapted.

Neste

## PART 4

### Topic: Thomson Holiday Reviews

Please read the whole text below. In each of the following tasks, please select the alternative that best completes the sentence.

So you've read the brochure, seen the photos and it looks great. But what's it really like? If you want to know what other holidaymakers think of your choice of hotel, resort or destination, then you've come to the right place. Check out these honest holiday reviews from past travellers and get the low-down on the food, location and pretty much the whole shebang. You can also leave your holiday review once you've been there to help others make the right choice. So what are you waiting for? Now's your chance to tell it like it really is. Write a holiday review of a recent destination you've visited and let others in on what they have in store.

The holiday reviews on this webpage are written by ...

- travel agents
- owners of hotels and resorts
- people who have visited the place being reviewed
- Mr. Thomson

You are asked to write a holiday review to ...

- let others know where you want to travel
- tell people about how you experienced a certain holiday destination
- apply for a room at a hotel or resort
- tell people about products which are being sold at a destination you have been to

The holiday reviews ...

- can be read in a brochure
- are made up
- are sent to you by post
- are based on personal experiences

How did you find completing the sentences in the tasks above?

- Very difficult
- Quite difficult
- Okay
- Quite easy
- Very easy
- Don't know

How confident do you feel that your answers on this test (all four parts) are correct?

- Very confident
- Quite confident
- Not confident
- Don't know

The text above is an excerpt from a text written by Per Lysvåg.

The text excerpt is adapted from a text from Thomson Holiday Reviews's website.

[Neste](#)

Page 6 of 7

Did you look up the meaning of any words while completing this test?

- Yes
- No

How many words did you look up?

- 1 or 2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- More than 10

[Neste](#)

Page 7 of 7

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*To submit your answers and consent to participate in the study,  
please click "Ferdig" (= "Submit")*

[Ferdig](#)



## Appendix E

### The Self-Report Questionnaire<sup>7</sup>

All participants (in both the VG3 group and IB3 group) were asked the following questions:

1) What is your native language? *(Please select all that apply)*

*This question must be answered, because the answer determines which questions you will be asked later in the questionnaire.*

English    Norwegian    Other

2) Do you have more than one native language?

Yes    No

3) Gender

Male    Female

4) How old are you? *Please fill in the number of whole years and whole months in the fields below.*

Years: \_\_\_\_\_ Months: \_\_\_\_\_

5) Do you have any diagnosis that would affect your reading? *(Please select all that apply)*

I have trouble with my eyesight

I have trouble with my eyesight, but wear glasses/contacts to correct my vision

I have dyslexia

I have problems with attention or understanding (e.g. ADHD, Asperger's)

I have difficulties with reading which I'd prefer not to specify

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6) What are your guardians' highest completed levels of education?

*If you only have one guardian, select an answer in the first row only.*

	High school (up to year 10)	High school (up to year 12/13)	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree (PhD)	Don't know
Guardian 1						
Guardian 2						

7) How many *non-school* books have you read in your spare time during the past year?

None    1-3    4-6    7-12    More than 12

8) Approximately how many of those books were in English?

0%    1-25 %    25-50 %    50-75 %    75-100 %

---

<sup>7</sup> The self-report questionnaire was provided in Norwegian for the VG3 group and in English for the IB3 group. In this appendix, the questions are only provided in English. The questions were predominately identical for the two groups, although a few questions were asked in one of the groups only. All the questions are included in this appendix.

9) Are you planning to study at university/college after high school?

*This question must be answered, because the answer determines which questions you will be asked later in the questionnaire.*

- Yes  No  Don't know

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question “Are you thinking of studying at university/college after high school?” was “yes”**

10) What are you thinking of studying at university/college? (*Please select all that apply*)

- |  |  |                                     |   |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture          | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics     | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fine Art              | <input type="checkbox"/> IT              | <input type="checkbox"/> Languages  | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing and health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Physics         | <input type="checkbox"/> Law        | <input type="checkbox"/> Education          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biology               | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry       | <input type="checkbox"/> Business   | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering           | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify: _____ |  |                                     |   |

11) What profession do you wish to enter in the future?

- Don't know  Profession: \_\_\_\_\_

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question “What is your native language?” was “Norwegian”**

12) How much time in total have you spent abroad where English was your main language of communication?

- No time  Up to 4 weeks  1-6 months  7-12 months  1-2 years  More than 2 years

13) Please list all the countries where you have stayed in total for 4 weeks or more and used English as your main language of communication:

*You may name up to 10 countries. Leave all the fields empty if you haven't been in any such country.*

County 1: \_\_\_\_\_

County 2: \_\_\_\_\_

County 3: \_\_\_\_\_

County 4: \_\_\_\_\_

County 5: \_\_\_\_\_

County 6: \_\_\_\_\_

County 7: \_\_\_\_\_

County 8: \_\_\_\_\_

County 9: \_\_\_\_\_

County 10: \_\_\_\_\_

14) How many years have you been learning English in school?

- Less than 8 years  8-9 years  10-11 years  12-13 years  More than 13 years  Don't know

15) How often do you use subtitles when watching movies/TV shows in English?

- Never  Sometimes  Often  Always

16) If you have the choice, which language do you prefer the subtitles to be in?

- English  Norwegian

17) Approximately how often do you write in English (*not including writing for school*)?

- 6-7 days per week  1-5 days per week  1-5 days per month  Rarer  Never

18) When do you use English to communicate with others? (*Please select all that apply*)

- When communicating with friends/partner/family from abroad  
 When writing for an international audience (e.g. online)  
 When gaming online  
 When traveling abroad  
 When I'm in English classes at school  
 Never  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question “Are you thinking of studying at university/college after high school?” was “yes”**

19) How important do you think it is for you to know English for your future studies at university/college?

- Not important  Somewhat important  Quite important  Very important  Don't know

20) How important do you think it is for you to know English for your future career?

- Not important  Somewhat important  Quite important  Very important  Don't know

21) How important do you think it is for you to know English for entertainment or social reasons?

- Not important  Somewhat important  Quite important  Very important  Don't know

22) How easy/difficult do you find *reading* in English?

- Very easy  Somewhat easy  Moderate  Somewhat difficult  Very difficult  Don't know

23) How easy/difficult do you find *writing* in English?

- Very easy  Somewhat easy  Moderate  Somewhat difficult  Very difficult  Don't know

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question “Are you thinking of studying at university/college after high school?” was “yes”**

26) Do you think the English you learn in school prepares you for the English you will encounter at university/college?

- Definitely not  Only partly  Mostly  Definitely not  Don't know

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question “Are you thinking of studying at university/college after high school?” was “yes”**

27) How worried are you about having to read required course readings in English at university/college?

- Not worried  Somewhat worried  Quite worried  Very worried  Don't know

28) How easy/difficult do you find reading the text types listed below *in English*?  
 (Please select one answer per row)

	Easy	Somewhat easy	Moderate	Somewhat difficult	Difficult	I don't read this type of text
Novel (at school)						
Novel (chosen by myself)						
Short story (at school)						
Short story (chosen by myself)						
Textbook (at school)						
Article in newspaper/magazine/online (at school)						
Article in newspaper/magazine/online (chosen by myself)						
Subtitles (film / TV shows)						
Blog						
Online gaming						

29) How easy/difficult do you find reading the text types listed below *in Norwegian*?  
 (Please select one answer per row)

	Easy	Somewhat easy	Moderate	Somewhat difficult	Difficult	I don't read this type of text
Novel (at school)						
Novel (chosen by myself)						
Short story (at school)						
Short story (chosen by myself)						
Textbook (at school)						
Article in newspaper/magazine/online (at school)						
Article in newspaper/magazine/online (chosen by myself)						
Subtitles (film / TV shows)						
Blog						
Online gaming						



30) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the English-language *factual texts* you read for school? (*Please select one answer per row*)

*Note: "Factual texts" are texts that provide information rather than tell stories (e.g. newspaper articles and textbooks)*

	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat agree	Agree
I understand most words I read					
I understand most sentences I read					
I think English-language factual texts are easy to read					
I like to read English-language factual texts					

31) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the English-language *literary texts* you read for school? (*Please select one answer per row*)

*Note: "Literary texts" are texts that tell stories (e.g. novels and short stories)*

	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat agree	Agree
I understand most words I read					
I understand most sentences I read					
I think English-language factual texts are easy to read					
I like to read English-language factual texts					

32) How often do you find that it takes longer to read in English than in Norwegian?

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  Always  Don't know

33) How difficult do you find the activities below *in English*? Please rank the activities in order of difficulty, where **1** is *least* difficult and **4** is *most* difficult (*Please select one answer in each column*)

	1	2	3	4
Reading				
Writing				
Speaking				
Listening				

34) How difficult do you find the following activities *in Norwegian*? Please rank the level of difficulty, where **1** is *least* difficult and **4** is *most* difficult (*Please select one answer in each column*)

	1	2	3	4
Reading				
Writing				
Speaking				
Listening				

35) How important do you think the following sources have been for your language development in English? (*Please select one answer per row*)

	Not important	Somewhat important	Quite important	Very important	Don't know
English lessons at school					
Reading English-language books in your spare time					
Watching English-language movies / TV shows					
Communicating in English with friends					
Reading English-language articles online in your spare time					
Reading English-language texts for school (e.g. textbooks, novels, short stories, etc.)					
Communicating in English with people online (e.g. online gaming)					
Reading English-language subtitles when watching movies / TV shows					
Speaking English when traveling abroad					

36) Are there any other sources that have been important for you when you have been learning English? If so, please describe below.

---

37) Is there a particular book / TV show / movie / game that you remember learning English from? If so, please name it below.

---

38) If a friend wants to learn more English, what would you suggest he/she tries?

---

Only IB3 participants were asked the following questions:

Which country do you live in?

*This question must be answered, because the answer determines which questions you will be asked later in the questionnaire.*

Norway  The United States of America  The United Kingdom  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What grade are you in? *Please fill in one or two digits.*

\_\_\_\_\_

What English class are you currently taking in school?

*Please name the English class you are taking in the field below. If you are not any English classes, please write "Not taking English".*

\_\_\_\_\_

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question "What country do you live in?" was "Norway"**

How long in total have you been living in Norway?

*Please fill in the number of whole years and whole months in the fields below.*

Years: \_\_\_\_\_ Months: \_\_\_\_\_

What type of school / educational programme are you in?

International Baccalaureate (IB)  International School  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How long in total have you been studying at an English-speaking school/educational programme in Norway? *Please fill in the number of whole years and whole months in the fields below.*

Years: \_\_\_\_\_ Months: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you at any point been studying at an English-speaking school/educational programme in a country other than Norway?

Yes  No

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question "Have you at any point been studying at an English-speaking school/educational programme in a country other than Norway?" was "yes"**

How long in total have you been studying at an English-speaking school/educational programme in a country other than Norway? *Please fill in the number of whole years and whole months in the fields below.*

Years: \_\_\_\_\_ Months: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you at any point been studying at a Norwegian-speaking school?

Yes  No

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question "Have you at any point been studying at a Norwegian-speaking school while living in Norway?" was "yes"**

How long in total have you been studying at a Norwegian-speaking school?

*Please fill in the number of whole years and whole months in the fields below.*

Years: \_\_\_\_\_ Months: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you at any point been living in an English-speaking country?

Yes  No

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question “Have you at any point been living in an English-speaking country?” was “yes”**

How long in total have you been living in an English-speaking country(ies)?

*Please fill in the number of whole years and whole months in the fields below.*

Years: \_\_\_\_\_ Months: \_\_\_\_\_

**This question was hidden unless the answer to the question “Have you at any point been living in an English-speaking country?” was “yes”**

Please name the English-speaking country(ies) you have lived in.

*You may name up to five countries.*

Country 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Country 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Country 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Country 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Country 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Only VG3 participants were asked the following question:

Which English class are you taking?

Social Science English  English Literature and Culture  Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_