Camilla Rostad

Speak up!

Exploring ESL teachers' facilitation of students' oral interaction

Preface and Acknowledgements

About myself:

I have worked as a teacher in lower and upper secondary school for 8 years, and the lack of students' oral participation has often questioned me, both as teacher in English as well as in other language subjects. It has been almost four and half years since I started on this path towards a master's degree in English and foreign language didactics. Ten years of higher education and four years of combining teaching with master's studies are now coming to an end.

Acknowledgements:

This master's thesis is a result of intensive and interesting work. It has provided me with new knowledge both on a professional and a personal level. It has provided me with new perspectives on language learning, and it has made me reflect on how I teach English and particularly how I facilitate students' development of oral skills. There are many people who have contributed so that I could reach the finish line and complete the project.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my academic supervisor, Anita Normann. Your enthusiastic encouragement, constructive suggestions and useful critiques throughout the entire process have been very much appreciated. Thank you for believing in me. I would also like to thank my academic co-supervisor, Hildegunn Otnes, for constructive feedback and recommendations.

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At times, it has been demanding to combine the role as a mother, wife, teacher, co-worker and student. Ola, Frida, Giulia and Ruben, thank you for your support and understanding, and for giving me time and space when I needed it. I cannot wait to share moments with you again. I also want to thank my colleagues for their encouragement, and a special thanks to the school administration for giving me room and time to write.

Camilla Rostad

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Abstract

In light of our world becoming smaller and the global need for advanced English language skills have increased, this thesis aims to explore how ESL teachers facilitate students' oral participation and teach oral skills. I wish to gain insight into how the teachers perceive their own facilitation, and furthermore how their students regard their own participation and their teachers' endeavours.

To answer this, a research project was conducted among two ESL teachers and their students in a lower secondary school in Northern Norway. Data was gathered from in-depth interviews with two teachers, focus group interviews with two groups of students and I also observed two English lessons with each teacher.

I found that due to the teachers' awareness concerning reluctant students, the teachers' facilitation of students' oral participation could be increased and developed further. The most important finding was the lack of correlation between how the teachers and the students perceived the given room for oral activity. The study also found that the teachers perceived their lessons as varied and with focus on oral participation. Still, the activities did not seem to facilitate students' oral participation even if that was the teacher's intention. Several aspects seemed to hinder longer sequences of target language use. Furthermore, the students gave an impression of liking the English subject but were at the same time aware of their lacking oral participation. Insecurity and fear of failure were among the reasons given by both the teachers and the students as explanations to the reluctant students' oral participation among the participating students.

The study emphasizes a need for an increased focus on how teachers facilitate students' oral participation and teach oral skills. To meet global and national demands, teachers should to a greater extent explain what is expected by the students and focus more on metalinguistic competence. In addition, teachers can do more to promote good learning conditions to diminish the students' insecurity and fear of failure. I am convinced that this might lead to an enhancement of students' oral skills in English, which again can lead to them becoming better equipped to encounter the global future that awaits them.

Keywords: Facilitation, oral participation, target language, oral skills, lower secondary school

Sammendrag

I lys av at verden blir stadig mindre, og at det globale behovet for avanserte engelskspråklige ferdigheter øker, søker denne avhandlingen å utforske hvordan engelsklærere legger til rette for muntlig deltakelse blant elever og hvordan de arbeider med muntlige ferdigheter. Jeg ønsker å få innsikt i hvordan lærerne oppfatter sin tilrettelegging, og også hvordan deres elever opplever sin egen deltakelse og lærernes innsats.

For å svare på dette, ble et forskningsprosjekt gjennomført blant to engelsklærere og deres elever på en ungdomsskole i Nord-Norge. Data ble samlet inn gjennom dybdeintervju med to lærere, fokusgruppeintervju med to elevgrupper, samt at jeg observerte to engelsktimer med hver lærer.

Jeg fant ut at til tross for lærernes bevissthet omkring motvillige elever, så kunne lærernes tilrettelegging for å skape økt muntlig deltakelse både økes og utvikles. Det viktigste funnet var mangel på korrelasjon mellom lærernes og elevenes oppfattelse av rom for muntlig deltakelse. Studien fant også ut at lærerne oppfattet timene sine som varierte og med fokus på muntlig deltakelse. Likevel virket det ikke som om aktivitetene la til rette for muntlig deltakelse blant elevene, til tross for at dette var lærernes intensjon. Flere aspekter så ut til å forhindre lengre sekvenser med bruk av målspråket. Videre ga elevene et inntrykk av å like engelskfaget, men var samtidig bevisst på sin manglende muntlige deltakelse. Usikkerhet og frykt for å mislykkes var blant grunnene som ble gitt av både lærere og elever for å forklare elevenes motvillige muntlige deltakelse.

Studien understreker behovet for et økt fokus på hvordan lærere legger til rette for muntlig elevdeltakelse og hvordan man underviser muntlige ferdigheter. For å møte globale og nasjonale krav, bør lærere i større grad forklare elevene hva som forventes av dem. I tillegg kan lærere gjøre mer for å fremme et godt læringsmiljø for å redusere elevenes usikkerhet og frykt for å mislykkes. Jeg er overbevist om at dette kan føre til en økning av elevers muntlige ferdigheter i engelsk, og som igjen kan lede til at de blir bedre rustet til å møte den globale framtida som venter dem.

Nøkkelord: Tilrettelegging, muntlig deltakelse, målspråk, muntlige ferdigheter, ungdomsskole

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1. Introduction

English is a universal language, and we live in a globalized world where we are predicted to meet and communicate with people from other countries all the time. Throughout the years, languages have been taught in many ways, and scholars have simultaneously tried to find the optimal way for students to learn a language. As times have changed, we now see ourselves living in a world where more advanced skills are increasingly demanded through education and job opportunities, and at the same time, this leads to new requirements for language teachers.

Developing learners' communicative competence is the most central aim of language teaching, and language teachers are often encouraged to take an eclectic approach based on their specific teaching and learning situation (Skulstad, 2018, p. 56), and when focusing on communicative competence and oral skills, most language teachers would presumably acknowledge the importance of students' oral participation as an approach to language learning.

Being a teacher means being an allrounder. You are expected to give lessons that are enjoyable, varied, interesting and meaningful. You are expected to serve a class consisting of numerous students with different interests and different abilities. Being a teacher also means that you must adapt the way you teach according to the given student group, but also to new curricula and shifts in pedagogy. All things considered, being a teacher means that your job is to prepare and equip students, so they can encounter the unknown world and the opportunities that awaits them.

In this chapter I will first give an outline of the background and purpose of the current study, before I continue with presenting the research question and explaining relevant terminology. Further, I comment on the responsibility of the ESL teacher, before presenting previous research on the field and the relevance of the study. At the end of the chapter I briefly outline the choice of methods and research design, and in addition the thesis structure will be introduced.

1.1 Background and purpose

The descriptions in the previous section clearly outline some of the responsibilities of English teachers. There are many elements that together form the background of this research project. Firstly, the project is a result of my own experiences as a teacher. From before, I know that

most classes are filled with curious students and many of them seem to like the English subject. Nonetheless, I have registered that many classes only have a handful of students who participate orally. Due to this, I believe there is a need for an altered focus on how we approach the high number of reluctant students. In line with the description above, it is my opinion *we,* as teachers, that must act if we want our students to increase their level of participation and increase their oral skills in English. Secondly, through this master's degree programme, I have seen a need for developing the didactic competence among teachers. Working as a teacher means that we have to teach according to a common basis consisting of national curricula and a European framework[1] outlined by the Council of Europe. It is my firm belief that students deserve teachers who constantly try to develop professionally, and the purpose of this research project has been to explore how two English teachers in lower secondary education in Norway facilitate students' oral participation and focus on communicative competence in their English classrooms.

Thus, this master's thesis attempts to shed light on the two teachers' own perception of teaching and facilitation of oral participation and compare it to their classroom practise. I hope to illuminate new perspectives on how teachers approach the topic of facilitating oral participation, and how they can increase oral student participation in class. My intention is to explore the situation of language teachers, but also to inspire language teachers to take a critical look at their own practice.

1.1.1 Research question and my project

The overall purpose of this study is, as already mentioned, to learn about teachers' reflections and practices around own approaches to teach oral skills and communicative competence. The main research question is:

> *To what extent is there a compliance between teacher cognition and the way students' oral interaction is facilitated in the classroom?*

However, since I am also interested in how the students perceive their own oral participation, and also their teachers' approaches to facilitate oral interaction, two additional questions have been outlined:

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[1] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – I will come back to this document in Chapter 2.

How do students perceive their own oral participation?

How do students perceive their teacher's approaches to facilitate oral interaction?

In order to find answers to these questions, I interviewed and observed two English teachers who work in lower secondary school. Over a period of two weeks I interviewed the teachers, two groups of students, one from each teacher's class, and I observed two English lessons in both classes. During the period I observed the two classes, they read an extract from a novel called "The Giver" written by Lois Lowry. I was not given any information about the lessons beforehand, and I had told the teachers to give ordinary lessons. With my research questions as a starting point, I wished to examine how teachers understood the importance of students' oral participation as an approach to develop oral, communicative skills and how it was facilitated. I also wanted to study if and how their cognition affected their classroom practice.

1.1.2. Definitions of terms

To avoid ambiguity and to allow for a common understanding, I find it necessary to briefly define some terms that will be frequently used in the thesis. The use of the term *second language* refers to the English language. This is in keeping with the *Knowledge Promotion*, where the terminology distinguishes between a learner's second and third language. The latter is languages like French, German and Spanish, and the curriculum refer to those as *foreign languages* (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013). The term *communicative competence* will in this thesis refer to a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skills needed for communication (Canale and Swain, in Bagaric and Djigunovic, 2007, p. 96). In the context of second language teaching, *oral participation* is defined as speaking in the target language while engaged in instructional tasks or activities (Delaney, 2012). During the study I refer to the term *authentic.* And there are several ways of interpreting the word. On the field of language learning one often come across words as "authentic text", "authentic task" and so forth. Since the classroom should try to mirror the real world, real world sources should form the basis for classroom learning (Richards, 2006). Throughout the text I refer to the entire project as *a study*, *a research project* or *the thesis.* When I refer to the students and the teachers who took part in the interviews, I also refer to the *respondents*. The teachers were given pseudo names, and when I refer to a specific student, I refer to *student* + a number.

1.2 The responsibility of the ESL teacher

Scholars are constantly trying to find the optimal way for students in a classroom to learn a foreign language, and to this day they still have not reached any general agreement on the issue. Over the years, the approaches of language learning have altered, and they all come with strengths and weaknesses. According to Drew and Sørheim (2016), the attitude of many language teachers today, is that language learners will benefit from a balanced approach which includes features of several approaches. Thus, that way English teachers will give their students the opportunity to understand the English language, to practise it and to produce it.

The *Knowledge Promotion* curriculum is the latest reform in the 10-year compulsory and upper secondary education. It is heavily influenced by the European trends in foreign language Education (Drew & Sørheim, 2016), and it defines five basic skills, which are integrated into each subject. This research project focuses on one of the skills, namely the students' ability to express oneself orally. This means that English teachers are responsible for developing students' skills to express themselves in English. According to Svenkerud, Klette and Hertzberg (2012), teachers should focus on oral skills because the linguistic turn and the strong influence of sociocultural theory has turned language into the most important tool for thinking and learning. It is also well documented how language and linguistic hegemony in school contributes social reproduction (Svenkerud, Klette, & Hertzberg, 2012, p. 35).

If I were to ask my students to characterize "the good ESL teacher", I would probably receive many different answers. Hopkins and Stern (1996) refer to a comparative study of policies aimed at improving teacher quality that depicted good teachers as those who try to improve to help students learn. Further, the study stated that good teachers keep up with changing conceptions of their subject matter and continually add to their repertoire of instructional methods. Increasingly, teachers are diversifying their pedagogical strategies to incorporate pupil-centered and small-group techniques. In addition, reflection also became a defining characteristic of quality teachers. The study also concluded that changes in education and society placed new demands on teachers (Hopkins & Stern, 1996, p. 508). Thus, teachers need to organize their practise in line with students' need and the demands from a constantly changing society.

1.3 Previous research and the relevance of this study

Hopkins and Stern (1996) claim that teachers are at the heart of educational improvement, and even though the study they refer to, mentioned in the previous paragraph, was published in 1993, I would claim that that a teacher in 2018 should fulfil identical requirements to be considered "a good teacher". However, since the students and the society are in constant change, new and updated research on the field is necessary to continue the improvement of language teaching.

Several studies have previously been conducted to shed light on the topic I chose for this thesis, to explore the compliance between teacher cognition and teacher practice in light of facilitating oral participation and teaching communicative competence. In his article, *Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do*, Simon Borg (2003) summarizes other researchers work on cognition. The article served as a point of departure to get a grasp of the different terms being used to explain the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching. In the article he argued that educational research clearly shows that there the teachers' cognition has an impact on teachers' professional lives. He focuses on three main areas that serves as a framework for research on teacher cognition: prior language learning experience, teacher education and classroom practise. Scott Thornbury (1996) examines students' oral participation and teacher facilitation. In the article, *Teachers research teacher talk*, Thornbury outlines different features of a communicative classroom. His outline helped me navigate through the analysis of the gathered material of the current study. Steve Walsh (2002) from The Queen's University in Belfast wrote an article about the construction and obstruction that take place in the ESL classroom. The article focuses on raising teachers' awareness to the degree of communicativeness in their classroom interactions. It made me realize that some of my own teacher language in class does not necessarily facilitate my students' language production. This was something I brought with me into this research project.

In a Norwegian context, scholars like Olga Dysthe and Frøydis Hertzberg are among those who have contributed with research on the field. It is relevant to mention that I am aware of the fact that Dysthe and Hertzberg did not conduct their research by gathering material from Norwegian ESL classrooms. Nonetheless, Dysthe (1995) wrote about the multivoiced classroom, based on observations from two American high schools and one Norwegian upper secondary school. Hertzberg (2012) explored the field of teaching oral skills, and her study was based on observations gathered from the Norwegian subject in six different lower secondary schools.

Despite these differences, I found their studies relevant, and their work has benefited this study by providing much information about Norwegian students and teachers. All of these, but also other articles, have served as a foundation for my research. It helped me understand the importance of explicit teacher facilitation as an approach to increase students' oral participation. In the subsequent paragraph, I am going to illustrate why my research project is highly relevant.

There are several reasons why I believe this study is relevant. First of all, it is relevant because educational research is important in itself. Exploring classroom practices is a way of developing as a teacher. Through this study, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the symbiosis of the classroom, and on a more personal level, I hope that taking a step back and observing other teachers can gain future students of mine. Secondly, it is important because this will raise an awareness of the situation in English classrooms in Norway. My impression is that many teenagers believe that their English skills are above average, and I can agree that there are many good aspects regarding their English, such as intonation, wide vocabulary and so forth. However, I will claim that the students still need to increase their abilities to be able to master the English-speaking reality that awaits them when they leave school, and it is our job as teachers to equip our students with the tools they need to succeed. A good mastery of oral English is one such important tool. That being said, despite a thorough research process, the limitations of the current study must be acknowledged. The last paragraph of this section will comment on the limitations of the research.

1.3.1 Limitations of the research

The purpose of the current study is not to measure a concrete learning outcome, but it is an attempt to examine teacher cognition related to facilitation of students' oral participation, and to shed light on how this facilitation can improve. The outcome of the study derives from two teachers' perceptions of their own practice, from classroom observation and from the perceptions of two student groups. Hence, the current study does not give a categoric answer as to how English teachers facilitate oral participation. Furthermore, there might be some limitations related to how data was gathered. First of all, I followed the teachers and their students over a short amount of time. If I had prolonged the observations, interviewed several teachers, and observed more classes, this would have provided me with additional data, and therefore strengthened the validity of the project. Secondly, my presence may have influenced the respondents of the study. During the observations, my presence could also have had an effect on the students' behaviour, thus, which in turn could have inhibited student participation.

Further, the quality of the interview was significant for the quality of the forthcoming analysis. As a researcher it is important to avoid biased interviews. Sharing occupation with the respondents might cause prejudice, and there is always a chance of the respondents giving answers they know the researcher wants. Chapter 3 will in further detail present the validity and reliability of the current study.

1.4 Methods and research design

This is an empirical study where I examine teachers' perceptions as a phenomenon. I have therefore chosen a qualitative approach as a research design. Since phenomena are difficult to examine based on quantitative methods only, I have chosen to conduct interviews and observations as methods for gathering data. A more detailed description of the choice of methods are presented and described in Chapter 3.

The research project was carried out in a lower secondary school in Norway with two teachers who taught English in 10th grade. The two teachers' classes consisted of 20-25 students each. Why I did not use my own students or colleagues as respondents is an aspect that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.5 Chapter summary and thesis structure

This study focuses on how two English teachers in lower secondary school, in light of their cognition, facilitate for students' oral participation. It also seeks to explore how students of the two participating teachers perceived their English lessons. To explore this topic, I have outlined one research question and two sub-questions. The theoretical background for the research project will be outlined in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I will present the methods used to gather data. Furthermore, in Chapter 4 I will present the findings of the study, in a descriptive analysis of the gathered data material. Then, the findings will be discussed in Chapter 5, before the thesis is summarized and the research questions are reviewed. At the end, I will also comment on the significance of the current research project and how it can contribute to the field of English didactics, before I present suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical Framing

To understand why oral interaction is the foundation for language learning, it is necessary to focus on relevant theories that illustrates this. This chapter aims to provide further information about the theories this study is based upon. I start by presenting the sociocultural perspective before I shed light on communicative competence as a theoretical concept. Secondly, I describe Communicative Language Teaching as an approach to teaching English, and briefly comment on the role of the teacher and the student. Further, I will focus on the connection between how the concept "communicative competence" is presented in the Common European Framework of Reference and the Norwegian curriculum, before I end the chapter by touching upon the relevant topics "teacher cognition" and "students as autonomous learners".

Second language acquisition research has come to recognize the influence of the sociocultural environment in second language learning (Lantolf, 2007). Lev Vygotsky argued that language development appears as a result of social interaction (Lantolf, 2007, p. 31). The sociocultural theory (henceforth, SCT) claims speaking and thinking to be interwoven. SCT is a theory particularly designed to take account of the interaction and the organic unity of mental and social process. Vygotsky explains that human mental activity arises because of the internalization of social relationships, culturally organized activity and symbolic and physical artefacts, in particular language (Lantolf, 2007).

Learning by talking

Speaking intercedes thinking, which means that people can gain control over their mental processes as a consequence of internalizing what others say to them and what they say to others. This internalizing is thought to occur when an individual interacts with an interlocutor within his or her zone of proximal development (Henceforth, ZPD). Vygotsky defines the ZPD (Figure 2.1) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, in Lantolf & Appel, 1994, p. 10).
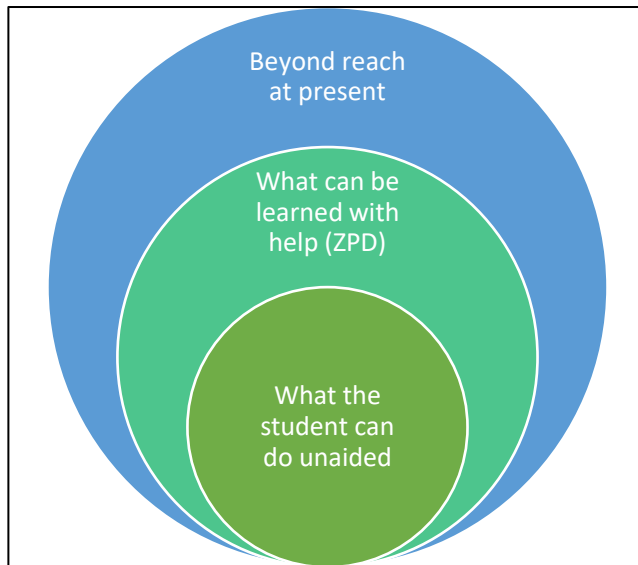
Figure 2.1 Zone of Proximal Development

As shown in Figure 2.1, ZPD is a metaphorical site where a learner can co-construct knowledge with an interlocutor. The ZPD has captivated educators and psychologists for a number of reasons. One is the notion of assisted performance, which, though not equivalent to the ZPD, has been a driving force behind much of the interest in Vygotsky's research. Another compelling attribute of the ZPD is that, in contrast to traditional tests and measures that only indicate the level of development already attained, the ZPD is forward looking through its assertion that what one can do today with mediation is indicative of what one will be able to do independently in the future (Williams & VanPatten, 2015, p. 199) According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), this is, in a situation in which the learner can perform at a higher level because of the support (scaffolding) offered by an interlocutor (Lightbown and Spada, 2013, p. 118). This is relevant for my study because both the teacher and peers serve as interlocutors through oral interaction, and an increased focus on facilitating students' oral participation will also help enhancing the development of students' skills.

The term *scaffolding* derives from cognitive psychology and first language research (Lantolf & Appel, 1994, p. 40) and refers to a process where a more knowledgeable speaker helps a less knowledgeable learner by providing an interactional framework that the learner can build on (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 146. Research shows that learners working together reach a higher level of performance by providing assistance to one another. This is relevant for this study because observation might show to what extent students actually interact with each other.

According to Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 114) many scholars have argued that conversational interaction is an essential, if not sufficient condition for second language acquisition, among them Michael Long (1983, 1996). He revised the *interactional hypothesis*, or the interactional approach, which is a theory that attempts to explain the role of interaction in the process of learning a language. It is composed of four major components: *input*, *interaction*, *feedback* and *output*. In Williams and VanPatten (2015), Susan M. Gass and Alison

Mackey describe these four elements, and in the following section these terms will be explained briefly. Input is the component that refers to the language that a learner is exposed to in a communicative context. It is an essential component in language learning. Interaction refers to the conversations the that learners participates in, and it is important because it is in this context that learners receive information about correctness and incorrectness of their utterances. There are two types of feedback: explicit and implicit. Gass and Mackey (Williams and VanPatten, 2015) explains explicit feedback as correction and metalinguistic explanations. Implicit feedback, on the other hand, includes several forms of negotiation strategies. Gass and Mackey list confirmation checks, clarification requests and comprehension in their article, and such strategies are significant for teachers when they negotiate for meaning. The last term, output, deals with learners' language production in the target language, and trough output a language learner can be pushed to reformulate an incorrect utterance to a correct and modified sentence. This hypothesis is relevant for this study because it will benefit the interpretation of the gathered data material. I will come back to the different elements in the discussion in Chapter 5.

Conversational interaction is essential for second language acquisition (Lightbown, 2013, p. 114). Stephen Krashen (1982) was the linguist to introduce the input hypothesis, which points at comprehensible input as an important feature in language learning, but what can be done to make learners comprehend the input? Lightbown refers to Long (1983), who argues that modified interaction is a mechanism that can help language become more comprehensible. Like Gass and Mackey (2015), Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 115) also present three examples on how to modify language. The first is to check the comprehension and ask questions to make sure the learner has fully understood what has been said. Further, the learner can give clarification requests, by asking the speaker to repeat what has just been said, whereas the third example is for the more proficient speaker, where self-repetition is the modifier. The current study may help illuminate teachers' use of the abovementioned strategies.

The Vygotskyan theory has been compared to the interaction hypothesis because of the interlocutor's role of helping learners understand and be understood. However, the two perspectives differ on how they emphasize the internal cognitive process (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 118). In the interaction hypothesis, the emphasis is on the individual cognitive processes in the mind of the learner. Interaction facilitates those cognitive processes by giving learners access to the input they need to activate internal processes. In Vygotskyan theory, the

focus is on the conversations themselves, with learning taking place through the social interaction.

To be able to completely understand the language learning that occurs through interaction, Swain (2000, p. 98) claims that we need to look beyond the comprehension of input to other aspects of interaction that may be implicated in second language learning. Much research has been done to examine how interaction provides many types of opportunities for learners, such as the chance to use the target language. Swain emphasizes the importance of output in language learning and claim the role of output to be underexplored (Swain, 2000). Output will push learners to process language more than with input. The learner is in control with output, and through speaking or writing a learner can "stretch" their interlanguage to meet communicative goals. In other words, to produce, learners need to do something (Swain, 2000, p. 99). One of the reasons for my interest for this topic, is because I agree with Swain's perspective on the importance of output, and my assumption is that the there is a lack of student output in the ESL classroom.

2.1 Communicative competence as a theoretical concept

There is a broad agreement among scholars and teachers, that communication is important in language teaching. The term *communicative competence* is central, and it refers to a student's competence to communicate. However, the term "competence" is controversial in the field of general and applied linguistics (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007). Many scholars have had different definitions and interpretations of the term. To keep it short, I have chosen to focus on the understanding outlined by Canale and Swain in the 1980s, which will be presented in the subsequent paragraph. In the 1970s, the central aim of second/foreign language courses became to develop the learner's communicative competence. A concept that is linked to communicative approaches to second/foreign language teaching and to an understanding of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), an approach that will be elaborated later in this chapter.

How can one measure whether someone communicates successfully? Scholars quickly saw the need for developing clearer sub-competences of the concept of communicative competence. At first Canale and Swain (1980, 1983 in Fenner and Skulstad, 2018) singled out three sub-competences: Grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018, p. 46). *Grammatical competence* refers to the knowledge of lexical items and rules related to morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology. Students can build up

this competence by doing grammar exercises, learning new words or by practicing pronunciation. *Sociolinguistic competence* involves the ability to be aware of sociocultural rules of use. A learner of English may be able to identify sentences but might not be capable of using them in a purposeful or authentic way. The last sub-competence by Canale and Swain, the *strategic competence,* refers to strategies speakers have to use to avoid breakdowns in communication. An example of this is to rephrase if you lack the correct lexical item (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018, p. 46). Later, Canale added a fourth sub-comptenece, namely the *discourse competence,* which is about being able to incorporate grammatical forms and meaning to achieve a unified text in a specific genre.

Skulstad (2018, p. 47) also refers to van Ek (1986) who later added two sub-competences to the term communicative competence. These were sociocultural competence and social competence. The term *sociocultural competence* has to do with language users being familiar with the sociocultural context of an utterance. Van Ek highlighted the importance of being aware of the sociocultural rules regarding appropriateness of the production and interpretation of an utterance. With the term *social competence* van Ek included the focus on the will and skill to communicate. A language learner must be motivated to use the foreign language and be confident to do so (will), and he or she must also be able to face different types of social situations and to show empathy (skill) (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018, p. 47). These sub-competences are important to address, because teachers need to pay more attention to them. By doing so, it will make it easier for them to focus more on teaching communicative competence and to evaluate to what extent their students are willing to learn.

2.2 Communicative Language Teaching

According to Skulstad (2018), language teachers are often encouraged to take an eclectic approach based on their specific teaching and learning situations in the classroom. However, it is evident that the Norwegian English curricula have been based on central ideas of Communicative Language Teaching (Henceforth, CLT) since the 1980s (Skulstad, 2018, p. 58). This is the reason why I decided to give room for CLT in the theoretical framing. In the *Knowledge Promotion* one can find phrases such as "authentic situations", and authenticity is important in CLT. With the introduction of CLT, the view on language went from being a formal structural perspective towards a view that focused on language use (Sullivan, 2000, p. 116). This approach is based on the idea that language is learned through communicating real

meaning. The lessons are meant to be more learner-centred and involve meaningful communication.

Three elements seem to form an underlying learning theory of CLT – The first one is *the communication principle*, which means that activities that involves real communication promotes learning. The second principle is *the task principle*, where the target language is used to carry out meaningful tasks. In the 1980s, meaningful tasks referred to problem-activities where the target language was used as an instrument to solve a task. As a teacher I interpret the term "meaningful task" as tasks being relevant to the students, i.e.. Meaningful topics, meaningful communication situations and so forth. *The meaningfulness principle* is the third element, which focuses on the fact that meaningful language supports the learning process (Skulstad, 2018, p. 55). Even though CLT is not based on one learning theory in particular, its focus on negotiation of meaning and interaction can easily be linked to theories connected to Vygotsky (Skulstad, 2018, p. 55). Today, the main aim of language teaching is to be able to communicate successfully, but how do a teacher know that his or her learners are developing their communicative competence? Skulstad (2018) argues that learning has to do with different aspects, such as motivation, intellectual development, repertoire of learning strategies and learner autonomy. The latter will be elaborated on later in this chapter. This study might shed light on degree of communicativeness in Norwegian ESL classrooms, and it will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

2.2.1 Students as autonomous learners

Facilitating good learning processes is one of the most important tasks that schools have. *The Quality Framework* of the *Knowledge Promotion* emphasizes that the school shall stimulate pupils to develop their own learning strategies and critical-thinking abilities (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2005). In her article, Åsta Haukås (2014, p. 1) emphasizes that the curricula expect students to have knowledge about and be able to reflect on their own language learning.

Developing strategies to become well-functioned skills is demanding for both students and teachers. The Norwegian language subjects' curricula are influenced by work done in the European Council in the 1970s, where a model on autonomation was created. This model seeks to explain the teacher's role to maintain a learning environment where learners can be autonomous in order to become more autonomous. Autonomous learners comprehend the

purpose of their learning programme, accept responsibility for their learning, takes initiative in planning and accomplishing learning activities, and they review and evaluate their own learning. In Norwegian curricula this is defined as to plan, accomplish and evaluate one's own work (Gjørven & Johansen, 2006, p. 211). However, to what extent do English teachers pay attention to the aims in the English subject curriculum that focus on students' language learning awareness? The current study may clarify the role of the students in the learning situation but also say something towards whether the teachers acknowledge their learners as autonomous.

2.2.2 The teachers' role

When it comes to the teacher's role, Sullivan (2000, p. 116) refers to Littlewood (1981) who describes the term "instructor" to be inadequate. This is because the teacher is also the overseer of learning, classroom manager, consultant, and co-communicator. A teacher will present new material, but also give room for learning to take place through independent activities such as pair and group work. In my study I will be looking for how the teachers facilitates oral interaction. What do teachers do to make their students speak? How much time are given to oral interaction, and when the students are given time, do they use the target language?

Olga Dysthe (1995, in Korsvold, 2000, p. 42) claims there are three conditions that facilitate high learning potential: highly engaged students, student participation and teachers' having great expectations. A condition for real engagement and student participation seem to be teachers who believe their students can contribute, and that these beliefs are signalled through questions being asked. The questions ought to be authentic, which means they must be questions the teacher does not know the answer to. It is equally essential that the student response is taken seriously by the teacher and reacted upon in the following conversation. Thus, the demanding engagement applies to the teachers too.

During the last decades, many creative activities and techniques have been designed to develop students' communicative competence. According to Claire Kramsch (1993, p. 93), the different tasks given by teachers can often be very complex, and sometimes even paradoxical. Kramsch' statement refers to tasks that are meant to engage the students, and invite to oral participation, but for different reasons fail to do so. As mentioned above, one of the roles of the teachers, is to facilitate oral interaction, and group work as an activity was mentioned. I believe this is an activity many teachers choose because they want their students to interact and serve as interlocutors. However, Prabhu (1987, in Kramsch, 1993) suggests that group work should not

be used in monolingual classrooms, because students tend to use their mother tongue instead of the target language. He even argues that group work should be discouraged (Kramsch, 1993, p. 75), Further, Prabhu claims that the amount of native language spoken in foreign language classes varies depending on different contextual parameters, such as time constraints, perceived purpose of the activity, size of groups and so forth.

Rod Ellis (1985, in Korsvold, 2000, p. 43) argues that a combination of rich input, the need to communicate, the opportunity to decide what to say and authentic feedback increase the effect of language work in the ESL classroom. As already mentioned, the communicative classroom does not have room for the traditional teacher-led activities where the teacher already knows the answer to the questions being asked. The communicative classroom contains authentic conversations between the teacher and the students (Korsvold, 2000, p. 44). As stated above, the CLT has affected the Norwegian curricula, and with this study I want to explore to what extent teachers in ESL classrooms focus on authenticity and less teacher-led activities. The following section will take a closer look at different policy documents related to language teaching.

2.3. From theories to policy documents

Since 2001 the Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Language, Learning and Assessment (Henceforth, CEFRL) has been used to validate students' language abilities, and it is both a tool for language teachers, for those who plan learning programmes and different types of language certifications (The Council of Europe, 2001). It is relevant to mention the CEFRL in the theory chapter because it forms the base of the Norwegian curriculum, and therefore it serves as an important backdrop for how English teachers are expected plan og execute their teaching of English.

CEFRL describes language users as social agents, who accomplishes different tasks in a society. Such tasks are actions performed by one or more individuals using their specific competence to achieve a goal. Further, the framework describes language use and language learning as follows:

> Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the

competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under various **constraints** to engage in **language activities** involving language **processes** to produce and/or receive **texts** in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9)

The framework emphasizes the development of several competences. I have chosen to include three of the highlighted words in the quote above, dealing with competence, which I find to be relevant for my context.

• *Competences* are the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions.

 • *General competences* are those not specific to language, but which are called upon for actions of all kinds, including language activities.

 • *Communicative language competences* are those which empower a person to act using specifically linguistic means.   (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9)

While Canale and Swain referred to grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence as the sub-competences of communicative competence (Fenner & Skulstad, 2018), the European Council claim linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence to be the components of communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 108). These competences are systematically described in the framework, but due to lack of space, I will not go further into detail here.

In *Framework for Basic Skills* the Directorate for Education and Training (2012) defines oral skills as something that involves mastering different linguistic and communicative activities. It includes being able to listen to others, to respond to others and to be conscious of the interlocutor while speaking (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012, p. 6). This framework also says something about how oral skills are developed, and it argues that language learners must participate actively to be able to master oral genres in constantly more

complex listening and speaking situations (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012, p. 6).

Possessing oral skills are important. For language learners it is significant to practice giving precise utterances, to be able to participate in conversations as a mutual partner and to be able to listen and react to other people's opinions. It is all about managing an active participation in society (Svenkerud, Klette, & Hertzberg, 2012, p. 35). The English subject curriculum even points out that after 10th grade students are expected to choose and use different speaking strategies that are suitable for a given purpose (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013). By *speaking strategies,* I mean knowing how to vary the use of language according to the participants and setting and being able to know how to produce text and to maintain communication (Richards, 2006, p.3) Further, oral and written competence has officially been juxtaposed, both in the Norwegian subject, the English subject, as well as other language subjects. However, according to Svenkerud, Klette and Hertzberg (2012), scholars has not paid enough attention to oral skills compared to the attention given the written skills. Through considerable classroom observation they studied how oral skills was taught on elementary level in Norway, and their findings show that there is little explicit teaching of oral skills. If you compare the amount of time spent on teaching oral skills to the amount spent on teaching written skills, the difference becomes more evident. In language teaching there are long traditions for teaching grammar, spelling, text structure and genre, and teachers often gives extensive feedback on students' written production. In their study, Svenkerud, Klette and Hertzberg (2012) could hardly see any teaching of oral skills. Even though their study was conducted in the Norwegian subject, it is not inconceivable that these findings easily can apply to how teachers act within the English subject. Nonetheless, it is interesting that teachers seem to spend so little time on teaching oral skills and strategies to increase communicative skills, since the Norwegian curriculum emphasizes the importance of oral skills and communicative competence in language learning. As mentioned above, Svenkerud, Klette and Hertzberg gathered material from observing Norwegian lessons, but the oral skills are equally important in the English subject. With their research in mind, the current study can examine whether there is an increased focus on teaching oral skills, and if there are similarities between the two language subjects and the lack of focus.

2.4 Teacher cognition

The current research project aims at exploring the compliance between the teachers' cognition and how they facilitate students' oral interaction. The concept *teacher cognition* is a common feature for research papers in education. The next couple of paragraphs will shed light on the term which is used when trying to explain teachers' judgements, decisions and behaviour.

According to Simon Borg (2003) the term *teacher cognition* refers to the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching. Namely, what teachers know, believe and think. Scholars have recognised that a teacher's cognition has a great impact on how they act professionally. Figure 2.2 origins from Simon Borg (1997, in Borg 2003, p. 82), and it summarises what teachers have cognitions about, how they are developed, and how they interact with teacher learning and classroom practice.
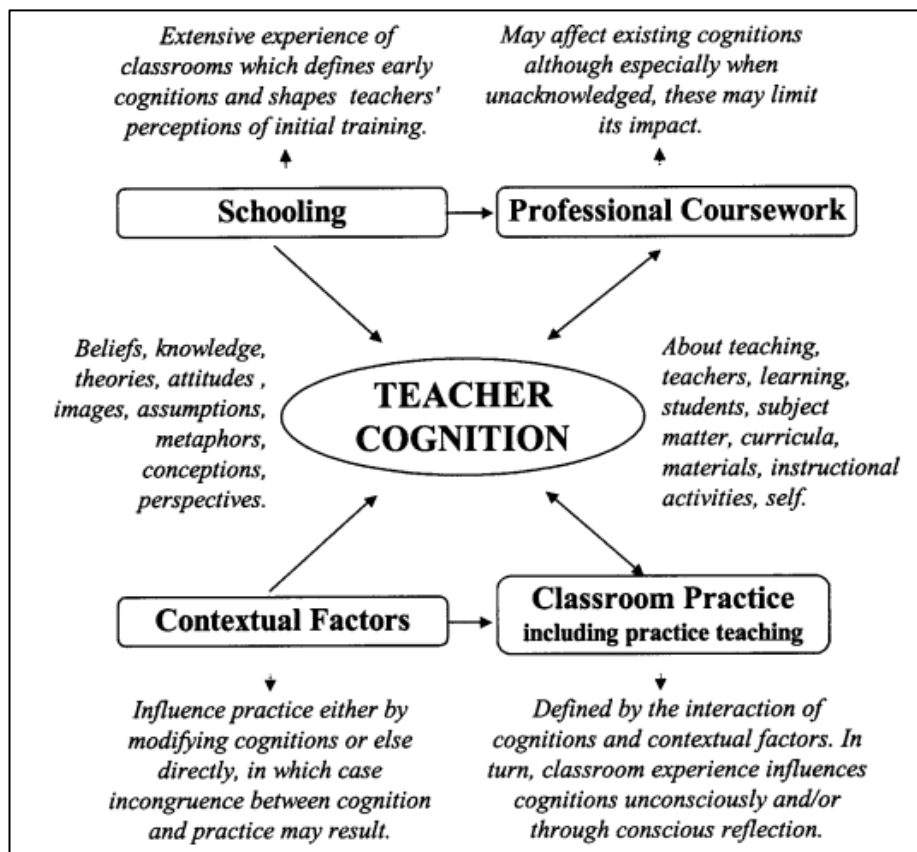

Figure 2.2 Teacher cognition (Borg, 1997)

Research on teacher cognition is concerned with understanding what teachers think, know and believe (Borg, 2009, p. 6). As seen in Figure 2.2, a teacher's cognition is affected by several factors: Schooling, professional coursework, contextual factors and classroom practice. Thus, this project seeks to draw lines between the two teachers' cognitions and their decisions, judgements and behaviour.

2.5 Language learning strategies

Trude Trebbi (1996, in Korsvold, 2000, p. 22) uses the word *learning activities* about everything students do to learn. For learning to occur, an inner process has to take place within the students, so that input is transformed into students' own knowledge. Teachers can facilitate learning, but since learning is an active process, students have to construct their own knowledge. This part of the theoretical framing focus on students' strategies to develop communicative competence.

Students must take control of their responsibility and power to make decisions, and the teachers must give the students the chance to do so. The students must learn to learn, and they have to be aware of the choices they make in the learning process. It is essential that students learn which activities that suits them and their learning (Korsvold, 2000). As mentioned previously in this chapter, the English subject curriculum emphasises that students shall be able to reflect on their own language learning. Åsta Haukås (2014) argues that even though the curriculum demand metacognition, Norwegian students seldom get the chance to reflect upon language and their own language learning together with their peers. She refers to studies that show that awareness of own thoughts and knowledge makes it easier to learn and adapt (Haukås, 2014, p. 2). The human brain always associates, compares, systematizes, categorizes and interprets new input with earlier experiences (Haukås, 2014), and in the ESL classroom, students can develop their metalinguistic awareness, and they are expected to develop their knowledge on language learning. The culture of the classroom plays an important role in fostering strategic learning. Donato and Maccormick (1994) argue that self-investment and use of innovative strategies need to be fostered, rewarded and valued in order to be adopted by most of the students (Donato & Maccormick, 1994). Nonetheless, Haukås (2014) underlines that even though student metacognition has been in the English subject curricula for over a decade, there are several reasons why this still is not an integrated part of language learning education in Norway. She

claims that many teachers lack knowledge about metalinguistic awareness. With this study, I will get the opportunity to see if the teachers make room for metacognitive reflections in their ESL classrooms.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter shows how important it is that language learning occurs in a social context. I have presented theories on communicative language teaching approaches in light of policy documents, theories on what affects the teacher's cognition, and why teachers must facilitate authentic learning processes, where the students are expected to participate using the target language. Finally, I presented theories on the importance of teaching learning strategies. This chapter serves as a theoretical framing for my methods and as a foundation for the discussion in Chapter 5.

3. Methods

In this master's thesis I have chosen to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer my research questions. The focus of this study has been on teachers' cognition related to their own practice with facilitating oral interaction and communicative competence when teaching English. As stated in Chapter 2, by *teachers' cognition* I mean what teachers know, think and mean. With this chapter, I want to clarify the choices I have made concerning the approaches of my research. I will hence both look at methods related to data generation as well as methods related to the analysis of the current study.

The process of the current study started with an assumption that language teachers speak too much in class compared to their students, even though they are highly aware of the fact that language learning happens through oral interaction. Many researchers have already examined the topic, and also criticized teachers for their excessive teacher talking time (Walsh, 2002). This study does not seek to tell the entire truth, because it focuses on *my* interpretations and the personal experiences of the participants, all gained through interviews, observations and digital recordings. However, it pursues to investigate teacher cognition and practice in Norwegian lower secondary schools. The signals we receive from this study might be useful for both me, my colleagues and future language teachers in how we choose to approach teaching of oral skills and communicative competence.

I carried out the data generation through interviews with two teachers, focus group interviews with one student group from each teacher's English class, and I also observed, and audio recorded each class during two English lessons.

3.1 Qualitative methods – The hermeneutical and phenomenological approach

Qualitive methods are prevalent within the fields of social sciences, and they say something about the quality and specific characteristics of the phenomenon being studied (Johannessen, 2010, p. 32). For this study, it was reasonable to choose a qualitative design with hermeneutic phenomenology as research design. By using triangulation of methods, i.e. several methods to gather data, I strengthened the reliability of my research (Dalen, 2008). By using triangulation, one also develops comprehension of phenomena (Patton, 1999).

Hermeneutics is a methodology of interpretation, and the aim for the hermeneutic method is to clarify and to give meaning to the elements being studied. These elements may seem unclear, chaotic, incomprehensible or even incoherent at first (Dalland, 2000, p. 56), but through interpretation we can find an underlying meaning, and we try to interpret when we come across something we do not understand (Gilje, 1993, p. 156). In this situation it is to understand the connection between teacher cognition and teacher practice when it comes to focus on students' oral participation in English class. Further, phenomenology, is a term that points toward an interest to understand social phenomena through the perspective of the participants. The method also seeks to describe the world as it is experienced by the respondents (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 45). One can say that gathered data from qualitative methods are registered as text data, whereas material retrieved through a quantitative approach is registered as numerical data. Why a quantitative approach was relevant for this study will be explained briefly in the subsequent paragraph.

3.2 Quantitative methods

For this current project it was reasonable to include an element of quantitative approach in process of generating data. Due to the assumption previously in the study, there was a need to measure how the two teachers distributed their English lessons. By measuring the amount of teacher talking time and student talking time, these results could be compared to the data from the interviews. Section 3.4 covers a more complementary description of the process.

3.3 Finding respondents

Since this study focused on English teachers and oral interaction in class, it was natural to look to schools to engage respondents. I chose not to contact colleagues at my own upper secondary school. Advantages and disadvantages related to this will be discussed in section 3.7. Instead, I contacted several English teachers working at nearby lower secondary schools and ended up with two positive English teachers at a local lower secondary school who said yes to join my project. They both taught English in 10th grade, and along with their classes consisting of 20-25 students each, they became the selected group for the research project. Both had been teaching English for approximately twenty years, which gave me an impression of them being experienced language teachers. Even though this study mainly aims its attention at teachers and their practice, I found it useful to gather additional data by talking with their students as well.

This was because they spend time with their teachers several hours per week and possess more information than I could within the given time aspect.

As mentioned above, the students, who also became respondents in this study, were 10th graders, which meant that they were 14 or 15 years old. Students in Norwegian schools learn English from they attend school in 1st grade. Thus, most of the students had learned English for more than nine years. Nonetheless, a handful of the students in the two classes came from other countries. Some of them had lived in Norway for a short amount of time, while others had been here for several years. Therefore, the students' English background varied, both when it came to how many years they had studies English, and to how they had learned it. Due to the age of the students and because I had planned to conduct audio recordings, I distributed a consent form for the students and their parents to sign (see consent form, appendix 2). All the students agreed to let me observe and record, but not everyone wanted to be interviewed. I asked the teachers to select six consent-giving students from their classes for the focus group interviews. On request the teacher set up a group of students consisting of low, intermediate, and high achieving students. That way, the group would represent the entire scale of students in a class. Thus, the process of finding respondents resulted in a group of respondents consisting of two English teachers working in lower secondary school, and 12 students. 6 from each teacher's class.

3.4 Collecting data

There are several aspects to consider when choosing methods for data generation. All types of research activities come with limitations, and time aspect, access to respondents and other resources are among the elements to look at before methods are selected. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I chose interviews, classroom observations and digital recording to gather data for my project. It was done over a period of two weeks. First, I interviewed the two teachers, then I observed each class twice, and at the end, I interviewed the two groups of students. By interviewing the teachers, I would gain insight to their thoughts on their own practice. By observing them in them in action, I could compare my observations to what they had said in the interview. By talking to the teachers' students, I would get a third aspect on the topic. Using multiple methods to generate data helped me shed light on different aspects related to the amount of oral production in the English classroom. With that, I was able to gather information about the teachers' thoughts on students' oral contribution in class. In addition, not only did I gain insight to the students' perception of the term communicative competence, but

also on their own experience of being orally active in class. The different stages in the data generating process will be further commented upon in the next paragraphs.

3.4.1 Interviews

The qualitative interview aims to understand a phenomenon seen from the perspectives of the respondents (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 20). I selected interview as one of the methods to gather data, because through talking with the teachers and their students I hoped to get deeper understanding about how they perceived and described their experience with oral interaction in English class.

Through this study, four semi structured focus group interviews were conducted. One with each of the two teachers and one with each of the two student groups. In the interviews with the teachers, the emphasis was on asking them about language learning through speaking and look at this in light of their own practice. The interviews with the two teachers were semi structured but conducted individually. It seemed natural to spend time on speaking with each teacher in private, since the main focus of this study is teacher's cognition and practice. When I spoke with the groups of students, the attention was on their own participation in English class, and on their evaluation of their English education (see interview guides, appendix 3 and 4).

I was determined to conduct the interviews in Norwegian. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, I wanted access to rich data. I believe both the students and the teachers were able to elaborate and give me more details when they could speak in Norwegian. The second reason was to make the students feel secure, and I hoped that by doing it in Norwegian, it could give me more respondents. The statements from the interviews presented in Chapter 4 will therefore be translated into English, whereas the original quotes will be included as footnotes at the bottom of the specific page.

The interviews with the two groups of students were conducted as focus group interviews. This is a form where one gathers a certain number of respondents to discuss one or several topics (Wilkinson, 2004, in Tjora, 2017, p. 123). For my study it was a strategic way of collecting information in a short amount of time, but another advantage is that that this method can seem less threatening for the participants than individual depth interviews because it gives a feeling of being a part of a conversation rather than an interview. (Krueger and Casey, 2000, in Tjora, 2017, p. 123). It could be useful for the students to participate in an interview together with

their peers. That way they can fill each other in, and they can elaborate on each other's utterances. On the contrary, one respondent's presence may affect another respondent's behaviour. In my opinion this has to do with the relationship between the students and social climate within the class.

All four interviews were documented by using a digital recorder and by taking notes, and the interviews were carried out in an agreeable manner. It had been many years since the last time I interviewed anyone, but I believe I learned to handle the situation quickly. Semi structured interviews use interview guides as a starting point, but questions, topics and order can vary (Johannessen et al., 2010). The teachers spoke freely, and I received valuable and relevant answers to my questions. The circumstances were a bit different with the two student groups. In each group there were a few students who dominated, while some of the others did not say that much. To ensure that everyone had the chance to be heard, some of the questions was asked directly to some of the more silent students. If I had chosen in-depth interviews instead, I might have gathered more data from each student, on the other hand, doing a focus group interview allows for some joint reflection, which may lead to other types of reflection as compared to individual in-depth interviews. I will comment on the validity of the current study in the latter part of this chapter.

3.4.2 Observations

As mentioned above, I chose to observe two English lessons with each teacher. Observation is time consuming and resource demanding, but it is an excellent research method to get direct insight to what is being studied. Through observation a researcher must be sensitive to situations and aspects in the environment of study (Tjora, 2017, p. 51), and I chose observation as a second data generating method because by being within the four walls of an English classroom observing the teacher with his or her class, I could gain knowledge and data that had not been acquired through the interviews.

Prior to the observations I chose not to give out too much information to my respondents. Both the teachers and their students had received a consent form telling them that my research focused on classroom interaction and work with basic skills. To gather valid data, I had specifically told the teacher to give regular English lessons. When I entered the classroom, I was presented to their students, and I stressed the fact that I was interested in observing their teacher, in addition I tried find a place to sit so I would not become a disturbing element.

I chose an open observation, where I participated as a present observer. This means that both the teacher and the students were aware of my presence (Repstad, 2007, p. 40), but I chose to take a step back, and not to participate in the lessons in any way. The reason for this, was because I did not want to interrupt the English lessons, and I wanted to observe the teacher and the students in an authentic setting. According to Johannessen et al. (2010, p. 120) it is necessary to conduct the observation in a setting that helps illustrate what the project aims to find an answer to. For that reason, it was reasonable to observe teachers and students in a classroom setting. During these observation situations I used digital audio recording, and I also took fieldnotes. As a result, the observation gave me insight in both teachers' and students' practice and the amount of participation. Since I interviewed the students after the two observed lessons, I could ask questions referring to incidents I had recently witnessed.

3.4.3 Transcription of data

When I had completed the field work, I started transcribing the audio material. To transcribe means to transform an oral text into a written text, and according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, p. 206) transcribed material becomes more structured and easier to analyse. As I transcribed, I got an overview and with this structuring the analysis of the material had begun. A transcription is a concrete reorganization of a verbal conversation that becomes a written text (Kvale &Brinkmann, 2015, p. 210), and at the same time as I listened to the recordings, I wrote down precisely what the respondents said. I kept track of who said what, and I also took note of other expressions, such as pausing, laughter, muttering and so forth. This was done to increase the reliability of the transcription (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 211)

3.5 Methods of analysis

The process of analysing the data started the moment I began collecting them. Thagaard (2018, p. 151) explains this with the fact that during a sequence of observation a researcher reflects on how to understand what is being seen, or how to interpret information given by the respondent during an interview. However, the explicit analysis started after the data had been gathered, and I had received a good overview of the material. I spent much time on listening to the digital recordings and on writing down each interview word by word, moreover, I also spent time on listening to the recordings and going through the field notes from the four sessions of observation. In other words, analysing data is much about categorizing a large amount of unstructured material, so it becomes more reasonable and manageable.

I had both a deductive and an inductive approach to the analysis. A deductive approach means that I had a set of categories with me from the beginning. Further, it aims at testing theory. The inductive approach, on the other hand, means that a new set of categories emerged as the analysing process proceeded. The different categories will be briefly elucidated in the following paragraphs.

In phenomenological designs it is common to analyse the meaning of content (Johannessen et al., 2010, p. 173). Since my study seeks more knowledge about English teachers' cognition of their own teaching practice, I found it relevant to go through the material using a content analysis. The different steps of the analysis will be explained in the following paragraphs.

3.5.1 Qualitative and quantitative analysis

When I analysed the interviews, I benefited from the four steps of a phenomenological content analysis (Malterud, 2003, in Johannessen et al., 2010). To begin with I approached the material deductively, I analysed the transcribed material based on a set of categories based on the theoretical framing of this study, but also based on my own experience from working as an English teacher. The categories were: *Language learning through interaction*, *Focus on communicative competence* and *Teacher talking time.* A phenomenological content analysis is explained as a reduction process, where the data material becomes condensed and afterwards appears as more comprehensible. The last stage in Malterud's (2003) data analysis process is to outline and recontextualize the material to create new terms and descriptions (Malterud, 2003, in Johannessen et al., 2010). As I kept working with the material, following categories emerged: *Lack of variation* and *Little room for oral activity.* To illustrate this process, and to increase the transparency of my research project, I have included two tables below with extracts from the interviews. The first table demonstrates condensation of the material with use of the deductive approach, while the second table illustrates how new categories emerged during the analysis:

Table 3.1: Analysing transcribed interviews – focus on condensation

Transcribed material **Main category:** Languages are learned through speaking *(Deductive approach)*	Condensation *(Codes)*
Researcher: På hvilken måte lærer elevene mest engelsk, tror du? **John:** Nei, altså jeg tror jo det at det <u>går jo på interesse</u>, så klart, og på en måte at man er engasjert i det man holder på med. Det er jo et utgangspunkt. Men jeg tror jo <u>at jo mer man deltar selv</u>, i at man ikke er passiv, men at man <u>er aktiv i læringssituasjonen.</u> Enten muntlig eller skriftlig. Eller begge deler. I stedet for at man er bare passiv, at man ikke sier noen ting og bare sitter og hører på. Så jeg tror at det at man er aktiv, rett og slett. <u>En aktiv bruker av engelsk.</u>	«Læring går på interesse» «Elevdeltakelse fører til læring» «Aktive brukere av engelsk»
Researcher: Hvordan er det med muntlig aktivitet i timene da? **Multiple students:** Det varierer. **Student 1:** Men nå er det helst slik at <u>han vil at vi snakker engelsk i alle timene.</u> **Student 3:** Og når vi svarer, så <u>må det være på engelsk.</u> **Student 4:** Egentlig burde vi jo snakke engelsk hele timen. For å virkelig få inn det å snakke engelsk.	«Lærer forventer bruk av målspråk» «Engelsk bør brukes til all kommunikasjon for å få bedre læringsutbytte»

Table 3.2: Analysing transcribed interviews – focus on the emerge of new categories

Transcribed material	Condensation *(Codes)*	The emerge of new categories *(Inductive approach)*
Researcher: Hvordan ser en typisk engelsktime ut da? **Multiple students**: Lesing! **Student 4:** Lese høyt, og hvis det er en lang… **Student 3:** …oversetting. **Student 4:** Noen ganger går hele timen ut på å lese. **Student 4:** Så får vi hjelp til å forstå ord hvis vi har… for eksempel hvis vi sier en setning som kanskje hørtes litt feil ut, så får vi hjelp fra læreren og kanskje en bedre måte å si det på. Og noen ganger, hvis vi blir ferdig med alt det, så kan vi gjøre noen oppgaver til teksten. Men det er liksom standard. **Student 9:** Vi pleier å lese hele timen.	«Typisk engelsktime = lesing» «Høytlesing» «Oversetting» «Lesing, veiledning fra lærer, oppgavearbeid» «Hele timer går til en type aktivitet»	«Lack of variation»

As presented above, the different statements from the interviews were placed in different categories, and through the coding process new categories emerged. This helped me identify new and interesting aspects connected to the gathered material. In line with the preceding focus on the hermeneutic approach, I will also claim that the material of the current study was approached hermeneutically. In the process of analysis, I alternated between interpreting single components. I both focused on particular utterances of the respondents, but I also took steps back to understand the situation as a whole. Moving back and forth from the explicit material, to the context and so on, is in line with the hermeneutic circle (Nilssen, 2012, p. 73).

After I had analysed the interview transcriptions, I read through my field notes and listened to the recordings from the four observed lessons. Simultaneously as I listened through the

material, I added new comments and questions. The demanding process of counting the amount of teacher talking time and student talking time was beneficial. Taking the extra time to determine the different fractions a lesson was divided into, helped increasing the transparency of the project. To illustrate the process, I have chosen to include an example of two sector diagrams - one from each class.

Figure 3.1
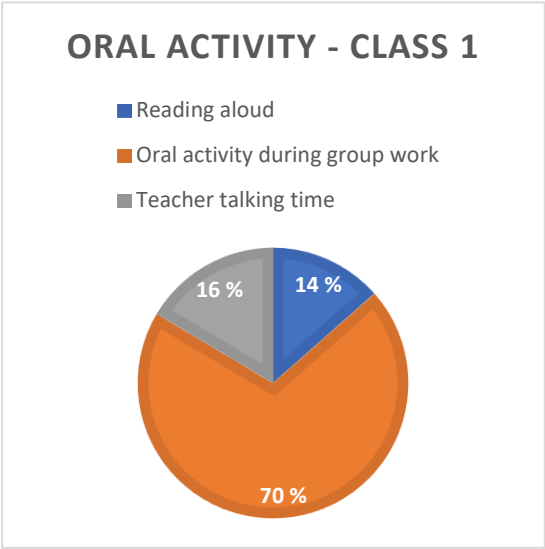
Figure 3.2
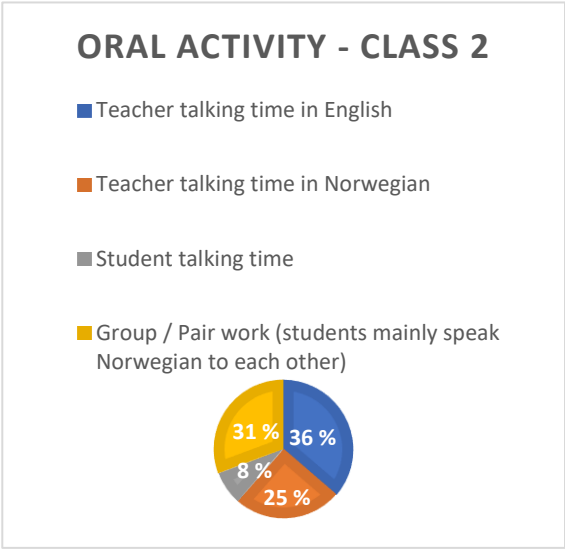
3.6 Ethical principles

With this section I will clarify the steps I have made to conduct a research according to ethical principles. My role as a researcher and my study was undoubtedly influenced by ethical dimensions. For me to be able to go through with this project, I have been granted with the benevolence of the participants. They have given of their time and shared their thoughts with me, and as Tjora (2017, p. 46) states, aspects like trust, confidentiality, respect and reciprocity must characterize the contact between a researcher and the participants of a project.

The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) has composed guidelines for research ethics, where one of the areas covered is the relationship to people who take part in the research. It enfolds topics such as respect, human dignity, confidentiality, and free and informed consent (NESH, 2016). In the beginning, when I searched for respondents, I started by contacting the principals at the different schools. When they approved my research project, I began to contact potential teachers. I wanted to introduce the project as clearly as possible, so both the teachers and the parents of the students received a

letter (see letter of information, appendix 2) containing the same information. There was need for parental consent because some of the students was under the age of 15. In agreement with the guidelines, I emphasised that participation was voluntary, and that all data would be deleted when the project was finished. I also reassured that the respondents would be anonymous, so the name of the school and the area it is located in is not mentioned.

Qualitative research will always be affected by the researcher's background and preunderstanding. In other words, the ideal of an open-minded researcher is a utopian thought (Nilssen, 2012, p. 137). Proximity strengthens qualitative research, and researchers often try to minimize the distance between themselves and the respondents to gain inside knowledge (Nilssen, 2012, p. 137). Since I share occupation with two of my respondents, one can say that the distance between us was minimal already. On the other side, since I was doing research within my own context, i.e. in a school setting, one can argue to what extent this made me biased since I have my share of experience and preconceptions of the idea of being a language teacher. As I have mentioned previously, I chose to go through with this study outside my own school. This was done to compensate for this and to minimize the influence this might have had on me. One can argue to what extent that choice could affect my research, and there are aspects both in favour of and against the conduct of research within one's own culture. My own experiences as a teacher helped me understand the participants' situation, but the preconceptions I had, also created some challenges (Hammersley & Atkins, 2013, in Thagaard, 2018, p. 80). Hammersley and Atkins (2013, in Thagaard, 2018) accentuate that it might be challenging to analyse aspects a researcher might take for granted.

3.7 Validity, reliability and generalization – strength and weakness of this study

This section will state the validity and reliability of the empirical material. *Validity* stands for relevance and credibility. In other words, what is measured, must be relevant and be valid for the problem being tested (Dalland, 2000, p. 50). Thus, validity is connected to whether the results of a study really corresponds with the research question (Tjora, 2017, p. 232). Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) speaks of validation as a quality check throughout the entire study, not just as a part of the inspection at the end of a research project. They refer to seven stages of validation, and during this project, I have tried to follow them. The quality of the study is important, and I have asked myself numerous questions while working on the current study. Is the quality of the methods good enough? Is the quality of the interviews adequate? Is the

transcription valid? Further, Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, p. 278) claims that the results continuously must be theoretically controlled, questioned and interpreted.

Reliability means trustworthiness, and in the field of research reliability refers to the accuracy of the collected data, what data is being used, and how the data is collected and processed. (Johannessen et al., 2010, p. 40).

In the following paragraph I will in further detail explain what was done to maintain the validity and reliability. Several aspects strengthen the validity of this master's thesis. All the interviews were managed with the same structure, and follow-up questions were asked so the respondents could elaborate on their response, and at the end of each interview session there were room for the respondents to comment on the topic. Moreover, the transcription work was done by me, and to make sure the data's trustworthiness was supported, each interview was transcribed word by word. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the use of triangulation of methods generated trustworthy results. The fact that I interviewed several teachers and students and observed a handful of English lessons also supports the reliability of this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) (in Johannessen et al., 2010, p. 230) also emphasise persistent observation as a technique to achieve reliable results. One can always argue whether my observation was persistent enough, yet I will claim that my profession makes up for this, and through my years working as a teacher I possess some knowledge about the field.

As already mentioned in section 3.3 I chose to go through with this study outside my own school. That way there was a distance between me and the teachers, which I will claim led to less preconception, since I was not acquainted with the teachers nor the students. Since I had chosen an open observation, this might have affected my respondents in how they acted out during the observations. Even though the teachers were told not to prepare anything special, and to give a normal English lesson, we cannot guarantee whether this was the case. Moreover, it was difficult to be ensured that the students behaved normally. It is important to keep in mind that this study was based on a handful interviews and the observation of four random English lessons. The material does not seek to draw a final conclusion, but rather to give the reader a glimpse into two English classrooms in a Norwegian school.

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented an outline of my research and given reasons for the choice of methods. Four methods were used to collect data: In-depth interviews to develop an increased understanding of the teachers' cognition, focus group interviews to gain insight to the students' experiences with the teachers' approaches, and classroom observations with digital recordings to look and listen for accordance between the teachers' cognitions and their practice. Ethical principles and the validity of the project were also considered and presented. The outcome of the analysis is presented in as a descriptive analysis in Chapter 4.

4. Descriptive Analysis

The following chapter is a presentation of what I have discovered through my study of the interviews by listening to and analysing the digital recordings and the field notes from the observations. This presentation is based on findings from the methods of analysis that was described in Chapter 3 (See section 3.5). My aim with this analysis was to find out if there is a correlation between the teachers' cognitions and their classroom practice concerning how they focus on facilitating oral participation. In addition, the analysed material from the interviews with the two groups of students helped me get a deeper insight into the field. Both the qualitative and the quantitative research processes have been systematic and structured, but it has also been demanding. Having to read and reread the material several times, to be open for new ways of interpreting and more methodical creativity forced me to sharpen my focus. The teachers that were interviewed will be presented as Jill and John, while the students are referred to as Student 1, Student 2 and so forth. To illustrate the analysis, I have included some statements from the gathered data material. The statements are translated from a Norwegian dialect. The original transcriptions are found as footnotes at the end of the specific page.

4.1 Categories

As presented in Chapter 3, both a deductive and an inductive approach were used in the process. The three first categories are based on the theoretical framing of this study, and the last two emerged during the inductive process as I analysed the transcriptions, the recordings from the observations and the field notes.

Table 4.1 Categories for the analysis

Deductive categories	Inductive categories
1) Language learning through oral interaction	4) Lack of variation
2) Focus on communicative competence	5) Little room for oral activity
3) Teacher talking time	

The chapter is divided into two main parts: The first part is a presentation of the findings done by the deductive analysis. The second part focuses on presenting the results from the next step

in the analysis process, related the inductive approach. The presentation of the findings from the analysis is organised around the categories presented in the table above and based on methods of analysis described in Chapter 3.

4.2 Language learning occurs through oral interaction

The findings related to the category *Language learning occurs through oral interaction* is the first to be presented because it also serves as an important backdrop for the study. Both the teachers and the students express their understanding of the importance of oral interaction in the ESL/EFL classroom. The analysis of the interview transcriptions with the two teachers, show me that they both struggle with the lack of oral participation from their students. They stress the fact that their students are far from active enough, and that they would like their students to participate much more. In both classes there is a handful of students who always raise their hand or contributes orally in some way, while the majority remains silent unless they are asked questions directly. In the interview with John, he said the following about his students' oral participation

> *The students are not as orally active as I would like them to be. Here we have twenty and something students, and there is a handful of students who are very active. That contributes. And we have a great deal of students who does not contribute with anything besides what they are told.[2](John)*

Jill complimented the skills of her English students. They had a wide vocabulary and a good pronunciation. Even the weakest students communicated well. She could make them read aloud and give oral presentations, but when it came to spontaneous speech, they were more reluctant. Several suggestions were put forward to explain the reason for the inadequate oral activity. John justified the student contribution with their age, and the fact that they were only lower secondary students, and that many of them probably were shy and insecure. Jill also mentioned this but kept coming back to the term *self-justice* which she meant dominated the students' behaviour.

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[2] *«Elevene er ikke så muntlig aktive som jeg skulle ha ønsket. Her har vi noen og tjue elever, og det er en handfull som er veldig aktive. Som bidrar. Også har vi en stor andel som ikke bidrar så veldig mye til annet enn det de på en måte blir fortalt» (John)*

There is a sort of self-justice, I believe, in the class, that makes it… I have many times tried to look… Can I find… Are there any looks… Are there anyone who comments. I have asked students if there are anyone who comments, are there anyone who says something. But they do not confirm. They say "no, it is nothing". "No one bothers me, no one bullies me for saying something wrong" But that…. Yes..[3] (Jill)

She believed many students refused to participate orally in class due to the fear of negative reactions from their peers, such as being laughed at, or receiving comments or looks. These seemed to be the major aspects that the teachers believed detained the students from participating. However, both teachers agreed on the statement that students learn through participation, i.e. an active use of English.

A sense of positivity seemed to prevail the student groups' attitude towards the English subject, and none one of the students I interviewed gave an impression of disliking it. According to one of the students, it was not necessarily the teacher who was responsible for that, but more the interest of the students. Both groups of students agreed on the fact that English was an important subject that they knew would be useful for them in the future. Being able to communicate with people from across the world, and to comprehend a language could open countless doors in terms of job opportunities or studies abroad. As shown by the included material gathered from one of the focus group interviews, some of the students stated that they sometimes mastered the English language better than their mother tongue, and they claimed that their English skills were a result of many years of learning English at school, and from the influence of different types of media. Examples from the transcribed material presented on the following page illustrates some of their perceptions related to their own English-speaking skills:

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[3] *«Der er en sånn selvjustis, tror jeg, i klassen, som gjør at… Jeg har mange ganger prøvd å se… klarer jeg å finne… er det blikk… er det noen som kommenterer, jeg har spurt elever om det er noen som kommenterer, er det noen som sier noe. Men de svarer meg ikke positivt… altså bekreftende på det. De sier «Neida, det er ikke det». «Det er ingen som plager meg, det er ingen mobber meg på grunn av at jeg sier noe feil». Men dét… ja…» (Jill)*

Student 2: Sometimes, I feel that English is a language I speak better than Norwegian, so having English is often not a problem

Student 2: …And media and films and all that.

Student 1: You hear English in your everyday life. That is not unusual. Media has had a great impact on us. We can easily get to know how things are in other countries with just a couple of clicks.

Student 4: Now we can get in touch with the rest of the world, and then it is nice to be able to speak English, because it is a language that almost everyone can speak And then, if we can communicate with people from other continents or other countries, for instance via the Internet or by going on a holiday, it is smart to be able to speak English, because then you can communicate with others.[4]

Like their teachers, most of the students agreed on the fact that they should participate more in class. They knew that their effort was not adequate. Some of the students that I interviewed belonged to the handful of students that always raised their hands, while some of the interviewed students were among those who rarely said a word in English unless their teacher asked them directly. As the statements included below try to illustrate, the students had made the same observations and told me that only a handful of their classmates were active in class, and that the majority was silent. They understood that the use of English during English lessons was important, and students from both classes admitted that they had to improve their use of English when working in pairs or in groups.

When the students were asked about how many of their classmates who normally took part in oral activities one student said:

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[4] *Elev 2: Jeg føler egentlig at engelsk er et språk jeg snakker bedre enn norsk av og til. Så å ha engelsk er ofte ikke noe problem.*

Elev 2: Og media og filmer og alt…

Elev 1: Man hører engelsk i dagliglivet liksom. Det er ikke noe uvant. Media har hatt en stor innvirkning på oss. Vi får lett vite hvordan det er i andre land bare ved noen klikk.

Elev 4: Nå er det sånn at vi kan få kontakt med resten av verden, og da er det fint å kunne engelsk for det er et språk som nesten alle kan. Og da, hvis man skal kommunisere med folk fra andre verdensdeler eller andre land, for eksempel over netter eller hvis du drar på ferie for eksempel, så er det lurt å kunne engelsk for da kan du kommunisere med andre.

> **Student 1:** *It is 1/3 maybe. It is the same every time.*

When the students were asked to characterize their own oral participation, this is what they said:

> **Student 2:** *I feel that I can push myself a little more.*

> **Student 5:** *I have more to give, because I am not that active.*

When we later during the interviewed talked about target language use, and how they thought it *should* be for them to learn the most, one of the students answered:

> **Student 4:** *We should actually be speaking English during the entire lesson. To really learn how to speak English.*[5]

Figure 4.1 (below) sheds light on the extended use of Norwegian among the students working together on an exercise. During the interview, John estimated that 80-90% of the conversations among the students were in Norwegian when working on tasks together. Jill also struggled with the students' collaborative language, and unless she monitored the group, which, of course, was difficult to do in a class with 20-25 students, most of them spoke Norwegian when they worked together on tasks. John pointed out that he expected his students to speak as much English as possible, and he would like them to speak the target language also when they work with task solving. Still, he found it difficult to ensure that everyone spoke English during pair work or group work. He emphasized that he did not know how he could get his students to speak English for an entire lesson.
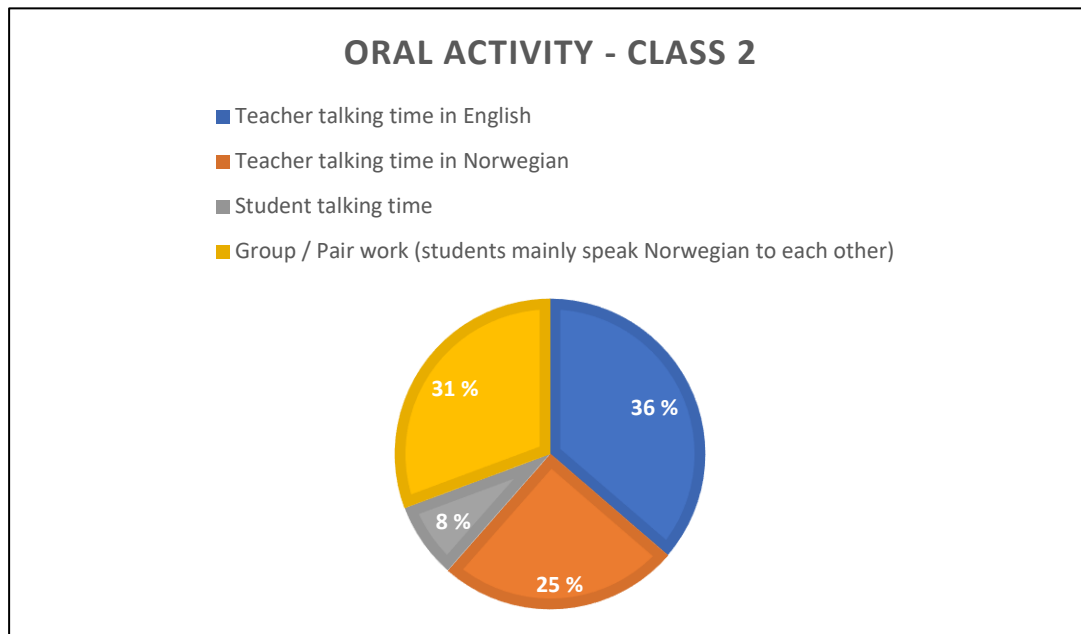
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[5] Elev 1: Det er 1/3 kanskje. Det er de samme hele tiden.
Elev 2: Jeg føler at jeg kan pushe meg selv litt.
Elev 5: Jeg har mer å gi, fordi jeg er ikke så aktiv.
Elev 4: Egentlig burde vi jo snakke engelsk hele timen. For å virkelig få inn det å snakke engelsk.

Figure 4.1 An example of distribution of oral activity in one of the classes

Further, the observations substantiated the impressions of the students and the teachers. Unless the teacher asked direct questions, many of the students remained passive. John did not ask each student a question. Instead, he relied more on the engaged students, while Jill walked from desk to desk asking the students questions related to the text they had been reading. Moreover, the observation supported John's impression of language use among the students. As they formed groups to work on exercises, many started speaking Norwegian instead of their target language. Oral interaction took place, but to what extent language learning occurred, remains to be discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.1 also says something about the use of Norwegian among English teachers. John said that he tried to speak as much English as possible in class but admitted that he switched to Norwegian to make sure everyone understood. However, he indicated that he was not satisfied with his own effort, and that he should merely be speaking English during these lessons. The students also commented on their teachers' use of English, where they implied that they would be comfortable with teachers who spoke English throughout the entire English lesson. One of the students even said that most students got the point long before the teacher started explaining in Norwegian. They even emphasized that they would probably learn more if the teacher stuck to the target language.

4.3 Focus on communicative competence

As mentioned in section 2.1 in the theoretical framing of this study, the term *communicative competence* is a wide term that contains several sub-competences. I would need to observe more than four English lessons to be able to give an accurate description of how Jill and John approach this topic with their students. Nonetheless, there was a certain focus during the lessons I was present, and the subsequent paragraphs will describe my findings. Several types of communication situations took place in the lessons I observed, such as teacher-led activities, reading aloud, group activities and different types of games focusing on learning vocabulary. This section aims to visualize to what extent Jill and John focus on communicative competence.

In the interview with Jill, she claimed to focus on oral activities in each English lesson. Both the interview and the observations demonstrated that she made them recite vocabulary to learn new words and to practice intonation. She also asked them to read aloud. Sometimes she also asked direct questions, or a general question for everyone to answer. The focus was on asking open questions, so the students could answer more freely. Because many of the students avoided showing what they were capable of, and rarely raised their hands, she started to ask random students to answer different types of relevant questions during the observed lessons. Whether this benefited the students' competence to produce oral text will be examined in Chapter 5.

Another relevant term to look back on is the word *grammatical competence*. As stated in Chapter 2, grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of lexical items and rules related to morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology. Research shows that students can build up this competence by doing grammar exercises, learning new words or by practicing pronunciation. During the lessons I observed, the students strengthened this competence through the work with new vocabulary from the text of the week. The teachers eagerly helped the students if they struggled with the pronunciation when asked to repeat vocabulary, and at the end of one of the lessons Jill let her students play a game where the students in teams are to translate vocabulary. Parts of John's lessons also revolved around reading aloud and vocabulary work. During one of his lessons the students played a word game similar to "Taboo" and "Alias",

The use of the target language in class, was something John mentioned during the interview. He admitted that this was an area where he could improve, and as mentioned in the previous section, both Jill and her students spoke a considerable amount of Norwegian during one of the

lessons. Further, observations show that apart from a few occasions, John spoke English throughout both lessons, and he also reminded his students of speaking English when they chose to speak Norwegian instead. As a result of the lessons, different types of communication situations took place during the observed lessons, but the teachers did not stress any focus on communicative competences in front of the students.

4.4 Teacher talking time vs. student talking time

The analysis showed that the amount of teacher talking time (henceforth, TTT) and student talking time (henceforth, STT) varied depending on the types of activities the teacher had chosen for the specific lesson. From Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 one can see that during one of the lessons the students were given a lot of time to speak with one another, when other lessons focused on other types of activities.

As briefly commented upon in section 4.2, material from both the interviews and the observations show that students did not make use of the opportunities to speak when they had the chance. When students, during the interview, were asked to explain their lack of oral contribution, they shared many of the arguments being put forward. They were insecure, afraid of what their peers might say if their utterance was wrong, and they were afraid that the teacher might make a big deal out of an incorrect answer.

Another interesting aspect that came up during the interview with Jill, was the change in students' behaviour over the decades. As mentioned in Chapter 3, both teachers had been teaching English for approximately twenty years, which meant that they had taught numerous of students since the beginning of their carriers. One of the teachers claimed that the student mass had changed, and that they spoke more freely twenty years ago compared with today's students. This is an interesting statement, that I believe should be examined further, but I will not elaborate on it since it falls outside the focus area of this study. I nonetheless think it is relevant to mention here, because it might be interesting for other teacher training students or working English teachers to explore. The next sections in this chapter will cover the findings related to the categories from the inductive approach.

4.4.1 The use of teacher talking time

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I chose to measure the amount of teacher talking time. However, another, and perhaps a more relevant aspect connected to TTT, became apparent during the

analysis. This relates to how the teachers approached the students to stimulate oral interaction. When the teachers reached out by asking questions to the whole class, most students avoided to answer. To make sure they received an answer, the teachers sometimes asked questions directly to a specific student, but quite often the teacher ended up receiving single word utterances, such as "yes", "no", or maybe "I don't know". The students rarely elaborated, and the teachers seemed to be aware of this, so they kept asking follow-up questions, but to little avail.

This paragraph will focus on the analysis of Jill and John's talking time. Findings show that John started one of his lessons by giving a presentation of this week's text, a novel excerpt from "The Giver", by Lois Lowry. He underlined that this was an advanced and difficult text. He continued to inform the students about a film they were going to watch in accordance to this text. Then, he gave a short outline of the activities of today's lesson before he chose to read the book's fact box introducing the author. and between the different student activities, he tells the students what to do next. During group activities he visited each group and asked if they needed help or had any questions. Findings also show that even if the students asked questions in Norwegian, John replied in English. The lesson ended with giving information about this week's homework. Shedding light upon one of Jill's lessons, findings show that she started one of her lessons by talking to her class in Norwegian about this week's vocabulary. This sequence lasted for over a minute. As mentioned above, during one of the lessons, they spent time on practising vocabulary. She chose to model the pronunciation of each word before a student were to repeat and translate. Later, after a sequence where the students had listened to the text and read parts of it out loud, Jill started asking questions to the text. The students were asked the following questions during an amount of 40 seconds:

What is the text about?
What is it?
Can you comment on this text in any way?
Is there anything you would like to say about the text?
Did you like it?
Did you not like it?
Have you heard it before?
What kind of text is this?"

Then, after a two second pause, she continued:

Nobody? (Jill)

No or little time was given for the students to reflect upon the questions or to give an answer. Only two students replied, and then a third was asked a question directly by Jill. During the second lesson I observed in Jill's class, she kept asking questions about "The Giver", but now she waited for the students to answer. Further, after each student response she consecutively repeated the students' answers. As seen, teacher talking time is used to give instructions, asking questions and to attract student participation. A couple of times behaviour control was detected.

4.5 Lack of variation

As mentioned previously in this chapter and illustrated in Chapter 3, new categories also emerged as a consequence of the analysis. One of them was the category I chose to call *Lack of variation*. As I thoroughly went through the data material I had gathered, it was obvious that the students experienced their English lessons as repetitive. Some teacher-led oral activities that constantly reappeared was question-answer sequences and reading aloud. An exercise that the students kept coming back to, was "reading". Several of the students in the two groups explained that most English lessons would consist of a reading activity, either aloud in class or individually. Further, according to them, most lessons also included doing tasks or translation work related to the given text.

John emphasized that he wanted to be an inspiration to his students, both when it came to topics and the approach. To him, variation was important, so pair work, group work and reading aloud were among the activities his students were used to. He explained it in this manner:

> *I try to choose activities where they have to be active, themselves, but the discussion, the talks, together in the classroom…It is difficult to get a grasp of. So, therefore, I try to give varied lessons, so there are a couple of joint activities, where these 5-6 students participate the most, and I also have pair work, group work, where the students have to contribute among themselves, and I walk around and listen as well as I can, and try to pay attention to their activity.[6] (John)*

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[6] *«Jeg prøver jo å legge opp til aktiviteter som gjør at de må være aktive selv. Men, den her diskusjonen, samtalene, sånn felles i klasserommet, den er vanskelig å få tak i. Så derfor, så prøver jeg i alle fall å variere undervisningen, slik at det blir noen typer fellesaktiviteter hvor, hvor det blir de her 5-6 stykkene som deltar mest, og at jeg også bruker å ha en del sånn pararbeid, gruppearbeid hvor de på en måte må bidra seg imellom, så går jeg heller rundt og prøver å lytte så godt jeg kan, og prøver å få med meg aktiviteten deres.» (John)*

However, during the interview he admitted that he still liked the lessons to be a bit traditional, such as practicing vocabulary and running vocabulary tests. He also said that he liked to try new things to get the students more interested. Observations show that his lessons contained different activities, some familiar to the students, but also new activities that were meant to entertain. His class participated in reading a longer novel extract from the textbook, vocabulary work, group work, a Kahoot and a game similar to "Taboo".

The students seemed to like the activities, but when I asked the students if the sessions I had observed were similar to their regular lessons, they said no. Which can imply that the teachers tried to put an extra effort into their lessons. Nonetheless, both student groups suggested that their teacher should include more of these "other types" of activities. They referred to Kahoot, quizzes, and other games as activities that might ignite the competitive spirit, and which they knew had worked successfully before. Some of these activities were used by John and Jill during the lessons I observed.

The teachers' statements thus concur with what I saw, but not with how the students had described their experience of their English lessons. I find these findings interesting because they might help us understand and explain why students do not participate as much as expected, both by their teacher and by themselves. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.6 Little room for oral activity

The second inductive category that appeared during the analysis was *Little room for oral activity.* Despite the teachers' alleged focus on varied lessons and a focus on oral activities, the students expressed that there was little room for oral activity.

Students from both classes claimed that their teachers asked them to read aloud in almost every English lesson, but they underlined that there was only a handful of students who volunteered for this activity. During the first lesson I observed in John's classroom, five students read out loud before John told his class to form groups and finish reading the text. These two activities took 18 of the total 45 minutes the lesson lasted. After that, 12 more minutes were spent on talking in groups about important events taking place in the text they read. Observation showed that reading aloud and the teacher asking questions in class were employed by Jill and John during their lessons, where the common denominator for these activities was that they generated little oral activity.

During the interviews, both John and Jill acknowledged the importance of oral interaction as an approach to improve students' English skills. John said that he tried to give varied lessons, and to let the students speak as much as possible, and Jill praised her students will to read aloud. Still, they were dissatisfied with their students' oral participation. Moreover, the students admitted that they could be more engaged during English class.

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented a descriptive analysis of the findings based on the analysis of the gathered material. This chapter shows that the teachers are aware of the importance of oral interaction as an essential approach to enhance language skills. However, the students and their teachers perceive the content of the lessons differently, but they recognize the need for increased oral student interaction. I will discuss the findings from a theoretical perspective in Chapter 5.

5. Discussion

As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is essential that language learners get as many chances as possible to actively use the target language, because language use itself is a requirement for learning. The aim of this study was to examine how English teachers focus on and facilitate communicative competence and oral student participation. I have also looked at students' reflections on their own oral participation and how they perceived their teacher's focus on the matter. In this chapter, I will reflect upon the outcome of my research. I will firstly present the overall findings, before I secondly discuss the teachers' cognition in light of the findings. Further, I will discuss how different elements affect the communicative classroom. I will also discuss how the two teachers participating in my study facilitate oral participation before I end the chapter by focusing on how different expectations are accommodated. The discussion is conducted in light of the theory presented in Chapter 2, and will lead to the final chapter, where I will revisit the research questions and conclude my entire study.

5.1 Overall findings

In my study of the compliance between teacher's cognition and practice related to student oral participation and communicative competence, I found that:

- Teachers perceived their English lessons as varied and with focus on oral participation. However, they acknowledged that their students' oral participation was inadequate.
- Different activities initiated by the teachers did not facilitate longer authentic sequences of student oral participation, even though that was the teachers' intention.
- Teachers and students did not use the target language as much as they could during the English lessons, and this was something they were aware of.
- Despite the unison agreement on the importance of using the target language as an approach to develop language learning, both students and teachers agreed on the lack of student oral participation.
- Teacher talking time (TTT) does not generate increased oral participation from the students.
- There was little correlation between how the teachers and their students perceived the given room for oral activity.
- The students seemed to like the subject, but the majority of the students were passive, and only a handful participated without being asked.

- Insecurity and fear of failure were among the reasons given by both the teachers and the students as explanations to the reluctant student oral participation among the participating students.
- There was an overall agreement between the teachers that their students master English well, and that they, because of that, should expect more from their students, in terms of oral participation.

From here on, I have chosen to discuss the abovementioned findings under the following headlines: *Cognition and Classroom Practice*, *The Communicative Classroom*, *Teachers´ facilitation of oral participation among their students* and *Great expectations – to what extent are they accommodated?*

5.2 Cognition and classroom practise

As presented in chapter 2, there has been a great interest on the field of research to examine teacher cognition and classroom practice, and there are several aspects influencing a teacher's cognition. The current study seeks to examine the two teachers John and Jill's cognition in light of their classroom practise to see if there is a compliance between the two. The following paragraphs will discuss some of the most central findings in light of theory on the subject.

Borg (2003, p. 91) claims that teachers' cognition has a great impact on their practises. The interviews with John and Jill gave me information that helped me understand more about their thoughts around their classroom practise. First of all, they clearly uttered an awareness of the importance of oral participation as an approach to language learning. Secondly, they described varied lessons with activities leading to oral participation. A teacher's cognition is based on and affected by several components. John explained some of his classroom practice as a result of his own experiences as a language learner:

> *"I wish to conduct some traditional activities. And I think, if it worked for me, I think it should work for these students as well. Vocabulary tests, for example. Something as simple as that. Well, yes… a bit of rehearsing on a couple of things"*[7] *(John)*

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[7] *«Jeg ønsker også å kjøre en del sånne tradisjonelle ting som jeg tenker at det funker på meg, så da tenker jeg at det da bør det funke på disse elevene også. Gloseprøve, for eksempel. Noe så enkelt som det. Altså, ja… litt sånn terping på en del ting:»*

This correlates with Borg's (2009 p. 3) statement about teachers being powerfully influenced by their own experiences as language learners. To illustrate, I have chosen to recapture a figure previously seen in the theoretical framing, which illustrates Borg's comprehension of the term "cognition":
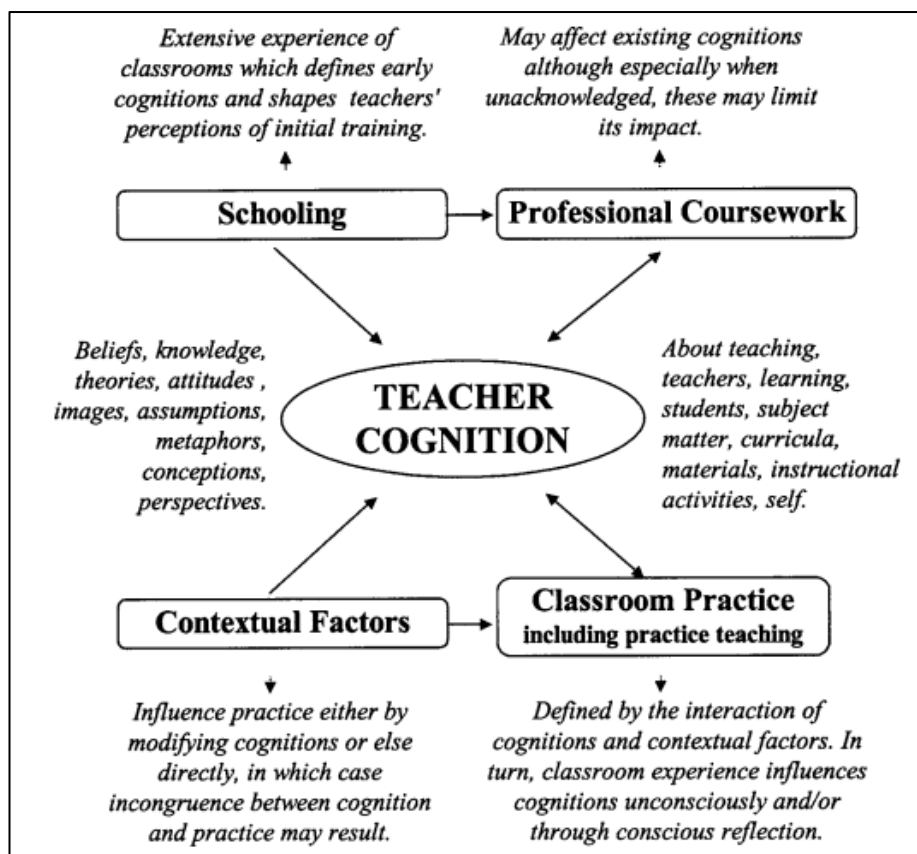
Figure 5.1 Teacher cognition (Borg, 1997)

Jill's practice was shaped by the social and psychological reality of the classroom. The students were reluctant speakers, so she tried to elicit oral participation by asking numerous questions. Moreover, she was very attentive to the possible explanations for the students' reluctant participation. One of her explanations was that the students were afraid to make mistakes in front of their peers. This leads the discussion to *corrective feedback*, which was thoroughly explained in Chapter 2. Many studies show the benefits of oral corrective feedback, but little is known as to whether this practice reflects teachers' beliefs. In her study, Hanne Roothooft (2014), revealed that many teachers were unaware of the amount of feedback they tended to

provide. During a reading sequence, Jill quickly corrected the reading student. In my fieldnotes I even commented that in my opinion, her corrective feedback came too early. Sometimes the students had not even had the time to finish the word. It was as if she knew that this particular student might struggle with this word, and therefore she wanted to help. In light of her consciousness of the students' fear of reactions, she could have reduced the amount of corrective feedback. Thus, I consider the compliance between her own cognition of unwilling students and her classroom practice of giving corrective feedback to her students as low.

As seen in Figure 5.1, a teacher's practise is also based on former amount of experience. Jill and John have been working as teachers for twenty years, and this clearly has an impact on how they teach. Research shows that experienced teachers focus more on language issues than on classroom management (Borg, 2003, p. 95). I also realised that when John or Jill faced obstacles, they were able to modify their lessons' approach without any further difficulties. This might be a result of them being experienced teachers.

5.3 The communicative classroom

The classroom is the arena where learning occurs. Olga Dysthe (1995) explains that a traditional view on classroom learning has been that students have been seen as empty bottles ready to be filled with the teacher's knowledge, and I must admit that it has occasionally struck me that maybe even the students believe it to be that way. As mentioned in the theoretical framing of this thesis, from a sociocultural perspective, learning occurs as a result of social interaction (Lantolf, 2007, p. 31). A constructionist approach focuses on creating knowledge through language use (Dysthe, 1995, p. 47), and combined with an interactionist view on learning, students have to gain knowledge through oral participation. According to Stephen Krashen (1982), there are both potential and limitations in the ESL classroom. One of the limitations is that the outside world can supply more input than a classroom setting. Second, the range of discourse that the students are exposed to, cannot be compared to those on the outside. However, an important aspect in favour of the classroom as an arena, is the *comprehensible* input. The teacher will normally modify the input according to the level of the students (Krashen, 1982, p. 58). The classrooms I visited, and the lessons I observed were characterized by a talking teacher, a few highly participating students, and a lack of target language use from a great majority.

A communicative classroom is a place where the students are given many opportunities to participate, and where forced participation must be facilitated. The following paragraphs will discuss the lacking use of English in the ESL classrooms I visited.

5.3.1 The important use of target language

From observing the two ESL classes, I will claim that English teachers need to be more consistent on the use of the target language. John, and especially Jill switched a lot between using Norwegian and English during their lessons, and this may have affected the target language use of their own students. Teachers send out an important signal when they use English consistently. By being a good example, more students might increase their own use of the target language during the lessons. In Chapter 2, I presented the interactional hypothesis. For language learners to be able to produce oral language, a great deal of comprehensible input is needed. This is also a reason for John and Jill to use the target language throughout the entire lesson. That way, they give their students suitable and challenging input, and as a result their students may acquire new knowledge. In the light of the ZPD, the teacher becomes an interlocutor, and by consistent use of the target language students will be able to perform at a higher level.

Many of the students in the two classrooms I visited were passive, and there are multiple explanations to why this was the case. Jill's assumption of the self-conscious students was confirmed by the students themselves. The students were afraid to make mistakes and expected their peers to laugh or react in some other way due to what they themselves perceived as inadequate target language proficiency. I expect most language teachers to know that making mistakes is a natural part of language learning, and it is essential that we signal this before the students. The solution to this problem is to make them participate orally despite their inadequacies. Krashen (1982, p. 77) emphasises that we must give our students the means of managing conversations. It is certain that they also in the future will experience lack of understanding and not being able to find the correct word.

In his article, Charles Parish (1987) argues that communication takes place best under conditions of openness, self-confidence, security and a desire to participate, but those conditions do not appear automatically in the classroom (Parish, 1987, p. 387). One of the solutions Parish (1987) suggests in the article is for teachers to surrender in power, and to switch from teacher-centred to learner-centred classrooms. Teachers must face and deal with these

factors that retain students from oral participation. Parish (1987) refers to other scholars' suggested methods that focus on creating a more pleasant atmosphere within the classroom:

> Relaxing the critical and self-protective faculties of the left hemisphere of the brain (…) allows the right brain to absorb large chunks of the target langue. No matter that it sounds mysterious to our critical and self-protective Western minds: it produces results – all without surgery.

(Parish, 1987, p 390)

In light of Parish's article, I will claim that Jill and John could have done more to assure their students of them being valuable, and that their contribution means a difference in the classroom. The students' impression is not just a trivial factor, and I suggest that this has to be taken seriously and dealt with. If not, I am afraid we as teachers will have to deal with a great number of reluctant students in the future. As far as I am concerned, I believe more students will dare to participate if teachers work consciously and systematic to create good learning conditions, and by that, I mean that they should focus on the atmosphere in the classroom and help the students build their confidence. If the number of confident and relaxed students increases, this might lead to a chain reaction of students' oral participation.

According to Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 39), classroom learners spend little time in contact with the target language, and they are also exposed to a far smaller range of discourse types than they are using in their first language. Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue that classroom learners are often taught language that is much more formal compared to language used in social settings. It strikes me that this is yet another argument that speaks in favour of why the students ought to use the target language throughout the entire English lesson. This speaks in favour of giving room for more informal conversations where the students can talk about topics they care about. It is my firm belief that we need to learn the students to use the English in far more ways. They should learn how to orally communicate that they are frustrated, or what expressions to use if they are agitated.

Triangulation of the material reveals that John's use of Norwegian was related to ensuring that all students understood what had been conveyed. Jill might not be that conscious on her extended use of Norwegian. My own experiences as a teacher show that they are not alone. Yet,

many aspects indicate that teachers should end the habit of overexplaining. There are many ways to aid comprehension. Teachers can slow down the rate of their speech and try to speak more articulated. This allows more processing time for the students. Secondly, the teachers can enhance the amount of high frequency vocabulary and use shorter sentences. Another aspect brought up in the theoretical framing, and that can be used to increase the amount of target language us, was negotiation for meaning. Suggestions such as confirmation checks, and clarification were presented as approaches to control the students' understanding. Thus, instead of using Norwegian to ensure that all the students understand what has been said, all of the suggestions mentioned above could have been used.

5.3.2 The teachers' focus on communicative competence during the English lessons

The goal of communicative language teaching is communicative competence (Richards, 2006, p. 2). The term was elaborated in Chapter 2, and in the subsequent paragraphs, I am going to comment on Jill and John's lessons in light of their focus (or lack of focus) on communicative competence.

In the lessons I observed in Jill and John's class, it was obvious that they focused on the *grammatical competence*. This can be explained due to Jill and John's devoted time to practise on new vocabulary. Of course, grammatical competence is an important dimension of language learning, but according to Richards (2006) it does not necessarily help the students in becoming successful learners who can use the language for meaningful communication.

Even though it was not specifically expressed during one of John's lessons, one might assume that the students, through composing sentences and trying to communicate in a precise manner during the sequence of playing the game similar to "Taboo", to some extent improved both their *strategic competence* and their *discourse competence*. I assume that to be the case, because the students had to explain words to each other and communicate in order to avoid breakdown in communication.

Taken into account what Jill and John expressed during their interviews, the lessons I observed did not show much focus on the different communicative sub-competences. That being said, I do not expect language teachers to focus on all the different sub-competences in every lesson, but I will dare to suggest that teachers, me included, should pay more attention to the different sub-competences mentioned in the CEFRL, and to a greater extent let the language learners

reflect on their own competences. We must not forget that there also is a main area in the English subject curriculum called "Language learning", where specific aims concerning the topic are listed. As a teacher, it is expected that I introduce the English subject curriculum to my students, but I fear that we might focus more on the other three areas and increase the students' accountability. By including the students more, and by explaining to them why we do what we do, this is a way to increase their metalinguistic awareness and their knowledge on language learning.

5.4 Teachers´ facilitation of oral participation among their students

The analysis described English lessons filled with different types of activities that were meant for the students to orally interact. However, I will claim that the English lessons were not very communicative at all. Even though a great amount of time during the English lesson was spent on being interactive, the exercises were not very communicative. This section argues the decisions made by the two teachers during their English lessons.

Starting with Jill's lessons, one can say that they contained prolonged sequences devoted to question and answer-routines. Scott Thornbury (1996) refers to the routine as IRF (teacher initiates → student responds → teacher follows up/gives feedback) and claims that this practice does not belong within a communicative methodology. Despite the amount of time being spent on asking and answering questions, little is communicated. In addition, during these sequences, Jill rarely asked her students to modify their language, and she seemed to understand everything the students said. According to Musumeci (1996, in Walsh, 2002, p. 6) teachers seem to understand absolutely everything their students says, sometimes even before they say it. That way, teachers deny their students the opportunity to identify problems in understanding (Walsh, 2002), and teachers also remove the opportunity the students might have to use real language.

Further, the students must be stimulated so they *want* to participate. Thornbury (1996, p. 279) underlines that through question and answer-routines, learners do not find room to speak as themselves. Moreover, they do not get the chance to use language in communicative encounters, or to create text to stimulate responses from fellow learners or to find solutions to relevant problems. As mentioned in the theoretical framing, both CLT and the English subject curriculum demands authenticity as key for communicative language learning to take place. If we go back to Jill's lessons, this is highly relevant. Instead of her asking each student a display question, where the primary purpose is to allow the students to display their knowledge of

language (Thornbury, 1996, p. 281), the teacher should have given them a list of authentic questions for instance for the students to discuss in pairs or in groups. That way she would have opened for longer sequences where the students could have been expected to outline, discuss, compare or share opinions related to the text they had read. Afterwards, she could have told each pair or group to present what they had discussed. Further, an alternative approach could be for the teacher to give the students an impression of them being valuable and that they can provide the lessons with useful content. This means that Jill could have asked more of the questions she did not have an answer to herself, rather than asking display-questions, because the latter are only meant for the students to show their knowledge.

Another interesting aspect of my findings was when Jill asked one question after the other about the text the students had read. In my opinion, they were not given enough time to think and reflect. This time is often referred to as *wait time* (Thornbury, 1996), and it is the time teachers allow students to answer questions before the questions are rephrased, given to someone else or maybe answered by themselves. Studies show that longer wait time increases the length of student responses (Thornbury, 1996, p. 282). This should be an objective for all teachers.

John's class was told to form groups to solve tasks. That way, they were given time and were expected to orally interact. With this, for me as an observer and a teacher, it is implicit that the students are to interact in the target language, and that this is understood by the students. However, observation showed that only a few of the students kept speaking the target language during the group work. Most students started speaking Norwegian as they formed groups. This correlates with Prabhu's allegation (1987, in Kramsch, 1993). However, I am not sure if I agree with Prabhu to avoid group work all together. The student interviews revealed that this was an issue the students were familiar with. My suggestion is rather for the teachers to constantly remind their students of the importance of using the target language throughout the lesson, but also what the purpose of the English given tasks are.

As previously mentioned, the teachers chose activities *they* believed invited students to oral participation. I have also explained why these activities did not serve as good starting points for students to express themselves. Yet, there are some other teacher related elements that keep the students from participating even more. First of all, the teachers largely controlled the topics of discussion, and they were also in control of both the content and the procedure of the lessons. An alternative could be to give room for students to take part in planning and conducting topics

related to the curriculum, that may have affected the students' connection to the English subject. Perhaps this would have contributed to a more motivated class, which again could have led to increased student oral participation. Secondly, research show that teachers control what goes on in classrooms primarily through the ways in which they use language (Johnson, 1995, in Walsh, 2002, p. 6). Johnson here refers to the vital role of the TTT. Not only can teacher talk constrain students' opportunities to participate, but it can also facilitate it (Walsh, 2002).

In section 4.2 I mentioned that many of the students I interviewed, expressed that they liked the English subject. However, they also claimed that this was not necessarily because of their teacher. During the interview, John mentioned *interested students* as an important component for learning to occur. The term "interest" was something that came up during the student interviews when we discussed what kind of topics they favoured within the English subject. In my mind, as a teacher, the motivated students are those who participate actively in class, and I am convinced that there is much more we as teachers can do to engage our students. Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 88) claim that teachers can make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn if classrooms are places that students enjoy coming to because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability. Further, they argue that the learning goals must be clear and challenging, and the atmosphere must be supportive (Spada & Lightbown, 2013, p. 88). According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991, in Drew & Sørheim, 2016, p. 21), motivation can be increased if activities are varied and introduced in such a way that learners become curious and excited about what will follow. Thus, teachers are expected to give lessons that are enjoyable, interesting, relevant, meaningful and challenging.

All in all, from the teachers' perspectives, their lessons were filled with varied activities that facilitate oral participation. John and Jill's ideas of giving varied classes were true to them, while the students give the impression of possessing a different perception of the situation. Even though there was room for the students to speak, the activities do not serve authentic and motivated sequences of interaction.

5.5 Great expectations – to what extent are they accommodated?

The title of this section does not refer to a Dickens' novel, but rather to the anticipations of the teachers and the students. Much has already been said about the two teachers and their approaches. Nonetheless, little has been said about the underlying expectations. This section

tries to explain some of the findings in consideration of policy documents, teacher expectations and learner expectations.

5.5.1 Expectations of ESL learners and their teachers in policy documents

The Norwegian school system is regulated by several policy documents, and many of them comment on how students and teachers should act to achieve good results and better learning. I have decided to focus briefly on the Education Act, and the English subject curriculum in the discussion of this study.

The Education Act demands students to be actively involved in the learning situation (Education Act, 1998, §2-3), and Report no. 22 to the Norwegian Parliament underlines that student motivation increases in line with enhanced freedom to choose between topics and approaches to solve given tasks. However, the report also stresses the importance of evident structure and teacher expectations (Ministry of Education, 2010-2011). According to the English subject curriculum, the students are expected to evaluate their own language usage, learning needs and to select suitable strategies and working methods to learn the English language. Moreover, oral skills are highlighted as one of the basic skills in the curriculum, and the students are expected to speak and interact using the English language. After year 10, the students are expected to "express oneself fluently and coherently, suited to the purpose and situation and to express and justify own opinions about different topics" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006. This short outline shows that the policy documents require reflected and dedicated teachers and students.

During the four lessons I observed, most students were active only if told to be so. This might be a result of lacking motivation. Report no. 22 lists varied approaches, relevant and meaningful lessons and high expectations as conditions that generate motivation. Could we have expected increased student oral participation if John and Jill's lessons were more varied, appeared as more relevant and meaningful?

5.5.2 Teachers' expectations of ESL learners

I believe Jill and John could have focused more on their own expectations towards the students. During the lessons, I observed that little was said about it prior to given tasks, and sometimes I even had a feeling of the teachers underestimating their own students. As mentioned earlier, the students read and listened to an extract from a novel called "The Giver" by Lois Lowry. When

introducing the novel and the listening task to his class, John continuously said that this was a very difficult text. Maybe *the most* difficult and longest text they had read that far. Even though he did not exactly say that it would be too difficult for the students, it certainly did not serve as motivation.

According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2015), teachers should have distinct expectations and be able to motivate the students to realise their learning potential (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). By explaining the purpose of a task and by clarifying the expectations, the students will get a meta reflection on their own learning. As mentioned in the section 2.2.1, autonomous learners comprehend the purpose of their learning programme, accept responsibility for their learning and takes initiative and so forth. I will argue that many of the passive students I observed in the two classrooms were not very autonomous. As teachers, one must remember that the high expectations must also be realistic. Thus, the lessons must be both challenging, and be able to give the students a sense of mastery. Another important element is for the teacher to create a good working community where learning is the common purpose. Lessons where the students fail to master learning, can lead to lack of motivation and diminish the students' expectation of themselves (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). For the above-mentioned reasons one might assume that the students would participate more if they were give clearer instructions where the teacher stressed the importance of language use. Moreover, by giving the students more time to reflect on their own language learning, they might become more motivated to speak English during the lessons.

5.5.3 Learners' own expectations

According to studies presented by the Ministry of Education and Training (2011), students' motivation for learning decreases as they get older (Ministry of Education and Training, 2011). Contrary to this, the 10th graders I spoke with were fond of the English subject. They liked to speak English, and some even claimed that they to some extent had a feeling of mastering their second language better than their mother tongue. This is a situation the teachers must benefit from. It is well known that Norwegian children and teenagers receive a great deal of target language input outside school from travels abroad and through television, films and other types of media. As mentioned in section 4.2, the students did not struggle to follow their teachers when they spoke English during the lessons, and they seemed to find it unnecessary for their teachers to give additional explanations in Norwegian. It seems to me that the students expected

more from their teachers, and they also wanted their teachers to expect more from them. The students also suggested activities that could possibly increase their motivation to learn more.

5.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have discussed my findings in light of theory presented in Chapter 2. I have discussed the topics from different perspectives, all related to the research question of the current study. I have also contributed to the discussion with my own experience when I found it relevant.

6. Conclusion and Final Remarks

In this research project I have explored how two English teachers in a Norwegian lower secondary school focus on and facilitate students' oral participation and teaching of communicative competence. *Oral participation* is in this thesis defined as speaking in the target language while engaged in instructional tasks or activities, and *communicative competence* refers to a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skills needed for communication. As stated in the English subject curriculum (2013), English is a world language, and is therefore used for international communication. To succeed in the globalized world, it is necessary for the students to be able to use the language and have knowledge on how it is used in different contexts. Becoming a competent speaker of English takes time, and for most learners a great deal of effort must be put into it. I believe an increased focus on how teachers facilitate student participation can boost the number of participating students, and in addition I assume it can increase the communicative competence of our students. This chapter will conclude the study by answering the research questions and arguing for their significance and transferability.

6.1 Research questions revisited

As mentioned earlier, this research project was not set out to find answers that could be generalized to all English teachers in lower secondary school in Norway. Nevertheless, I believe that I have met my objective of gaining a deeper insight into how two teachers perceive their own teaching of English, and what can be done to better facilitate student oral participation. What is more, I have achieved a better understanding of how two groups of students perceive their English education. In the following paragraphs, I will revisit and answer the research questions.

The study's main research question was the following:

> *To what extent is there a compliance between teacher cognition and the way student oral interaction is facilitated in the classroom?*

The data material I gathered showed interesting and to some extent unexpected results. As we could see in Chapter 4, Jill and John perceived their English lessons as varied and with a focus on student oral participation. Simultaneously, they uttered an awareness of a reluctant student

behaviour. This was explained by self-justice among the students and students' fear of failure. As Borg's model (Figure 2.2) illustrated, several elements contribute to affect a teacher's cognition. However, observation, theory and discussion revealed that the two teachers' assumptions of filling their lessons with tasks aimed at letting the students speak, did *not* invite to long interactional sequences in the target language in the student groups.

A teacher's choice of methods and language can obstruct students from speaking. When the teachers in this study chose to ask display questions instead of authentic questions, or when the teachers spoke Norwegian for a long time, or overlooked students who chose to do the same, they were all examples of approaches that may have delayed development of their students' target language.

This illustrates that there is some compliance between the two teachers' cognition and how they facilitate oral interaction. The teachers acknowledge that the students are reluctant students, but they lack insight into how their choice of tasks and their own behaviour contribute to maintain the students' reluctant participation.

Related to the main research question above, I was also interested in finding out how the teachers' students perceived their own oral participation and how they perceived their teachers' facilitation of it. I hoped that their reflections would help me gain deeper insight on the topic. Hence, two additional sub-research questions were outlined. They will be presented in turn

How do students perceive their own oral participation?

The interviews with the two student groups demonstrated that many students liked the English subject, and they understood how and why learning English would be beneficial for them in the future. Moreover, their awareness of their own reluctancy correlated with the teachers' perceptions, and the majority also acknowledged a need to increase their oral participation and use of target language in the English class. They explained the lack of oral student participation mainly due to fear of failure. This also correlates with the teachers' perceptions.

How do students perceive their teacher's approaches to facilitate oral interaction?

There was little correlation between how the students and their teachers perceived the room for student oral participation during the English lessons. The students experienced their lessons as monotonous and seemed to prefer lessons that would increase their motivation.

When we put these aspects together, I believe this shows that there is a need for an increased teacher awareness on how lessons are conducted, and oral participation is facilitated. Through high and clarified expectations, through authentic tasks and focus on motivation, I believe we can achieve a higher level of oral participation among our students. Let us not forget the importance of how we use the teacher talking time, because the use of teacher language is a significant contributor and tool when it comes to developing language learning among students. The students indicated that they were ready to expand their oral participation, and in my opinion, it is up to the teachers to enhance the facilitation in order for the students to aim even higher.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

Conducting research within a classroom means to explore an area consisting of countless of interesting possible aspects to dig into. During the thorough process of this research project, I have come across interesting and unexpected results which have led to new questions being raised. Due to time and space limitation of this type of research, is was not realistic to further examine all of them. This section aims to outline suggestions for further research on the topic. The topics I have chosen to mention here is: *Change in student behaviour, assessing oral skills* and *Teacher language*.

Change in student behaviour: During her interview, Jill mentioned that she had observed a change in student behaviour during the years she had worked as a teacher. By that she meant that at the beginning of her career, students were more eager to participate orally. This was something I found interesting, but on the side of what my research project set out to explore. However, it would be interesting to find out whether her assumptions were legitimate or not. It may therefore have been interesting to conduct a project where teachers with seniority are interviewed to search for equal impressions, but also to try to find the reason for the eventual change.

Assessing oral skills: During the thesis, I briefly touched upon oral and written skills as juxtaposed in the English subject. However, I did not elaborate on this. It is my understanding

that much of the assessment of oral skills is related to assessment of oral presentations. This topic was touched upon in an article by Svenkerud, Klette and Hertzberg (2012), and it is my opinion that such a study would be highly relevant within the context of the English subject. It would be interesting to study how English teachers assess oral skills, maybe even compared to how written skills are assessed.

Teacher language: The teachers' language was one of the elements mentioned in this research project has mentioned. Nonetheless, this is an aspect that would have been interesting to explore even further. Walsh (2002) has already conducted a study focusing on teacher language, but I believe it would be interesting to set out such a project in a Norwegian context, to see how the English teacher's language impedes or facilitates student contributions. By recording lessons, and by focusing on the teacher's way of using his or her language, important influencing elements might be discovered.

6.3 Final remarks

Now that this research project has come to an end, I believe the results from the study and from my reflections show that there is a need for an increased focus on how teachers facilitate students' oral participation in the ESL classroom. For me as a teacher, it has enhanced my awareness of my classroom practice, and it has inspired me to renew my perception why students can become reluctant, but also on how to increase the student participation. Furthermore, I hope that my research project can provide teacher students and colleagues with new perspectives on how to better facilitate student oral participation. I also hope for an increased awareness around the expectations of policy documents that serve as a basis for our teaching. As I am writing this thesis, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is renewing and improving the national curricula. For the English subject curriculum this means an implementation of three *core elements* that replaces the current *main subject areas*, and it contains fewer competence aims compared to what we are familiar with in current English subject curriculum. It strikes me that the existing outline of the new English subject curriculum is far less detailed, and it will require teachers to sharpen their focus and become even more aware of their practices. However, even if the teachers change their practices, we will never be guaranteed that these pedagogical adjustments will lead to entire classes participating orally. Nonetheless, it is still our job to prepare them for an unknown future and pursue the utmost development of our students' oral skills. Oral skills are considered as one of the basic skills in

the curriculum for a reason, and taken everything into account, our ways of teaching oral skills must be based on that consideration.

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Appendix 1: Letter of permission from NSD to collect data

NSD

Anita Normann

7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 22.11.2017   Vår ref: 56904 / 4 / AGL   Deres dato: Deres ref:

Vurdering fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 31

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 06.11.2017 for prosjektet:

56904	*English teachers, are we talking too much? A study of classroom interaction, teacher beliefs and practices*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Anita Normann*
Student	*Camilla Rostad*

Vurdering
Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er meldepliktig og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av personopplysningsloven § 31. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling
Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:
•opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
•vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
•eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Vi forutsetter at du ikke innhenter sensitive personopplysninger.

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet
Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke endringer du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet
Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i Meldingsarkivet.

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt
Ved prosjektslutt 30.11.2018 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av
personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren
                                        Audun Løvlie

Kontaktperson: Audun Løvlie tlf: 55 58 23 07 / audun.lovlie@nsd.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Camilla Rostad, camros@vgs.nfk.no

Appendix 2: Information letter to the parents and the consent to participation in the study

Camilla Rostad
Lærer ved Aust-Lofoten videregående skole
E-post: camros@vgs.nfk.no
Tlf: 98834040   Svolvær, 27.09.17

Til elever og foreldre/foresatte for elever på 10. trinn

Forespørsel om innsamling av data til mastergradsforskning

I forbindelse med mitt mastergradsstudium i Fagdidaktikk i engelsk og fremmedspråk ved NTNU skal jeg gjennomføre et prosjekt der jeg retter fokuset mot klasseromsinteraksjon og arbeid med grunnleggende ferdigheter.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Deltakelse i studiet vil for eleven innebære:

- At jeg observerer to undervisningsøkter i engelsk, dersom engelsklærer gir sitt samtykke til dette.
- At jeg gjennomfører fokusgruppeintervju med et utvalg av elever fra den aktuelle klassen.

Jeg vil bruke lydopptaker i forbindelse med både klasseromsobservasjonene og intervjuet. Intervjuet vil være en samtale om elevens opplevelse av og erfaringer med muntlig deltakelse og muntlighet som grunnleggende ferdighet. Det vil ikke være nødvendig for eleven å forberede seg i forkant av et eventuelt intervju.

Hva skjer med informasjonen?

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og elever/foresatte kan når som helst trekke sitt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger som kommer frem i undersøkelsen er konfidensielle og lydopptak fra observasjon og intervju er det bare jeg som har tilgang på. Alt datamateriale vil anonymiseres, og lydopptak og annet lagret materiale vil bli slettet i forbindelse med avslutningen på forskningsprosjektet i november 2018.

Skolens rektor er informert om mitt arbeid og har gitt sitt samtykke til innsamling av data. I tillegg meldes forskningsprosjektet inn til Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste (NSD) i henhold til retningslinjer for forskningsetikk og personvern. Min veileder på Institutt for lærerutdanning er Anita Normann, førstelektor i engelsk didaktikk.

På bakgrunn av dette ber jeg altså om deres tillatelse til:
- Å gjøre lydopptak i forbindelse med observasjon av to undervisningsøkter
- Å eventuelt intervjue din sønn/datter om muntlig aktivitet i timer/klasseromsinteraksjon.
- At innhentet informasjon kan bli brukt i mitt mastergradsarbeid.

Oppstart for forskningsprosjektet er september 2017, og selve mastergradsarbeidet beregnes avsluttet november 2018.

Ta gjerne kontakt via epost dersom du har spørsmål om prosjektet.

Vennlig hilsen,
Camilla Rostad

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg gir tillatelse til at min sønn/datter deltar i studien på betingelsene nevnt i skrivet som presenterer studiet.

Forutsetningene for tillatelsen er at informasjonen som fremkommer gjennom studien anonymiseres, og at prosjektet følger gjeldende retningslinjer for forskningsetikk og personvern.

Jeg har snakket med min sønn/datter om dette og han/hun har også gitt sitt samtykke til å delta i studiet.

☐   Jeg samtykker til at det gjøres lydopptak i engelsktimene til min sønn/datter

☐   Jeg samtykker til at Camilla Rostad kan intervjue min datter/sønn om klasseromsinteraksjon og muntlighet som grunnleggende ferdighet.

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta.

Elevens fulle navn: _____

Sted:_____   Dato:_____

Elevens signatur:_____

Foresattes signatur:_____
Vennligst lever svarslippen til kontaktlærer så snart som mulig. Takk for hjelpen.

Appendix 3: Interview guide for interviewing the teacher

Intervjuguide – Lærer

- Starte med uformell samtale
- Informasjon om prosjektet
    - Bakgrunn og formål for samtalen
    - Forklar hva intervjuet skal brukes til
    - Avklar spørsmål rundt anonymitet og taushetsplikt
    - Spør om respondenten har spørsmål eller om noe er uklart

Start lydopptak

Hvor lenge har du jobbet som lærer?

Har måten du har undervist på endret seg fra du var ferdigutdannet til nå?

Hvordan ser en ideell engelsktime ut for deg?

På hvilken måte lærer elevene mest engelsk, tror du?

Hva legger du begrepet «klasseromsinteraksjon»

Hvor viktig er elevenes muntlige aktivitet med tanke på språkinnlæring?

Hva synes du om elevenes muntlige aktivitet i engelsktimene?

Med tanke på muntlig aktivitet i timene – er det noe du ønsker en endring på?

Hvordan arbeider du for å skape økt aktivitet i engelsktimene?

Hva kan gjøres for å få elevene mer **med** i timene?

Hva kan du som lærer gjøre? Hva kan elevene gjøre?

Er du bevisst rundt dette med åpne/lukkede spørsmål når du står i klasserommet?

Hvis elevene responderer, hvordan legger du til rette for videre samtale knyttet opp til elevens svar?

Oppsummere

Er det noe mer du ønsker å legge til ang. engelskfaget, som vi ikke har kommet inn på?

Stopp lydopptak

Appendix 4: Interview guide for interviewing the students

Intervjuguide- Elev

- Starte med uformell samtale
- Informasjon om prosjektet
    - o Bakgrunn og formål for samtalen
    - o Forklar hva intervjuet skal brukes til
    - o Avklar spørsmål rundt anonymitet og taushetsplikt
    - o Spør om respondenten har spørsmål eller om noe er uklart

Start lydopptak

Samtale om erfaring og tanker om engelskfaget

Hva synes du er best med engelskfaget?

Hva synes du er mest utfordrende med engelskfaget?

Hvis det overordnede målet med engelsktimene er at du skal utvikle språket ditt, hvordan ser en ideell engelsktime ut for deg?

Hvilke tanker har du rundt viktigheten av det å være muntlig i engelsktimene?

Gis det rom for mye muntlig aktivitet i engelsktimene, synes du?

Hvordan vil du karakterisere din egen muntlige aktivitet i timen?

Hva kan du gjøre for å bli med aktiv?

Hva mener du læreren kan gjøre for å legge til rette for mer muntlig aktivitet?

Den timen jeg var med og observerte, var det en gjennomsnittstime med tanke på muntlig aktivitet?

Er det noe mer du ønsker å legge til ang. engelskfaget som vi ikke har kommet inn på?

Stopp lydopptak

Appendix 5: Coding the transcribed material

C: Hvordan er den ideelle engelsktimen? Den mest perfekte engelsktimen? Hvordan ser den ut for dere? Har dere tenkt på det, noen gang?

Elev 7: Egentlig ikke – kanskje at vi gjør mye forskjellig? At vi ikke bare leser.

Camilla Rostad
Ideell engelsktime = variert time. Ikke bare lesing.

Elev 9: At vi er i grupper og snakker med hverandre

Camilla Rostad
Gruppearbeid og muntlig arbeid

C: Så dette med å snakke kan gjøre time artigere?

Elev 8: At man ikke bare sitter å jobber hele timen.

Elev 10: Da kan man komme litt utenfor fokus, og man får ikke til å fokusere helt på det man jobber med. Men hvis man snakker med folk, så kan man få mer fokus på det man jobber med. At man lærer mer.

Camilla Rostad
Samarbeid kan være bra for fokus, og da lærer man bedre.

C: Ja, så det å prate, og det å kunne snakke med hverandre i timene, å kommunisere, vil gjøre timene bedre?

Elever: Ja

C: Snakke på engelsk, eller snakke på norsk, da?
Elever: Engelsk (i kor)

Camilla Rostad
Samarbeid skal foregå på engelsk

C: Nå var jo jeg inne i en time hos dere, men nå spilte jo dere et spill, eller hadde et glosespill helt på slutten. Tror dere, jeg vet ikke helt hvor mye dere fulgte med på de andre gruppene, for dere var jo i egne grupper. Men snakket dere engelsk til hverandre eller snakket dere norsk?

Flere elever: Norsk

Camilla Rostad
Elever erkjenner at de gjerne tyr til norsk

Elev 8: Jeg prøvde å snakke engelsk på gruppa mi, men de begynte å snakke norsk, så...

Camilla Rostad
Vanskelig å snakke engelsk når resten av gruppa snakket norsk

C: Ja, det er kanskje litt vanskelig å være den eneste som prøver? Går dette litt igjen, at når dere jobber med oppgaver og skal samarbeide, så snakker dere norsk eller snakker dere engelsk?

Elever: Mest norsk

Elev 7: Jeg føler, at så lenge jeg snakker med noen andre, som har med et tema å gjøre, så lærer jeg av det også. Selv om det er på norsk.

C: Vi snakket jo litt om dette med å være muntlig, og nå får jo dere muntligkarater i engelsk, ikke sant? Så dere skjønner det at å være muntlig aktiv, det er viktig. Ikke sant, for å bli flinkere.

C: Gir læreren deres dere mye rom til å være muntlig aktiv i timene, på engelsk altså? Å stille spørsmål slik at dere får svare,

Elev: Både og

Elev 6: Ja, men bortsett fra at vi på en måte leser, og det er jo sånn at hvis du vil lese, så blir du bedre muntlig, men utover det er det ikke mye rom for å si noe generelt i faget.

Camilla Rostad
Muntlighet = lesing i daget. Ellers lite rom for å være muntlig

C: Ja, for i går og i dag så jobbet dere veldig mye med gloser. Var dette en typisk engelsktime som dere bruker å ha?

Elever: Nei

Elev 9: Vi pleier å lese hele timen,

Camilla Rostad
Lesing er standarden

C: Så det hender seg at dere bruker å lese store deler av timen?