



MULTIMODAL IDEALS IN THE CLASSROOM: BENEFITS OF AN EXPANDED TEXT-TERM

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Abstract

The English Subject Curriculum (ENG01-04) presents a view on the concept of what a “text” is that reaches far beyond its lexical definition. In this paper, I look at what benefits the expansive text term from ENG01-04 has for language teaching by looking at its implications for multimodal teaching approaches. But curricular implications matter little if they are not reflected in the views of teachers, and therefore I have also researched five teachers’ feelings around the term “text” is and what they think about how the term is presented in ENG01-04. My findings indicate that the ideals voiced by the English Subject Curriculum are mirrored in the teachers who base their teachings on the curriculum. However, they do not attribute their views to the curriculum but rather something adapted from a necessity when working with the lower grades.

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Introduction

In a world that constantly evolves and where technology is becoming an ever-present part of daily life, it is paramount to provide today's youth with an up-to-date and relevant education that encompasses societal changes. In this paper, I will look at one particular change in the national curriculum of Norway. As part of a national improvement of the Norwegian school system, the Ministry for Education and Research enacted a school reform called the *Knowledge Promotion* (LK20), which was established as regulation by royal decree in 2017. One of the goals of this subject renewal was to address changes in society and adapt the curriculum accordingly, and therefore several changes were implemented in the English subject in LK20 (ENG01-04). In this paper, I will look primarily at the core elements of the *English Subject Curriculum* (from here ESC). More specifically, I will focus on how the curriculum regards "texts" and how explicitly it states the vast degree to which the concept of text is viewed and compare it to how the term is understood by teachers. In the ESC of LK20, multimodal texts have been recognized as a necessity to a much greater extent than in previous curriculums. Compared to the ESC of LK06 (ENG1-03), which does mention the multimodal nature of language learning and talks about how "text" is to be understood in a broad sense, ENG01-04 clarifies its understanding of the subject by using far more explicit language in explaining what text as a broad concept means. In short, close to everything that conveys meaning can be considered as text according to ENG01-04, be it recorded speech, pictures, or writing.

Working with texts, both reading and producing, is recognized as an important part of language learning. A wide acceptance of what can be considered text allows teachers to draw on a far greater range of learning materials; it especially allows for the usage of more authentic texts in language learning classrooms. Working with that type of material, students will learn vocabulary, grammar, forms of expression, idiomatic phrases, and other aspects of language to a greater extent than what can be achieved from a strictly lexical definition of what "text" is. But curricular changes matter little if the teachers who are responsible for implementing them fall short in this task. The purpose of this paper is to, on a small scale, map out to what degree the renewed and modernized ideas of LK20 are reflected in the beliefs and teaching methods of language teachers. I will present the findings produced in an attempt to answer these questions: *What benefits are there to a broad understanding of "text," and how do teachers' understanding of it compare to the definition presented in the new English subject curriculum (ENG01-04)?* By first looking at what implications a multimodal

understanding of the concept of text has for language teaching, I will attempt to explain and present some of the advantages of such an approach. Then I will use findings from qualitative interviews of five teachers who teach either English or Norwegian in grades ranging between years 1 and 7. These interviews map out how much teachers have adapted to this clarification by researching their thoughts on the subject of "text." Finally, I will compare the results of my research with the government's stance to show that, for the most part, the implementation of this specific part of ENG01-04 has been successful.

Theory

With the ever-accelerating digitalization of our society and the inherent multimodality of the digital world, it is paramount that students develop tools to navigate and make meaning of this aspect of their daily lives. To understand why this is, we must first look at what "multimodal" and "multimodality" means and what a multimodal text is. Multimodal is simply the term used to describe something that is made up of more than one mode, which are socially generated products for communication (Bearne & Reedy, 2017, p.388). Modes can be understood as the different ways we humans convey our intentions, such as images, sound, gestures, and writing. These modes are socially constructed over time as information carriers appear and are shaped by the society that uses them. Multimodality, on the other hand, is a theoretical term that encompasses how we utilize different modes in the process of meaning-making, with one of the main ideas of the concept of multimodality being that all communication is multimodal (Canals, 2021, p.648; Diamantopoulou & Ørevi, 2021, p.6). A typical conversation will never use only one mode; for example, the mode of gesturing, also known as body language, conveys as much meaning as the sounds we make. Even traditional academic writing, which is usually not considered multimodal, contains at least two modes: written words and layout (Sun, Yang & Silvia, 2021, p. 4). The way a text is shaped conveys a meaning that either fortifies or weakens the written words. For example: if an academic paper is written in a silly font, it loses most of its credibility. Having established the multimodal reality of human communication, we can see why students should develop multimodal literacy. Recognizing that it takes several modes to make meaning, it becomes apparent why multimodal instruction is necessary (Maagerø & Tønnessen, 2021, p.31). Tools for meaning-making in everyday life will normally operate independently of school instruction, but to understand these tools and approach them critically, students will need instruction. The importance of being able to navigate the world has been recognized by the Ministry of Education and Research.

In the ESC, the term text is used much more broadly than its lexical definition. Whereas the Cambridge Dictionary defines "text" as "the written words in a book, magazine, etc., not the pictures" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), the ESC regards it as a significantly vaster concept. In ENG01-04, it is explained as:

"The concept of text is used in a broad sense: texts can be spoken and written, printed and digital, graphic and artistic, formal and informal, fictional and factual, contemporary and historical. The texts can contain writing, pictures, audio, drawings, graphs, numbers and other forms of expression that are combined to enhance and present a message." (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a, p.3).

This understanding of the term is not new, but where LK20 differs from previous curriculums such as LK06 is how explicitly it states what is meant by text as a broad concept. The old ESC, ENG1-03, uses significantly fewer words to mention: "[...] where the concept of text is used in the broadest sense of the word. It involves oral and written representations in different combinations and a range of oral and written texts from digital media." (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013, p.2). Not all of the new curricula are as explicit as the ESC. If we look at the Norwegian subject curriculum (NSC) in LK20 (NOR01-06), it portrays a similarly vague explanation of working with texts as ENG1-03: "The Norwegian subject builds on an expanded text concept. This means that the pupils shall read and experience texts that combine different forms of expression." (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019b, p.2). Though this is an interesting note, exactly why the Norwegian and English subject curriculums differ in their explanation of text as a broad concept goes beyond the scope of this paper. As we can see, although the broad understanding of text is not a revolutionary change between LK06 and LK20, the ESC does clarify what the Ministry means to a greater extent than previous curriculums.

Since the ESC itself offers little reasoning or explanation as to why text is viewed in such a broad sense, we must look to the "Foundation of knowledge in English [own translation]" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2021) to avoid speculation. Although the primary purpose of this article is to provide both guidelines for what teachers or school owners should consider when implementing new subject textbooks and an overview of current educational research, it elaborates on the reasoning for many of the goals and competence aims of the ESC and gives us therefore valuable insight. In this guide, the Directorate makes its view on multimodality clear. The world we live in is increasingly digital, and the digital world is heavily multimodal. Therefore, it is paramount for successful participation in society that students obtain a multimodal competence as part of

the literacy they are to develop during their school years. To achieve this, it is crucial that literacy is understood alongside a broad text concept (Directorate for Education and Training, 2021, p. 16). Achieving multimodal literacy is one of the primary reasons for the broad interpretation of text, but this approach also has other benefits. It allows teachers to implement authentic materials to a far greater extent. Authentic materials are books and other forms of media that were not created for language learners but rather with native speakers in mind (Ciornei & Dina, 2014, p.275). In a study on the use of reading authentic picture books in a Norwegian classroom, Birketveit and Rimmereide (2017) conclude that reading authentic material is beneficial and indicates that increased usage of picture books and illustrated books are called for in the teaching of English in Norwegian schools (p.115). In another study, Birketveit et al. (2018) mention the difficulty of understating the necessity of authentic language input in language learning (p.3). The ESC acts in accordance with this and gives teachers ample opportunity to use authentic material from current popular culture, which can, in addition to being valuable for language learning, increase students' motivation for reading (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2021, p.62)

There are several benefits to including digital and multimodal competence in the English classroom. Yi (2014) notes that a focus on multimodal literacy allows teachers to better draw on English language learners' experiences and strengths, as these are often overlooked in the more standardized academic literacy ideals (p.164). In addition, requiring teachers to teach their students how to read and interpret multimodal texts also covers an aspect of literacy that Rowsell & Walsh (2011) mention as essential, namely that of critical digital reading. Today's students will typically have browsed the internet long before starting school and are therefore likely to learn or already possess the technical skills required to read online; the ability to discern important information from unimportant, however, does not appear without being taught (Walsh & Rowsell, 2011, p.58). Other advantages of a multimodal approach to language learning include enriching writing pedagogy and student motivation for learning, developing language learners' understanding of media, and increasing students' ability to express themselves (Sun, Yang & Silva, 2021, p. 13). Teachers today make good use of multimodal texts when teaching. Still, as several of the subjects interviewed for this paper mentioned, it is often born out of necessity associated with instructing young students and not legislative demands. The need for appropriate curriculum clarification and changes has clearly been addressed in LK20, in accordance with strong suggestions from Mitsikopoulou (2021), who argues for the need for explicit adaptation of multimodal literacy in policy documents such as curriculums (p. 52).

However, the explicit focus on working with multimodal texts in the ESC is by itself not enough to achieve adequate multimodal and digital literacy. Although creating textbooks and inventing new pedagogies with theoretical founding in multimodal theory is an important part, it is not enough in and of itself (Diamantopoulou & Ørevik, 2021, p.4). If the assessment criteria that teachers are supposed to grade by do not reflect the adaptation of a multimodal practice in the ESC, then it might as well not exist. Mitsikopoulou (2021) comments on this when discussing curriculum changes in Nordic countries and finds that although they succeed in curricular inclusion of multimodality, these changes have not influenced students' assessment (p. 54). The Directorate for Education and Training (2021) mentions that there has been a lack of multimodal consideration in the evaluation of written final exams in year 10 and that monomodal writing was by far the most common long answer task given to students. But the examination method for the English subject is (as of 2021) under revision, and the Directorate expects future examinations to contain more multimodal approaches (p.70-71).

Method

Qualitative research

The second research question in this paper called for a collection of data from teachers who relied heavily on various types of texts in their language teachings. My wish to collect their honest thoughts on the subject limited the available data collection methods. Based on the qualitative nature of my study and the relatively small sample size from which to draw research subjects, I decided that interviews, which generally fall on a spectrum between completely structured and unstructured, would be best suited for the task. In a structured interview, the interviewer will prepare a rigid interview guide with closed questions where the interviewee has little room for reflection. An unstructured interview is akin to a topic-focused conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee (Blandford, 2013, section 6.4). Methods that fall between these two extremes are referred to as semi-structured and can lean towards either end. The interviews presented in this text were semi-structured but leaned towards structure rather than structure. There were several reasons for this. For one, audio recordings were not possible due to the need for privacy. Therefore, questions had to be kept so closed that it was possible to record them manually but so open that some reflection still took place. As can be seen in the interview guide (see Appendix A), some of the questions are more closed than others. Of the five questions, Q4 is the most closed as -it's fine- or -I agree with it- would be acceptable answers, though, as noted by Roulston (2010a), closed questions often lead to reflection or further explanation when answered in the negative (p. 4). This was

observed with one interviewee, who disagreed with LK20, and elaborated more on their reasoning than the interviewees who agreed with it.

In contrast with quantitative research, which often produces concrete data that can be easily quantified and statistically analyzed, qualitative research methods primarily result in significantly more varied data material. This leads to a problem that often plagues qualitative research, which is the difficulty of achieving a satisfactory degree of quality (Anderson, 2010, p. 2; Blandford, 2013, section 10.1; Roulston, 2010b p.201). In this paper, I have chosen to rely heavily on the checklist created by Anderson (2010), as presented in her article on how qualitative studies should be presented to assure as high a degree as possible of reliability. Precisely what aspects qualify as quality can be challenging to establish, as different introductory articles on the subject show little consensus on terminology. Roulston (2010b) mentions several of the terms some authors use to describe what they feel is essential to ensure the validity of the research, and although the wording is inconsistent between different papers, their end goal is the same (p.201). Two words that are often used, though with slightly different intentions, are *validity* and *reliability*. In this text, I use them as Anderson eloquently explains them:

"Validity relates to the honesty and genuineness of the research data, while reliability relates to the reproducibility and stability of the data." (2010, p.2)

Sampling and considerations

To answer my research question, I wanted to interview teachers who actively worked with and used the term text. Therefore, with the assistance of my practice teacher, I reached out to eight different English teachers by email. This paper focuses primarily on subject teachers who would be likely to have conscious opinions on the use of texts in the classroom. Therefore, I did not approach teachers who taught content-focused classes even though, as previously mentioned, 'text' is currently regarded in such a broad manner that one could argue that math teachers also work primarily with texts. Of the eight teachers, only three responded and agreed to participate. The remaining teachers did not answer at all, so their reasons to decline are mostly speculation, but a reasonable explanation is that they simply did not have time as teachers are quite busy. Due to the school's frequent participation in different studies conducted by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, it could also be that the teachers felt that small-scale research such as mine was not worth their time. I will offer more reflection on this when I address the limitations of this study. Because of the low engagement in my initial outreach, I decided to approach two of the teachers who worked on the same

team as my practice teacher and therefore had interacted more with us students. They agreed to participate, making the total number of interview subjects five.

Of the sample group, three teachers had both teaching experience and credits in English (T1, T2, and T3); these were the ones who responded to my initial email. One did not have credits in English but taught the subject (T5), and one did not teach nor possess credits in English but taught both Norwegian Sign Language (NTS) and Norwegian (T4). All of the teachers worked at the same school in different grades between years 1 and 7. It could have been interesting to interview a teacher of higher grades, as the complexity of written learning materials usually increases with the pupils' age, but this was not possible at this particular primary school.

Several steps were taken to make the interviewing process as accommodating as possible for the interviewees, and they were generally successful. The participants were largely influential in deciding where and when the interviews took place, and they were given several opportunities to back out. On multiple occasions, we rescheduled to accommodate their time schedules. Most of this was done to ensure a positive and beneficial environment, which Blandford (2013) notes as essential for the initial stages of an interview (section 6.4). For the most part, this endeavor was successful, and there was a positive atmosphere. Unfortunately, the interview with T3 happened immediately after a somewhat long and challenging situation with two pupils during a field trip. As a result, I had not had a chance to collect myself before meeting T3. Therefore, the atmosphere of the interview was tenser than I would have liked, but it seems that this mostly affected small talk and not the actual interview to any extended degree. As I will elaborate on during the analysis, T3's answers are not disfavorably compared to the other subjects. Consequently, I deemed it unnecessary to remove the interview even though the setting was less than favorable.

Anonymity for the participants was of major importance to stay within the requirement of privacy protection under Norwegian law. This was ensured by not recording video or audio that could be used to identify them and instead manually recording the ideas and arguments the teachers presented. In addition, I use gender-neutral pronouns and substitute names for T+number to further increase the difficulty of identification. The gathering of informed consent was conducted verbally at the start of each interview, which in addition to continuing anonymity, also helps reduce the cost of participation (Blandford, 2013, section 5).

The five interviews were carried out over a two-week period. Participants did not receive any information on what the interviews were about before they started. This was done in order to ensure that answers were as close to the teachers' honest thoughts by avoiding the

possibility of the subjects reading up in advance. There was one main reason for a degree of secrecy. As noted in several sources, participants might not tell the truth and instead try to produce arguments that the interviewer will agree with (Anderson, 2010, p.2; Roulston, 2010b, p. 205). Because of the difference in age and status between the interviewees and me, I doubt that any of the teachers felt a particular need to gain my approval. Still, they may have wanted to seem as competent as possible and therefore have researched the theme of the interview if they had known of it in advance. Initially, I had some concerns about whether or not the participants would discuss the interviews with each other since scheduling issues meant there would be multiple days between each interview. Fortunately, this was not the case. None of the teachers seemed to have reflected on the questions before I asked them. A piece of solid evidence for this is that none of the subjects appeared to have seen the definition of 'text' from the ESC before, which I imagine would have been one of the first things they familiarized themselves with if any discussion had found place between the subjects between interviews.

The interviews were conducted in different smaller workrooms where we could have some privacy from their co-workers and usually took somewhere around ten to fifteen minutes to complete. Mutual understanding of questions is instrumental in ensuring valid and reliable results (Roulston, 2010b, p.202), and the interviews were therefore conducted in Norwegian and later translated to English by me. All the participants were asked the five questions in the order they appear in the interview guide (Appendix A), except for T4, who did not teach English and therefore could not answer Q5. Some necessary clarification was offered whenever interviewees seemed confused. Especially the difference between Q1 and Q2 seemed unclear to most subjects, which I would clarify by asking them to think of a definition one might find in a dictionary.

Results and Analysis

Generally speaking, 80% of the interviewees showed an understanding of text term that matched that of the Directorate and agreed that the definition in ENG01-04 was good, with the only outlier being T4, who I initially, for reasons explained later, thought would have the broadest definition. All of the teachers mentioned multimodality as being a positive thing and something they had to incorporate into their teaching, especially because of the low age of their students. Several of them also reflected on how instructions on multimodal texts were necessary for the student's ability to navigate the modern world with its highly digital and multimodal way of life.

One thing I found especially interesting was that, in general, all the teachers, except for T4, talked about "text" broadly, especially when discussing how they worked with texts in their classrooms, but in an attempt to define the term, most fell back to the lexical view of text as being written words. This shift is especially clear with T2. They mention the use of pictures as text for the youngest children when asked Q1, saying that to them, text means "both letters and sentences. And pictures for the young children", and then in Q2, they return to defining it as "Words formed to sentences, lots of them turn to a text." T1 and T5 voiced similar views. When asked for a more concrete definition of "text", T5 said that "Text is words arranged to form meaning", while T1 expressed a similar idea saying, "[texts are] all forms of writing". Of all the interviewees, only T3 was somewhat consistent in how they talked about "text" and how they defined it. T3 was the only teacher who mentioned that they thought verbal expression could be considered text, though they did express some doubt about the validity of such a claim.

In general, most of the teachers could not conclude firmly whether or not the way they viewed texts had changed. Except for T1, who insisted that their thoughts on the subject had always been the same and blamed the lack of organizationally allocated time for further education, and T2, who said "The term has expanded to include pictures and such. Before the children can write we use pictures and call that text", the remaining teachers used vague language when answering Q3. T3 mentions that "The way we view text has changed, but maybe not the way we think about what text is" and T4 claims they are "Not completely sure. It is maybe, probably something that has changed as education has made me more aware". Considering how widely they talked about text and text usage in the classroom during small talk, I believe there has been some adaptation over time, but they had little awareness of any such change. Most of them arrived at an inconclusive conclusion that there had probably been some change, but they allocated it to a necessity of working with the younger grades rather than any official stance by the Ministry.

Another common trait between the interviews was the lack of familiarity with how text is viewed in LK20. For Q4, none of the participants seemed to recognize the definition from the curriculum. I had prepared for them not remembering the exact wording and therefore brought it with me in writing to our meetings (See appendix A), but I had not imagined that it would be so foreign. Granted, as mentioned before, all interviewees, with the possible exception of T4, presented a similarly broad understanding of texts as the Ministry. T1 and T5 even explicitly mention multimodality as beneficial for language learning during Q1 and Q2 before seeing the official understanding, and T2 and T3 talk about the benefits of

using different modes but in more colloquial language, for example how T2 talks about using pictures as text for children who have yet to learn reading. This would imply that they have understood the intentions of the subject curriculum even if they haven't read it closely.

Another explanation could be that they read the core elements of ENG01-04 when it was first launched in 2019 and took it to heart then, but during the three years since then have primarily focused on the competence aims, and the exact definition has therefore slipped away with time.

I mentioned that 80% of the teachers voiced approval of the way the Norwegian government understands text and how the outlier surprised me. T4 did not agree entirely with LK20's view of the term, though it is important to note that neither were they entirely against it. Answering Q4, they initially commented that "there are texts without all of that multimodal stuff [...]" and went on to mention how one could use different modes to enhance the message of a text but that only the mode of writing could be considered actual "text." It also seemed that T4 had some misconceptions about genre and text as they often worded themselves in a way that used "text" as a literary genre. For example, when answering Q2, they said that "A text is something that tells you something about some subject". Their narrow understanding of texts took me aback because T4 has credits in NTS and had worked several years as a sign language teacher, and in NTS, "text" is used broadly. Since NTS is a language without its own written language, a sign language text is a coherent text in NTS which is recorded and stored by digital means (Ministry of Education and Research, 2015, p.9). Therefore, this type of text is more akin to what the hearing might recognize as a monologue or presentation. And even though T4 explicitly mentions sign language texts as a type of text when answering Q1, they still mostly talk about text as written words. Initially, I thought this difference of opinion between T4 and the rest might be because T4 was the only one who had neither formal nor practical experience with English. However, as discussed earlier, the subject curriculum for Norwegian holds the same ideals as for texts, although not nearly as explicitly stated. Therefore, I find it difficult to justify a lack of multimodal appreciation wholly based only on a lack of credits in English.

None of the teachers seemed to have any awareness of whether the definition from the ESC had impacted their teaching practice or not. When answering Q5, they primarily used vague language. Only T1 seemed to be reasonably certain that the updates to the ESC had little impact on their teaching methods, claiming that "No. Because I'm newly educated and work a lot with multilingual students, so I use a lot of multimodality in my teaching". T3, who in general was in complete agreement with the ESC, felt that "[...] we have worked like that

for a long time" and therefore did not feel like the ESC had warranted any change for them. T2 reckoned that "I think it might have. That's why it's a good idea with further education". Of all the teachers, only T5 explicitly mentions how they are supposed to base their teaching on the curriculum, and therefore surmised that any change in the ESC should have some impact on teaching methods, claiming that "Generally we are supposed to plan our teaching based on the curriculum, so we probably try to work more varied than before."

Discussion

One key benefit to regarding text as a broad concept rather than a short and narrow definition is that it broadens what can be considered acceptable learning materials for language teaching. If the ESC simply mentioned that students are to "work with texts" without any further explanation of what "text" means, then some teachers might understand it as its lexical definition, which actively excludes pictures or other modes than writing (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), and then feel obligated to focus on traditional writing in their classrooms. Therefore, one of the major advantages of the broad definition in the ESC is that it opens for drawing on multimodal texts when working with both language input and output in the classroom. Several of the teachers interviewed in this paper mentioned that using multimodal texts was a necessity for their teaching practice, citing young or multilingual students and that using pictures was important during the earliest stages of English learning. When students are still in the beginner stages of learning before any vast vocabulary has been acquired, using multiple modes can assist in communication (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2021, p.43). Maagerø & Tønnessen (2021) mention that meaning-making is a process consisting of more than just language, which means that developing multimodal literacy is essential for all subjects, not just English (p.31). Encouraging students to work with, create, and critically assess texts that actively use multiple modes is an essential part of generating and further improving multimodal literacy. Regarding text as more than a collection of words and sentences allows for this. In addition, an open definition both allows for a far greater usage of varied and authentic texts, which is proven to be both great for language learning as well as reading motivation (Birketveit et al., 2018, pp.3-4; Birketveit & Rimmereide, 2017), and assures teachers that using such untraditional materials are well within the mandate the state has given them.

Of course, as long as the final assessment after ten years of primary school focuses on the production of traditional academic writing, teachers' ability to assign text production tasks that feature multimodal elements will be constrained. Teachers usually wish for their students

to achieve as good a grade as possible, and suppose they know that final exams will lack any focus on the production of multimodal texts (Mitsikopoulou, 2021, p.54; The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, p.71). In that case, the teachers are forced to focus on classic academic text creation, even though the ESC opens for massive implementations of multimodal text work. It remains to be seen to what degree the revision of the examination process addresses this issue. Still, the Directorate admits that assessment criteria and exam tasks must explicitly and concretely mention the inclusion of multimodal elements (The Directorate for Education and Training, 2021, p.71). It is apparent that to fully utilize the wide interpretation of "text" in the ESC, standards for assessment must follow suit.

It seems then that the Ministry and the teachers are largely in agreement on the benefits and necessity of a multimodal approach to text work. Some of the teachers talked mostly about using multimodal texts as a tool for adaptive education, while others mentioned the need to improve students' digital competence. This is primarily the same reasons that the Directorate gives for understanding "text" as anything that conveys meaning (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2021), so it is promising that the findings in this paper indicate that overall, English teachers share a similarly broad view on "text". One of the noticeable implications of the findings produced by this paper is that it seems like all the subjects who would, or should, have been familiar with the ESC (i.e., those who teach English) considers "text" to be a similarly broad concept as the curriculum. In comparison, the sole outlier is the one that would have been exposed to the just as broad but much vaguer definition from the NSC. This could suggest that another benefit of explicitly stating what is meant by "text as a broad concept" is increased teacher appropriation of the ideal. However, this study is only on five teachers. It is, therefore, too small a sample to argue that any trends found here are definitively representative of the sample base that is the entirety of teachers. Thus, the findings in this study should be considered with the relatively limited sample group in mind, and further research on a much larger scale would be necessary to determine if this is indeed a trend or simply a coincidence.

Limitations

Anderson (2010) notes that one of the major limitations of qualitative studies is the individual skills of the researcher (p.2), and as a student teacher, I have little experience as a researcher. This may have limited the study in several ways. Firstly, the method has some potential room for improvement. My decision to not inform subjects about what they would be interviewed about breaks with the common practice of qualitative studies (Blandford, 2013, section 5). Instead, I chose to start each interview with a concise presentation of the information that would usually be given in a preemptive information sheet. This includes gathering informed consent, introducing the purpose of the study, and how I would record and anonymize data. None of the interviewees seemed displeased with not knowing what they would be questioned about, though T2 exhibited some signs of stress when not being able to produce "correct" answers. Still, this lack of information could be another reason for the low engagement of my initial outreach to participants. However, not sending out an information sheet did have the desired effect. I believe that the teachers answered more honestly and that the resulting data was closer to their personal values, than it would have been if they had looked up how the Ministry viewed the text term. Another limitation of this study is its small sample size. The questions could also have been better worded. First, all subjects appeared confused as to what precisely the difference between Q1 and Q2 was and needed clarification from me. Prompting them to create a definition that could be found in a dictionary might have influenced the short and narrow description some interviewees offered. Q5 produced little to no important data. It was based on the idea that the teachers were aware of the updated view on text, and that they would have had been cognitively aware of the implications for their teaching practice. In retrospect, it would have been better to change the wording from "has the definition [...]" to "will the definition [...]" or even remove it altogether and instead perhaps ask specifically about how they used multimodal texts in their classroom.

Conclusion

In this study, I have tried to answer the two questions "What benefits are there to a broad understanding of text?" and "how do teachers' understanding of it compare to the definition presented in the new English subject curriculum (ENG01-04)". To answer the first question, I have looked at the "Foundation of Knowledge in English" to find the reasoning behind the inclusion of text as such a broad concept in the ESC and to understand why the Ministry of Education and Research has chosen this particular view. By looking at multimodal theory, I have shown some of the advantages of a broad understanding of "text". The major ones are

how an explicitly broad text concept allows for increased use of multimodal texts in language learning and makes it easier for teachers to develop multimodal literacy in their students, and widens the idea of suitable learning materials.

To answer the second research question, I conducted qualitative interviews with five teachers to discover what thoughts they had about the text term. To acquire reliable data through this method and ensure the validity of the research, I have included a summary of the relevant theory on qualitative studies. The findings from these interviews were compared to the ideal voiced by the ESC and revealed that, in general, the implementation of the multimodal goals of the Ministry of Education and Research has been largely successful. All of the teachers mentioned how they used multimodal texts in their teaching and the importance of this, but they reasoned it to be a consequence of the young age of their students and not any curricular change. Of the interviewed teachers, four (80%) agreed with how text was viewed in the ESC, and I have presented some potential reasons why the remaining one (20%) had some disagreements. The interviews also provided some interesting insights. There were some discordances between how the teachers talked about text with a broad understanding of the term and how they defined it more narrowly. However, this study was conducted with an insignificant amount of the totality of teachers in Norway, and further research on a larger scale would need to be undertaken before any general claims can be made. Therefore, the findings presented in this study should not be viewed as definitive evidence for trends outside of the five teachers that participated in the interviews.

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Appendix A

Q1: What does the term “text” mean to you?

Q2: How would you define it?

Q3: Have you always held this definition?

Q4: How do you feel about the definition in the English curriculum?

Q5: Has the definition from LK20 had any impact on your teaching practice?

Definition from LK20: “The concept of text is used in a broad sense: texts can be spoken and written, printed and digital, graphic and artistic, formal and informal, fictional and factual, contemporary and historical. The texts can contain writing, pictures, audio, drawings, graphs, numbers and other forms of expression that are combined to enhance and present a message.”