



# NTNU

Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology

## **Interpreting the Curriculum Aims Concerning Oral Production:**

**Teachers' Attitudes Towards Pronunciation Teaching in the EFL  
Classroom**

MGLU3504

English 2 module 2

Spring 2022

**Camilla Farbrot**

Candidate Number: 10006

**Abstract:**

This research paper aims to investigate the teaching focus on pronunciation in Norwegian EFL classrooms. In order to investigate this matter, two research questions were created: a) How do teachers interpret the curriculum guidelines when teaching pronunciation in the Norwegian EFL classroom? and b) What teaching strategies do in-service EFL teachers use to teach pronunciation?. Data were collected through a questionnaire and a document analysis of the LK20. The questionnaire was distributed to Norwegian in-service English teachers in 5th-10th grade. This study reveals that concerning oral production, LK20 is interpreted to have a focus on communication. Moreover, that the individual teachers believe listening activities can enhance the students' pronunciation. Lastly, that teaching different English varieties can be beneficial to pronunciation teaching, but Received Pronunciation (RP) and GenAm (general American) are often favored to introduce.

## Table of Content

<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1 BACKGROUND.....	4
1.1.1 <i>The neglected aspect of oral production</i> .....	4
1.1.2 <i>English in a global context</i> .....	4
1.2 SUMMARY.....	5
<b>2.0 THEORY</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 THE ASPECTS INCLUDED IN PRONUNCIATION .....	6
2.2.0 INFLUENTIAL PRINCIPLES TO PRONUNCIATION TEACHING .....	6
2.2.1 <i>The native speaker ideal</i> .....	6
2.2.2 <i>The intelligibility principle and lingua franca core</i> .....	6
2.3 PRONUNCIATION TEACHING'S PRESENCE IN THE CURRICULUM .....	7
2.4 NORWEGIAN STUDENTS AND EFL VARIETIES.....	8
2.6 TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS L2 ACCENTS.....	8
2.7 PRONUNCIATION TEACHING STRATEGIES IN THE EFL CLASSROOM .....	9
2.8 SUMMARY.....	9
<b>3.0 METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>10</b>
3.1 QUALITATIVE METHOD .....	10
3.2 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES.....	10
3.2.1 <i>Questionnaire</i> .....	10
3.2.2 <i>Document analysis</i> .....	11
3.3 DATA ANALYSIS .....	11
3.4 VALIDITY .....	12
3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	13
3.6 SUMMARY.....	13
<b>4.0 FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>14</b>
4.1 TEACHERS INTERPRETATION OF THE CURRICULUM GUIDELINES WHEN TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN THE NORWEGIAN EFL CLASSROOM .....	14
4.2 TEACHING STRATEGIES IN-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS USE TO TEACH PRONUNCIATION.....	15
4.3 SUMMARY.....	17
<b>5.0 DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>18</b>
5.1 COMMUNICATION IS KEY.....	18
5.2 PRONUNCIATION TEACHING STRATEGIES .....	18
5.3 PRESENTING DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF ENGLISH CAN BE BOTH A BLESSING AND A CURSE .....	19
5.4 THE EMPHASIS OF PRONUNCIATION IN EFL CLASSROOMS .....	20
<b>6.0 CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>7.0 REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>22</b>

## 1.0 Introduction

Pronunciation teaching should not be entirely disregarded in order to achieve successful communication in English. Nevertheless, it has been argued that pronunciation has been neglected when it comes to both EFL research and teaching (Bøhn & Hansen, 2017). It is not unusual for people to believe that once there is a focus on pronunciation, the aim for oral production is to sound like a native speaker. However, it is instead desirable to enhance the speakers' intelligibility, through focusing on the features of speech that can impede communication (Harmer, 2015). The Norwegian national curriculum (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020) can be challenging to interpret concerning the significant aspects of oral production and pronunciation. On the one hand it stresses the importance of communication, and on the other hand it states a more specific focus on pronunciation. Moreover, there is a lack of information on how to assess pronunciation. Nevertheless, studies revealed that although many Norwegian teachers solely concern themselves with intelligibility to oral production, pronunciation has an influence in determining the students' grades (Bøhn & Hansen, 2017). In this research paper, I have examined in-service teachers' attitudes on the emphasis of pronunciation in Norwegian EFL classrooms. In order to explore this phenomenon, I have focused on two research questions: a) How do teachers interpret the curriculum guidelines when teaching pronunciation in the Norwegian EFL classroom? and b) What teaching strategies do in-service EFL teachers use to teach pronunciation?

## 1.1 Background

### 1.1.1 The neglected aspect of oral production

Although pronunciation is a visible aspect to communicate in English, Harmer (2015) has argued that some teachers are reluctant to focus on pronunciation in their lessons. Moreover, that there can be several reasons why this occurs. Some teachers might for instance believe that concerning oral skills in English, being able to communicate is the most significant element to consider. Furthermore, Harmer states that it is believed by teachers that students can acquire an understandable pronunciation while focusing on other parts of the curriculum. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue and say that having a focus on pronunciation in the classroom can be beneficial, not only to the students' own production of language, but also to their comprehension of oral English (Harmer, 2015).

### 1.1.2 English in a global context

Kachru (1985) has divided English language speakers into different categories: different circles. The *inner circle* consists of native speakers of English. Moreover, the *outer*

*circle* includes nations where English plays a significant role as a second language (L2).

Lastly, the *expanding circle* consists of nations where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), and English does not have an official status in these areas (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

Norwegian speakers are members of the expanding circle.

Norwegian schools tend to focus on teaching EFL. In EFL, the inner circle sets the rules and norms for what the non-native speakers of English should reach for when learning English (Seidlhofer, 2000). By having a focus on pronunciation in the EFL classroom, it is not intended that the students are going to sound like a native speaker. It is suggested that there are some features of speech that are more evident to intelligibility than others. Those aspects will generally be favored in the teaching of pronunciation (Harmer, 2015). Another approach to English language teaching is to focus on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The majority of English speakers learn English as an additional language (Galloway & Rose, 2015). English is therefore considered a *lingua franca*, which is described to be a contact language for nations with a different first language (L1) (Jenkins, 2007). ELF can be understood as a concept that concerns the communication between members of several different cultures, where the intelligibility aspect should be considered when learning English (Jenkins, 2007). Furthermore, ELF can be an approach that takes into account that English is not the L1 for many English speakers

Moreover communication is viewed as the most important aspect to oral production, but the pronunciation level still needs to be sufficient enough so one can efficiently have a conversation. Speech must be quite understandable and consistent, although students most likely will not sound like a native speaker. In fact, it is possible that misunderstandings can occur if the pronunciation is not satisfactory. Moreover, wrong intonation patterns can for instance send undesired indications (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015)

## **1.2 Summary**

This chapter has covered some background information on my topic. Pronunciation tends to be neglected in the EFL classroom, that English is not only spoken by native English speakers, and that there are advantages to focusing on good pronunciation. The next chapter introduces relevant theory on the topic.

## **2.0 Theory**

### **2.1 The Aspects Included in Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is not only concerned with the production of sounds in a language. Nilsen and Rugesæter (2015) introduced some elements in order to feel comfortable with one's individual pronunciation as a teacher, and to be able to help students acquire an understandable pronunciation. As they elaborated, "you need to study pronunciation from various angles: the articulation of vowels and consonants (and you also need to know something about the differences between the sounds of English and Norwegian), the rhythm of English, and the intonation (or sentence melody)" (p. 9).

As mentioned by Nilsen and Rugesæter (2015), there are other aspects to pronunciation teaching than solely the articulation of specific sounds. Stress, rhythm and intonation are also mentioned as present in pronunciation. Stress is concerned with the fact that some speech sounds are more significant than others, and it can be identified when a single word is pronounced (word stress) or in the pronunciation of phrases (sentence stress). Nilsen and Rugesæter stated that "the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables constitutes the basic rhythm of the English language" (p.107). Intonation is related to the melody of speech and can help the speaker convey a message (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015).

### **2.2.0 Influential Principles to Pronunciation Teaching**

The *nativeness ideal* and the *intelligibility principle* have influenced pronunciation research and pedagogy. Both ideals have been viewed as beneficial, but it has been implied that the intelligibility principle might be more relevant (Levis, 2005).

#### **2.2.1 The native speaker ideal**

The native speaker ideal concerns that "it is both possible and desirable to achieve a native-like pronunciation in a foreign language" (Levis, 2005, p. 370). In other words, an EFL learner should for instance aspire to sound like a person who has English as an L1. Although this principle has been largely present in pronunciation teaching, particularly before the 1960's, it has been explored more recently that this ideal is rather unrealistic and only creates an unnecessary burden for both the teacher and the learner (Levis, 2005).

#### **2.2.2 The intelligibility principle and lingua franca core**

The intelligibility principle expresses that the learner of a foreign language should simply focus on being understandable. Moreover, it suggests that communication will not be disrupted even if the learners have strong accents (Levis, 2005). One does not have to sound like a native speaker in order to attain successful communication in English. However, there

are some pronunciation mistakes that can impair intelligibility more than others. With this principle in mind, pronunciation teaching should target these aspects (Levis, 2005). A reference guide was created to target the features that can be detrimental to intelligibility. Jenkins (2009) has suggested some features to include in pronunciation teaching called the Lingua Franca Core (LFC). The LFC includes: “Consonant sounds (except /θ/, /ð/, and dark /l/), vowel length contrasts, restrictions on consonant deletion, nuclear (or tonic) stress production/placement and the vowel /ɜ:/ (as in RP “fur”)” (Bøhn & Hansen, 2017, p. 57).

English is not only spoken in one manner, and multiple English accents exist around the world. An accent refers to the pronunciation of a speaker, and some of them are based on the origin of the speaker, while others are based on the speaker’s education level and social background. Furthermore, people who use English as a lingua franca develop their own pronunciation based on their L1 (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015).

### **2.3 Pronunciation Teaching’s Presence in the Curriculum**

To get an understanding of what students should learn during English classes in Norway, the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training has identified competence aims (LK20). Moreover, this document serves as a reference guide for the entire nation as to what should be covered in the various subjects. LK20 introduces general information about the English subject, and in addition, competence aims that should be covered by certain grade levels. The general section of the curriculum emphasizes that the students’ focus orally is that they are able to communicate. Moreover, the specific aims after 7th and 10th grade also stress the importance of being able to understand others, and to be understood (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020).

A competence aim does however explicitly target pronunciation in the English curriculum, it should be covered by 10th grade, and it is to “use key patterns of pronunciation in communication” (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020, p. 8). Moreover, this aim states that there should be a more specific focus on the various productions of sounds. However, research has identified that it can be challenging to interpret what is meant by “key patterns of pronunciation”. Torgersen (2018) has challenged this aim by stating: “As formulated here, one may get the impression that any pattern is acceptable, even a strong “Norwenglish” one, as long as the speaker is consistent in his or her usage, but such an interpretation is unlikely” (p. 219). One can wonder if “key patterns” are linked to correctness in speaking, as the nativeness ideal, or if it values communication (Torgersen, 2018). A similar competence aim is presented in the aims that should be covered by 7th

grade; namely, “explore and use pronunciation patterns and words and expressions in play, singing and role playing” (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020, p. 7).

## **2.4 Norwegian Students and English Varieties**

It is not uncommon that native accents of English are used as pronunciation guides in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Although there can be some benefits to using native accents as a pronunciation reference, it can signal that the student wants to be a representative for the values and beliefs of the speakers in these regions (Rindal, 2014). Moreover, Rindal has explored which English accent Norwegian students appreciate while learning English. She asked 70 Norwegian 17 year olds which accent they aimed towards when speaking English. The participants could choose between “British”, “American”, “Norwegian”, “Neutral”, “Other” and “I don’t care”. Rindal (2014) argued that the majority of the students preferred a British, American or a neutral accent. None of the participants aimed towards a Norwegian accent of English. The students explained that an American accent is present in several media platforms and is accessible to them, and the British accent can seem professional, and they associate it with class and status (Rindal, 2014).

In addition, it has been examined by Rindal and Piercy (2013) which native accents were the most present in Norwegian students’ English. LK20 does not state that any specific variety is preferred, and Norwegian students are able to make their own language choices. They found in their research that “Most of the realisations of phonological variables among the Norwegian adolescents could be identified as variants which can be found in native BrE and AmE accents.” (p. 223). However, it is not stated that their pronunciation was entirely native and did not have traces of their L1 to it. The research also suggests that the majority of the students participating were influenced by American English (Rindal & Piercy, 2013).

## **2.6 Teacher Attitudes Towards L2 Accents**

Jenkins (2005) has researched teachers’ feelings towards their own accent. Although some of the teachers seemed to be pleased with their accent, her study found out that others wanted to sound more native (Jenkins, 2005). Language instructors often favor the intelligibility principle when it comes to pronunciation teaching. Nevertheless, it was explored by Jenkins (2005) that many teachers would rather prefer to sound native-like, than solely focusing on making themselves understood. She has also investigated how the teachers would appreciate teaching a pronunciation model based on their local L2 accent. Most of the participants said that they were delighted to do so. However, it was added by some of the teachers that it would not please their personal pronunciation goals



Bøhn and Hansen (2017) have also studied teacher attitudes towards non-native accents. In their research, they have explored whether pronunciation can influence oral assessment at upper secondary schools in Norway. Moreover, it was stated that the teachers had very different opinions concerning if a native accent should influence a student's grade. Furthermore, the participants agreed that the pronunciation of segmentals would need to be correct in order to receive a top grade (Bøhn & Hansen, 2017).

## **2.7 Pronunciation Teaching Strategies in the EFL Classroom**

No specific answer key on how to teach pronunciation is available, but some ideas as to what features to include are introduced. One teaching strategy is teachers using themselves as reference guides. Students are able to produce sounds by imitating what they hear. If they are exposed to good pronunciation, they may learn how to say words correctly. Additional materials, such as online tools are valuable, but by using the teacher as a reference point, the students are exposed to authentic expressions and language (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015).

It can also be an asset to introduce the phonemic script for the students. By doing so, the students may become aware of how the different units in a word are pronounced correctly. It is possible to find some phonetic script in many textbooks, and it can be a significant tool to learn the correct pronunciation of words (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015).

Some suggestions on how to face pronunciation errors in the classroom have been introduced in the literature. The classroom needs to be a supportive learning environment, so that the joy of learning a language is not harmed. Nilsen and Rugesæter have recommended that spontaneous speech should not be disrupted, because it is valuable for the students to experiment and attempt to present their message instead. However, it is important to correct the students in other parts of the lesson. Otherwise, the mistakes can eventually turn into a habit. Repeating the correct pronunciation of a word that was mistaken can be beneficial, instead of initially pointing out the error (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015).

## **2.8 Summary**

Chapter 2 has included relevant theory and previous research linked to my topic. Moreover, this chapter has looked at the nativeness ideal and the intelligibility principle, LK20, different varieties of English, Norwegian students' accent aims, teacher attitudes towards L2 accents and various approaches to teaching pronunciation. Chapter 3 presents the methodology adopted.

### **3.0 Methodology**

In order to explore what the focus is on pronunciation in Norwegian EFL classrooms, I researched a) How do teachers interpret the curriculum guidelines when teaching pronunciation in the Norwegian EFL classroom? and b) What teaching strategies do in-service EFL teachers use to teach pronunciation?. I decided to do both a questionnaire and a document analysis. One can categorize these research tools as qualitative methods. I created a questionnaire that consisted of 10 questions, which included three different main topics. It was relevant for me to examine the thoughts and feelings of in-service 5th-10th grade English teachers in Norway. The reason why I have chosen this particular grade level is because that is the grade level I will most likely be working with. Furthermore, I can imagine that there is less of a focus on pronunciation prior to 5th grade. The teachers that I shared my questionnaire with are from several schools in Norway. There were 7 teachers who participated in my qualitative research.

#### **3.1 Qualitative Method**

To research the emphasis of pronunciation in Norwegian EFL classrooms, I decided that it was reasonable to focus on conducting qualitative research. Merriam (2009) argued that “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). In my study, I wanted to explore the feelings and thoughts of Norwegian in-service EFL teachers that work with 5th-10th graders.

#### **3.2 Data Collection Strategies**

##### **3.2.1 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was developed to research this matter. According to Johnson and Christensen, a questionnaire is a data-collection tool that focuses on making each participant of a study fill in their thoughts on a topic. Moreover, it is an instrument to “obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality, and behavioral intentions of research participants” (p. 162-163). Through a questionnaire, it is possible for the researcher to access information that would be challenging to attain if it was solely observed.

The questionnaire can be constructed in several manners. For instance, it is possible to include open-ended questions and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow the participants to answer the question however they personally prefer (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The reason why I chose to create such questions was because I wanted to examine the

teacher's feelings towards my topic. Moreover, those perceptions would perhaps be more accessible if they were able to use their natural language and expressions.

My questionnaire was divided into three main sections. One category was concerned with how one can interpret LK20, another with exploring how pronunciation is taught, and lastly there was a focus on the different varieties of English and their presence in Norwegian EFL classrooms. Furthermore, I decided to have my questionnaire in Norwegian. The reason why I decided to do so was first and foremost because it could make the teachers more comfortable to answer my questionnaire. In addition, information given by the teachers will less likely be lost in translation. However, I presented that it was possible for them to reply in English too. The excerpts from my questionnaire have been translated to English as accurately to the original answer as possible.

### **3.2.2 Document analysis**

Document analysis is also a data collection strategy I used. Document analysis involves investigating secondary or existing data to obtain information. LK20 is considered as an official document, because it contains written information that is registered by an organization (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) This particular data collection method can differ from other qualitative methods, such as interviewing and observing, in the sense that documents are often created for other reasons than the research in mind.(Merriam, 2009).

During my study, I wanted to examine LK20, to see how teachers interpret it when it comes to the focus on pronunciation in English. LK20 is produced as a reference to what students should comprehend through their years of education. Therefore, it is not a tool specifically designed for exploring my research. I analyzed LK20 in order to ask questions concerning specific aspects of the curriculum in my questionnaire.

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

To find answers to the research questions, categorizing one's data is beneficial. *Coding* can be explained as a wish for organizing and managing data (Merriam, 2009). At first I decided to look at what each individual teacher had responded to all of the questions to see if I found any correlation in the various answers given. Next, I decided that it was suitable to divide my questions into three main sections to grasp the information that I have attained. One section focused on the interpretation of the curriculum, the next on how pronunciation is taught and the last on teaching different varieties of English. In these three sections I tried to connect the responses that were similar to one another, and also investigate those who stood out. Moreover, I created a document for each of the research questions where I included the

main ideas that the teachers had provided. I translated these ideas to English, and counted how many who had similar answers in a section. Moreover, I highlighted the different answers I wanted to further discuss to answer my research questions.

Concerning the document analysis, I found it relevant to essentially look at the sections that targeted spoken English. Moreover, that was mostly in the general subject section, and in some of the specific curriculum aims for the various grade levels. It was interesting to look at the aspects of the curriculum that were slightly unclear and could contradict other areas of LK20. Furthermore, I investigated the elements that correlated to the responses that I got, and also those who differed from it.

### **3.3 Validity**

According to Merriam (2009), “All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner.” (p. 209). In order to apply research information into one’s own belief, one needs to be certain that it is trustworthy and valid. To ensure that qualitative research is reliable, particularly the ethical considerations are highly relevant to examine (Merriam, 2009).

Therefore, it was important for me to respect the participants' privacy and the questionnaire was completely anonymous. Moreover, I did not want to force anyone to participate in my study, and although the participants had agreed to take part in my research they were able to withdraw at any time. I distributed my questionnaire to many more teachers than I got responses from. If I had gotten more participants, it would perhaps increase my study’s credibility. On the other hand, that would perhaps cause me to disrespect the voluntary aspect of my study and then again make it seem more questionable. Qualitative research can also be time consuming, especially when it comes to coding and analyzing data, so it was realistic to limit the number of participants to some extent.

It is stated that “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). In other words, a qualitative researcher’s role is for instance to interpret and try to understand people’s relationship to certain phenomenons. The researcher takes a large part in understanding the data provided. However, using oneself as a research instrument may also have some shortcomings. It is challenging to eliminate one’s own biases and subjectivities entirely. Consequently, these perceptions may shape the collection and interpretation of data (Merriam, 2009). As much as I have tried to conduct my research with an open mind, I cannot assure that it is not entirely unbiased.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

In order to strengthen a research's validity, it is significant that it is conducted with ethical considerations in mind. It is important that a researcher protect the participant's privacy (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Although the research information I gathered is not a highly sensitive matter, it was significant that the participants felt comfortable presenting their thoughts and feelings to me. The questionnaire that the participants were presented with was anonymous and cannot be traced back to the individual teacher. Moreover, it was not necessary for me to apply for an NSD approval.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter introduced the data collection strategies; questionnaire and document analysis. Moreover, the validity and ethical considerations are stated. The next chapter presents my main research findings.

## **4.0 Findings**

To examine the emphasis of pronunciation teaching in Norwegian EFL classrooms, I investigated the research questions: a) How do teachers interpret the curriculum guidelines when teaching pronunciation in the Norwegian EFL classroom? and b) What teaching strategies do in-service EFL teachers use to teach pronunciation?.

### **4.1 Teachers Interpretation of the Curriculum Guidelines When Teaching Pronunciation in the Norwegian EFL Classroom**

In this section, I will present how all of the teachers that participated in my study argued that the main focus of oral production in LK20 was that the students were able to communicate and make themselves understood. Moreover, it has been suggested that pronunciation can be used as a tool to enhance successful communication. The teachers have also given some specific examples to how they promote the curriculum guidelines in the EFL classroom.

The questionnaire included a question concerning the interpretation of LK20 on oral production. It was repeatedly stated that communication is the most significant aspect to it, and that should be the main focus concerning oral skills. However, it was argued that pronunciation could be a stepping-stone for successful communication. It was for instance mentioned that: “I see that the main focus is on the utility aspect and that the spoken language (pronunciation included) is a tool for communication.” It was also brought to attention that although the curriculum states that one should learn “key patterns of pronunciation”, the communication aspect of oral production should be more valued.

Moreover, the teachers were asked how they promote the curriculum aims concerning oral skills in the classroom. Several activities and emphases were introduced to answer this question. Particularly, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was brought up as a beneficial teaching strategy to oral production. 4 of the teachers stated that making room for communication activities would help promote the curriculum guidelines. One of the teachers even provided a more detailed recipe for promoting the curriculum aims. It included having a specific focus on English phonemes, discussing certain customs and “common knowledge” that can be applicable to English speaking countries, and having the students listen to and learn about different varieties of English. However, one teacher stated that: “I have not gotten that far in the work with the new curriculum that I have gotten to think this through yet”.

Concerning if there was enough emphasis on pronunciation in the curriculum. The participants all stressed how communication should be the most important aspect to the

teaching of oral production, and that pronunciation training would occur while practicing speaking. As long as the students were exposed to activities where they were able to communicate, pronunciation teaching would be sufficient. One teacher argued that “I think we need to render harmless speaking English. It is absolutely not necessary to speak “perfectly” -The most important thing is communication and that the students get extensive practice”. This teacher stated that, even though there are some challenging pronunciation points for Norwegian students, practicing speaking over a longer period of time will be beneficial for successful communication.

Furthermore, it appeared as what was stated in the curriculum was adequate. On this note, it was presented that: “I guess that if we read thoroughly, and live by, the competence aims, then pronunciation is taken care of in a satisfactory way.”. However, it was also shared by one of the teachers that he/she would appreciate an increased focus on pronunciation, but since there are so many other significant aspects to the English lessons, it would not be realistic to focus more on pronunciation time-wise. In other words, one should target the features that are more vital to learning English.

Since 6 of the teachers believed that what was stated in the curriculum concerning pronunciation was sufficient enough, it is interesting to take a look at whether the focus on pronunciation has always been the same. One can see that the curriculum aims concerning pronunciation have been significantly altered through history. In 1939 it was stated that: “pronunciation must be given careful attention throughout the course” and “therefore one must always take extreme care to correct even the most minor mistakes, and the correct [Pronunciation] must be practiced” (Ministry of Church Affairs and Education, 1939, p. 227). In 1960 it was announced, “it is obvious that the ability to hear and understand and speak in English have a close connection to having good pronunciation” (Ministry of Church Affairs and Education, p. 210). Moreover, that intonation is as valuable as correct pronunciation, and that input needs to be read by “native Englishmen” (Ministry of Church Affairs and Education, 1960, p. 210-211). The communication aspect to pronunciation was gradually integrated in the following curricula, and the American accent increased its status eventually. Former curricula have also presented that British and American English are the varieties one should have focused on. LK20, on the other hand, does not specify this.

#### **4.2 Teaching Strategies In-service EFL Teachers Use to Teach Pronunciation**

In this section of the questionnaire, the in-service teachers were asked to elaborate on what teaching strategies they appreciate for pronunciation teaching. Listening to spoken

English was repeated to be a valuable aspect to teaching pronunciation, and oral activities in English were also viewed as advantageous. Moreover, teaching different varieties of English was presented as a key aspect to teaching pronunciation

A question I asked in this section concerned how pronunciation was taught in their classrooms. Several of the answers included focusing on oral activities in the English lessons. In addition, some of the teachers presented that listening activities would be beneficial in order to learn the pronunciation of words. It was stated that: "Listening to different types of English is contributing to giving them prerequisites for "correct" and understandable pronunciation.". It was possible for the students to listen to audio clips of other speakers, either native or non-native speakers, or use the teacher as a guide. Furthermore, one of the teachers reflected on using him/herself as a reference for correct pronunciation. It was stated that this teacher used to be good at speaking English in class, and that the teacher still attempted to do so in classes where there was a good relationship to the students, but in classes where he/she did not know the students that well it was feared that it could create a distance in the teacher-student relationship. This teacher was therefore reluctant to use oneself as a reference guide to correct pronunciation. Other teachers also stated that they it is beneficial to speak as much English in class as possible, but it is comfortable to shift the lectures into Norwegian. Specific activities were also introduced to answer the question: "Minimal pairs, tongue twisters, reading out loud, presenting listening clips, the phonetic alphabet, reciting poems where certain sounds/words are relevant for rhymes for instance".

The questionnaire presented two dilemmas an English teacher might face. One of them concerned helping a student that struggled with being understood. Although some of the teachers emphasized that they did not experience this as a teacher for Norwegian students, others came up with some teaching methods. Several of them involved listening strategies. For instance, it was explained that repeating a challenging word, with a correct pronunciation, could be a settle way of correcting a student. Having the students listen to correct pronunciation was a favored teaching strategy if students struggled with pronunciation.

On the contrary, the teachers were going to answer a question concerning helping the students who want to develop their already intelligible pronunciation. It seemed like this was an issue that was less common for them to encounter. One of them replied: "I have not experienced this issue before". Other teachers expressed that "minimal pairs" could for instance be helpful. Another advice offered was: "There are certain websites that can help



him or her. The websites present a correct pronunciation of most words, and they also refer to where the pronunciation comes from". Listening to correct pronunciation was a favored tool.

Regarding the question about teaching English varieties and if textbooks could be a tool in doing so, the teachers agreed that they thought consciously about having more than one English variety in the classroom. However, it varied from teacher to teacher as to how many varieties they focused on. Several of the teachers said that they introduced the most typical variations. What is meant by the most typical can be a matter of definition, but two of the teachers exemplified typical as "Received Pronunciation (RP)", "American" and "Australian". There were also two teachers who were more ambitious as to how many variations they wanted to present. One of them answered: "As many as possible/ as many we have the time for." Meanwhile, the other teacher recited several examples of varieties. The consensus was that it should not make a difference if a student was approaching either of the varieties, but it was stated by 3 of the teachers that it is fun if they tried to sound native. Moreover, some of the teachers appreciated the textbook *Stages* published by H. Aschehoug & Co. According to the teachers, this textbook provided text the students could listen to that included different varieties of English. However, it seemed like other teachers would possibly have to operate with older textbooks, as they did not use textbooks at all in their lessons. It was presented: "I do not have enough knowledge about teaching materials to say something about this. I have not used it particularly".

### **4.3 Summary**

Concerning the interpretation of LK20, the focus of oral production was on communication. It should be less intimidating to speak English, and not all pronunciation errors should be called attention to. Listening and communication activities were mentioned as beneficial. Furthermore, it is significant to present the diversity in English varieties for the students, but RP and GenAm are favoured. Chapter 5 discusses these findings further.

## 5.0 Discussion

In my research I have wanted to examine the following research questions: a) How do teachers interpret the curriculum guidelines on teaching pronunciation in the Norwegian EFL classroom? and b) What teaching strategies do in-service EFL teachers use to teach pronunciation?.

### 5.1 Communication is Key

As presented in the result section, the participants of my study believed that being able to communicate is the most important aspect to pronunciation teaching in LK20. As long as their students are able to make themselves understood in English, they believe they are fulfilling several of the competence aims. These are responses that correspond to the *intelligibility principle* concerning teaching pronunciation ideals (Levis, 2005). Furthermore, CLT stood out as a learning tool to promote the curriculum aims. This activity presents that language learning happens while the students are communicating with one another (Harmer, 2015). According to the teachers, it is possible for the students to develop sufficient pronunciation while they are doing communicative teaching activities.

It was stated by a teacher: “I guess that if we read thoroughly, and live by, the competence aims, then pronunciation is taken care of in a satisfactory way.”. What can be interesting to examine is that the curriculum can be challenging for some teachers to interpret. It presents a specific aim concerning pronunciation: “use key patterns of pronunciation in communication”. In addition, it also stresses the importance of being able to communicate in oral production (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020). As mentioned by Torgersen (2018), it is not clear to everyone what is meant by “key patterns of pronunciation” (p. 219). Although the teachers that responded to my questionnaire interpreted that LK20 concerning oral production focused on communication, this might not be a general consensus among all Norwegian English teachers.

### 5.2 Pronunciation Teaching Strategies

There were some teachers who said it was not an issue for Norwegian students to make themselves understood. Moreover, it is possible to imagine that they were thinking of how Norwegian students speak and connecting it to the LFC (Bøhn & Hansen, 2017). Nevertheless, in this increasingly globalized world, not all Norwegian EFL students have Norwegian as an L1. There might be students that are bilingual, and have a mother tongue that can give them a prerequisite for a pronunciation that is less intelligible. Teachers need to

be able to assist all students, not just the ones with Norwegian as L1. Teacher training programs should prepare pre-service teachers for this issue.

5 of the teachers stated that listening activities could be beneficial for pronunciation teaching. It could be beneficial to repeat the word with a correct pronunciation, to adjust an error. This corresponds with a teaching strategy presented by Nilsen and Rugesæter (2015). It was stated that they had the students listen to a lot of English, to attain correct pronunciation. It can be relevant that the teacher has as a rule to speak as much English as possible in class.

On this note, I find one reply in the questionnaire particularly intriguing. That is the answer concerning the teacher who was reluctant to speak English in classes where he/she did not have a secure relationship with the students. Nilsen & Rugesæter (2015) argued that: “In many cases a learner will be able to produce most sounds of the language simply by imitating what s/he hears” (p. 157). A student can learn a significant amount of good pronunciation, if she/he is exposed to correct spoken utterances of speech. It has been claimed that having the teacher used as a reference guide for the students is one method to develop the students’ pronunciation (Nilsen and Rugesæter, 2015). Although it may be more unnatural to speak English to students one does not have a relationship with, it can be beneficial in the long run to set a standard to how the lessons will occur. It is possible to imagine that it is less intimidating to speak English if students are used to hearing the teacher speak English.

### **5.3 Presenting Different Varieties of English Can be Both a Blessing and a Curse**

All of the teachers in my study agreed that English varieties should be introduced in the classroom. It can present to the students that there is diversity in pronunciations and one does not have to sound like a native to be understood. LK20 does not state that any varieties should be more endorsed than others (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020). Nevertheless, RP and GenAm were repeated to be the most significant varieties to introduce. Moreover, these particular varieties might have been mentioned, because it was stated in former curricula that those varieties should be focused on. Perhaps those aims still linger in today’s society.

Two teachers expressed that they did not use the textbook when it concerned teaching varieties in English, and English subject teaching in general. Moreover, it can be because it is not as relevant anymore. Not all schools are able to purchase the newest textbooks that have been written with the new curriculum aims in mind, and have to settle for material that may have some shortcomings. Schools throughout Norway will get various assistance from teaching materials that can create a gap in the students’ learning outcome.

Several of the teachers said that they did not care whether the students tried to lean towards a native accent, or not. However it was stated that they encouraged them to “try” to incorporate a native accent to their spoken English. These statements could create a pressure for some of the students to want to sound more native-like. This corresponds to the native speaker ideal (Levis, 2005). Even though they stated that they did not prefer a native accent, they found it “fun” if they tried. It has been presented in Rindal’s study (2014), that none of the students in the study preferred a Norwegian accent of English. Moreover, Jenkins discovered in her research that the teachers she asked were pleased to teach spoken English based on the local L2 accent, but the teacher would not personally settle for that pronunciation. It was also presented in Jenkins’ study (2005) that several of the participating teachers wanted to improve their accent. It is interesting to discover that both students and teachers can aspire to sound more native-like, but one interprets the curriculum otherwise.

Furthermore, Bøhn and Hansen (2017) have argued that a native pronunciation is often preferred during oral assessment in Norwegian upper secondary schools. Although the teachers in my study emphasized that they did not prefer any variety to another, the fact that they encouraged the students to try to explore with native accents can perhaps subconsciously create additional criteria to oral assessment. That would contradict their beliefs concerning their interpretation of the curriculum, which emphasized communication and intelligibility.

#### **5.4 The Emphasis of Pronunciation in EFL Classrooms**

It seems like many teachers believe that teaching pronunciation is taken care of if the students practice communicating. Pronunciation will be developed as they are speaking. The students should only need to be intelligible. Moreover, it is implied that this mindset also fulfills the curriculum aims concerning oral production. However, it is according to the teachers possible to include some aspects of pronunciation teaching into the English lessons. The teachers presented examples of some teaching strategies that can benefit the students, especially if they are correcting errors. It appears that the teachers wanted to enhance the students’ confidence concerning oral participation by presenting multiple varieties of English. By seeing that English accents differ throughout the world, they might not be as ashamed for having a Norwegian accented English. Pronunciation is highly diverse and that there is no need to sound like a native in order to have successful communications in English. However, one might need to consider which varieties to introduce for the students. If RP and GenAm are the only varieties presented, it can cause that the emphasis of pronunciation teaching is to be concerned with sounding like a native. Moreover, that can influence oral assessment.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Although a focus on pronunciation can make communication more effortless, research argued that there are other aspects in the EFL classrooms that should be appreciated more (Bøhn & Hansen, 2017). In my research I have explored: a) How do teachers interpret the curriculum guidelines on teaching pronunciation in the Norwegian EFL classroom? and b) What teaching strategies do in-service EFL teachers use to teach pronunciation?. I decided to research this matter by doing a questionnaire and a document analysis. Furthermore, 7 teachers participated in my study. My research would have increased its reliability if more participants had agreed to answer my questionnaire. Additionally, it would perhaps have been beneficial to do interviews to get more in-depth information from the teachers, and they could have elaborate more on some of their claims. Moreover, I would have been interested in investigating this matter in a larger scale research project where I can interview both teachers and students as to what can be defined as successful teaching strategies. Nevertheless, the participants of my study generally deciphered the curriculum aims concerning oral production as guidelines for intelligible communication. Moreover, they provided some approaches to focus on pronunciation in the lessons, but it was claimed that pronunciation could be taken care of through oral activities. It has been stated that introducing multiple varieties of English can also be a way of showing how diverse the English language is pronunciation-wise (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015). Furthermore, it can help the students embrace their individual accent. However, there should be a larger representation of accents than solely RP and GenAm, because that can create a subconscious demand to sound more native-like, even though that is not how the participants interpret LK20. There is an emphasis on pronunciation in Norwegian EFL classrooms to some extent, but there are several other features of English language teaching that are more prioritized.

## 7.0 References

- Bøhn, H. & Hansen, T. (2017). Assessing Pronunciation in an EFL Context: Teachers' Orientations towards Nativeness and Intelligibility, *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 14: 54-68.
- Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing global Englishes*. London: Routledge.
- Harmer, J. (2015). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Jenkins, J. (2005). Implementing an International Approach to English Pronunciation: The Role of Teacher Attitudes and Identity. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 535-543.
- Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a lingua franca : Attitude and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Levis, J. M. (2005). Changing Contexts and Shifting Paradigms in Pronunciation Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 369–377. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588485>
- Ministry of Church Affairs and Education. (1939). *Normalplan for byfolkeskolen*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Ministry of Church Affairs and Education. (1960). *Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole*. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nilsen, T., & Rugesæter, K. (2015). *English phonetics for teachers* (3rd ed.). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Rindal, U., & Piercy, C. (2013). Being 'neutral'? English pronunciation among Norwegian learners. *World Englishes*, 32(2), 211-229.
- Rindal, U. (2014). Questioning English standards: Learner attitudes and L2 choices in Norway. *Multilingua*, 33(3), 313–334. <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2014-0015>
- Seidlhofer, B. (2000). Mind the Gap: English as a Mother Tongue vs. English as a Lingua Franca. *VIEWS*, 9(1), 51-68.
- Torgersen, E. N. (2018). Teaching Pronunciation. In Bøhn, H., Dypedahl, M., & Myklevold, G. (Red.), *Teaching and learning English*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm akademisk.
- Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. (2020). *Læreplan i Engelsk (ENG01- 04)*. Retrieved from <https://www.udir.no/lk20/eng01-04/kompetansemaal-og-vurdering/kv4>

