Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences

Jørgen Lervik Ofstad

A qualitative study on Norwegian EFL Teacher Attitudes towards Pronunciation Assessment.

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Supervisor: Georgios Neokleous
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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the attitudes of Norwegian EFL teachers towards assessment of pronunciation at VG1 level. Four teachers at high-school level in Norway participated in the study through interviews and writing a reflection log. The findings suggested that the teachers held negative attitudes towards the assessment of pronunciation. Three of the teachers stated they had issues with interpretating the competence aims of the curriculum, and therefore explained that they believed pronunciation assessment to be difficult. Moreover, the study revealed a lack of consensus regarding the assessment of nativeness of speech, which might suggest that the curriculum does not define pronunciation sufficiently. This study concludes by arguing that there are some issues with the little attention and elaboration on pronunciation in the curriculum.

Sammendrag

Denne kvalitative studien tok sikte på å undersøke Norske engelsklærers holdninger og meninger om uttalevurdering av elever på første videregående nivå. Gjennom refleksjonslogger og intervju, bidro fire videregående lærere med innsikt om fenomenet. Resultatene indikerer at lærerne har negative holdninger mot vurdering av elevers uttale. Tre lærere forklarte at de syntes det var vanskelig å tolke kompetansemålene, og visste derfor ikke hvordan de skulle vurdere uttale. Videre viste studien at det var uenighet blant lærerne om nativeness var en faktor som skulle påvirke vurderingen av elevens uttale, noe som påpeker at kompetansemålene ikke er tydelige nok. Denne studien indikerer at det er noen problemer vedrørende hvordan uttale blir fremstilt i læreplanen, og at dette potensielt kan medføre ulike vurderingspraksiser blant lærere.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Due to globalization and the spread of English as the dominant lingua franca of the world, it has become increasingly important to be a proficient user of the English language (Smokotin et al., 2014). Furthermore, due to an increased amount of English language input from intranational exposure and transnational travel and communication, English language fluency and proficiency in Norway have significantly improved (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Because of this, Rindal and Piercy (2013) argued that an increased proficiency and confidence among Norwegians enabled the English language to be utilized more in higher education and business domains in Norway (Rindal & Piercy, 2013).

As the studies of Smokotin et al. (2014) and Rindal and Piercy (2013) suggested, the English language has become increasingly important to master, and has played a pivotal role in the Norwegian educational system. To support this, Simensen (2005) stated that taking into account the last 50-60 years, the compulsory starting point for attending formal instruction in English in the Norwegian school system has decreased from students aged 12 to students aged 6 years old. As it stands now, the English subject is mandatory for 11 years. In addition, its value is emphasized in the national curriculum which states that: "The subject shall give the pupils the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.2). Strengthening the point already put forward by Smokotin et al. (2014), the curriculum postulates that English is a tool for communicating not only in Norway, but also abroad. However, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) also emphasized that the English subject should prepare students for educational and societal life which require English language competence. The mandates as put forward by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) further corroborate the findings of Rindal and Piercy (2013) who argued that English is increasingly utilized in higher education and business domains in Norway.

As a subject in Norwegian Education, the ways in which English is taught and assessed is heavily regulated by law. Regulations to the Education Act state that the assessment of the students should be based on the competence aims as outlined in the curriculum of the given subject (Regulations to the Education Act, 2006, § 3-3). Therefore, being the deciding factor of how a subject should be taught and assessed, it is imperative to address and cover the subject's curriculum competence aims. The English curriculum (ENG01-04), commonly referred to as LK20, consists of three core elements: communication, language learning, and working with texts in English (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Core elements are defined as the most crucial academic content for the students to master to apply the knowledge in authentic situations outside of the classroom. Being one of the core elements of English, communication is deemed as an element which is of high importance in the subject. Furthermore, the curriculum addresses that the teaching of English should enable the students to practice in authentic and practical situations (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Consequently, to teach the students to effectively communicate in English outside of the classroom is an integral part of the subject.

As already mentioned, the assessment of the student's proficiency should be based on the competence aims of the subject (Regulations to The Education Act 2006, § 3-3). The English curriculum consists of 17 different competence aims, and they are structured as abilities which the pupil is expected to be able to do after the course. In the competence aims of Vg1 (an abbreviation for 1.st year of high school), pronunciation is addressed in two out of 17 competence aims: "The pupil is expected to be able to use patterns of pronunciation in communication" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training , 2020, p.12) and " the pupil is expected to be able to express himself or herself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, receiver, and situation" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12).

The curriculum and the competence aims have several didactical and pedagogical implications. Firstly, the competence aims influence teaching, as the teaching of the subject should facilitate learning towards mastering the competence aims (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Secondly, the competence aims dictate the assessment of the students, as the student should be assessed based on competence aim completion. Regulations to The Education Act 2006, § 3-3). Ultimately, since pronunciation is represented in the curriculum, the teachers are therefore required to teach and assess pronunciation.

Due to the spread of English as the global lingua franca (Smokotin et al., 2014), it has become increasingly important to be able to communicate in English (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). To prepare Norwegians students to utilize the English language outside of the classroom, the English subject has an important role in Norwegian education (Simensen, 2005). However, how the subject is taught and assessed is regulated by law (Regulations to the Education Act, 2006, § 3-3). Based on the presence of pronunciation in the competence aims at VG1, pronunciation therefore should be assessed by teachers.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

Personally speaking, my history with English is long as I have always been interested in the language and therefore chosen the English subject as an optional class when possible. However, throughout my experiences in school and education I experienced a lack of consensus and a range of different opinions held by my instructors regarding pronunciation. Some of the teachers and students I have interacted with strived to replicate a nativelike intonation and pronunciation, while others talked with a strong Norwegian accent. Moreover, throughout my education, I have experienced that pronunciation has not been taught or focused to a great extent. Despite having studied the English subject for longer that the average Norwegian, pronunciation as a topic still seemed rather ambiguous that prompted me to explore the issue further.

In addition, a personal value of mine has always been equality; namely, the idea that regardless of gender, ethnicity, sex or religion, humans should be treated equally. Based on my experiences with the ambiguity of pronunciation, I started wondering how teachers assess pronunciation, when a plethora of different pronunciation patterns among teachers and students exist. Moreover, there was the question as to how the assessment of pronunciation can be based on equality, when there is a lack of consensus regarding pronunciation. I therefore found it necessary and interesting to investigate teacher attitudes towards pronunciation and how they asses their students.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on my experiences as a student I had some topics which I wanted to investigate. Considering relevant literature and the data of this study, which is elaborated in chapter three, this study aimed to investigate the following three research questions: 1) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' understanding of pronunciation in the English subject curriculum? 2) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation? 3) How do Norwegian EFL teachers assess' pronunciation?

1.4 Terminology

Before proceeding with a brief summary of the relevant literature and the presentation of the findings, it is important to summarize some of the key terms that are featured prominently in this study. As addressed in section 1.2, a lack of consensus regarding pronunciation is noticeable, and it is therefore important to present the definition of pronunciation which this research abides by. For this study, pronunciation can be understood as: the production of English sounds to make meaning in an utterance. This definition recognizes that pronunciation is about specific sounds related to a given language, but also embraces the communicative perspective with emphasis on creating meaning in an utterance. This definition of pronunciation does not emphasize nativeness, which is a term used to describe nativelike speech (Levis, 2005).

Validity and reliability are two terms used for describing the quality of a test or study. Validity is a concept which describes to what degree a test measures what it is intended to measure (Messick, 1996). An assessment of oral language can be deemed as valid if the assessment of the student is based on features which the teacher is supposed to attend. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measurement (Fjørtoft & Sandvik, 2016), the assessment is reliable if the results are consistent when conducted multiple times. The terms pronunciation, validity, and reliability are more deeply elaborated on in the literature review section.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured in the following six chapters: introduction, literature review, method, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The purpose of the literature review is to present literature of relevance to this study to help readers better understand current research on the topic. After a brief review of the literature, an elaboration on the methodology the study employed to collect and analyze the data is presented. Following the method chapter, the main findings of the study are presented. The purpose of the fifth chapter is to discuss possible implications of my findings in light of the relevant literature. To summarize the whole thesis, a concluding chapter presents the limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the motivation for and structure of this thesis to investigate the three research questions: 1) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' understanding of pronunciation in the English subject curriculum 2) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation? 3) How do Norwegian EFL teachers assess pronunciation? The next chapter aims to present literature relevant to the scope of this thesis: namely, assessment of pronunciation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The Role of Assessment in Norwegian Education

Assessment of the students has several possible implications for teaching and learning. The influence that assessment has on teaching and learning is commonly referred to as washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Fjørtoft and Sandvik (2016) argued that being able to assess the student is a central competence of a teacher. They elaborated that a teacher that cannot identify the current academic level of the student would not be able to adapt the teaching to the student's needs. Similar arguments were made by Idsøe and Skogen (2016) who claimed that only through correct assessment of the students' abilities is the teacher able to adapt teaching for every student. A highly competent student, compared to a student with less competence, may need different challenges and support to develop academically. Consequently, the lack of effective assessment of the students may negatively impact the academic development, regardless of their academic proficiency (Idsøe & Skogen, 2016). Being able to adapt teaching is an important aspect in Norwegian education, as the Education Act states that: "Education must be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupil, apprentice, candidate for certificate of practice and training candidate" (The Education Act, 1998, § 1-3). Assessment is therefore as argued by Idsøe and Skogen (2016) and Fjørtoft and Sandvik (2016) a fundamental component to tailor instruction to the needs of the individual student.

2.1.1 Formative and summative assessment

Two methods which teachers often apply to assess and evaluate the learning process and outcome of the students are formative and summative assessment (Dixon & Worrell, 2016). Formative assessment is an evaluation of the progress of the student during a course, with the intention to create positive changes in the forthcoming teaching and education (Engh, 2011). Formative assessment does therefore not usually include a grade, as it aims to give insight into the progress and development of the student during a course. As a result, it enables the teacher to give feedback and tailor teaching to the individual student's needs (Engh, 2011). Summative assessment, on the other hand, is conducted at the end of a course/learning process with the intention to evaluate what the student was able to learn at the end of the course/learning process (Engh, 2011). A summative assessment does therefore not consider effort, teaching or other internal and external factors related to the student, as it only aims to evaluate the academic level of the student.

In Norway, summative assessment is graded with a grade scale ranging from one to six, whereas grade one (1) is equivalent to a failing grade, while grades five (5) and six (6) reflect a high grade of competence aim achievement (Regulations to the Education Act, 2006, § 3-5)**.** The exam is a summative assessment of the students' abilities at the end of a subject course. This entails that the student's level of competence aim achievement is represented by a grade ranging from one to six (Regulations to The Education Act, 2006, § 3-5). The grade of an exam is displayed on the student's diploma and therefore share the same key feature as the final grade assessment of a subject, as they display the student's level of competence aim achievement (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019).

In the general studies program (GSP) at the first year of high school (Vg1) in Norway, there are two different exam forms: the oral and the written exam. The main difference between the two is the way they are conducted. Another difference between them is that the oral exam given at high school level is administered locally (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). A local given exam entails that the exam is developed and administered by the county municipality, in contrast to a written exam, which is developed and administered centrally by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Sandvik, 2022). However, being administered by the county municipality, the oral exam transcends the individual school, as students across multiple schools conduct the same exam.

2.1.2 Exams in Norway

Much like assessment in general, the exam has several functions and implications which makes it important in education and society. Muñoz and Álvarez (2010) argued that high-stakes tests, such as exams, have more power to modify teacher and learner behavior compared too low-stakes tests. According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2019), the exam serves two main purposes in the educational system: the certification of a student's competence and the ranking of applicants. As briefly mentioned, the grade of an exam is displayed on the student's diploma as the final grade assessment of a subject (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). However, the grade of an exam may be deemed as more important than the final grade assessment, as a student that has received a one (failed) on the final grade assessment, would pass the subject if they receive a grade two or higher on the exam (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). On the contrary, a student who fails the exam would not pass the subject, regardless of the final grade assessment (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). The exam therefore serves the function of certifying the current academic level of the students.

Its second function is to rank applicants (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). A student's diploma consists of the final grade assessment and the grades from exams. The grade of the exam is therefore fundamental for acceptance into further education and work life (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). However, the importance of exams is not only student related, as the statistics and data gathered from exams aim to serve information about the status of Norwegian education at a national level (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019).

As an exam has implications on several levels, it is therefore imperative that it is optimized as an assessment form. International and national studies on teacher attitudes have indicated that teachers characterized the assessment of oral English as holistic and intuitive (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). For instance, Bøhn (2016) studied how oral exams in English were conducted by Norwegian EFL high school teachers. Overall, the data indicated that the teachers generally understood the elements of the exam (content and communication) in the same way. However, the findings also revealed that there was variability regarding the assessment of pronunciation. Bøhn (2016) found that Norwegian EFL teachers had widely differing views on the importance of native speaker pronunciation. Five of the respondents did not see nativeness as important, while six found it to be of considerable importance. Bøhn (2016) pointed to the fact that the oral exam is administered locally, and with the lack of national rating scales and rater training, may have led to different assessment practices across counties. The findings of the study may suggest that there are some issues with the English oral exam related to pronunciation assessment and its validity.

2.1.3 Assessment reliability and validity

In a discussion of a test´s quality, the concepts of validity, reliability, and inter-rater reliability are frequently addressed. These three concepts are key terms in this study about assessing pronunciation during an oral examination. Reliability is a term which describes the consistency of an assessment (Fjørtoft & Sandvik, 2016). An assessment which gives consistent results when conducted multiple times would therefore have a high level of reliability. On the contrary, if a student answers a test multiple times with identical answers but the score varies, the test has a low level of reliability. The essence is that if a test or measurement is reliable, the results should be consistent if it is conducted multiple times under the same conditions.

Fjørtoft and Sandvik (2016) defined reliability as the consistency of an assessment. Taking this definition of reliability into account, inter-rater reliability can be understood as the consistency of assessment between two or more raters. In other words, inter-rater reliability is about the level of agreement when different teachers assess a student. To exemplify, if teacher A gives the student a grade five, while teacher B gives the same student a grade three, there is a low level of inter-rater reliability, as the assessments are inconsistent. Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) put forward the argument that a test with low rater reliability or inter-rater reliability cannot validly assess the feature it is intended to assess. Consequently, if teachers assess pronunciation differently like in the study of Bøhn (2016), it may be argued that there is a lack of inter-rater reliability.

Validity, on the other hand, is focused on the quality of the individual measurement. In other words, validity describes to what degree a test measures what it is intended to measure (Messick, 1996). Validity points to how concrete evidence and theory supports the interpretations of the result (Fjørtoft & Sandvik, 2016). To exemplify, if a thermometer shows two degrees lower than the actual temperature, the measurement has a low amount of validity, as evidence points to its inaccuracy. Fjørtoft and Sandvik (2016) elaborated that a test's results may be interpretated in different ways, and validity would therefore be about how complete and coherent the rationale behind the interpretation is. In an oral exam for instance, a range of teachers may assess the student differently, as there is no absolute truth nor complete objectivity in assessing oral competence. However, the rationale behind, and the evidence which the assessment is based on, is what determines the level of validity (Fjørtoft & Sandvik, 2016).

Fulcher and Davidson (2007) stated that language testing can be broken down into three different types of validity. The first is criterion-oriented validity, which is a measure of how well a tests predicts an outcome for another measurement (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). A test has criterion validity if it accurately predicts how well an individual will perform at a certain task (i.e., the SAT test administered by the college board). The second is content validity, which is that the content of the test is a representative sample from the domain that is to be tested (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). For instance, if a student is conducting a test in VG1 math, but is given VG2 math tasks, the test (VG2 math) does not give a representative sample of the domain that is being tested (VG1 math level). The last type of validity is construct validity; a construct can be understood as the underlying attributes or skills being evaluated, which are measurable and observable during a test (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). In language testing several constructs are being evaluated to determine the student's oral proficiency, as for example vocabulary, grammar, fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. Consequently, construct validity is therefore about to which degree the different constructs (vocabulary, pronunciation etc.) measure what it is supposed to (oral proficiency).

2.1.4 Assessing pronunciation

Messick (1996) argued that language tests should include authentic and direct samples of communicative operations. This means that the test should enable the student to talk, listen, and respond, which gives samples of communicative operations. This was also echoed in Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) as they argued that the assessment of pronunciation can be defined as performance-based assessment, as the students are being assessed on their ability to apply their knowledge to perform a certain task, such as speaking and listening. However, literature may reveal that the assessment of pronunciation has not received much attention in language testing and research. The key issue in L2 pronunciation assessment is according to Isaacs (2014) that it has been heavily neglected and under-researched over the past several decades. Isaacs and Harding (2017) stated that pronunciation has traditionally been marginalized as an assessment criterion in EFL speaking tests and under-conceptualized in models of oral proficiency. Similar findings were made by Bøhn (2016), as his study revealed that teachers had issues operationalizing the pronunciation construct during oral exams. The participants found it hard to clearly define and operationalize pronunciation when assessing the students (Bøhn, 2016). Literature may therefore suggest that pronunciation and L2 pronunciation assessment is a subject which may cause some issues for teachers as it has not been given much attention (Isaacs, 2014). Moreover, pronunciation is a complex feature consisting of a plethora of different elements to consider (Pennington& Rogerson-Revell, 2019), which might increase the difficulty of assessing it.

2.2 Pronunciation

2.2.1 Pronunciation and oral communication

Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) argued that pronunciation is fundamental in all oral language. Pronunciation is required, not merely for talking, but for communication itself. A requirement for conveying a message in a meaningful way is that the receiver of the utterance understands the words that are spoken. Having put the individual sounds into a comprehensible pattern would increase the chances that the listener understands the meaning of what the speaker is trying to convey (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). One could therefore ague that pronunciation is the cornerstone of oral speech as it heavily affects intelligibility.

Different definitions of pronunciation can be found in the literature with different research studies foregrounding different aspects of what it encompasses. However, according to Cook (2001), pronunciation could be understood as the production of English sounds. Yates (2002), on the other hand, argued that pronunciation is the production of sounds to make meaning. The convergence of both these definitions is that they focus on the production of sounds. However, Paulston and Burder (1976) argued that pronunciation is a sound system which does not obstruct the communication from the speaker nor the listener´s perspective. Cook (2001) and Yates (2002) covered a linguistic perspective, as their definition focused on the production of sounds. Paulston and Burder (1976) focused on the communicative value of pronunciation and its relation to intelligibility. Based on the definitions provided by Cook (2001), Yates (2002), and Paulston and Burder (1976), this study adopts the following definition of the term: Pronunciation is the production of English sounds to make meaning in an utterance. This definition recognizes that pronunciation is about specific sounds related to a given language, but also embraces the communicative perspective with emphasis on creating meaning in an utterance.

2.2.2 Components of pronunciation

Pronunciation is an imperative feature of communication as it influences the intelligibility for speech (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). In fact, it is a complex language feature consisting of a plethora of different elements which affect the clarity of the speech. In this section, the language feature pronunciation is elaborated through two key components: segmental and suprasegmental features.

According to Florez (1998) the segmental features are the basic supply of sounds and the way they combine in order to form a language. Crystal (2003) defined segmental features as "any discrete unit that can be identified either physically or auditory in the stream of speech" (p. 426). Florez (1998) argued that traditional pronunciation teaching has focused on mastery of the segmental features. This means that the students have practiced individual sounds to form a correct pronunciation of a word. Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) defined segmental phonology as the ability "to articulate and discriminate the individual sound elements or phonemes making up the system of consonants and vowels of a language" (p.4). Pronunciation from a strictly segmental perspective can therefore be understood as the ability to articulate, include, and exclude specific vowels and consonants to form a specific word.

Crystal (2003) defined suprasegmental features as "a vocal effect which extends over more than one sound segment in an utterance" (p.466). To clarify, a segmental feature can be understood as an individual discrete sound unit, as for example, a vowel or consonant. A suprasegmental feature, on the other hand, extends over more than one segmental in an utterance, as for example stress. Pitch, intonation, stress, and rhythm are all suprasegmental features which either allow or deny communication of being intelligible. Florez (1998) made the argument that suprasegmental features have been neglected in order to focus on the more traditional segmental features. All the suprasegmental features to a varying degree affect whether the speech is deemed as comprehensible. According to Gilakjani (2011), the suprasegmental features include: stress, rhythm, prominence, and intonation. Stress is a combination of length, loudness and pitch applied to syllables of a word (Gilakjani, 2011). Rhythm is a suprasegmental feature that is nearly connected to stress, as it is the pattern of which syllables are stressed, unstressed and when pauses is applied in a stream of speech. Prominence is according to Gilakjani (2011) a "speaker´s act of highlighting words to emphasize meaning or intent" (p. 10). Prominence, on the other hand, could be achieved by adjusting the intensity, duration, or pitch of certain syllables (Gilakjani, 2011). Intonation is also known to be the melody of speech (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015) as it identifies how a speaker lowers or rises the pitch of the voice in a sentence or phrase. American linguists have traditionally made the distinction between tone and intonation by the length of pitch pattern; as intonation refers to sentence-level pitch patterns, while tone refers to pitch patterns at a word-level (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). The level to which the student can master the segmental and suprasegmental features would determine to which degree the student is able to pronounce words and utterances correctly. Incorporating these elements into their definition of pronunciation, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) defined it as the method of producing sounds for creating meaning, which consists of consonants and vowels of a language (segments), and the suprasegmental features as, for example, stress, timing, rhythm, intonation.

Pronunciation is therefore a complex feature with a plethora of different elements which to a varying degree affect the intelligibility of the speech.

Of note is that a speaker's geographical origin or social class may also impact the speech and how it sounds. An accent can be understood as a distinctive pronunciation of a word related to a country or social class (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015). Crystal (2013) explained that an accent is the auditory features of pronunciation which identify where an individual is from, either geographically or socially (Crystal, 2013). As an example, a speaker with a British accent would pronounce <NOSE> as /nəʊz/, while a speaker with an American accent would pronounce the word as /noʊz/ (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015). Furthermore, along with accent, the researchers elaborated that there are different patterns of intonation based on different regions (Nilsen & Rugesæter, 2015). There are therefore several ways an individual word can be pronounced based on different accents, and several ways a sentence can be communicated based on different intonation patterns. However, Isaacs (2014) highlighted that foreign accents tended to receive excessive amount of attention due to their perceptual notability. Moreover, this tendency may be a consequence of that speaking English nativelike has traditionally been seen as the optimal goal (Levis, 2005).

2.2.3 The focus on teaching and researching pronunciation

The time devoted and spent on teaching pronunciation varies in many classrooms according to MacDonald (2002). Levis (2005) argued that the teaching and assessment of pronunciation is a story of extremes, whereas its importance was being heavily guided by the instructors' relevant teaching ideology. Approaches to teaching have affected how much emphasis the teachers have given pronunciation, ranging from being heavily emphasized in the audiolingual approach to being mostly ignored in the cognitive movement (Levis, 2005). However, Tergujeff (2013) argued that pronunciation does not seem to receive much attention in research, teaching, and education. She argued that with the advent of the teaching ideology Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) traditional pronunciation teaching was deemed incompatible with teaching language as communication (Tergujeff, 2013). Furthermore, even though traditional pronunciation teaching methods were being rejected, there were no new comprehensible methods of teaching pronunciation introduced (Tergujeff, 2013). The study of Levis (2005) may therefore indicate that pronunciation is a feature which had a varied emphasis and focus on language teaching. Even though pronunciation has received a varying degree of attention, the findings may indicate that pronunciation does not still receive much attention in teaching or research.

2.3 Competing Goals and Principles in Pronunciation

2.3.1 The nativeness principle

As introduced earlier, pronunciation is a language feature built up of a plethora of different segmental and suprasegmental elements. Bøhn (2016) found that teachers emphasized widely different elements in their assessment of pronunciation; a finding which echoes the results of the study by Levis (2005). Levis (2005) claimed that pronunciation pedagogy and research have for the past 25 years been heavily affected by two contradicting ideas and principles: namely, the *nativeness principle* and the *intelligibility principle.* As indicated by Nilsen and Rugesæter (2015), there are different distinctive pronunciation and intonation patterns related to countries. The nativeness principle holds that it is achievable and most desirable for EFL learners to adapt and gain a nativelike intonation, pronunciation, and accent when learning a L2. This entails that the learner should strive for adopting the pronunciation and intonation pattern that of an English-speaking native (Levis, 2005). Research, however, points to that nativeness in pronunciation is biologically conditioned to occur before adulthood, thus leaving it to be an unrealistic goal to obtain in education (Levis, 2005). Levis (2005), therefore, pointed to that many teachers, who might be unfamiliar with research on pronunciation, may see the rare student who gains a native accent as an achievable ideal and not like a rare exception. This may be one of the reasons why the nativeness principle still holds root and is being supported by some teachers today (Bøhn, 2016; Levis, 2005).

2.3.2 The intelligibility principle

Contrary to the nativeness principle, the intelligibility principle does not focus on a nativelike speech or accent. The sole goal and focus of the intelligibility principle is that the learner is understandable (Levis, 2005). The intelligibility principle holds that communication can still be highly effective and understandable even though foreign accents are noticeable, and sometimes even strong. In the intelligibility principle, there is no correlation between accent and understanding (Levis, 2005). Consequently, the instruction of pronunciation following the intelligibility principle should emphasize features of the language which are most meaningful for being understood and deemphasize features that to do not affect the ability to be understood (i.e., native accent) (Jenkins, 2002).

2.4 The two Language Paradigms

2.4.1 The English as a foreign language paradigm

Levis (2005) claimed that for the past 25 years the nativeness and the intelligibility principle have affected and influenced pronunciation pedagogy. According to Iannuzzi and Rindal (2017), the way in which teachers assess pronunciation is a result of how they interpret the competence aims, which again is affected by the language paradigm the teacher supports. There are two language paradigms which the researchers identified as frequent in the English subject curriculum (Iannuzzi & Rindal, 2017). The first language paradigm is called English as a Foreign Language (English as a Foreign Language = EFL). In this paradigm, the goal of teaching is that students learn to use the language like native users. From a pronunciation perspective, this would also entail that any pronunciation, intonation, and accent that deviates from Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) would be deemed as incorrect (Iannuzzi & Rindal, 2017). However, the goal of this paradigm is not strictly language-based, as the paradigm holds that the learner also needs to gain cultural awareness like a native (Iannuzzi & Rindal, 2017). The EFL paradigm therefore holds several similarities with the nativeness principle, where the correct use and form of the language is like a native.

2.4.2 The English as a lingua franca paradigm

The second language paradigm which Iannuzzi and Rindal (2017) argued is portrayed frequently in the English subject curriculum is the English as Lingua Franca (English as a Lingua Franca = ELF) paradigm. As opposed to the EFL paradigm, the core idea of the ELF paradigm is the recognition that English is a global language. Consequently, this implies that there is not one pronunciation, intonation, and accent that is more desirable than others. Much like in the intelligibility principle presented by Levis (2005), the focus of pronunciation teaching in the ELF paradigm is that it should not hinder or disturb communication (Iannuzzi & Rindal, 2017). Every accent and intonation are accepted and deemed as equal within this paradigm if it does not hinder or disrupt communication.

2.4.3 The duality of language paradigms in the curriculum

Even though Iannuzzi and Rindal´s (2017) research was based on LK06, the previous version of the curriculum, several of their arguments are applicable to LK20, as some competence aims lean toward the ELF paradigm, while others reflect the EFL paradigm. One of the competence aims of LK20 recognizes English as a global language, which indicates the views of the ELF paradigm. As it states, the objective is to "describe key features of the development of English as a global language" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12). On the contrary, the curriculum also emphasizes a distinction between native speakers and non-native speakers, by referring to the English-speaking world: "explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12). It may be argued that by referring to the English-speaking world, the curriculum makes a distinction between native speaking countries and countries with English as a second language, reflecting the English as a Foreign Language Paradigm. These findings may therefore indicate that the duality of language paradigm persists in LK20. Iannuzzi and Rindal (2017) put forward the argument that when the English curriculum does not make a clear standpoint of which language paradigm to follow, it is the teachers' subjective understanding, experience, and values, which would determine which paradigm is being favored, and which would ultimately affect how they assess pronunciation.

2.5 Studies on how Pronunciation is Assessed

2.5.1 The language paradigm's influence on assessment

To ensure quality of assessment, Stiggins (1995) argued that assessment must start with clear and specific achievement expectations. Based on this, it may be argued that a prerequisite to ensure quality of pronunciation assessment is a clear and specific achievement expectation of the language feature pronunciation**.** However, Iannuzzi and Rindal (2017) claimed that the curriculum expressed two opposing language paradigms, which reflect two different pronunciation principles: namely, the intelligibility and the nativeness principle. Literature may therefore indicate that there might be different achievement expectations of pronunciation based on the language paradigm the teacher supports.

In the intelligibility principle, for instance, which follows the ELF paradigm, understandability of speech is the main feature of focus. The ELF paradigm was strongly supported by Jenkins (2002), as she argued that the learners are more likely to utilize the language in ELF situations, and thus the goal for teaching should not be nativelike speech, but simply being able to be understood by other non-native speakers. Jenkins (2002) therefore constructed the LFC (Lingua Franca Core), which is a set of features based on research, which has proven to be necessary and most influential on intelligibility in communication. She found that there were mostly segmental features that mattered and affected intelligibility the most. The LFC consists of the following main features: consonant sound, except /θ/, /ð/, and dark /l/, vowel length contrasts, restrictions on consonant deletion, nuclear stress production/placement (Jenkins, 2002). From an intelligibility principle, these features would be focused and emphasized. This is in great contrast to a teacher who follows the nativeness principle. Such a teacher would emphasize and assess the student's ability to reproduce an RP (Received pronunciation) and GA (General American) pronunciation and intonation.

2.5.2 Analytical and holistic assessment

The language paradigm the teacher abides by may influence what language features the teacher focuses and assesses. However, the way in which the teacher conducts the assessment of the language features may vary widely, particularly since Bøhn (2016) pointed the absence of national rating scales or rater training in Norway. A study conducted by Szpyra-Kozłowska et al. (2005) addressed the issue of reliability of most frequently employed assessment methods of EFL learners' pronunciation. The study compared two different approaches of pronunciation assessment: namely, holistic and analytic assessments. A holistic approach to language testing entails that the teacher does not focus specifically on any feature or construct, but rather evaluates the overall effectiveness of language (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2005). The advantage of this approach is that it enables the teacher to assess many students in a short amount of time. However, the researchers found that lack of specificity in the holistic approach reduced the intra-rater and interrater reliability (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2005). The study revealed that some of the teachers who utilized a holistic approach applied some various analytic criteria (i.e., intonation) in their assessment (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2005). The analytic criteria the teacher emphasized in the assessment varied among the teachers, thus resulting that the students were assessed based on different constructs and terms (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2005).

In contrast to the holistic approach which focuses on the general ability to communicate, the analytical approach aims to systematically assess specific features and constructs of the language separately (i.e., production of vowels, consonants, and stress). The analytical approach entails that the teacher establishes a detailed and specific marking scheme, in which different specific language aspects and constructs are evaluated separately (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2005). The assessment of all the individual language aspects and features would then provide the foundation of the overall assessment of the students' performance. An advantage of this approach to assessment is that when each language feature is assessed separately, the teachers may gain a deeper understanding of the student´s strengths and challenges.

By assessing each construct individually, it may be argued that an analytical approach to assessment may to a higher degree enable the teacher to obtain a complete and coherent rationale behind the assessment, which is a requirement of an assessment's validity according to Fjørtoft and Sandvik (2016). Similar arguments were made by Fulcher (2012) who stated that the use of assessment matrixes is considered to increase the validity of the assessment. Similar findings were made by Szpyra-Kozłowska et al. (2005), as they found that 90% of the teachers in their study regarded an analytic approach to be more reliable and objective than its counterpart holistic assessment (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2005).

2.5.3 Teachers' attitudes on pronunciation.

As already discussed, and as it readily transpires from the literature, pronunciation is a complex feature with a plethora of different elements that need to be considered (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Its complex nature may explain why some teachers find it difficult to assess but also teach it. A study conducted by MacDonald (2002) revealed that teachers expressed difficulties assessing and teaching pronunciation, which may be the consequence of several factors. Traditionally, pronunciation has not received much attention in the curricula, and teachers therefore expressed a lack of incentive to focus explicitly on teaching and assessing pronunciation (Macdonald, 2002). This conclusion also mirrors the claims made by Tergujeff (2013), who argued that pronunciation has not received much attention in research and education. Similar arguments were made by Gilakjani (2011) as he argued that pronunciation does not have a prominent role in many curricula and that pronunciation teaching is ignored in many EFL classrooms.

Another possible factor to the teachers´ reluctancy to teach pronunciation, which may also underline the lack of attention pronunciation has received in research, is the teachers´ belief that pronunciation has few teaching and learning materials of high quality (MacDonald, 2002). The lack of learning and teaching materials to aid teachers has therefore led them not feeling confident to teach pronunciation. The teacher participants of MacDonald's (2002) study also pointed out that there was no clear assessment framework to support their judgment of the student's pronunciation, which was also addressed by the teachers in the study of Bøhn (2016).

Similar findings were found in a study by Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016). The study revealed that based on a lack of pronunciation materials and institutional resources the teachers did not like to teach pronunciation and were therefore reluctant to teaching and assessing it explicitly. This corroborates the findings in Tergujeff 's (2013) study where teachers did not feel confident in teaching and assessing pronunciation because of a lack of materials to assist them in the process. Studies may therefore suggest that there is a dearth of focus on producing materials to assist teachers in teaching and assessing pronunciation. Internal factors such as lack of knowledge and sufficient training were also factors influencing their reluctancy to teach pronunciation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). The insufficient preparation to teach and assess pronunciation sufficiently has consequently reduced the motivation and confidence among the teachers, which ultimately resulted in a lack of focus on teaching and assessing pronunciation in the classroom (MacDonald, 2002).

2.5.4 Student attitudes on pronunciation

As the studies described in the previous section revealed, because of the insufficient emphasis of pronunciation in the curriculum and the lack of learning and teaching materials, teachers felt reluctant to teach pronunciation. Gilakjani (2016) echoed this in his study and stated that pronunciation did not have a prominent role in many EFL classrooms. The studies of MacDonald (2002) and Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) indicated that teachers were negative towards teaching and assessing pronunciation, and therefore seldomly attended to pronunciation in their classroom. To support this, studies conducted by Benzies (2013) and Tergujeff (2013) indicated that students felt that pronunciation was neglected in the classroom. The studies suggested that students were generally positive towards pronunciation, but stressed that they lacked opportunities to practice pronunciation, as other language areas were taught more frequently.

Tergujeff (2013) investigated Finnish EFL learners' perceptions and views on English pronunciation teaching. Her study found that most of the students emphasized fluency and intelligibility as the focus and goal of their education. The students did not aspire to achieve a native-like pronunciation, and they agreed that talking English with a foreign accent is acceptable if it did not affect intelligibility. Based on the descriptions and definitions provided by Levis (2005), one could argue that the students of the study followed the intelligibility principle.

Similarly, previous studies suggested that EFL students felt pronunciation was neglected in the EFL classroom. A study conducted by Benzies (2013) found that Spanish EFL students had negative views on the role of pronunciation in the EFL classroom. The study argued that the students were generally positive to learning pronunciation, as they deemed it to be an important feature of speech (Benzies, 2013). However, the students believed that perceptive skills, as for example, reading and listening, were being prioritized over productive ones, writing and speaking (Benzies, 2013). This may point to that the EFL students felt they lack the opportunities to produce and practice their pronunciation. Moreover, the students argued that pronunciation was seldomly explicitly practiced or assessed in the classroom. They elaborated that other language areas as for example reading, writing and grammar, received greater attention than oral skills (Benzies, 2013). This is also mirrored in the studies conducted by Tergujeff (2013) and Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) as the studies concluded that the teachers expressed a lack overall lack of focus on pronunciation in teaching.

2.6 Chapter Summary

English plays a key role in the Norwegian society, as it is represented in the Norwegian education and business domains (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). However, how English is taught and assessed in Norwegian education is strictly regulated by law. Regulations to the Education Act state that the assessment of the students should be based on the competence aims in the curriculum of the given subject (Regulations to The Education Act, 2006, § 3-3). Furthermore, as pronunciation is present in the English subject curriculum, the teachers are obligated to assess and teach pronunciation in their classroom. However, a study conducted by Bøhn (2016) found that there were some issues with the assessment of pronunciation during the oral exams. The issue of L2 pronunciation assessment was also reflected in literature, as studies conducted by Gilakjani (2011) and Tergujeff (2013) indicated that teachers did spend much time assessing or teaching pronunciation. The teachers neglect on teaching and assessing pronunciation is in great contrast to Pennington and Rogerson-Revell's (2019) claim as they argued that pronunciation is fundamental in oral language development. However, Isaacs (2014) stated that the key issue with L2 pronunciation assessment is that it has been heavily neglected and under-researched over the past several decades. This study therefore aims to close the gap on L2 pronunciation assessment research in Norway. The following chapter, the method chapter, presents what methods were employed to collect and analyze the data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research design adopted to answer the research questions of the study: 1) What are the EFL teachers' understanding of pronunciation in LK20? 2) What are the teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation? 3) How do teachers assess pronunciation? The chapter first presents the research design and data methods utilized to collect data. After this, chapter presents how this study analyzed the data to answer the research questions and concluded by discussing the topics of validity and reliability pertaining to the research design.

3.1 Qualitative Research Design

A research design could be understood as the strategy and rationale which the study intends to follow to attempt to answer its research questions (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Given the focus of the study, which is to investigate Norwegian EFL teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation, the study adopted a qualitative research design. The goal of qualitative research is to seek to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it (Hatch, 2002). The epistemological prerequisite to qualitative research is therefore that knowledge is constructed in the interaction between researcher and research participant (Nilssen, 2012). Qualitative research aims to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon by interacting with the participants who have experience with it. Qualitative research may therefore provide a deep and detailed understanding of attitudes, opinions, events, and non-observable phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2018).

This thesis could be classified as a phenomenological study, as the study aims to gain insight on the attitudes of a certain phenomenon trough the perspective of a specific group of people (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). According to Christoffersen and Johannesen (2012), the main purpose of phenomenology is to describe and explore people's experiences and perspectives of a given phenomenon. Based on the epistemological standpoint of qualitative research (Nilssen, 2012), it is imperative to integrate the perspective of researcher, as it is the researcher's interpretations and perceptions of the data which are emphasized in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2018). A fundamental principle in phenomenology is therefore meaning, as the researcher attempts to create meaning of a phenomenon through utterances or actions of a group of people (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). For this reason, phenomenological studies should consider the background of the research participants, as a prerequisite to create meaning is to first understand who the human is (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012).

3.2 Research Participants

The ontological prerequisite to qualitative research is that there are a plethora of different realities (Nilssen, 2012) Based on this ontological standpoint, it could be argued that in qualitative research it is favorable to interview many different individuals to increase the amount of data. However, Kvale and Brinkmann (2019) stressed that to gain data and insight from many participants is time-consuming, which may reduce the time the researcher can spend on interpretation of the material, consequentially reducing the quality of the data analysis. Therefore, considering the arguments put forward by Nilssen (2012) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2019) regarding the size of participant groups, this study identified four participants: Mari, John, Johanne and Elisabeth, as a reasonable compromise. By interviewing four different teachers, this study can compare and contrast the realities of the different participants, while avoiding that an excessive amount of data reduces the quality of the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019).

Given the scope of the study, assessment of English pronunciation, criterion sampling was employed to identify potential high-quality informants. Criterion sampling is the selection of a research participant based on pre-determined criteria (Palinkas et al., 2015). To participate in the study the participant was required to have a master's degree in English, be currently teaching English at VG general studies program (GSP), and have experience with assessing English oral exams. These pre-determined criteria were implemented to increase the likelihood that the participant had relevant experience with English pronunciation, and therefore able to share insight relevant to the thesis. To ensure some degree of diversity in the group of participants, four teachers who matched the criteria were selected based on slightly different characteristics. Stratified sampling can be understood as dividing the whole group into multiple different sub-categories based on different characteristics (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012).

The four different subcategories that were implemented was gender and experience of the teacher, but also the location and size of the school. According to Statistics Norway (2020), 25.5 % of teachers in central Norway are male. Therefore, to best reflect the population, and have both genders represented, the study recruited one man and three women to participate. The second sub-category of the teachers was the amount of experience they had with teaching English. Research has revealed that training and experience might influence the teacher's attitudes towards pronunciation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Consequently, the study recruited teachers with a varying degree of experience. The third variable between the teachers is the location of the school and the attempt to strike a balance between schools in rural districts and school in cities. The correlation between the location and the quality of school has not been confirmed, however, it has been debated whether schools in the city are of higher quality than schools in rural districts (Revdal, 2020).

Given this debate and to diversify the material, two teachers taught at schools in rural districts, and the other two taught at schools located in cities. Despite there being no strong empirical evidence, it has been debated whether the size of the school affects the quality of instruction (Bålerud,2020). The participants therefore represent schools with a varying number of students attending the GSP programme, with a difference of smallest to largest of approximately 100 students.

These four teachers shared several qualities and traits based on criterion sampling, which ensured that they were fit to participate in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Moreover, given the similarities of the teachers, same educational background (holders of a master's degree), all currently teaching English and experience with assessing English oral exams, it is somewhat reasonable to compare the findings from the different participants. Despite the commonalities of the participants, stratified sampling ensures that the group is somewhat diversified regarding gender, experience, school size and location (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012), which may provide the study with more diverse insight. By combining the two sampling methods, the study aimed to have a diverse group of participants which may provide different insights based on their distinctions, but still be comparable based on their similarities.

Table 1.

Table of Characteristics of the Research Participants in the Study.

Teacher (Gender)	Appx. years of English teaching experience.	School district.	Size of the school
Mari (F)	10 years	Rural	Second to largest
John (M)	40 years	Rural	Smallest
Johanne (F)	25 years	City	Second to smallest
Elisabeth (F)	15 years	City	Largest

The table presents an overview of the teachers that were selected to participate. One male was selected, John, and three women were selected, Mari, Johanne, and Elisabeth. John was the most experienced teacher with 40 years of English teaching experience, while Mari was the least experienced with 10 years of experience. Mari and John worked at high-schools in rural districts, while Johanne and Elisabeth worked at high-schools located in the city. Elisabeth worked at the largest high school with the largest number of students attending the GSP, while John worked at the smallest school with the smallest number of students attending the GSP.

None of these teachers were colleagues, as they worked at four different schools. However, being that all schools are in the same county (Trøndelag), it may be identified as a weakness to the sampling. The English oral exam is a local exam, which means it is administered by the county municipality (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). This might have had an impact on the variation of the data, as the exams which the teachers assessed had been administered by the same county municipality. Another potential weakness to the sampling may be that all teachers are rather experienced, as there were no teachers in the study who had less than approximately 10 years of experience. However, given their shared traits and the chosen use of data collection strategies, the sample generated findings that might be applicable to a bigger percentage of the Norwegian EFL teacher population.

3.3 Data Collection Strategies

After an appropriate group of participants was sampled and identified, the process of gathering data relevant to the thesis was initiated. An important element to a research process is data collection, as the data material constitutes the basis of the analysis (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). This study gathered data through three different collection strategies: document analysis, reflection logs, and interviews. The reasoning behind the trinity of data collection strategies is elaborated further in the chapter.

3.3.1 Document analysis

The analysis of the English subject curriculum served multiple purposes towards the data collection and the data analysis process. Christoffersen and Johannessen (2012) stated that in phenomenology it is important to understand the framework and setting of the phenomenon which is being studied. The curriculum sets the guidelines towards assessment and teaching (Regulations to The Education Act 2006, § 3-3), Consequently, the English subject curriculum (ENG01-04) is a framework impacting how teachers assess pronunciation and therefore of importance to the framework and setting of the phenomena (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012).

Firstly, the analysis of the English subject curriculum identified topics relevant to the study, as for example the limited attention on pronunciation in the curriculum, and the lack of elaborative descriptions. The document analysis therefore identified topics which shaped the research questions of this study. Secondly, the findings of the document analysis were purposeful towards the construction of the interview guide. The analysis of the curriculum identified meaningful questions and findings, which would be explored in greater detail, by addressing them in the interviews. Several of the questions in the interview guide were based on the findings of the document analysis. Lastly, the analysis of the LK20 was seen as purposeful towards increasing the quality of the analysis of the reflection logs and interviews. The curriculum serves a regulating function towards assessment (Regulations to The Education Act 2006, § 3-3), and is therefore an important element of the setting of the phenomenon (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). The data of this study needs to be analyzed and interpreted in light of the curriculum, as it is the document that dictates assessment. Taking this into account, an analysis of the curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020), was therefore deemed as purposeful for to the progress and quality of the study.

3.3.2 Reflection logs

According to Chitpin (2006), writing journals or reflection logs has become a common technique for encouraging reflection on professional teaching practice. Reflecting on teaching and experiences in the classroom promotes progress, as reflection logs and journals encompasses a place to record honest perceptions and reactions (Chitpin, 2006). Prior to the interviews, the teachers were sent an identical instruction to write a short reflection log/journal consisting of maximum 250 words (Appendix.1). The instructions were sent three weeks prior to the interview, and the teachers were asked to reply at least one week prior to the time of the interview. Giving the teachers two weeks to write the reflection log was a precaution taken to ensure that they had sufficient time to write the reflection log. Moreover, by limiting the time to write the reflection logs to only two weeks, the participants did not have an excessive amount of time to write, which may increase the likelihood that the reflection log was spontaneous and authentic.

The teachers were asked to reflect and elaborate on their own assessment practices of pronunciation. Writing about their own practices and experiences in a form of a journal or log, is a tool to better understand themselves as teachers (Chitpin, 2006). The reflection log is therefore personal and subjective, as it contains the teacher's own attitudes and teaching practices towards pronunciation. The purpose of the reflection log was to serve as a warm-up to the interviews, as it encouraged reflection about teaching and their own attitudes (Chitpin, 2006), but also provide information about the participants, their experiences, and attitudes towards pronunciation, prior to the interviews.

The deadline of submitting the reflection log was set one week prior to the scheduled interview. By receiving the reflection log of the participant one week prior to the interview, I was able to read and analyze the reflection log before conducting the interview. By having some insight of the teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation and how they conduct assessment, the interview guide could be modified and refined based on the findings of the reflection logs. The findings of the reflection logs therefore aided in constructing and modifying the interview guide to fit the individual teacher by identifying topics which could be more deeply investigated in the interviews.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

According to Cohen et al. (2018), conducting interviews in research may serve three purposes: Firstly, interviews could serve as a purpose to gather information on the scope of the research, or on the participants thoughts and beliefs on the scope of the study (Cohen et al., 2018). Secondly, interviews may be utilized to confirm hypotheses or to create new ones (Cohen et al., 2018). Lastly, interviews may be conducted in combination with other research methods, to follow up or survey already gathered data (Cohen et al., 2018). In this study, interviews were conducted to gather information on the teachers' attitudes of pronunciation. Moreover, the interviews also served the purpose to follow up on the data gathered from the analysis from LK20 and the reflection logs.

Conducting interviews is the most common method to collect qualitative data, as it enables the researcher to receive deep and detailed elaborations (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). Based on this, qualitative interviews are deemed as a suitable data collection strategy when the scope of the study is the experiences and attitudes of humans (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). According to Christoffersen and Johannesen (2012), a semi structured interview can be understood as an interview conducted with the assistance of an interview guide (Appendix 2). In other words, the guide serves the purpose of assisting the interviewer, and the researcher is therefore free to ask the questions which s/he sees fit. By not following the interview guide strictly, the flexibility of the interview is increased, thus enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions to utterances that are deemed as important, providing deeper insight (Cohen et al., 2018).

Planning is important prior to the interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019), and it was therefore essential to prepare the interview guide before the interviews were conducted. As briefly introduced above, the interview-guide was partly based on the reflection log which the teacher wrote. This enabled me to modify the questions of the interview-guide to fit the teacher, which increased the likelihood of receiving meaningful insights. However, most of the interview guide was identical for all teachers, consisting of questions deriving from literature and the analysis of LK20. All questions aimed to be as open-ended as possible to invite the teacher participants to give elaborative and reflective answers about their attitudes towards pronunciation.

After the interview-guide was approved by my supervisor and the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, I conducted a pilot-interview. Conducting a pilot interview allows the researcher to test the interview-guide and equipment (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019). The pilot-interview was conducted on a teacher that was not selected to participate in the study based on not matching the criterion (the teacher did not teach at GSP). The pilot interview confirmed that the interview-guide was suitable.

Prior to the interview, each participant was sent practical information, where the purpose and the focus of the study was presented through a consent form (Appendix 3). Every participant of this study has given their consent. Before starting the interview process, each participant was asked general questions, not related to the study, i.e.: have you seen the new TV-show of TV2? This was done to warm up the candidate and start to build a relationship with the participant, as it is in the first phase of the interview where the researcher builds the foundation of trust (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). Gaining the participant's trust was important to increase the likelihood of them feeling comfortable elaborating on their attitudes and experiences towards pronunciation.

Thereafter, the participant was asked simple factual questions about their age, education, and subjects. These simple factual questions were asked to introduce the theme of the interview, but also to gain some basic understanding of the human, which is essential in qualitative research (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). After the factual questions, the interview moved over to questions relevant to the thesis, which were questions from the reflection log, and questions about assessment, pronunciation, and the curriculum.

The interviews lasted between 45 to 75 minutes. Notes of key insights were taken during the interviews to aid in the analysis. Facial expressions and body language cannot be recorded with a voice-recorder, so it was necessary to take notes of these potentially meaningful findings. The interviews were transcribed shortly after it was conducted, then the recordings were deleted afterwards, in accordance with Norwegian Centre for Research Data guidelines.

3.4 Data Analysis

The process of systematically structuring and arranging data material to enable the researcher to identify findings is called data analysis (Nilssen, 2012). Qualitative data analysis often entails working with and analyzing written texts (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). In this study, the data from LK20, reflection logs, and interviews were represented through written text. Due to the magnitude and the different characteristics of data material in this study (the curriculum, four reflection logs and four interviews), two different analysis methods were employed to answer the research questions of the study: a qualitative content analysis of the curriculum, and a thematic analysis of the reflection logs and interviews.

Qualitative content analysis and a thematic analysis share the process of coding. Coding is an imperative activity in the qualitative research process (Nilssen, 2012). The act of coding can be understood as systematically reading a text to identify meaningful elements, sentences or phrases and labeling them into codes (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). Saldana (2016) defined a code as a "word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p.4). In other words, a code is a construct generated by the researcher, which is essence-capturing towards generating meaning in the data material (Saldana, 2016).

3.4.1 Qualitative content analysis of the LK20

A document in research can be understood as any written text which is used as a primary or secondary source to data (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012). The English subject curriculum could therefore be defined as a document (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012). Despite their existing many varieties of documents, what is common for all documents is that they are data generated from the past, from a time before the researcher analysis it (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012). Being that documents is data generated in the past (Christoffersen & Johannesen), it is important to be aware of the setting and context of document. Before analyzing the document, it is therefore pivotal to consider the document's author(s), reader(s), context, and purpose (Thagaard, 2009). According to Thagaard (2009), it is therefore important to put LK20 into a context before analyzing it. The curriculum is written and developed by the Norwegian directorate for Education and Training (2020) to be read by educators, students, and parents. As a document, the curriculum regulates teaching and assessment in school (Regulations to The Education Act 2006, § 3-3). The context of the curriculum as a document is that it is regulated by law, with the purpose of informing educators, students and parents about the contents and guidelines of the school.

A qualitative content analysis examines and analyzes the informational content of a text (Mayring, 2000). In other words, the scope of a qualitative content analysis is to analyze the information the text communicates. An important aspect to content analysis is to fit the material into a model of communication (Mayring, 2000). As already addressed by Thagaard (2009), in a document analysis, it is key to consider the purpose the document served. Considering the focus of this study, assessment of pronunciation, it was deemed as reasonable to utilize a deductive category application. A deductive category application is when the researcher has pre-determined categories deriving from relevant literature or research (Mayring, 2000). A category is a group of multiple codes which captures the essence of the data material, categories is therefore used to reduce the data material to make it more manageable (Nilssen, 2012). The curriculum was coded based on two different categories: pronunciation and assessment.

Mayring (2000) stated that an important element to content analysis is that the categories is the center of analysis. By constructing two categories prior to coding, I was able focus on passages and text that was relevant to the categories. After the document was coded, I revised the codes, and developed the final set of multiple categories, which had more distinct and specific qualities than the two original categories. The final categories were guidance to assessment, assessment and pronunciation.

3.4.2 Thematic analysis of the interviews and reflection logs.

A thematic analysis can be understood as identifying themes, categories, or patterns in the data material, which is coded, categorized, and elaborated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In a thematic analysis, the researcher has the freedom to decide which themes to emphasize in the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme can be understood as a phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit is about or means, consequently, a theme is therefore a result of coding and categorization (Saldana, 2016). According to Cohen et al. (2018), when the data material consists of multiple research participants, it is deemed as necessary to construct themes and categories which can be utilized in the analysis of the data material. I therefore found it reasonable to conduct an identical coding process on the reflection logs and interviews. By conducting the same coding and analysis process on all the data, it made it easier to compare and contrast the findings from the reflection logs and interviews. The reflection logs and interviews therefore shared the same codes, categories, and themes.

There are different variations of thematic analysis, depending on what themes are created. In a semantic approach, themes are identified within the explicit surface of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In other words, in a semantic thematic analysis, the themes are developed explicitly on what the participant has written or said, which involves that the themes are generated without any interpretative work of the researcher. In contrast to a thematic analysis at the semantic level, a thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content and interprets underlying ideas and concepts within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This entails that the development of latent themes entails interpretive work, as the themes are constructed from latent features in the text which represent something essential (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, attitudes towards pronunciation can be portrayed in an utterance without the participant explicitly talking about their attitudes. To exemplify, a teacher participant could express negative attitudes towards pronunciation by saying that they dislike pronunciation explicitly or by not saying it explicitly; for example, by elaborating that pronunciation is the last thing they teach in the classroom. Therefore, given the nature of this study, which investigates teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation, it was deemed as appropriate to conduct a thematic analysis at the latent level of the qualitative data.

The analysis of the reflection logs and interviews followed the six phases of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

1. Getting an overview of the data material by reading and transcribing.
2. Systematically organizing the data material through coding.
3. Searching for themes in the data material
4. Revise the themes
5. Define and name themes
6. Write the report in relation to relevant quotes, extracts, theory and research questions.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

The purpose of the first phase of the thematic analysis was to obtain an overview of the data material (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Prior to coding, the data material was read multiple times. While reading, relevant passages, words or utterances were highlighted to gain a general overview of the contents of the data. After reading and exploring the data material, a memo was written consisting of my initial thoughts, potential categories, and themes. This process could be defined as pre-coding; a process prior to coding to aid and enhance the coding process (Saldana, 2016). By getting a general overview of the data material prior to coding, I was able to determine the coding methods which was appropriate for the study. Due to the nature of this study, it was deemed as reasonable to combine three different coding methods. Concept coding is appropriate for studies with multiple participants and wide variety of data material (Saldana, 2016). The first coding method focused on concepts relevant towards pronunciation, the curriculum, and assessment. In concept coding, the labels and codes did therefore not represent human emotions or attitudes, the codes represented a broader meaning than a single item or action (Saldana, 2016). For example, if the teacher talked about utilizing a matrix to aid in their assessment, the passage was coded as analytic assessment, as a matrix represents the concept of an analytic approach to assessment.

In contrast to concept coding, which focused on pronunciation, the curriculum and assessment, emotion, and value coding focused on investigating the subjective qualities of human experiences (Saldana, 2016). According to Saldana (2016), affective coding methods are particularly appropriate to studies that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences in relation to decision-making and perspectives. Emotion coding and value coding were therefore seen appropriate to focus on teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation and assessment. Emotion coding can be understood as labeling a passage or utterance based on the feelings participants may have experienced (Saldana, 2016). Passages were therefore coded based on the potential feelings the participants experienced when they elaborated on their experiences towards pronunciation and assessment. The last coding method which was used is called value coding. Like emotion coding, value coding focuses on the subjective qualities of the human, but is more attentive towards the participants values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldana, 2016). By combining concept, emotion, and value coding, I was able to identify and structure passages that were relevant concepts towards pronunciation and assessment, but also able to capture the individual teachers' subjective qualities.

After deciding on the appropriate coding methods, I was able to proceed to the second phase of the thematic analysis, organizing the data material through coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the coding process, each code was written in a code book to keep track of the different codes and in what reflection log or interview it occurred. According to Saldana (2016), the coding process is a heuristic, exploratory and cyclical act, the data material was therefore coded in multiple cycles. Following several cycles of coding, the final set of codes was produced.

The codes were then utilized to identify and construct themes in the different interviews and reflection logs. According to Saldana (2016), theming the data is applicable in interviews, and especially if it is a phenomenological study. Theming the data could be understood as searching the data set for themes or concepts which are of relevance towards the topic under investigation (Saldana, 2016). This could be understood as phase three, four and five of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.5 Validity, Reliability, and Ethical considerations

3.5.1 Validity

Validity describes to what degree a study measures what it is intended (Messick, 1996). To increase the validity of this study, several steps were taken in the data collection and data analysis process. Based on the plethora of different definitions of pronunciation that exist in the literature (Cook, 2001; Yates, 2002; Paulston & Burder, 1976), each research participant was provided with a definition of pronunciation in the reflection logs and interviews. By ensuring that the participants followed a common definition of pronunciation, it enabled me to compare the findings from the different interviews and reflection logs.

According to Christoffersen and Johannsen (2012), it is important for the validity of the study, that the data constitute accurate representations of the phenomenon. I therefore employed three data collection strategies to obtain data from multiple sources. According to Cohen et al. (2018), triangulating the data may provide a more complete understanding of a phenomenon, and negates the weakness and researcher bias of collecting data through one method. This study triangulated the data through the following data collection strategies: document analysis, reflection logs and interviews. The document analysis of the curriculum served a purpose to aid in developing the research questions as well as shaping the interview guide. The reflection logs identified themes and topics which I could furtherly investigate in the interviews. Being that the interviews were conducted as the final method, the findings from the document analysis and reflection logs were explored further in the interviews, which may have provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Christoffersen and Johannsen, 2012). Therefore, to increase this study's validity, the study collected data from three different methods given that validity points to how concrete evidence and theory supports the interpretations of the result (Fjørtoft & Sandvik, 2016).

3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability revolves around aspects of consistency of the study, and whether the study can be replicated by another researcher (Kvale & Brinkman, 2019). Based on the ontological and epistemological standpoint of qualitative research (Nilssen, 2012), the researchers have a central role in the study, as it is their interpretations and perceptions of the data which are emphasized (Cohen et al., 2018). Because of this, Nilssen (2012) argued that a qualitative study can never be identically replicated, as different participants potentially have different experiences with a given phenomenon (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012

A challenge of phenomenological studies is the principle of distance to the participants. To gain a complete understanding of the phenomenon, the research should strive to minimize the distance to the participants (Nilssen, 2012). On the other hand, if the researcher comes too close to the participants, the researcher's subjectivity may interact with the participant, thus having an impact on the reliability of the results (Nilssen, 2012). I was therefore attentive towards my subjectivity and potential research bias and took several steps to reduce the latter from this study. According to Chitpin (2006), a reflection log is placed to record honest perceptions and reactions. Consequently, the reflection logs therefore allowed participants to write about the phenomenon without me affecting the data. The findings from the reflection logs and document analysis then aided in creating an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions. By asking open-ended questions, I enabled the participants to answer in the manner of their choosing, thus minimizing the potential risk of affecting their answers. This interview guide was tested in a pilot interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019), which confirmed that the questions of the guide were open-ended and invited the participant to elaborate on their own thoughts.

The analysis process was done thoroughly with multiple cycles of coding. However, according to Smith and Noble (2014), bias exists in all research, and it is hard to eliminate it. The presence of bias in research might be a consequence of that in qualitative studies, the data collection and data analysis are centered around the researcher (Christoffersen & Johannesen, 2012). I therefore followed the phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006), and the elements of qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2000) to increase the reliability of the analysis process.

3.5.3 Ethical considerations

Qualitative research is dependent on participants sharing their experiences and letting the researcher into their world. It is therefore important to consider the ethical aspects of the study (Nilssen, 2012). This study followed the guidelines set by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). The interview guide was sent to NSD and was approved before the interview process started. Each participant was sent a written consent form, which gave them information about the researcher, the study, and its purpose. Each participant gave their written approval prior to conducting the interview, and every participant was informed that they could withdraw their consent at any given time. None of the participant withdrew their consent.

To ensure that the participants could not be identified in the study, the data material was transcribed after the interview and the recordings of the interview were deleted. Each participant was given a pseudonym, and none of the schools are named. After transcription, each teacher was asked if they would like to edit some comments in the transcriptions. None of the participants wanted to remove or adjust their comments. This study therefore followed the three basic requirements for ethics in qualitative research, which are informed consent, privacy requirements, and the requirement of being correctly portrayed (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018).

3.6 Chapter Summary

This study collected data through three different methods: analysis of the English subject curriculum, reflection logs, and semi-structured interviews. The advantage of collecting data through multiple methods is that it gives rich data about the phenomena which is being studied (Christoffersen and Johannsen, 2012). Moreover, by triangulating the data, it may have provided a more complete understanding of the assessment of pronunciation and negated potential researcher bias (Cohen et al., 2018), which may improve the validity of the study. In the data collection process, the three ethical requirements as explained by Postholm and Jacobsen (2018), and the guidelines set by Norwegian Centre for Research Data were followed strictly to ensure the ethical aspects of this study. The data was analyzed through two different analysis methods: qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, where I followed literature from Mayring (2000) and Braun and Clarke (2006) to structure my analysis. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the empirical data that were found in the attempt to address the three research questions of the thesis. Firstly, this chapter presents the findings of the document analysis of the LK20, as it is the overarching regulatory framework of assessment. Following the document analysis of the LK20, data from the interviews and reflection logs to address the teacher's understanding of pronunciation in the LK20, their attitudes on pronunciation, and how the teachers assess pronunciation are presented. The data revealed that the teachers held negative attitudes towards pronunciation, as they found it hard to assess it. Moreover, the findings indicated that there was a lack of consensus regarding pronunciation assessment, which might be a consequence of the limited focus it receives in the curriculum.

4.1 Research Question 1.: EFL Teachers' Understanding of Pronunciation in LK20

The data indicated that the teachers believed that pronunciation has been given limited attention in LK20. Moreover, three of the teachers addressed that the competence aims lack specificity and definitions of terms which the competence aims address (i.e., patterns of pronunciation). This vagueness of the competence aims has led to different interpretations of the competence aims, specifically revolving around the assessment of a nativelike intonation and pronunciation.

4.1.1 Pronunciation's role in LK20

In LK20, pronunciation is addressed through two out of a total of 17 different competence aims. The first competence aim refers to pronunciation as a language pattern: "the pupil is expected to be able to use patterns of pronunciation in communication" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12). The second competence aim is less explicit, as pronunciation is not directly addressed, however, it also refers to precision of oral expression: "the pupil is expected to be able to express himself or herself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, receiver, and situation". (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12).

From a quantitative perspective, findings suggest that pronunciation has a minor role in LK20. Pronunciation is only addressed in two out of 17 competence aims, which entails to a mere 11% of the total English subject curriculum. The findings of the content analysis that suggested that pronunciation has received little attention in the curriculum, was mirrored by three of the participants in the interviews and reflection logs. In the interview, Johanne pointed out that pronunciation has been given little attention in the LK20: "Pronunciation has been marginalized in many competence aims in the national curriculum". Similar notions were reflected in Elisabeth's reflection log; "The national curriculum states that the student should be able to use patterns of pronunciation in communication, excluding this, there are no direct requirements to the students' pronunciation abilities". Data from the analysis of LK20, the reflection logs and interviews, therefore, point to that pronunciation is present in the LK20, but has received limited focus.

4.1.2 Interpretation of the competence aims

Based on § 3-3 in Regulations to the education act (2006), which states that the students´ assessment should be on the competence aims of LK20, it may be argued that the examiner´s understanding of the competence aims of the LK20 is a dictating factor for how the examiner assesses the student. However, the findings suggested that some of the teachers found it hard to interpret the competence aims of the national curriculum.

When asked to comment on the two competence aims of pronunciation presented above, Elisabeth replied: "I think interpreting the national curriculum is a skillset on its own". Elisabeth immediately pointed out that understanding the competence aims is a complex and difficult task. Elisabeth referred to "interpretation" of the curriculum, which might imply that the competence aims lacks specificity and conciseness, and therefore must be interpreted by each individual teacher. In addition, Elisabeth argued that due to the lack of specificity and definitions of terms in the competence aims, the LK20 is open to different interpretations. Mari believed that the competence aims lacked explicit explanations of what they entail and include. Mari claimed that she understood which language feature to assesses, however she explained that competence aims lack an explicit definition of what the term entails: "Use the correct pronunciation – Pronunciation in English? I do not understand, I find them to be very, very, vague". Similar concerns were mirrored in the interview with Elisabeth, as she also addressed the absence of specifications of pronunciation-related terms in the competence aims: "They are pretty vague, I understand, but they are not specified in any other way".

The idea put forward by Elisabeth and Mari that the competence aims lack specificity and definitions of terms were also mirrored in the analysis of the LK20. Considering the competence aims that addresses pronunciation, the analysis revealed that there is no elaborations nor definitions of terms in the competence aims: "The pupil is expected to be able to use pronunciation patterns in communication" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) does not elaborate on how pronunciation is defined, and as the literature review presented formerly, there is a plethora of different definitions of pronunciation, which may be the cause to why Mari and Elisabeth find it hard to understand the competence aim. Moreover, the competence aim refers to pronunciation patterns in communication, but does not elaborate what a pattern entails or include, which was addressed by Elisabeth, as a root for insecurity: "I have been wondering about that. What does pronunciation pattern entail?".

In this study, the four teachers stated that they assessed the students based on the competence aims of the LK20. However, Mari and Elisabeth explained that they found it hard to interpret the competence aims, due to the lack of elaborations and definitions of the terms in the competence aims. This was also voiced by Johanne, as she made the argument that as the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) does not define terms in the competence aims, teachers may interpret them differently: "There are different opinions. Because there are different dynamics and criterion which we have interpreted differently. Assessment can be very subjective, especially oral assessment".

4.1.3 Nativelike intonation and pronunciation in the LK20

Elisabeth and Mari addressed that the competence aims were open to individual interpretations among teachers, as the curriculum lacks definitions of terms such as patterns of pronunciation. For that reason, Johanne highlighted that teachers may grade students differently based on varied interpretations of the competence aims. In this study, the findings suggest that due to a lack of definitions in the competence aims, there was a lack of consensus revolving around the inclusion of a nativelike intonation and pronunciation in the competence aims.

John explained that based on his interpretation, he believed that intonation was included in the competence aims: “Patterns of pronunciation… It is all about the pronunciation of the words like an American or British person… Priority one is to pronounce the word so that it is understood. Priority two is that intonation is included”. John explained that the intonation of the student should also be assessed. Moreover, by addressing that the student should pronounce the words like an American or British person, it is indicated that John supports the nativeness principle (Levis, 2005), where the nativelikeness of speech is assessed.

In contrast to John who assessed the student’s ability to replicate a nativelike intonation, Johanne explained in her reflection log that she did not believe that the student´s ability to mimic a nativelike intonation should be assessed. However, Johanne explained that several teachers shared John’s opinion of a nativelike intonation, as stated that several students have been assessed based on their ability to reproduce a nativelike intonation: “Many of the students believe pronunciation means speaking without a Norwegian accent, which is not something I take into consideration when I assess the students. Many students have experienced that they have been evaluated as less proficient in English based on their lack of nativelike intonation”.

In her interview, Johanne explained that she did not evaluate a nativelike intonation, contradictory to John, who based on his understanding of the competence aims assessed the student’s ability to produce a nativelike intonation. The existence of different interpretations by teachers of the intonation’s inclusion in the competence aims, portrayed by John and Johanne, was emphasized by data from the interview with Elisabeth. When Elisabeth was asked to comment how she understood the competence aim: “The pupil is expected to be able to use pronunciation patterns in communication” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12), it was indicated that the competence aim was a source of uncertainty and open to different interpretations: “I do believe it to be about pronunciation, but I am unsure about how much intonation is included”. This echoes the findings of the document analysis, as the lack of definitions of terms has led to Elisabeth being uncertain about whether she should assess intonation or not. In addition, the different interpretations of the intonation’s role in the competence aim by John, Johanne and Elisabeth, emphasized the claims made by Mari, as she argued that the competence aims lack definitions of what they entail and include.

4.2 Research Question 2: Teachers’ Attitudes Towards Pronunciation

Based on lack of elaboration and specificity surrounding pronunciation in the competence aims, the findings indicated that there was a lack of consensus among the teachers regarding interpretations of the competence aims. However, the absence of elaborative descriptions on how to grade the students based on competence aim completion, and the lack of specific definitions of terms (i.e., pronunciation) may increase the teacher’s autonomy in assessment, as the teacher is restricted by few definitions and assessment guidelines. The findings revealed that the teachers held widely different opinions on the importance of pronunciation assessment. John and Johanne felt that pronunciation was imperative for communication, and thus assessed pronunciation explicitly. This is in great contrast to Mari who believed several other language features were of greater importance. Moreover, the teachers’ attitudes towards the importance of pronunciation may also have influenced to what degree the teachers focused on pronunciation in their assessment of oral English.

4.2.1 Importance of pronunciation

The data analysis revealed that the teachers have different opinions on the importance of pronunciation. In his reflection log, John elaborated on his perspective on the importance of pronunciation: "vocabulary and a comprehensible pronunciation will to a high degree determine the grade for the student". To evaluate the students during an oral exam, John explicitly focused on pronunciation and vocabulary. This may point to that John believed that pronunciation is an integral feature of oral speech, and therefore assessed it explicitly. Like John, Johanne expressed a belief that pronunciation is of salient importance for communication; "pronunciation is important because, to be understood, one has to pronounce words correctly. If the pronunciation is poor, one risks misunderstandings. So therefore, I believe it is important for the student to learn to pronounce words correctly". Johanne argued that pronunciation is imperative for the communicational value of speech. In addition, she argued that if the student mispronounced words, it may affect the comprehensibility of speech, which again decreases the communicational value. This may suggest that John and Johanne believed that pronunciation is a vital feature of English and something that should heavily impact the student's grade.

In great contrast to John and Johanne who argued that pronunciation was important based on its impact on the communicational value of speech, Mari believed that there are several other linguistic features that are of greater importance. Mari was asked to comment on if she believed that vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and grammar are all of equal importance in oral assessment, to which she replied: "I am a bit uncertain about pronunciation. Depends on how poor the student´s pronunciation is. The rest of them are all of equal importance. Grammar, fluency, and vocabulary are all super important! Pronunciation… Almost as important*".* When presented with four language features, Mari explicitly suggested that pronunciation was of lesser importance. She did not state which was most important, however, she explicitly pointed out that pronunciation was of lesser importance. This may be an indication that contradictory to John and Johanne who believed pronunciation was of great importance, Mari believed that pronunciation was a language feature of less importance.

4.2.2 Teachers' attitudes towards assessing pronunciation.

The data indicated that the teachers had different opinions on the importance of pronunciation. John and Johanne believed pronunciation to be vital for communication, and consequently a vital aspect of language learning. Mari, on the other hand, believed that there were several other language features which were of greater importance. Considering this variance in the teachers' perspectives on the importance of pronunciation, one may also expect some variation in the teachers' attitudes towards assessing pronunciation.

Findings indicated that Mari believed several other language features were of greater importance than pronunciation, and this may have affected her attitudes towards assessing pronunciation. Mari´s view on pronunciation and assessment of pronunciation was further expressed when she was asked about whether she believed assessment of pronunciation to be hard: "I rarely assess pronunciation explicitly because it is a part of the whole package. So, I do not find it hard to assess pronunciation. And that is maybe because I do not focus on it". In great contrast to John who believed pronunciation was one of two vital components to assess during an oral exam, Mari believed pronunciation was only a minor part of assessing oral English, and thus she spent little to no focus on assessing it. This may emphasize the findings which suggested that teachers held a subjective view of the competence aims and that these directly influence how students are assessed.

Another factor that may have had an impact on the EFL teachers' attitudes on the assessment of pronunciation is the complexity of assessing oral English, which was addressed by Elisabeth in her reflection log: "A presentation includes assessment of the student´s language, content, structure, presentational skills and how sources are used. The presentation usually lasts between three to seven minutes, so there are many factors to assess in a short amount of time". Elisabeth underlined a point already put forward by Mari; namely the idea that pronunciation was one of many aspects the teacher should evaluate during an oral examination. By mentioning the several aspects which were to be assessed and the relatively limited amount of time to evaluate them, the data may indicate that Elisabeth found oral assessment problematic. The complexity of oral assessment, in combination with the short amount of time, leads to the teacher having to draw many conclusions on the student´s overall proficiency in a short time interval. Assessing a plethora of language features in a short period of time may prove troublesome and difficult for teachers. This might lead to language features that the individual teacher deems to be of less importance, and therefore may not be assessed to the degree they should.

In light of the idea that some teachers may find oral assessment problematic, it may be argued that the competence aims do not provide the teacher with sufficient guidance on how to assess the student. Based on the structure of which the competence aims are written: "the pupil is expected to be able to…" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12), the competence aims categorize the levels of competence into two different categories: the pupil can use patterns of pronunciation in communication or the pupil is not able to use patterns of pronunciation in communication. On the other hand, as presented in the literature review, the Norwegian grade scale does not follow this structure of "the student is able / the student is not able", as it varies from one to six (Regulations to The Education Act, 2006, § 3-5). Therefore, the competence aims and its two categories do not correspond with the grade scales and its six different grades to express competence. To exemplify further, it could be argued that the lowest scoring student, as well as the highest-scoring student have both been able to use patterns of pronunciation in their communication to some degree. However, considering this sentence structure, the competence aims do not provide any guidance to assess the student based on different levels of competence aim completion, as it only divides between being able or not able. Furthermore, as addressed by Elisabeth in her reflection log, during an oral examination the teacher should assess many different features; however, the weight of each individual competence aim is not specified in the curriculum. During an exam, all the relevant competence aims should be assessed, however how much each competence aim should affect the overall grade of the student is not elaborated. On the assumption that all competence aim is of equal importance, pronunciation would account to 11% of the grade, given the fact that pronunciation is included in 2 out of 17 competence aims.

In great contrast to Mari and Elisabeth, John stated that assessing pronunciation is a relatively simple task. When asked if he believed assessing pronunciation to be difficult, he quickly pointed to his amount of experience as a resource; "No, with the amount of experience that I possess, I can quickly assess whether or not the student pronounces words and sentences correctly". John argued that assessing was easy for him based on his experience. What is worth noting is that John is by far the oldest interview subject as he would retire in a few months, while the other three candidates were in their forties. This may suggest that the amount of experience the teacher has with assessment may affect the teacher's ability to assesses.

4.3 Research Question 3: Teachers' Assessment of Pronunciation

The data indicated that the EFL teacher attitudes on pronunciation, as well as their attitudes on assessment of pronunciation, varied. Mari who did not believe pronunciation was of any importance spent little attention on assessing pronunciation. This is in great contrast to John who believed that pronunciation was important, and, therefore, focused on pronunciation in the assessment. Despite this variety on the teachers' attitudes on pronunciation, findings illustrated that all teachers acknowledged that pronunciation should be assessed based on the competence aims. Even though the four teachers agreed that pronunciation should be assessed, the way the teacher preferred to conduct their assessment varied, as some teachers preferred to utilize an assessment matrix, while others did not. Moreover, the data revealed the vagueness and different interpretations of the competence aims addressed by Mari, as the teachers lacked consensus revolving the assessment of nativelike intonation and pronunciation.

4.3.1 LK20s role in the teacher's assessment of pronunciation

As introduced in the introduction of this chapter, the Regulations to the Education Act (2006) states that the assessment of the student should be centered around the competence aims of LK20. Therefore, it was no surprise that Johanne, Mari, and John explained that the basis of their assessment was centered around the competence aims of LK20. The competence aims of LK20 was the first thing Johanne addressed in her reflection log: "When I assess the student's pronunciation, I start with the competence aims in the curriculum and the assessment matrix we have for oral production". Being that the competence aim was the first thing Johanne referenced when writing about her assessment of pronunciation, it may be an indication that the competence aims have a major influence on her assessment. Along with Johanne, Mari also pointed to the competence aims of the curriculum as the basis of her assessment: "During an oral exam I assess them based on the national curriculum. From an oral perspective this means the ability to communicate and adjust this communication according to situation and receiver". Mari and Johanne explicitly address the curriculum and competence aims as the foundation of their assessment, which suggests that LK20 plays a major role in their assessment.

John stated that the introduction of national curricula has helped teacher to gain a common understanding of what to assess, which he argued has increased the reliability of the oral exam: "…solidified criteria was introduced to help teachers gain a common understanding of the communicational setting and the assessment situation.". By stating that the curriculum has helped teachers gain a common understanding of assessment, it is also suggested that John was considerate and aware of that assessment should be based on the national curriculum. Findings may therefore indicate that teachers are attentive towards applying LK20 as a basis of their assessment.

4.3.2 Using a matrix to assess students

The teachers were all attentive to assess the students' based on the competence aims of the LK20. However, whether the teacher preferred to use a matrix in their assessment varied. In this study, John, Mari, and Johanne stated that they employed a matrix as guidance to their assessment. This was in great contrast to Elisabeth, who argued that utilizing a matrix decreased the quality of her assessment.

Three of the teachers, John, Mari, and Johanne, explained in their interviews that they preferred to use a matrix when assessing the students' oral proficiency. Johanne elaborated on the assistance that specific characteristics of competence aim completion offered in her assessment; "When we (referring to her colleagues in her department at her school) assess exams, we bring grading matrixes with specific characteristics of competence goal achievement which helps me a lot in my assessment". Having specific characteristics of competence supported her judgment as it enabled her to examine the student's performance according to specific criteria or traits which then could justify a score. Johanne's use of matrix is also displayed in her reflection log: "When I assess the students' pronunciation, I start off with the competence aims in the curriculum and our assessment matrix we use for oral production". Johanne underlined that she utilized an assessment matrix in the assessment of the students. In addition, she specificized that the rubric aligned with the competence aims of the national curriculum, which may reflect the importance and influence the competence aims has on the teacher's assessment.

It was evident that John was supportive of utilizing a matrix when assessing oral proficiency, as he brought his schools assessment matrix for oral English to the interview and explained how it worked: "you put a mark where the student has competence, to show specifically where the student´s competence lies". The matrix John referred to divides each competence aim into five different sublevels of completion, varying from "a very low degree", being the lowest score, to "a very high degree" which is the highest score. John explained that each of these five sublevels include common characteristics for a student performing at that given level, to aid the teacher determine what level of competence the student has displayed. According to John, there were two benefits of utilizing a matrix. Firstly, he argued that when each aim was divided into several levels of completion, it was easier to identify which aspects of the language the student mastered, and which features the student needed to practice. Furthermore, he elaborated that having a matrix may help the teacher in assessment as it could give the teacher guidance as to what features to assess, and on determining to which degree the students have displayed competence. The potential benefit of utilizing a matrix was also addressed in the interview with Mari, where she elaborated that assessment matrix have aided her in her assessment of the students. She argued that a matrix is a helpful addition to the teacher's autonomy and assessment; "You use your own knowledge a lot when assessing students and it is helpful to reflect around specific points on a matrix which is why I always use a matrix".

In great contrast to John, Johanne, and Mari who were positive and utilized a matrix in their assessment, Elisabeth elaborated on why she did not prefer to utilize one. Firstly, she argued that to use a matrix may create an artificial communication setting, which may hinder a natural flow of communication with the student. Secondly, she argued that English consists of a plethora of different features, and one cannot therefore assess them individually: "Every competence aim has to be seen as one whole, all of them are equally relevant. This means that there is a lot that affects the grade, therefore I am not sure if I want a specific and rigid matrix.". The specificity of a matrix, which was deemed as a strength by John and Mari, was what Elisabeth deemed as a weakness: "Even though I understand why some teachers want more specifics when assessing oral proficiency, I believe that it allows more students to be successful when it is not that specific". Using a matrix may give the teacher explicit guidance as to what to assess, but it might also exclude some language features; what is not on the matrix may not be assessed. Having a matrix, as Elisabeth suggested, may potentially increase the specificity on what to assess, but also narrow down the elements to assess, therefore reducing the autonomy of the teacher.

4.3.3 Assessment of nativelike intonation and pronunciation

As discussed earlier, findings of the study suggest that based on the teachers' different interpretations of the competence aims and pronunciation, there was a lack of consensus regarding the assessment of nativelike intonation. However, the data may also suggest their different opinions on the importance of nativeness in speech, as it may be indicated that John and Elisabeth followed the nativeness principle, while Johanne and Mari indicated they followed the intelligibility principle. The data may therefore indicate that a nativelike intonation and pronunciation could affect the students' grade, when assessed by John and Elisabeth. On the contrary, students assessed by Johanne and Mari would not be deemed as more proficient if they applied a nativelike intonation and pronunciation.

John explained that nativeness of speech was a requirement to achieve the highest grade when he assessed his students: "To achieve the highest grade the student should have a native intonation, to avoid… let me use a brutal word "Norwenglish" *(Slang for a Norwegian accent while talking English)*, which to me sounds horrible". John was a firm believer that a nativelike intonation and pronunciation was something that was required to achieve a high grade. On the other hand, another finding was the negative attitudes that John portrayed against a Norwegian accent and intonation, deeming it as "horrible". Considering this, Elisabeth stated that it was natural that a language teacher becomes impressed by a student talking with a nativelike intonation and pronunciation: "If you talk like a native, it is impossible to avoid being impressed. You react like: wow, this is great English. As a language teacher, I do not think you can help it". Like John, Elisabeth elaborated that students with nativelike intonation and pronunciation are often deemed as proficient users of the language. It may be argued that Elisabeth and John indicated some support towards the nativeness principle (Levis, 2005), as they admittedly preferred a nativelike intonation and pronunciation.

In contrast to John and Elisabeth who assessed the students based on their ability to replicate nativelike speech, Mari did not believe that a nativelike intonation or pronunciation should be assessed. Mari elaborated in the interview that a nativelike intonation and pronunciation did not affect the grade when she assessed her students: "The student may talk as Thor Heyerdahl or Jens Stoltenberg but if they have a wide vocabulary and pronounce the words fully understandable, it should not matter that they sing like a Norwegian" (Thor Heyerdahl and Jens Stoltenberg are known for having a distinct Norwegian accent when speaking English*)*. According to Mari, the student may speak with a strong Norwegian intonation and pronunciation, but if it does not affect the understandability of the speech, she argued that it should not affect the assessment of their pronunciation negatively. The notion that the student should not be assessed on their ability to mimic a native but rather on the understandability of speech was also mirrored in the interview with Johanne. She explained that in her classes there were students from different countries, with different backgrounds, accents and dialects which influenced their English intonation and pronunciation. However, she argued that the English language is dynamic, and consists of a plethora of different varieties, and one cannot therefore argue that one is more correct than the other. In sync with Mari, Johanne did not assess the student's pronunciation or intonation based on nativelikeness, but rather on their ability to convey an utterance understandably. These statements made by Mari and Johanne may indicate that they abide by the intelligibility principle, where the sole goal and focus is that the learner is understandable (Levis, 2005).

The findings of this study may indicate that John and Elisabeth followed the nativeness principle, while Johanne and Mari showed sings suggesting they followed the intelligibility principle. This mirrors the findings of Bøhn (2016) whose study found that his teacher participants held different opinions on the importance of a nativeness in speech, which was also reflected in the interview with John: "There is a lack of consensus. I'm leaning towards the belief that a nativelike intonation and pronunciation is a major plus. Many of my colleagues argue that a native intonation and a Norwegian intonation should be treated as equal".

4.4 Chapter Summary

The findings revealed that the teachers believed that pronunciation has received little attention in the curriculum. Moreover, the teachers admitted to having issues interpreting the competence aims, as they were characterized as vague. Three of the teachers argued that pronunciation was an important language feature, while one of the teachers did not attend to pronunciation to a large extent in assessment. Furthermore, three of the teachers utilized an assessment matrix to aid in their assessment of oral language, while one teacher argued the use of a matrix decreased the authenticity of the dialogue with the student. Based on the vagueness of the competence aims, the teachers argued that there were different interpretations, which might explain the lack of consensus regarding assessment of nativeness among teachers in this study. The next chapter discusses the findings that the research questions sought to address.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study found that pronunciation has received little attention in the curriculum, and the teachers argued that it was difficult to interpret the competence aims. The interviews and reflection logs revealed that there was a lack of consensus regarding how much attention pronunciation should receive in assessment, and whether nativelike intonation and pronunciation affect the student's grade. This chapter discusses the findings of this study and how they relate to previous literature and the three research questions of this study: 1) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' understanding of pronunciation in the English subject curriculum? 2) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation? 3) How do Norwegian EFL teachers assess' pronunciation?

5.1 The Weakness of the Little Focus on Pronunciation in the English Subject Curriculum.

This study found that John, Elisabeth, and Johanne believed that pronunciation has a received little attention the curriculum. By addressing that pronunciation has a limited focus in the curriculum, it might be argued that John, Elisabeth and Johanne found pronunciation to be underrepresented in the curriculum. To support this, John and Johanne argued that pronunciation is an important factor in the oral language. The lack of focus on pronunciation was identified in the content analysis of the English subject curriculum, as the results indicated that pronunciation is addressed in two out of 17 competence aims (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p.12). These findings echo the results from Gilakjani's (2011) and Macdonald's (2002) studies, which argued that pronunciation has not received much attention in the curriculum.

Previous studies have indicated that the focus on pronunciation in the curriculum influenced the degree it is taught and assessed (Macdonald, 2002). For instance, Macdonald (2002) found that due to the limited focus pronunciation received in the curriculum, teachers were reluctant to teach and assess pronunciation. It therefore raises the question whether the little attention spent on pronunciation in the Norwegian subject curriculum has led Norwegian EFL teachers to not focus on teaching and assessing it. To support this hypothesis of the correlation between the neglect of pronunciation in the curriculum, and how it might influence the focus of teachers, the findings that emerged from Mari's logs and interviews are deemed worthy of further discussion. Mari did not believe pronunciation had received little focus in the curriculum, and admitted she did not focus on assessing pronunciation. This might indicate that the lack of focus on pronunciation in the curriculum may be an influential factor that could potentially reduce the teachers' focus on assessing pronunciation. Consequently, the lack of assessing pronunciation may potentially negatively influence the quality of instruction, as literature suggest assessment is important to tailor teaching for each individual student (Idsøe & Skogen, 2016; Fjørtoft & Sandvik, 2016). The lack of assessment on pronunciation might therefore reduce the quality of teaching.

It may be argued whether the lack of focus on pronunciation in the curriculum might potentially hinder that English subject fulfills its purpose in school. The purpose of teaching English in Norwegian schools is to enable the students to utilize the language outside of the classroom (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020), as the English language is frequently utilized in Norway (Rindal & Piercy, 2013) but also globally (Smokotin et al., 2014). It therefore may be argued that to teach and assess pronunciation is an integral part of fulfilling the subject's purpose of enabling the students to use the language outside of the classroom, as pronunciation is fundamental in oral language (Pennington& Rogerson-Revell, 2019). Furthermore, pronunciation's importance for oral communication might be the reason as to why John and Johanne believed pronunciation to be important and needed to receive more attention in the curriculum. The findings of this study, along with literature (Pennington& Rogerson-Revell, 2019), suggest that it is important to focus on assessment and teaching of pronunciation to meet the teaching requirements of the English subject (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). As a result, pronunciation needs to receive greater focus in the curriculum, as the lack of attention on pronunciation might reduce the focus it receives in teaching and assessment (Macdonald, 2002).

5.2 The Lack of Elaborations in the Curriculum and Possible Implications for Assessment

The content analysis of the LK20 revealed that the competence aims are not elaborative in regards as to how pronunciation should be assessed. This was also echoed in the interviews, as Johanne, Elisabeth, and Mari explained that they found term "pronunciation patterns" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020) to be confusing and difficult to interpret. This might be the reason as to why the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2019) reported that teachers characterized the assessment of oral English as holistic and intuitive. The vagueness of the competence aims might be explanation to why the participants of this study suggested that there are different interpretations of the competence aims among teachers, which might suggest there is an issue with the inter-rater reliability of oral English assessment.

Literature discussed a plethora of different definitions of pronunciation which include and focus on different aspects of the language (Cook, 2001; Paulston & Burder, 1976; Yates, 2002). It is therefore problematic that the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) does not define pronunciation patterns, as teachers might apply different definitions, which might cause a variance in how students are assessed. To support this, in this study, there was a lack of consensus among participants regarding the assessment of a native-like intonation and pronunciation based on different interpretations of the competence aims. According to Iannuzzi and Rindal (2017), both the EFL paradigm and the ELF paradigm are portrayed in the competence aims of the curriculum. This might be the cause as to why John and Elisabeth followed the nativeness principle (Levis, 2005), while Mari and Johanne followed the intelligibility principle (Levis, 2005).

The lack of specificity in the competence aims might have several negative implications. According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2019), the exam serves two main purposes in the educational system: the certification of a student's competence and the ranking of applicants. However, this raises the question whether the exam can serve its two purposes if the competence aims are vague and thus open to different interpretations among teachers. Stiggins (1995) argued that a requirement to the quality of assessment is a clear and specific achievement expectation. As a result, it may be argued that a determining factor to the reliability and validity of English oral exams is that all teachers have a shared understanding of the competence aims, as they constitute the basis of the student's assessment (Regulations to the Education Act, 2006, § 3-3). Rogerson-Revell (2019) put forward the argument that a test with low rater reliability or interrater reliability cannot validly assess the feature it is intended to assess. Taking this into account, it may be argued that the lack of conciseness might affect the validity of the oral exam negatively. This might suggest that the competence aims need to be more concise and elaborative regarding pronunciation to ensure that teachers have a shared understanding of how to assess pronunciation. Without a shared understanding of how to assess pronunciation, the oral exam cannot validly certify the student's competence or rank the applicants (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019)

5.3 Standardizing the Assessment of Oral English to Improve the Quality of Assessment

The only teacher who stated that the assessment of pronunciation constituted a simple task was John, who was the eldest of the participants. John had been an English teacher at high school his whole life and was due to retire in the summer. He was a very experienced English teacher with much experience on teaching and assessing English, and this might be the reason why he found it easy to assess pronunciation. The correlation between experience and training and the attitudes towards pronunciation was also reflected in the literature. Macdonald (2002) found that the teachers believed that they had insufficient preparation to teach and assess pronunciation and were therefore reluctant to teach and assess pronunciation.

In great contrast to the experienced teacher John, Mari and Elisabeth argued that assessing pronunciation was a difficult and complex task. Assessing pronunciation may be a challenging task, as it is a complex language feature (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) consisting of segmental (Florez, 1998) and suprasegmental features (Gilakjani, 2011). However, as Elisabeth addressed, during an oral presentation the teacher must assess more constructs than pronunciation, which might explain the difficulty of assessing an English oral exam. This was also echoed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2019), which reported that teachers characterized the assessment of oral English as holistic and intuitive. This might put emphasis on the correlation between the attitude towards pronunciation assessment and experience, as intuition is an ability which is influenced by experience. However, this might also call attention to that there is a lack of assessment material to aid teachers in assessing oral English.

Three of the teacher participants, John, Mari, and Johanne, explained in the interviews that they preferred to use a matrix when assessing the students' oral proficiency, as they believed it aided in their assessment. Similar arguments are found in the literature, as an analytic approach to assessment is deemed to increase the validity of the assessment (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2015). On the other hand, Elisabeth explained in her interview that she did not like to use a matrix as she believed it reduced the authenticity of the dialogue with the student. This argument is supported by Messick (1996) as he argued that language tests should include authentic and direct samples of communicative operations, and a matrix might reduce the authenticity of dialogue. It therefore raises the question whether a matrix would increase the validity of an exam. On the one hand, it may aid teachers in assessment as an analytic approach to assessment is deemed to raise the validity of the test (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al., 2015). On the other hand, the use of a matrix might reduce the authenticity of the dialogue with the student, which is a prerequisite to language testing according to Messick (1996).

The oral exam given at high school level is administered locally (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), which entails that there is no national rater training or national assessment matrixes provided (Bøhn, 2016). This means that the matrix of John, Mari and Johanne is constructed by different teachers. The contents of the matrixes utilized by John, Mari and Johanne may therefore be different in how they address pronunciation. It therefore raises the discussion whether assessment of oral English could be improved with the introduction of a nation-wide assessment matrix.

One benefit of standardizing the assessment of oral English through a nationwide assessment matrix is that it may provide all teachers with a document consisting of the same constructs to assess the students, regardless of the school district. This may increase the inter-rater reliability of the oral exam, as it would give all teachers equal criteria on which they would base their assessment. For example, this study found that John and Elisabeth assessed the students based on their ability to replicate native speech (Levis, 2005), while Mari did not. It may be argued that an implementation of a nationwide assessment matrix would give the teachers a shared idea of what to base their assessment on. Consequently, such practice might increase the inter-rater reliability of the teachers, which ultimately makes the oral exam more valid.

In this study, Mari admitted to not focusing on pronunciation in her assessment, while John and Johanne focused heavily on assessing pronunciation. The competence aims do not specify to what degree a teacher should assess pronunciation, which might explain the variance of pronunciation assessment. However, if a matrix was used, it could specify to what degree and how pronunciation should be assessed. The use of a matrix might therefore increase the likelihood that pronunciation is assessed to an equal degree by all teachers, despite the lack of emphasis it has in the curriculum (Gilakjani, 2011; Macdonald, 2002).

Three of the teachers in this study argued that they found pronunciation assessment to be difficult, which corroborates with previous studies (Macdonald,2002; Tergujeff,2013). Arguably, the use of a matrix might reduce the complexity of assessing oral English, by making the assessment less holistic and intuitive (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), as a matrix would identify specific constructs to assess. A matrix might therefore support teachers who do not have that much experience assessing pronunciation, as experience potentially is a factor which potentially simplifies assessment (Macdonald, 2002). The use of a nationwide assessment matrix might therefore increase the likelihood that all students are assessed based on the same terms, but also give the teachers aid in assessment of oral English.

5.4 Chapter Summary:

It could be argued that the assessment of pronunciation is problematic based on multiple reasons deriving from the competence aims in the curriculum. The limited attention on pronunciation in the curriculum (Macdonald, 2002) does not encourage the teachers to assess pronunciation to the degree it should. This might be the reason to why Mari did not focus on pronunciation in her assessment. Pronunciation is important for oral communication (Pennington& Rogerson-Revell, 2019), and is therefore arguably an important feature to attend to fulfill the purpose of the English subject (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Despite this importance, pronunciation is only addressed in two out of 17 competence aims.

Moreover, the teachers found it challenging to interpret the competence aims due to lack of specific explanations, and therefore have deemed the assessment as holistic and intuitive (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). As a potential consequence, findings indicate that the teachers have different interpretations of the competence aims, thus assessing the students based on different criteria. The lack of interrater reliability of pronunciation assessment may therefore reduce the validity of the oral English exam (Rogerson-Revell, 2019). It therefore raises the question of the oral exam can fulfill its purpose of certifying the student's competence or rank the applicants (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), if the students are potentially assessed on different terms (Bøhn, 2016). As a measure to increase the inter-rater reliability and validity of the exam, the application of a nationwide assessment matrix was discussed to increase the quality of the exam. The following chapter concludes this thesis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 A Summary of the Findings of the Thesis

The focus of this study was to investigate how Norwegian EFL teachers assess pronunciation. By utilizing three data collection strategies, the study aimed to answer the following three research questions: 1) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' understanding of pronunciation in the English subject curriculum 2) What are the Norwegian EFL teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation? 3) How do Norwegian EFL teachers assess pronunciation?

To gather the data material, the study employed three different data collection strategies: a document analysis of the English subject curriculum at GSP VG1 (ENG01-04), reflection logs, and interviews. The findings of this study indicated that teachers held negative attitudes towards assessing pronunciation. In the interviews, the teachers elaborated that pronunciation has received little attention in the curriculum, and therefore found it hard to interpret the competence aims and assess pronunciation. This is in accordance with previous studies on teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation, as literature suggest that due to the neglect of pronunciation in the curriculum (Tergujeff, 2013), teachers were reluctant to assess pronunciation (Macdonald, 2002).

The data of this study revealed that based on the vagueness of the competence aims, the research participants believed that there are many different interpretations of competence aim "patterns of pronunciation" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020) among teachers. Moreover, the teachers of this study disagreed on whether nativeness of speech should be assessed in pronunciation assessment. These findings mirrored Bøhn (2016), which might indicate that the duality of the two pronunciation principles (Levis, 2005) still is an issue. To aid them in their assessment, three out of four participants utilized an assessment matrix, as they believed it increased the validity and reliability of the assessment. This corroborates with previous research, as the study of SzpyraKozłowska et al. (2005) found that teachers believed that an analytic approach to assessment increased the validity of their assessment of oral language.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to study gain insight on the teachers' attitudes towards assessment of pronunciation. It was therefore found reasonable to employ a qualitative research design to interact with four teachers to provide an indication of teachers' attitudes towards the assessment of pronunciation. The four teachers that participated in this study did not represent the diversity of the full teacher population, which makes the findings of this study not generalizable.

There are several limitations to this study connected with the research participant group. The research participants of this study were all from the same county municipality. This might be a limitation as the oral exam is a local given exam (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), which entails that it is administered by the county municipality (Sandvik, 2022). By reporting to the same county municipality, the teachers of this study had potentially received the same oral exams and undergone the same kind of teacher training administered by the county municipality. This might have been a weakness of this study as it might have limited the variety in the data material. Moreover, all the teachers in this study were rather experienced, as they all have more than 10 years of experience. Teachers that have less experience than 10 years, and who potentially have more recently finished their teaching education, is not represented in this study. A research participant that has recently finished teaching education, with less than 10 years of experience might have provided insight that would have been of relevance to this study.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study are not generalizable, but they shed light on some potential topics for future research. Firstly, a suggestion for future research is to conduct a mixed method study with both interviews and questionnaires. The interviews should include multiple participants with more variety in experience and that who work in different county municipalities. This could be combined with a questionnaire that investigates teachers' attitudes and understandings of pronunciation in the LK20. This might identify what problems exist in the LK20, and how it could be further improved. Moreover, there is a gap in research with studies that focus the student's voice. A suggestion for future research is to conduct a study with an emphasis on the on the student towards nativeness, pronunciation and pronunciation assessment.

Three of the four teacher participants in this study utilized a matrix to aid them in their assessment. It would therefore be interesting to conduct a study, where a matrix for assessing oral English is introduce to multiple teachers, to investigate how it influences their attitudes towards pronunciation, and the inter-rater reliability. The study could be conducted by having multiple teachers assesses a student without a matrix, then conducting the experiment again with the matrix. The results might potentially identify whether a matrix makes the results more consistent and whether it aids the teachers in their assessment.

6.4 Final Remarks

In an increasingly globalized world, communication between individuals that do not share first language has become more frequent, which is why it has become increasingly important to be able to communicate in English (Smokotin et al., 2014). The English language therefore plays an important role in the Norwegian and global society (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Pronunciation is fundamental in all oral language, as it influences whether the listener understands what the speaker says (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). Pronunciation is therefore an imperative factor towards using the English language efficiently in communication, which is why the assessment of pronunciation must not be neglected.

The validity and reliability of assessment is important for multiple reasons. To be able to tailor instruction to the academic level of the student, it is required that the teacher can identify the student's current level through assessment (Fjørtoft & Sandvik, 2016). The purpose of exams relies on assessment, as the grades given testify student's competence, and rank applicants (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). The assessment of pronunciations is therefore important for the academic development towards enabling students to utilize the language outside of the language, which is the purpose of the English subject. (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). The reliability and validity of pronunciation assessment is therefore fundamental for the academic development of students (Idsøe & Skogen, 2016).

In contrast to the assessment of mathematics, where there is only one correct answer to tasks, language tests include authentic and direct samples of communicative operations

(Messick, 1996), which means there exist an infinite number of correct responses to tasks. This might be the reasons why teachers classify the assessment of oral English as holistic and intuitive (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), and why teachers find it hard to assess and teach pronunciation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Moreover, oral assessment is performance-based assessment (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019), which entails that the teacher needs to interpret and assess the student's performance. Consequently, being that the assessment of oral language is based on the teachers' interpretations and evaluation of the samples of communicative operations, language tests can never reach the levels of reliability and validity as math tests. Despite this, there are some measures that can be considered that may potentially improve the validity of the oral exam and pronunciation assessment.

One of the steps that could be considered is adjusting how pronunciation is addressed in the curriculum. For instance, Stiggins (1995) argued that assessment must start with clear and specific achievement expectations. The teachers of this study explained that they based their assessment on their interpretations of the competence aims. One may therefore argue that a shared understanding and interpretation of the competence aims is a requirement for inter-rater reliability. Moreover, as the curriculum communicates both the EFL and ELF paradigms (Iannuzzi & Rindal, 2017), it should therefore specify whether the teacher should assess the students based on the nativeness or intelligibility principle (Levis, 2005).

In addition, it should be considered whether an introduction of a nationwide assessment matrix would be beneficial for the assessment of pronunciation. Three out of four teachers in this study already employed a matrix in their assessment. However, the matrixes were not constructed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, and its contents may therefore vary. To improve the inter-rater reliability and validity of oral exams, it might therefore be beneficial to construct a nation-wide assessment matrix which would increase the likelihood that teachers assess the students based on the same constructs. Given that teachers have expressed a lack of assessment framework (Bøhn,2016; MacDonald, 2002), the introduction of an assessment matrix might therefore fill that gap and make the assessment of oral language less holistic and intuitive. Moreover, by standardizing oral assessment through a matrix, it may increase the likelihood that all teachers, regardless of experience, school district, and attitudes, attend to pronunciation in their assessment in the same manner so that it is equal and fair to all students.

7. References

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1:

Refleksjonslogg

I denne refleksjonsloggen (*maks 250 ord*) ønsker jeg at du reflekterer rundt egen vurderingspraksis.

Refleksjonsspørsmålet er:
Når **du** skal vurdere elevers uttale, hvordan går **du** frem?

I denne masteravhandlingen vil uttale forstås etter følgende definisjon:

> Engelsk - "Pronunciation is the production of English sounds to make meaning in an utterance".
>
> Norsk – «Uttale er produksjonen av Engelske lyder for å skape mening i en ytring».

Om noe skulle være uklart så er det bare å ta kontakt:

E-post: XXXXXXXXXX@hotmail.com
Mobil: +47 XXXXXXXXXXX

Refleksjon:

Appendix 2:

Introduksjon av prosjektet og meg:

Mitt navn er Jørgen Lervik Ofstad, jeg er en masterstudent som forsker på vurdering av engelsk uttale. Det som er forskingsfokuset, er hvordan lærere vurderer uttale og hvilke syn lærere har på vurdering av uttale. Samtidig ønsker jeg å få deres meninger og kommentarer på noen korte utdrag fra en vurderingsmatrise som omhandler vurdering av uttale.

Definer uttale:
Engelsk - "Pronunciation is the production of English sounds to make meaning in an utterance".
Norsk – «Uttale er produksjonen av Engelske lyder for å skape mening i en ytring».

Seksjon 1, Genrelle spørsmål

a) Alder:

b) Antall år som lærer:

c) hvilke fag?

d) Antall år som engelsklærer:

e) Utdanning innen Engelsk:

f) Annen relevant erfaring?

g) Vært sensor på engelsk muntlig eksamen?

h) Hvis ja, fått noen spesifikk veiledning/kursing mot det å være engelsk muntlig sensor.

Seksjon 2, Generelle spørsmål om vurdering av uttale

a. Hvilken rolle mener du vurdering spiller for elevenes utvikling?
a. Hvor viktig synes du uttale er for eleven

a. Hvordan går du frem i vurdering av elevens uttale
   - **Hvorfor har du valgt å gjort det slik ?**

a. Hva mener du kjennetegner de som viser gode muntlige ferdigheter innenfor engelsk?

a. Gitt samme innhold, hva kommer til å skille karakter 5 fra 6.

a. Hva kjennetegner de som viser mindre gode muntlige ferdigheter innenfor engelsk?

a. Synes du det er vanskelig å vurdere engelskuttale?

- **Hvorfor?**

a. Når du skal vurdere elevens engelsk muntligferdigheter, bruker du da en spesifikk vurderingsmatrise?

a. I en engelsk-muntlig eksamen, hvilke kategorier vurderer du eleven?
- Hvilke kategorier?
- Hvilken kategori mener du veier tyngst?

Seksjon 3, Om LK20

Kommenter på følgende kompetansemål: hentet ifra LK20 (Vg1 Studieforberedende)

- *Bruke mønstre for uttale i kommunikasjon.*

- *Uttrykke seg nyansert og presist med flyt og sammenheng, idiomatiske uttrykk og varierte setningsstrukturer tilpasset formål, mottaker og situasjon.*

- *bruke kunnskap om grammatikk og tekststruktur i arbeid med egne muntlige og skriftlige tekster*

a. Synes du LK20 gir deg tydelige pekepinner og retningslinjer på hva som skal vurderes.

a. Synes du LK20 gir deg tydelige pekepinner og retningslinjer på hvordan uttale skal vurderes.

Appendix 3:

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

«How To Assess Pronuciation"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke engelsklæreres fremgangsmåter, tanker og meninger om vurdering av engelsk uttale.

Formål

Formålet med studien er å få innsikt i hvordan lærere vurderer engelsk uttale, hvordan lærere ser på vurdering av engelsk uttale, læreres syn på hvordan uttale blir presentert i LK20 og læreres tanker angående en vurderingsmatrise som standardiserer engelsk uttale.

Ved å si ja til å bli med i prosjektet deltar du i vårt masterprosjekt under følgende forskningsspørsmål:

«Hvordan vurderes engelsk uttale?»

«Hva er lærerens syn på vurdering av engelsk uttale?»

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Institutt for lærerutdanning

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Jeg ønsker å intervjue engelsklærere som underviser ved studiespesialisering på 1.vgs, ulik erfaring innenfor læreryrket er ønskelig. Utvalget som får denne henvendelsen er et tilstrekkelig utvalg med lærere på ulike skoler, men siden dette er et kvalitativt forskningsprosjekt er det øvrige grensen informanter i prosjektet fire.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Ved å delta sier du ja til å delta på et intervju med omfang på ca. 45-60 minutter. Intervjuet vil bli tatt opp som lydopptak og transkriberes, hvorpå lydfilene slettes. All data vil anonymiseres og det vil ikke kunne være mulig å identifisere deg som individ. Spørsmålene du blir bedt om å svare på vil omfatte hvordan du vurderer engelsk uttale, hvordan du ser på vurdering av engelsk uttale, hvordan uttale blir presentert i LK20 og dine tanker angående en vurderingsmatrise som standardiserer engelsk uttale.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger, samt den dataen du har bidratt med, vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Ingen data som hentes inn vil påvirke din situasjon eller ditt forhold til skolen du jobber på. Skolens status og din stilling vil dermed være urørt, og dataen som blir samlet inn vil kun bli brukt til vår forskning.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det vil kun være veileder og den aktuelle studenten som vil ha tilgang til opplysningene vi samler inn. Transkripsjonen av lydfilene vil utføres av studenten.
- Vi vil erstatte navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine med fiktive navn i transkripsjon og datafiler, slik at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til disse personopplysningene om de skulle få tilgang til dokumentene. De øvrige personopplysningene som samtykkeskjema vil være adskilt fra øvrige data.
- Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?
Opplysningene slettes når prosjektet avsluttes, etter planen vårsemesteret 2021. Personopplysninger og eventuelle opptak vil bli slettet umiddelbart etter prosjektslutt (28.02.2021).

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.
På oppdrag fra *Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige Universitet* har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Kontaktopplysning prosjektleder/veileder:
Georgios Neokleous:

- Tlf: XXXXXXXX. Epost: Georgios.neokleous@ntnu.no

Kontaktopplysninger student:
Jørgen Lervik Ofstad:

- Tlf: XXXXXXXX. E-post: Jorgenofstad@hotmail.com

Kontaktopplysninger NTNUs personvernombud:

Thomas Helgesen

- Tlf: XXXXXXXX E-post: thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på e-post (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Georgios Neokleous *Jørgen Lervik Ofstad*

(Veilder/Forsker)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «*How To Assess Pronuciation»* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology