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Vocabulary development in the English classroom

A qualitative study of teachers' approaches to vocabulary development and the reasoning behind them

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Acknowledgements

This thesis marks the end of my time as a student at the University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway. Writing this project has been incredibly interesting and rewarding, but it has also been one of the most challenging things I have ever done. I chose the topic of vocabulary development as I see it as the most important aspect of the acquisition of English and I consider it highly relevant for many teachers.

I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisors, Christopher Loe Olsen and Kristin Isaksen, without whom I never would have been able to complete this project. They have provided me with patient guidance, useful critique and invaluable guidance. I would also like to thank my informants who gave valuable insight on the topic. Finally, I would like to thank my family, my fellow students, and my friends for supporting me through all of this.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the following research question: *How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?* The study examines how a sample of English teachers approach vocabulary teaching, and why they have chosen their respective approaches. In order to answer the main research question, I formulated two additional questions: *what are teachers' cognition towards the role of vocabulary teaching in ELT?* And *How do teachers interpret competence aims in relation to vocabulary teaching?* Both of these questions inform the answer to the main question of this project.

I chose to explore this topic for several reasons. The main one being that I believe that vocabulary is the most important part of English acquisition, and research on the topic is important to provide effective instruction in vocabulary. I have also attended multiple schools, none of whom agreed on which approach to vocabulary teaching is the most effective for acquiring word knowledge. I wanted to investigate if teachers have knowledge of research in vocabulary development, and if they choose their methods based on said research.

To answer the research question, I have collected data using a qualitative approach where I conducted interviews with English teachers and observed some of the informants in a classroom setting. I coded the data from the informants into various categories of topics that emerged through the data collection and analysis process, and I used the coded data to answer my research questions. My findings indicate that teachers, to some extent, use approaches which are proven to be effective towards vocabulary development. However, there is a noticeable gap in knowledge about the research behind their chosen methods.

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1.0 Introduction

This is a project where I interview English teachers about aspects of their vocabulary teaching. I focus on three main areas: (1) their attitudes towards vocabulary in relation to language acquisition, (2) their choice of methods as well as the reasoning behind said methods, (3) how their interpretation of the competence aims influences their teaching methods in relation to vocabulary development. I will also be observing an English classroom to see the methods in practice. In this inquiry, I interview four teachers and observe two in a classroom situation. I originally planned to observe of the teachers, but schools closing due to COVID-19 prevented me from completing all observations. The question I seek to answer in this research project is as follows:

How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?

The main goal for the project was to find out the reasoning behind the methods teachers use to teach vocabulary. Further, I hope that the study makes teachers more aware of their own classroom practices. This is important, because if the teacher does not know why they are doing something, then the students do not know either.

1.1 Background and motivation

Vocabulary development is one of the most important aspects of second language acquisition (Choo, Lin, & Pandian, 2012, p. 853). It is of primary importance both in language production and comprehension (Choo et al., 2012, p. 853). Some researchers say that a major difference between native speakers and foreign learners is the extensiveness of their respective vocabulary, and similarly that one of the most important tasks that language learners have is to acquire a sufficiently large enough vocabulary to function in the target language (Choo et al., 2012, p. 853). In light of this information, there is no doubt that vocabulary development should be focused on in the English classroom to improve both the production and comprehension of the English language.

In the vastly globalized world that we live in today, knowing how to speak English, at least to a certain extent, is almost a prerequisite for participation. English is according to the Norwegian Directorate for Education "[…] both a tool of gaining knowledge and personal insight" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006b). Norway currently ranks at number three on the *EF English*

Proficiency Index (Education First, 2019), an index which attempts to rank countries based on the average level of English proficiency. English is of high importance in education, business, and mobility. It is not an official second language in Norway, but it acts as a *lingua franca* (a bridge/common language) in many scenarios. Many large companies use English as lingua franca, and in higher education a considerable amount of written curriculum and several lectures are taught in English (Rindal, 2014, p. 8). English has manifested itself in Norway as a familiar language to many, which only increases the need for research into how it is currently being taught.

In my formal education, I attended a plethora of different schools, probably more than most, in almost equally many different countries. Each school I attended treated language learning differently. This difference was oriented towards approaches to learning vocabulary and what type of vocabulary was necessary to learn first. My experiences during my school years mirror on of the major ongoing debates in language learning circles: the explicit vs implicit instruction debate. Some schools focused primarily on implicit vocabulary learning, where the meaning of the word is extrapolated based on the context it appears in (Ellis, 2009, p. 17). In contrast, another school I attended focused largely on explicit vocabulary instruction, where the teacher provides a metalinguistic explanation either proactively before any learning activities or retroactively after coming upon an unfamiliar word (Ellis, 2009, p. 17). There were schools that stood firm on each point along the spectrum of approaches to language learning, and it perplexes my why the difference between the schools is so vast. This reflection sparked the metaphorical *fire in my mind* to study the subject further in my master thesis.

There is also a major debate going on in the second language research community concerning what approach is best to second language teaching. The debate centers on the balance between focus on meaning *(FonM)*, focus on form *(FonF)*, and focus on forms *(FonFs)* (Saeidi, Zaferanieh, & Shatery, 2012, p. 72). FonM states that exposure to meaningful input and learning through the usage of language is enough to acquire the necessary vocabulary needed for production and comprehension. Instruction in this approach is purely communicative and its primary interest is on the use of language in real-life situations (Saeidi et al., 2012, p. 1). FonFs is on the other side of the methodological spectrum. It states that second language learners could not achieve high levels of linguistic competence exclusively from meaning-focused instruction.

FonFs argue that a conscious attention to grammar rules, words, notions, functions, etc. which in turn are taught in a linear additive manner is the only way to achieve high levels of linguistic competence (Saeidi et al., 2012, p. 1). The last approach is in many ways and amalgamation of the two, and states that both FonM and FonFS is important to effectively learn English. Focus on form (FonF) states that one should "draw students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Laufer & Laufer, 2005, p. 224). However, this definition was expanded upon in Ellis (2015, p. 1) where it includes "planned attempts to intervene in interlanguage development and thereby cater to intentional language learning". My study will see which of these approaches, if not a combination of multiple, teachers use and why.

The combination of the importance of vocabulary to language learning, and the vast and significant difference in methods used in teaching vocabulary, made me interested in this aspect of the subject. I want to study the teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards vocabulary in relation to language learning, and why they choose the methods that they do. I am also interested in how they interpret the competence aims from LK-06 in relation to vocabulary teaching, and how this understanding manifests itself in their teaching methods. My interest lies in the process and reasoning behind the methods that teachers use. Is the choice of method based on language research, personal experience, competence aims, the English textbook, etc.?

According to Norbert Schmitt (2019), there has been done enough research on vocabulary to suggest a number of principles of good vocabulary instruction (Schmitt, 2019, p. 265). In the article he listed eight of these principles, including: "Vocabulary teaching is a complex and gradual process, and different approaches may be appropriate at different points along the incremental learning process" (Schmitt, 2019, p. 265). This principle states that the fact that teachers use different methods to teach vocabulary is not a bad thing. It is important to use a variety of methods to teach vocabulary, and this will be explored further in the theory chapter.

This study will strive to provide a useful contribution to our understanding of teacher's attitudes in relation to vocabulary teaching in *English language teaching* (ELT). In form of insight into other teacher's thoughts on the subject. It might also be helpful for the participants, as they may become more aware of their own practice. Furthermore, the findings of this study will not in any shape or form act as a template for how vocabulary teaching should be performed, it will only be

an illustration of how a few teachers teach vocabulary and the reasoning behind their methods. The study will explore the teacher's understanding and attitude towards vocabulary development as well as the reasoning behind their methods.

1.2 Research question

The topic and main focus of this study led me to the following research questions:

> **RQ1: How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?**
>
> *RQ2: What are teacher's cognition towards the role of vocabulary teaching in ELT?*
>
> *RQ3: How do teachers interpret competence aims in relation to vocabulary teaching?*

My main question is to find out which approach teachers utilize to teach vocabulary, and what the reasoning behind their chosen approach is. The second question entails examining the teacher's attitudes towards vocabulary teaching, which will inform our understanding of how they choose to teach it. Cognition is a term used to describe what teachers think, know and believe about a given topic (Hestetræet, 2012, p. 177). It will also explore what teachers know about the importance of vocabulary in L2 acquisition; the teacher's knowledge of the subject will most likely influence how it is taught in the classroom. The third question is oriented towards the interpretation of competence aims, and how this interpretation influences what is done in the classroom. I limit the scope of my project to teachers who teach between 5th -10th grade in the Norwegian educational system.

Naturally, there are more than one effective method of language teaching. Many of these are distinctly different from each other, yet still equally effective (P. Nation, 2018, p. 144). Therefore, my focus will be on the *why*, rather than the *what*. Why do the teachers use the methods that they do? Many methods are used because they are backed by research, others because teachers *think* that they are backed by research. Nation (2018) states that "some of our most treasured ideas on vocabulary size, text coverage, fluency development and vocabulary learning are based on one or two rather shaky pieces of research" (P. Nation, 2018, p. 145). He precedes this by stating that many of his students had proven his ideas to be false, just because that he too took it for granted that many theories he had on language were backed by research. The research questions aim to examine what teachers know and what they think about vocabulary in English language acquisition.

1.3 Contribution to the field

Before, and during this thesis I have read many studies and articles on the subject of vocabulary development and the methods for it to happen effectively. I have conducted several interviews with English teachers from different schools, as well as observed an English classroom to see some methods implemented in practice. My contribution to the field will be to present information about the process of planning an English lesson in relation to vocabulary development. It will shed light on some vocabulary teaching approaches that are used in the classroom by teachers today, as well as the reasoning behind them.

A majority of research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies the effects of different theories and teaching methods. A lot of them analyze quantifiable data, such as how many words are needed to effectively communicate, or word retention. This thesis, however, looks at the teacher's perspective. It will attempt to paint a picture of how some teachers understand and implement language research into their classrooms.

1.4 Ethics

Ethics is a major part in all forms of research, including this. Ethical considerations are important to do in projects such as these to ensure that the project's informants are safe in all areas, both mentally and physically. The ethical considerations done in this project has to fall within three different categories: (1) the informant's right to autonomy, (2) the researcher's duty to respect the informant's right to privacy, and (3) the researcher's responsibility to avoid harm. (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 41)

1.5 Outline

My thesis is divided into six distinct chapters and it is structured as follows:

Chapter one presents the background and motivation for doing this project. I also present my research questions.

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework which builds the foundation of my project. It discusses some of the principles of vocabulary development as well as the importance of a large vocabulary for language comprehension and language production.

Chapter three presents the methodology of the study. It will also discuss critical aspects of data collection in relation to reliability, validity, as well as ethical and methodological concerns.

Chapter four presents the data from the interviews and observation, as well as analyzing them

in depth in comparison to relevant theory. I also discuss the findings in relation to my research questions.

Chapter five summarizes the main findings of the study.

Lastly, I have included an overview of all references used in this thesis.

2.0 Theoretical framework

This chapter covers the theoretical framework of the thesis. It will explore theory on vocabulary development, as well as its presence in the Norwegian school's competence aims. I will explain the various approaches to vocabulary development, such as focus on form, focus on forms, and focus on meaning. I will also present theories on what the role of vocabulary is in second language acquisition.

2.1 The role of vocabulary in second language acquisition

In this section the importance of vocabulary for reading comprehension is explained, and the necessary vocabulary size a learner needs to have in order to read authentic texts without difficulty is examined. The importance of vocabulary development is highlighted by Singleton (1999, p. 4) who asserts that:

> *"...the major challenge of learning and using a language – whether as L1 or L2 – lies not in the area of broad syntactic principles but in the 'nitty-gritty' of the lexicon*" (Singleton, 1999, p. 4)

In the earlier days of many languages, the sheer number of syntactic rules was able to transcribe a certain meaning to a sentence without much lexical information. Cook & Newson (1996 cited in Singleton, 1999, p. 4) states that many aspects of language that earlier language models handled as syntactic, are today dealt with as "idiosyncrasies of lexical items". Cook (1991 cited in Singleton, 1999, p. 4) also stated that language learners today need an "immense amount of detail" about the specifics of how particular words are used in different situations.

Historically, vocabulary has not garnered as much attention or emphasis as grammar, both in terms of language teaching and language development (Choo et al., 2012, p. 853). According to Kelly (1969 cited Choo, Lin, and Pandian, 2012, p. 853) the only time a word was given explicit instruction was when the word exemplified a grammatical rule. It was not until after the 1970s that the role of the lexicon was elevated. Choo et al. (2012, p. 853) credits this to Meara's (1995) observation that the research into the field of vocabulary acquisition has exponentially increased since then and that we now have a deeper understanding as to how language is acquired. Recently, the lexical dimension of language learning is generally deemed as highly significant and indispensable in language learning (Choo et al., 2012).

A highly debated topic within the world of language research is the amount of vocabulary that is necessary for a learner to know, as well as the methods in which these words are most effectively taught. Paul Nation (2001 cited Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014, p. 484-485) divides words into four categories: high-frequency words, academic words, technical words, and low-frequency words. He states that high-frequency words are incredibly useful and should be explicitly focused on for learners who are learning English. Academic words are worth the effort for learners who plan on, or wish to study in English, which also extends to technical vocabulary if that learner is going into a specific field of study. Finally, low-frequency words, Nation states, is not worth focusing classroom time on, given its infrequent nature. He argues that the benefit of learning low-frequency vocabulary is not worth the time spent to learn it (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014, p. 485). These reflections are relevant for teachers today to know which words to give explicit focus on during lessons.

The controversy in these statements do not stem from the statement itself, rather the definitions of the terms within it. Schmitt & Schmitt (2014, p. 485) agree with the cost/benefit approach, however they do question whether the categories for vocabulary are accurately defined. For the English language, high-frequency words have generally been defined and operationalized as the first 2000 most frequent word families. A word family includes the root form (select), its inflections (selected, selecting, selects) and its derivatives (selection, selective, selectively, preselect) (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014, p. 485). However, according to Schmitt and Schmitt (2014), this number seems to be insufficient for adequate coverage. They argue that, though there is not a clear cut-off point, after the first 3,000 words families the increase in coverage is so small that they no longer can be classified as high-frequency.

As the table below shows, the fourth and fifth word family combined only contribute around 3% coverage. Schmitt and Schmitt (2014) therefore conclude that high-frequency vocabulary would include the first 3,000 most frequent word families in English.

Table 1(Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014, p. 488)

Frequency band	Example words	% Coverage added by level	Cumulative %
1,000	the, history	77.86	77.86
2,000	accommodate, prefer	8.23	86.09
3,000	digest, receipt	3.70	89.16
4,000	elastic, thread	1.79	90.95
5,000	locker, tranquil	1.04	91.99
6,000	diligent, undertake	0.70	92.69
7,000	fossil, jagged	0.65	93.34
8,000	abhor, obtrusive	0.40	93.74
9,000	remorse, wrench	0.32	94.06
10,000	barricade, pigment	0.32	94.38
11,000	glitzy, scam	0.16	94.54
12,000	epitome, resonate	0.14	94.68
13,000	outdo, tipsy	0.12	94.80
14,000	secede, yearbook	0.10	94.90

The current consensus in the language research community is that for adequate comprehension, a person needs to have 98% lexical coverage (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014, p. 489; I. Nation & Nation, 2006, p.61), which amounts to one unknown word per 50 words. To achieve this level of coverage for written language, a person would need to have knowledge of 8,000 to 9,000 word-families (I. Nation & Nation, 2006, p. 71). Note that this number only accounts for comprehension for reading. Spoken language requires fewer, but still as much as 6,000 to 7,000 word-families (I. Nation & Nation, 2006, p. 77).

The numbers above are a lot higher than what Schmitt and Schmitt (2014) defined as being high-frequency words, but that does not necessarily negate their point. If we are to lower the comprehension expectations to 95% from 98%, then one would only need to have knowledge of 4,000 to 5,000 word-families for written language, and only 2,000 to 3,000 word-families for spoken language (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014, p. 490). They argue that schools should focus primarily on high-frequency vocabulary up to a minimum of 3,000 word-families. However, this does not mean that teachers should not focus on mid-frequency words. High-frequency words are in many ways already covered pedagogically within textbooks and graded readers, whereas mid-frequency words only amount for between 6% and 12% of the teachers vocabulary in class

(Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014, p. 498). Further research is needed to address how mid-frequency words should be taught in school, but there is no doubt that it should be given attention to decrease the gap between high-frequency words and the amount of word-families needed to know for adequate comprehension of both written and spoken English.

2.2 Explicit and implicit instruction

There is an ongoing debate in the language research community about explicit vs. implicit instruction. The debate centers on which type of instruction yields the greatest amount of word knowledge, as well as which type of instruction gives what type of word knowledge. The type of instruction defines what type of word knowledge one as, explicit instruction leads to explicit knowledge, implicit instruction leads to implicit knowledge (Spada, 2015, p. 76).

Explicit knowledge is defined by Spada (2015, pp. 75-76) as knowledge with awareness, it is conscious, analyzed and declarative. Spada gives the example that if you know that a sentence is ungrammatical, and you can explain why with reference to a rule, then you have explicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge is defined as knowledge without awareness (Spada, 2015, p. 76). It is intuitive and unanalyzed. Implicit knowledge, explained by Spada (2015, p. 76) is being able to tell that a sentence is ungrammatical, but not being able to explain why.

Explicit instruction is any activity that is aimed at committing word knowledge to memory (Choo et al., 2012, p. 853). Methods that are considered explicit include grammar-translation method, decontextualized word learning, connect word to meaning, etc. These methods are all focused on the learning of vocabulary or grammatical form and are therefore defined as explicit instruction.

Implicit instruction is any activity where the learning of vocabulary is to a certain extent a by-product of an activity that is not directly aimed at vocabulary learning (Choo et al., 2012, p. 853). Implicit instruction can be talking English throughout the lesson, extensive reading, communicative tasks, etc. These tasks are not directly focused on vocabulary; therefore, any lexical information that is learned through one of these tasks would be implicitly learned.

2.3 Vocabulary teaching approaches

There are many ways of teaching vocabulary to students. The main approaches are focus on meaning *(FonM),* focus on form *(FonF)*, and focus on forms *(FonFs).* Note that in the terms

focus on form, and focus on forms, I am limiting my focus to vocabulary form/lexical form, not on grammatical form, structural form, etc. ELT research is rich in data on the various approaches to language teaching, especially in terms of FonM, FonF, and FONFs. Despite this, there seems to be little agreement within the research community as to which approach is the most effective for vocabulary development. There are many studies conducted on each of these approaches and a lot of them disagree with each other. Most of these studies are context based and can therefore not be generalized to a whole population of English learners. This part of the chapter will present the different theories as well as arguments both for and against them.

2.3.1 Focus on meaning (FonM)

In focus on meaning (FonM), it is argued that vocabulary is acquired purely by meaning focused instruction. The supporters of this approach holds the position that a learner, upon encountering an unfamiliar word, infers the meaning of the unfamiliar word by context and other linguistic or non-linguistic clues (Laufer & Laufer, 2005, p. 226). Through this process, the learner has a relatively high chance of guessing the correct word and may retain certain knowledge of the word's meaning. In the case that word knowledge is not retained, repeated exposure to the word increases the probability that word knowledge is retained and/or expanded upon. They argue that even "if very few words are retained after one communicative activity or text, the cumulative gains over time may be quite remarkable if the learner reads regularly" (Laufer & Laufer, 2005, p. 226). One study conducted at the University of Mashhad found FonM to be significantly more effective for vocabulary acquisition than FonFs (not FonF), however the study was conducted solely on Iranian beginner learners, so the results of the study does not generalize itself to other nationalities, nor proficiency levels (Saeidi et al., 2012, p. 78).

Focus on meaning is not the most reliable source of vocabulary knowledge (Laufer & Laufer, 2005, pp. 226-227). This is because it is not the most effective approach to obtaining substantial knowledge of words (Laufer & Laufer, 2005, p. 226). According to Laufer and Laufer (2005, p. 226), in a comparison between how learners from three different countries assessed their own knowledge of words in context, all learners over-estimated their knowledge; often times by over 60%. Laufer and Laufer (2005, p. 226) argue that this is because learners who understand the overall message of a text do not pay attention to the "precise meanings of individual words", and that the aforementioned lack of awareness causes them to confuse unfamiliar words with

'synoforms' (i.e. words with similar form), or because unfamiliar words have a "deceptive structure". Examples of this would be words such as *course* and *coarse* may be easily confused as they look similar, and the word *shortcomings* may be misunderstood as a *short visit* rather than a failure to meet a certain standard. These misunderstandings may lead to incorrect vocabulary knowledge, because students make assumptions without an immediate way to control that the assumptions that they have made are correct.

2.3.2 Focus on form (FonF)

Focus on form was defined by Long (1991 cited Laufer & Laufer, 2005, p. 224) as "drawing students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication". Ellis (2015, p. 1) proposes an addition to the definition, in which he includes "planned attempts to intervene in interlanguage development and thereby cater to intentional language learning". Ellis' (2015) definition includes intentional focus as well as incidental, thus opening the approach up to many more methods while still holding the same meaning and communicative focus. Laufer and Laufer (2005, p. 224) argues that FonF "should be motivated by and carried out as part of meaning oriented situations.

Laufer & Laufer explains the term *Focus on Form* as a focus on the "function that a particular form performs" (Laufer & Laufer, 2005, p. 224). For example, a focus on the grammatical 'form' -s includes an instruction that it signifies the plural form of a noun. The FonF approach states that learners must notice the forms for them to be learned. Given learners' limited capacity for processing both meaning and form, meaning is often times prioritized, which is why form has to be explicitly drawn notice to by the teacher (Laufer & Laufer, 2005, p. 224).

Focus on form is supported by many studies as being an effective approach to vocabulary acquisition. Ellis et al. (1994 cited Ellis, Loewen, & Basturkmen, 2006, p. 136) showed that students with the opportunity to negotiate for meaning acquire more words and gain a better understanding of the learned words than students who do not have the same opportunity. Ellis and He (1999 cited Ellis, Loewen, & Basturkmen, 2006, p. 136) stated that as well as the opportunity to negotiate, the opportunity to produce also led to better understanding of words and a higher number of words acquired than when "they only have access to premodified or interactionally modified input". De la Fuente (2002 cited Ellis, Loewen, & Basturkmen, 2006, p.

136) supports this statement; Production and negotiation led to more word knowledge than premodified input. Similar results were also found in studies by Mackey (1999 cited Ellis, Loewen, & Basturkmen, 2006, p. 136) and Iwashita (2003 cited Ellis, Loewen, & Basturkmen, 2006, p. 136). Ellis, Loewen, and Basturkmen (2006, p. 136) argues that the evidence for Focus on form is so convincing that it is no longer a question of whether or whether not it works, but rather "what type of negotiation works best". They add that this is not to say that FonF is better than FonFs, and that comparing the two would not be "fruitful".

2.3.3 Focus on forms (FonFs)

Focus on forms is "the systematic teaching of isolated grammatical items and rules" (Ellis, 2015, p. 223). In the FonFs approach, the language is an object to be learned rather than a tool for communication, which it is in FonF. The theoretical basis of FonFs is that knowledge of language is acquired through the same means as other cognitive skills. The theory behind FonFs justifies it through 'skills acquisition theory', where it divides skill acquisition into three distinct stages: declarative knowledge, proceduralised knowledge responsible for what is to be done with language data, and automatization of procedural knowledge (Ellis, 2015, p. 225). The first stage entails factual knowledge of the target language, such as grammatical rules and syntax. The second stage is how these rules are applied and how to combine them to form a coherent sentence structure. The final stage is the automatization of these processes, which means to follow the rules of the language without any conscious thought.

One study by Laufer (2006) showed FonFs to yield a 25% increase in learned words compared to FonF, however, in the FonF-student's test the student's attention was not drawn to the target words, it was the responsibility of the student to look up any unfamiliar words in a text where they only had 93% coverage. It could be argued that the task was more FonM than FonF, however this does not negate the fact that 72% of word meanings were retained in the FonFs task. Ellis et al. (2006, p. 137) states that FonFs is especially beneficial for "structures that are difficult to acquire 'naturally'". Ellis also argues that though many of his studies promote a task-based approach to language learning, he does not "deny the utility of more traditional types of instruction" (Ellis et al., 2006, p. 137).

2.4 The presence of vocabulary in the curriculum

The curriculum (LK-06) in English states what the students are supposed to know by the end of certain grades. The English subject is structured in main subject areas, in which there are different competence aims (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006c). The overarching part of the subject curriculum states the main subject areas as being *language learning, oral communication, written communication*, and *culture, society and literature*.

Vocabulary development is mentioned specifically both in the oral communication section, and the written communication section. It states that "the main subject area involves developing a vocabulary and using idiomatic structures and grammatical patterns" when writing, speaking, and conversing (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006c). The competence aims after year 7 that directly mention vocabulary within these two sections is the same one in both, and it is "understand and use a vocabulary related to familiar topics" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006a), this competence aim is altered to be "understand and use a general vocabulary related to different topics" under the "after year 10" section. Beyond this, it is indirectly mentioned in a couple competence aims. For example, "read and understand different types of texts of varying length from different sources", by understand, it inherently means that the words within the text need to be understood as well, at least to a certain degree. Nation and Nation (2006, p. 61) would argue that the students would need between 95-98% coverage to understand the content of the text without much difficulty.

The new curriculum has reduced the amount of main subject areas and competence aims. The new curriculum has three areas that it focuses on. The three areas are communication, language learning and meeting with English texts (text, in this case, is defined as oral, written, printed, digital, graphic, artistic, formal, unformal, etc.). Texts can also include text, images, audio, drawings, graphs, numbers and other forms of expression that is put together to convey a message (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Vocabulary development is mentioned explicitly in the subject area called language learning, where it not only focuses on learning words, but also on strategies on how to learn languages in general. The competence aims are slightly similar, but are altered in a meaningful way. In the new curriculum the competence aims that explicitly mention vocabulary are "listen to and understand words and phrases in adapted and authentic texts" and "express themselves understandably with a varied vocabulary and courtesy phrase adapted to the

recipient and situation" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b) (translated from Norwegian). The new curriculum includes authentic texts as a requirement, which the old one does not. It also uses the phrase "varied vocabulary", which gives more weight to vocabulary than "general" does.

3.0 Methodology

In this chapter, I will describe the methodology I found to be most appropriate to answer my research questions. Furthermore, I will discuss the validity, reliability, transferability, and ethical considerations done throughout the course of this study. Creswell (2014, p. 5) states that researchers need to consider "the philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the research design that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice". Therefore, my description and explanation of the research design will support the chosen methods of data collection and analysis in relation to my research questions.

The methods chosen in this study are all carefully selected to answer my research questions. I have included the research questions below for easier reference.

> **RQ1: How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?**
>
> *RQ2: What are teacher's cognition towards the role of vocabulary teaching in ELT?*
>
> *RQ3: How do teachers interpret competence aims in relation to vocabulary teaching?*

The type of interview, and the type of observation is tailored to fit the purpose of the study and to properly answer the research questions.

3.1 Research design

The language sciences are truly interdisciplinary and encompass a wide variety of focuses, approaches and objectives. In the starting phase of a research project, the researcher needs to assess these and select an appropriate way to integrate the different components of the study in a logical and coherent way (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 1). The research design acts as a blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of the data. The methods decided on in this project are not done devoid of context. The methods chosen are intimately tied to the research questions, in a way that the dataset matches what the project is attempting to study. The methods chosen are "dependent on the theories that they are designed to investigate" (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 1).

This project will hold a constructivist worldview, which is typical for qualitative research projects, such as this one (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). The constructionist worldview, or rather, social constructivists maintain that individuals construct varied and multiple subjective views on

different situations (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). The goal of the research is to rely primarily on the informant's views on the situation being studied. This worldview is therefore appropriate, since the aim of the project is to study the teacher's thoughts and attitudes around the learning of vocabulary in the English classroom. I was not focused on analyzing the relationship between a set number of variables, which would require a quantitative approach. The qualitative approach can be implemented when you want to have a detailed description of the setting and phenomena being studied (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 182). Qualitative research eludes a simple definition because of the diversity of approaches, methods, techniques, and philosophical stances that all fall under the term qualitative research. In short, the data collected in this study will consist of words, rather than numbers (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). A fundamental criteria to this type of research is that the informants have experience with the phenomenon being studied (Postholm, Jacobsen, & Søbstad, 2018, p. 118). To study vocabulary development accurately in the English language it is important that the informants have a formal education in English at a university level. I ensured that all of my informants have taken a minimum of one semester of English at a university level. This is presented further in section 3.5.

3.2 Methods for data collection

Qualitative research is primarily based on data gathered from methods such as qualitative surveys, meta-analysis, classroom observation, interviews, ethnography, content analysis, text analysis, and process research (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 139). In this project, my primary method of data collection is qualitative interviews. Postholm (2018, p. 117) states that qualitative interviews construct knowledge in a meeting between researcher and participant. It also allows for a deep-dive into a particular phenomenon to a greater extent than a quantitative approach. In addition, I also carried out an observation in the classrooms of the teachers I interviewed to supplement and inform the answers given in the interview. This approach is a method known as triangulation, which is often used to add internal validity to a study by collecting data through multiple methods and/or sources on the same topic (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

3.2.1 Interview

I decided that an interview was the most appropriate approach to examining my research questions. Qualitative studies often use interviews to gain an understanding of an informant's beliefs and practices. Interviews are flexible by nature and are well suited to understand the

perspectives of the informants, as well as helping to clear up any misunderstandings or misconceptions that may occur. They also allow access to information that would be inaccessible by any other method. In a phenomenological interview the researcher is interested in finding out the "what" and the "why", and this resonates well with the goals of this study: what approach do teachers have to vocabulary teaching and why are these approaches chosen. The researcher must therefore ask both "what" and "why" questions in the interview.

For example, in the interviews I conducted, I inquired about what methods the teachers used in their classroom, as well as why those particular methods were chosen. Their answers gave me information about a choice they made in their teaching practices and it gave the reasoning behind that choice. This method for data collection relates directly to my research questions, given that they surround the reasoning and process behind a choice of methods.

There are different approaches to conducting an interview, Postholm (2018, pp. 120-121) describes these methods as the structured, the unstructured, and the semi-structured method. These terms are by no means absolute, and interviews can fall on a scale anywhere between structured and unstructured. In this study, the interviews were primarily unstructured. There was no specific order the questions needed to be asked in, and I inquired about topics as they occurred during the interview.

In the structured method, the interviewer asks the same questions to all informants. The questions asked are prepared beforehand with a limited number of response categories. The questions are asked in the same order in all interviews, and the researcher is never to improvise or change any of the questions or answer categories (Postholm, 2017, p. 69).

The unstructured interview is the complete opposite of the structured interview. Postholm (2018, p. 120) states that one could argue that observation and unstructured interview go hand in hand. The reasoning for this being that it usually happens during observation, where for example in a classroom setting, the teacher would approach the researcher every now and then to explain what they are doing while the researcher observes from the sidelines. The researcher has no questions prepared, they just observe, listen, and follow up where they feel they need more information.

Finally, the semi-structured interview is according to Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) in (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 121) the most appropriate approach to understand the perspective of the informant.

The researcher prepares themes, topics and sometimes even questions. The researcher is not concerned with the order that the questions or topics are brought up in, they are asked when it occurs naturally. The researcher is also open to informants bringing up themes that the researcher had not previously considered. Both parties (researcher and informant) try to understand the meaning of what is being said, and continuously analyze the topics that are being brought up. These types of interviews are usually implemented in case-, ethnographic, phenomenological and narrative studies (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 121).

In light of this, the method I deemed most appropriate to answer my research questions was the semi-structured interview. It is one of the more effective methods to understand the thoughts and actions of the informant about the given topic (Postholm, 2017, p. 72). I made an interview-guide (see appendix 1) with topics that I would bring up and encouraged the informant to give as much detail and explanation as possible to any given topic or question throughout the interview. The interview was conducted in Norwegian as it seemed the most natural, but they were allowed to speak English or to include English words and phrases in their answers. The interview guide I used had a set of questions that surrounded four overarching topics. The four topics were:

- About the curriculum
- About vocabulary
- Vocabulary during planning
- Challenges and opportunities

If we dd not naturally "stumble" on to the topics I asked one of the questions from the guide, but if the conversation naturally went to the challenges of teaching vocabulary then I did not refer to the questions in the guide.

Postholm et al. (2018, pp. 132-133) states that the quality of the interview is highly dependent on the interviewers competence and knowledge of the field. The interviewer needs to have a solid base of knowledge to be able to understand what the interviewee is saying and be able to ask the right follow-up questions. I kept this firmly in mind when preparing for the data collection. In addition to reading extensively about the subject, I also familiarized myself with the audio recording equipment that I would be using during the interview. To conduct an interview requires the full attention of the interviewer, and unfamiliar equipment should not pose as a

distraction throughout (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 132). Postholm (2018, p. 132) also argues that to ensure that the informants feel safe during the interview, it would be beneficial to have them decide when and where it should be conducted. When the informants agreed to partake in my project, I asked them when they had time, and with the first two informants I asked them where they would like the interviews to be conducted. The last two informants were interviewed over skype, so location was not relevant. The estimated duration was also informed about beforehand.

3.2.2 Observations

Interviews are in many ways revealing, but they work best when complemented by other methods (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 141). In this study, the interviews will be corroborated by classroom observations. Observation is deemed one of the most fundamental methods of data collection (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 113). Since the observation in this study is conducted in a natural setting (an English classroom), the type of observation done would be defined as naturalistic. There are also different types of observations in the sense of how structured it is. The observation I conducted in this project would be defined as a structured observation, where the information gathered is sorted into distinct predefined categories that are listed on an observation chart (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 71). I go into further detail on the observation chart later in this chapter.

Observers can enact different roles in a research project. They can be participant-as-observer, complete observer, complete participant, and/or observer-as-participant. The distance and level of participation can be pictured in a simple table:

		Researcher's participation	
		Small	Big
Researcher's distance	Small	Participant-as-observer	Complete participant
	Big	Complete observer	Observer-as-participant

Table 2 - Model of researcher role. Adapted from Postholm et al. (2018, p. 115).

In my project, I classify my role as observer-as-participant. In the role of observer-as-participant, the researcher is present during the activity being observed, but he/she is not a participant in said activity (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 115). The researcher is in the room but does not help or influence the situation beyond the extent of their presence. Postholm (2018, p. 115) states that the researcher can answer questions from students about who they are, or what they are doing,

but any questions related to the class and subject would be redirected to the teacher responsible for the lesson. This is to ensure that the researcher does not participate in the processes being observed. I chose this particular role to ensure that I do not influence the teacher's actions. I do not want any actions, comments or choices that I may have made as an active participant in the classroom to influence how the teacher teaches their subject. Additionally, I wanted to full focus to be on observing the teacher and their actions; by not participating in the activities, I had the opportunity to keep my attention focused on the teacher, rather than on running activities and helping students.

Before the observation begins, the teacher being observed needs to know the exact role that the observer will have in the classroom. If the researcher is going to be an observer-as-participant, the teacher being observed then knows that they do not have an extra teacher in the classroom. Postholm (2018, p. 131) argues that the students should also be made aware of what role the researcher has before the lesson begins so that they know how to relate to the researcher. I introduced myself in the beginning of the class, and informed them that I would not act as a teacher and that all questions regarding the topic of the class should be directed at the teacher.

Many researchers use audio or video recording to record the situation being observed. In my project, I chose not to do this as I did not deem it necessary. The focus of my observation was the teacher, not the entire classroom, and the methods they implemented in their lesson. I used an observation chart (see appendix 2) with focus areas to ensure that I made note of the most important parts of the lesson. The observation chart included points such as:

- How is the assignment/exercise introduced?
- What method does the teacher use to teach vocabulary (FonM, FonF, FonFS) and if the methods chosen are explicit/implicit?
- What types of material is used to teach (textbook, dictionary, internet, smartboard, etc.)?
- Were there any challenges related to the students differing competence in the subject, and how were these challenges solved by the teacher?

According to Postholm (2018, p. 131) it is important for the researcher to read up on theory related to what is going to be observed. I read up on the theory presented in section 2.0. The

observation chart is based on what types of methods are most commonly used in vocabulary teaching, and it helps the researcher focus on the observations relevant to the study.

3.5 The informants

This part of the chapter will describe the selection criteria, as well as the process of selecting and contacting informants. Additionally, it will discuss how many informants are enough for a study like this one. Creswell (2014, p. 189) states that informants need to be purposefully selected as to best understand the situation and the research question. The informants involved in this study all share a set of criteria that I have deemed necessary to contribute to answering the research questions sufficiently. Selecting informants from a set of criteria is known as purposeful selection (translated from Norwegian; *hensiktsmessig utvalg*, Postholm (2017))

The set of criteria that I worked from in this study was based on the questions I aim to answer. To answer a question regarding teaching vocabulary in English, I decided that the informant must have some form of certification that they have knowledge in the field, both in terms of knowledge of the English language, but also in terms of the pedagogical approaches to teaching English. Therefore, the criteria I had for the informants are that they must have some form of formal education in English (university level), and that they must teach English in a school on a regular basis.

In qualitative studies, it is difficult to discern how many informants are necessary to sufficiently answer the research questions at hand. According to Creswell (2014, p. 189) the number of required informants depends on which qualitative design is being used. Narrative research typically includes one or two individuals; phenomenology typically has between three and ten; ground theory lies at around twenty to thirty, and so on. This study falls within the domain of a phenomenological study; therefore it should have between three and ten informants. In this study, two informants were observed and interviewed, and two informants were just interviewed. Given the closing of schools due to COVID-19, it became impossible to conduct observations on the last two informants.

I consider this sufficient in order to answer the research questions, because the informants I interviewed provided several insights into the topic, and were I to get more informants then it would be possible that I would not be able to analyze each individuals answer to the degree that it requires – within the scope of this thesis. Postholm (2017, p. 43) also stated that in studies such

as this one, it might be beneficial to choose an amount on the lower end of the recommended amount. Arguing that with a fewer number of informants, the researcher is better able to accurately analyze the answers of the informants. The amount of informants also falls within the guidelines set by Creswell (2014, p. 189), but as stated above, in the lower end.

My study had one criterion for the informants, and that was that they were English teachers. I did not have an abundance of English teachers to choose from, therefore I selected informants based on willingness to participate and availability. This type of sampling is called convenience sampling (Creswell, 2014, p. 158). It is not the most desirable type of sampling given that it is a nonprobability sample, but there were too few willing informants for a selection to take place.

My first two informants were acquired through one of my advisors who got me in contact with teachers affiliated with the university's practice period. Both English teachers present were interested in the project and we planned the observation and interview during the first meeting. The rest of my informants were acquired through e-mailing schools in Northern-Norway to find teachers willing to participate in my project.

I have listed the informants in this study in the table below with how many credits they have in English, as well as how many years of experience they have in teaching English. The informants have all given me permission to give information about how many credits they have in English and how many years of experience they have. None of the information in the table below infringes on the informant's anonymity.

Teacher	Credits	Years of experience
A	30	22
B	90	13
C	300	3
D	60	6

Table 3 – Informants' higher educational background in English.

3.6 Methods for data analysis

I used an audio recorder to record the interviews. In the first two interviews, I used one that I borrowed from the university, and the last two were recorded using Skype's built in record function. I recorded the interviews to keep my focus on the interview and not on avidly writing

notes during the interview. The recording was able to catch every stop, pause, tone of voice, etc. All of which was included in the subsequent transcription. I transcribed the interviews myself because Postholm (2017, p. 104) argues that the researcher should do all transcription themselves, given that a continuous analysis will take place during the process of transcription. To secure the validity of the transcription I made sure to include all instances of pauses, stops, overlapping speech, and tones, ensuring an accurate transcription. When the process of transcription was finished, I continued analyzing the data.

The purpose of qualitative data analysis is firstly to sort and organize the data gathered in relation to their relevance to the research questions(Postholm et al., 2018, p. 139). Qualitative data in its raw form is often too saturated with information and must be structured in a way that makes it more "friendly". Postholm (2017, p. 91) names the type of analysis that involves the coding and categorization of answers as a *descriptive analysis.* Giorgi (1985 cited in Postholm et al., 2018, p.160) suggests a three-step process for the analysis of qualitative data through descriptive analysis:

1. Read to get an understanding of the bigger picture
2. Development of opinion-units
3. Transformation of the informants' statements into psychological phenomenological expressions.

This approach to data analysis is most appropriate to my research project because it gives a structured and organized view over the thoughts and meanings of my informants. It makes the analysis simpler because it condenses the raw data into smaller pieces of information that represent the informants' thoughts, which in turn makes it easier to analyze.

Step 1, Giorgi states, involves reading the full transcriptions from the interviews to get a sense of the whole. He argues that phenomenology is a holistic approach and that meaning must be extracted from the whole, beginning to end. The meaning of the statements are not explicable without the context in which they were made. I made sure to read through the entire transcript in its entirety before extracting quotes that were relevant to my research questions. The next step (2) is to develop opinion-units, as they are referred to in Postholm (2018, p. 160). It is not possible to present the transcription as a whole, or it is not very feasible to do so; the researcher must therefore, in light of relevant theory, extract shorter quotes and excerpts that represent the

opinions, thoughts and meanings of the informant. I condensed and translated the quotes from step 1 into shorter sentences that represented the thoughts of the informant. The final step (3), as Giorgi describes it, is the heart of the analysis. The researcher presents a second-order description based on the content of the opinion-units. I created descriptions of the teachers' thoughts about the topics I questioned them about. Another method of analysis by Moustakas (1994 cited in Postholm 2018, p.161) goes further in depth on the process and introduces a few more steps that I found to be practical and useful in my analysis. Moustakas suggests removing all repeated and overlapping statements, coding the various statements in categories based on theme and subject, and finally describe the essence of the thoughts and meanings each informant has surrounding the subject matter.

During my analysis of the data from the interviews I followed these general procedures. The first step was reading through the transcriptions to get a general sense of the interview. I continued by going back through the interview several times to extract statements and excerpts with meaning that related to the topic. I condensed and translated said excerpts to their essence making the longer sentences into briefer statements. This first step is a continuous process and the researcher must always be open to different interpretations of the data material. I went back to the original transcripts several times to ensure that I correctly captured the essence of their answers.

Following this I began coding the condensed data from the raw material. Coding in qualitative research is the process of organizing data into themes/topics that aid in the interpretation of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 222). Qualitative coding is an inherently interpretive process and requires several readings and re-readings of the data material. The researcher needs to stop and ask questions frequently and reflect on their interpretation of the data. The coding process begins by extracting themes from the data and comparing those themes between the different informants, as well as the other types of data gathered (in this case observation). Before, during and after the coding process the researcher must repeatedly reflect on coding decisions and question the extracted themes to ensure the quality of the study (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 223). The categories are made to make it simpler for the researcher to compare the answers of the informants to each other and they must therefore be relatively general. The categories that I coded my informants' answers into are:

- *competence aims*

- *focus*
- *role of vocabulary*
- *explicit/implicit*
- *methods*
- *difficulties*

The table below gives a brief description of the coding categories.

CATEGORY:	DESCRIPTION:
Competence Aims	Related to the new or old curriculum
Focus	Answers that relate to an approach to vocabulary teaching
Role of vocabulary	Statements related to the importance of vocabulary
Explicit/implicit	Answers related to preferred type of instruction
Methods	Mentions of specific methods
Difficulties	Challenges with vocabulary development

Table 4, coding categories.

The final step in the process is to analyze the organized data material and look for relationships and patterns that connect to larger concepts and theories. As previously mentioned, the researcher must look back and forth through the data, the coding decisions, interpretations, etc. continuously through all steps to ensure consistency in analysis and thought throughout. The following figure visualizes the continuous process of data analysis as presented in this chapter.
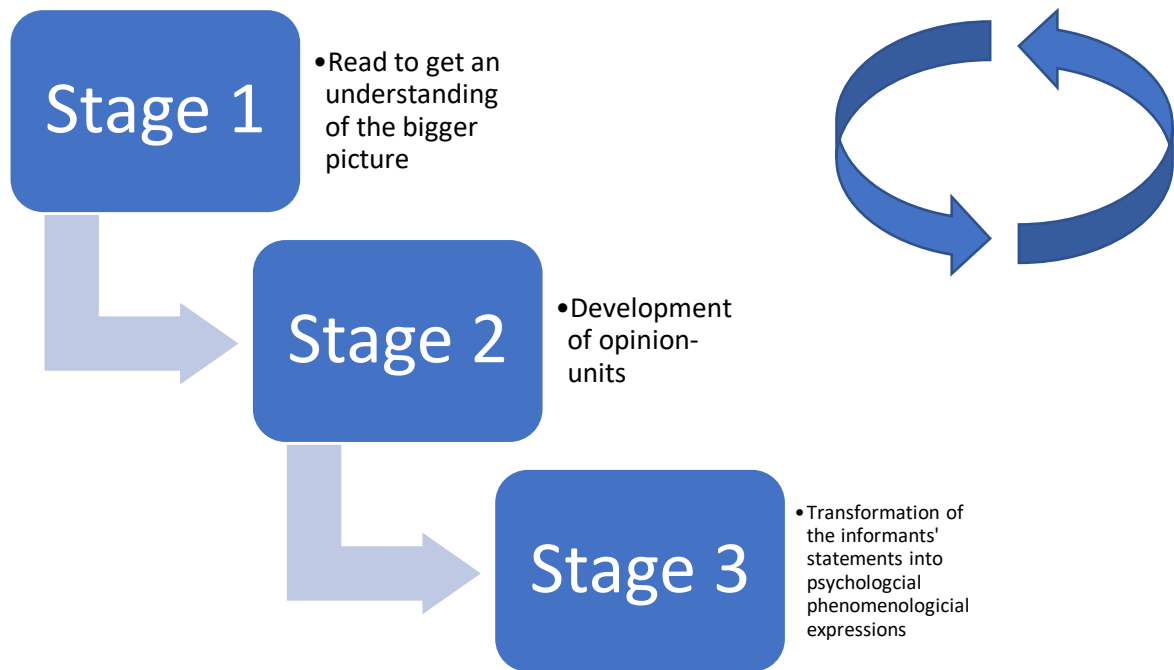
Figure 1, steps for data analysis.

3.7 Reliability

Reliability is often defined as the consistency of results. If the study was replicated and produced the same results, it had a high degree of reliability (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 223). In the social sciences, however, this definition can pose a challenge. The epistemology behind this concept is that there is an objective truth that is directly measurable. In the social sciences this theory does, arguably, -not seem to be accurate. Phenomena can change both slowly and rapidly over time, and a lack of agreement of results between two separate studies does not point to a lack of reliable measurement, but to a change of context or a change in focus. A qualitative study is difficult to replicate as the knowledge and data that is produced during it is created through the meeting of researcher and informant. If one, or two of those variables change then the results will too (Postholm et al., 2018, pp. 223-224). People evolve over time, which means that if the study is identical except that it is conducted a month later, then the results might differ from the original study. In qualitative studies, Postholm (2018, p. 224) suggests an alternative method of ensuring reliability. She ties reliability to reflection over how the data collection process and the researcher might have affected the outcome of the study. This requires that (1) the researcher reflects over their own influence, and (2) that the researcher makes the methodology transparent and honest so that others can reflect over it.

To ensure the reliability of this study I have been as transparent as possible with all of the choices I have made during the span of this project. I have stated all of the methods I have implemented, as well as why I chose those methods for this particular study. I have also reflected on my own influence on the project as a whole.

Using interviews as method for data collection will arguably always involve some level of subjectivity. My interpretation and analysis of the interviews will to a certain degree affect the reliability of the study. In my data analysis I will ensure that I separate between the informants' interpretations of the topic and my own. Complete reliability in a study such as this, is arguably neither possible nor desirable (Kvale, Brinkmann, & Torhell, 2009). I attached my interview guide in the appendix (see appendix 1) to provide insight into how I investigated how teachers teach vocabulary and why, and by doing this it is possible for other people to conduct a similar study or to draw ideas from my approach to this one.

One challenge with using interviews as a method for data collection is that the informants may not always be completely truthful. According to Postholm (2017, p. 170), this can be due to the informant having a tendency to only remember positive instances and suppress negative ones, wanting to put themselves in a better light, or if the topic is sensitive they might have difficulty speaking about it in general. In the context of this project, informants might be untruthful, or misrepresent their approach to perhaps match what they think that I am searching for. Or they might not want to admit that are not competent about this particular aspect of language learning. I used triangulation on two of the informants by observing them in the classroom, thus complementing their answers in the interview; but I see this as adding reliability to the first two informants, not deducting reliability from the latter two. I do not have any reason to believe that untruthfulness played a heavy role in my interviews, or that any of my informants had reason to withhold information in a way that made an important impact on my study.

3.8 Validity

Validity comes in two forms: Internal validity and external validity. Internal validity is a measure of if the conclusions that have been drawn are valid given what and who has been studied. Has the researcher, through the method of data collection, collected the appropriate data to answer the research questions (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 223). External validity, also referred to as transferability, relates to what extent the findings of the study can be applied beyond the context

that was actually studied. If one school was studied, to what extent can the results be transferred to other schools (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 223).

My research questions all relate to the thoughts, meanings and practices of English teachers. I used interview as a method to gain insight into what a few teachers thought about vocabulary and its importance to the acquisition of English. The questions in the interview all related to vocabulary and the different aspects behind the process of planning a lesson with vocabulary acquisition in focus. I also implemented observation as a method to ensure the quality of the study. The observation corroborates the interview and gives additional information that would otherwise go amiss. According to Postholm et al. (2018, p. 138), observation should not be implemented as the only method for data collection. This is because when the researcher is observing, it is only his or her subjective view on the situation in front of them. The researcher brings in their own assumptions and preconceived notions to the observation, which will influence what the observer sees and how he or she analyzes the things that happen. For a qualitative study to be sufficient in a constructivist worldview, it must take in to consideration the thoughts and meanings of the informant (Postholm et al., 2018, p. 114). The theory of triangulation states that one should implement multiple sources for data to ensure, or check, that the sources support and complement each other, or if they provide inconsistent answers that do not add up (Postholm, 2017, p. 138).

Even with triangulation and multiple sources of data, there is still room for misinterpretation and the misconstruing of the informants' answers. I have tried to minimize this by following Postholm (2017, pp. 131-133) processes to ensure the quality of a study. Among these processes is member checking. Member checking requires the informant to confirm if the researcher's interpretations are accurate, and if they recognize themselves in them. Member checking is a process that can last throughout the study. I did member checking throughout the interviews, for example, by repeating their statements back to them if there were any ambiguities. At the end of the interview I asked the informants if they would like to specify or elaborate on any answers they had given, or if they had any thoughts on the matter that I had not asked them about. I have also made the recordings from the interviews available to the informants, and instructed them to contact me if there is anything they would like to specify about the answers they gave or elaborate further on in one or more of their answers. Lastly, all informants gave me their contact

information so that I could ask them more questions, or if I had any questions to them regarding my interpretation of their answers. Lincoln and Guba (1985 cited Postholm, 2017, p. 132) consider member checking the most important process to ensure the validity of a study.

I have accounted for my influence on the study by presenting my philosophical worldview and methodological choices as transparently and honestly as possible.

3.9 Ethical and methodological concerns

An omnipresent principal in a research project is the ethical responsibility of the researcher. There is a long list of ethical issues one may encounter when conducting a research project. Each distinct part of a project has a set of ethical issues that need to be considered. Qualitative research projects especially are uniquely exposed given that in many cases there is a close "relationship" between the researcher and the informants (Postholm, 2017, p. 142). It is therefore immensely important that the researcher maintains the ethical dimension of the research project throughout the course of the study.

The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics has a set of guidelines that must be upheld in any ethical research project. The guidelines can be grouped in to three types of ethical considerations. (1) The informant's right to self-determination and autonomy, (2) the researcher's responsibility to respect the informant's privacy, and (3) the researcher's responsibility to avoid harm (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 41).

The first type surrounds the informant's right to self-determination and autonomy. A person who is asked to participate in a research project, has participated, or will participate in one, has the right to control their own level of participation. The person needs to give free, informed consent to participate, and they maintain the right to revoke this consent at any time during the study without having to provide a reason. They will also not suffer any negative consequences as a result of them no longer wanting to participate in the study (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 41).

The second type relates to the researcher's responsibility to respect the informant's privacy. All people have the right to choose what information is publicized about them. The informant has the right to decline the researcher access to information about the informant. Participants of any study need to be sure that the researcher upholds confidentiality. The researcher is not allowed to

use information about the informant that can be used to identify the informant (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 42).

The third and final type of ethical consideration is the researcher's responsibility to avoid harm. This type of ethical consideration is more prominent in medical fields, but that is not to say that it is not still relevant in social science research projects. There needs to be done a consideration if the method of data collection touches upon sensitive or difficult topics that make it strenuous for the informant to come back out of. The informant is to be placed under as little duress as possible (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 42).

After I had determined what the scope of my study would be, which methods I was going to use, and what data I needed to answer my research questions, I sent my project outline to NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data) to ensure that the precautions I had done were within the guidelines set by NESH. Before the act of data collection occurs, Postholm (2017, p. 146) states that it is important that the informants have all the necessary information needed (Postholm, 2017, p. 146). This includes what is expected of them, what information will be gathered, and how their privacy will be protected throughout the study. When I contacted the different informants, I provided them with an information pamphlet, which contained information of what their participation in this study would entail, as well as general information about the study itself. They were also informed of their rights as a participant in this study and were provided with an opportunity to ask questions about the information in the pamphlet if there were parts that were unclear or ambiguous. Two of the informants gave written consent, whereas the other two gave oral consent at the beginning of the interview over Skype. The information pamphlet and consent form were both approved by NSD. Consent form can be seen in appendix 3.

4.0 Research findings, analysis and discussion

In this chapter I will present the data that was gathered through observation and interviews. The answers that were given in the interviews were sorted into different categories that were developed in the coding process. The teachers were not asked the exact same questions; however, all questions surrounded the same topics and can be connected through the theme. The categories that emerged are: competence aims, focus, role of vocabulary, explicit/implicit, methods, and difficulties. Some answers fit within several categories; these answers were put in the category that best fit the main topic of the answer. The development of the coding categories is detailed in section 4.1. In the following chapter, I will refer to the informants by the pronouns he, him, his, regardless of the informant's actual gender to protect their privacy.

Once more, the research questions for this project are:

> **RQ1: How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?**
>
> *RQ2: What are teacher's cognition towards the role of vocabulary teaching in ELT?*
>
> *RQ3: How do teachers interpret competence aims in relation to vocabulary teaching?*

These research questions will be discussed by inspecting the observational notes and answers of the informants in light of relevant research and theory on the topic of vocabulary development.

4.1 Coding categories

The observation and informants' answers were coded into the categories mentioned above. The categories that emerged from my dataset are detailed in this section:

The first category, **Competence aims**, contains all answers that related to either the old (LK-06) or the new (LK-20) subject curriculum for English.

The second category, **Focus**, included all answers that related to which approach the teachers preferred or utilized in their methods. Not all of the teachers were aware of the terminology for the different approaches, and could therefore not mention them specifically. I noted all mentions of how they taught vocabulary, such as "My lessons are centered around a text, where we talk about unfamiliar words as they arise", and then defined which approach this most accurately fit within.

The third category, **Role of vocabulary**, contains all statements related to the importance (or unimportance) of vocabulary to language learning.

The **Explicit/implicit** category contains any mention of method or approach that falls within either one of the terms, the quotes are marked based on which type of instruction it is: one teacher spoke primarily English in his lessons, which would be marked as implicit, another teacher uses vocabulary pre-teaching, which would be marked as explicit.

Methods contains any thoughts the informants had on specific methods. This includes thoughts and descriptions of methods that they use, as well as their thoughts on methods that they stated that they did not use.

Difficulties is a category compromised of any challenges that may arise in the planning phase, the actual lesson, or about the topic in general. Below this is a table with a simple summary of the categories:

CATEGORY:	DESCRIPTION:
Competence Aims	Related to the new or old curriculum
Focus	Answers that relate to an approach to vocabulary teaching
Role of vocabulary	Statements related to the importance of vocabulary
Explicit/implicit	Answers related to preferred type of instruction
Methods	Mentions of specific methods
Difficulties	Challenges with vocabulary development

Table 5, coding categories.

4.2 How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?

My main research question is *How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?* The question aims to do a qualitative analysis on what thoughts teachers have on the role of vocabulary, the methods teachers use to teach vocabulary, and what the reasoning behind these methods are. To answer this question, I created a few research questions in addition

to my main one. I will, in this section, present and analyze my findings, and discuss the findings in relation to my research questions.

4.2.1 What are the teachers' cognition towards the role of vocabulary teaching in ELT?

All teachers in this project understand the importance of vocabulary, but they are not all sure on how it should be taught, nor in agreement with each other. The main categories that are relevant for this research question were *Role of vocabulary, Difficulties, Methods* and *Focus*. I asked many questions that surrounded this specific theme, as I believe it to be essential for this research project. When asked if they thought vocabulary was an important aspect of teaching/learning English, all teachers gave an unequivocal "yes". This should come as no surprise to anyone.

Teacher 1 said that vocabulary learning is very important to the learning of English, and it is something that he keeps in his thoughts whenever he plans a lesson, but *Teacher 1* did not state that it was neither more, nor less, important than other areas of language learning. In my observation of one of his lessons, I noted that he often explained, defined, and talked about unfamiliar words from the text they were reading. Which confirms his statement that he believes vocabulary is a particularly important aspect of language learning. He also, when appropriate, pointed out the form of the word, explaining how the suffix/prefix changed the specific meaning of the word in the context of the text, which falls within the approach *focus on form*. As described in section 2.3.2, focus on form is drawing student's attention to specific words, or forms, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication.

Teacher 2, on the other hand, stated that "vocabulary, simply, isolated, is more important than grammar". Elaborating that it does not matter if you know the grammar if you do not have any words to use it with. He stated that as long as you are understood, that is the most important part, and then the grammar can be learned as you go. The main idea that *Teacher 2* states is the reason for why vocabulary is more important, is that vocabulary is the foundation in which language is built from, and then you can add other things like grammar, and syntax on to the foundation over the course of the school year. My observations confirmed *Teacher 2*'s statements, where many of the activities he used during his lesson were word games that purely dealt with vocabulary words related to that lesson's topic. The lesson was centered on a specific text, and the word games used words related to the unfamiliar words in the text. This type of method is an example of a

combination of methods within *focus on form* and *focus on forms* approach to vocabulary teaching/learning. The primary focus of this lesson was the text that they were working with, which would classify this as a *focus on form* approach; however, the word games dealt with the words devoid of context, which is characteristic of the *focus on forms* approach.

Teacher 3 specifies that "here in Norway, it is most important to begin with vocabulary". Teacher 3 feels that vocabulary, in the English language, is the most important of all; continuing that in Russian and Lithuanian, they have a very complex grammatical structure, because the grammar gives a lot of the meaning in a sentence comes from its grammatical structure. This is compared to the English language where comparatively it does not have very complex grammatical structure, and it is similar to Norwegian except for in a few areas. Teacher 3 states that for Norwegians to learn English, "a lot of things come for free". Here he refers to words that mean the same in both Norwegian and English, which in many cases both look and sound alike. "Simply put", he says, "vocabulary, very important, and then the grammar comes along the way". One method that *Teacher 3* implements in many of his lessons is the concept of vocabulary pre-teaching. This activity is a pure word and meaning activity that deals with decontextualized words isolated from context. In terms of teaching approach, this method is purely *focus on forms*. As described in section 2.3.3, FonFs deals with language as an object to be learned rather than a tool for communication. The approach is highly systematic, and according to Laufer (2006), one of the most effective approaches for vocabulary acquisition.

Teacher 4, in a similar fashion as Teacher 2 and 3, stated that vocabulary probably is the most important area, but he feels that grammar is harder to learn than vocabulary is. Teacher 4 argues that "you can make yourself understood even though the grammar isn't there, you have to have a certain extent of vocabulary". Regardless of this, he states that he most of the times focuses on grammar, and that any vocabulary teaching that occurs during his lessons is mostly implicit. He rarely plans a lesson with a focus on vocabulary. In addition to him thinking that grammar is more difficult to learn than vocabulary, he also states that it feels like the textbooks that the school has, and the curriculum, are more focused on grammar than vocabulary. He noted as well that he was uncertain about what type of vocabulary should be taught and where he should begin. *Teacher 4* says that he prefers methods which ensures that he maintains supervision of the students' actions and activity. Working within set frames that are presented prior to the activity.

He likes to vary methods between reading and writing, variation being key here. One method he is particularly fond of is "would you rather?" questions. One student gives the other a dilemma, and the other must choose one of the two options and then provide a reasoning as to why they chose that option. This forces the students to use vocabulary related to the dilemma given, and they must use newly learned words to provide a reasoning. He says that by giving them some freedom, but at the same time setting clear limitations, it makes it easier for them "to express themselves". This activity, as explained, seems to be purely *focus on meaning*, where any vocabulary learned is incidental rather than intentional.

Discussion

A general consensus among the informants was a mostly positive attitude towards teaching vocabulary, however, there seems to be varying levels of uncertainty on exactly how to do it. In terms of *Role of vocabulary*, the informants were positive to including vocabulary teaching in most, if not all, of their lessons. What the research shows is that "the lack of vocabulary knowledge is the largest obstacle for second language readers to overcome" (Folse & Folse, 2004, p. 2). Without other areas of language, such as grammar, little can be communicated, but without vocabulary nothing can be communicated. In short, the teachers in this study understand that vocabulary is essential to language learning and that it is one of the, if not the most important aspect of language learning.

Teacher 4 stated that he felt that grammar was more difficult to learn than vocabulary. I cannot find much research to support this claim. I am not arguing whether grammar or vocabulary is more difficult to learn, though I am sure that there is disagreement here as well; however, I am saying that not focusing on vocabulary more is not supported by the research on the topic. The largest obstacle for L2 learners in reading ability is vocabulary knowledge (Folse & Folse, 2004, p. 2), and there is also a correlation between the learner's reading ability and their writing, listening and speaking ability. Correlation does not equal causation, but according to Folse and Folse (2004) "empirical studies have shown that good L2 readers, writers, speakers, and listeners know much more vocabulary". A foreign language learner can get by without grammar but is completely useless without vocabulary. In terms of the research question, the teachers' cognition surrounding the role of vocabulary to language learning would suggest that it would take priority in their choice of methods.

When it comes to the category of *Focus* and *Methods*, which to some extent overlap, the findings show that teachers work primarily with methods that include contextualized vocabulary in lessons with an overriding focus on meaning and/or communication, also known as *focus on form*. Two teachers mentioned methods which used isolated decontextualized vocabulary learning (*focus on forms*), whereas the other two stated that those methods should no longer be used in school, providing no other reason than that "you're not supposed to anymore". One of the teachers who used them also stated that he knows that it is a "big no-no" to use vocabulary tests for example, but he only used them because his students enjoyed them and experienced a sense of achievement doing them. As to why the teachers did not use much decontextualized vocabulary teaching/learning, they provided no answer that related to research on the topic. The general answer was "we're not supposed to use them anymore". There is a time and place where decontextualized vocabulary learning is exceedingly useful, and not using those types of methods may lead to much less vocabulary knowledge than if they were implemented. Webb (2009), asserts that decontextualized vocabulary teaching/learning may improve both reading comprehension and writing. Arguably, the lack of using decontextualized methods may be a result of lack of competence concerning the theory behind vocabulary teaching. Laufer and Laufer (2005) and Choo et al. (2012) are also supporters of dealing with vocabulary isolated from context to some degree.

Teacher 3 mentioned using vocabulary pre-teaching as a method. A study by Webb (2009) supports this, stating that vocabulary pre-teaching "may improve reading comprehension and writing" (Webb, 2009, p. 462). This statement is dependent on the method of instruction, but Webb states that decontextualized tasks, like the ones *Teacher 3* mentioned in his answers, may improve vocabulary learning. A few of the tasks *Teacher 3* mentioned are mind maps, mix and match, guessing game, all of which have the premise of connecting the word to the meaning. This particular type of method would be classified as *focus on forms*, however, he only uses this to familiarize the students with the vocabulary of a topic or text, so his overall teaching approach is *focus on form*, given that the overall lesson has a focus on meaning and communication.

To summarize, vocabulary is held in high regard in relation to English language acquisition, however, there is a lack of competence on the research behind how to systematically approach vocabulary teaching, and which methods are supported and/or not supported by studies.

4.2.2 Are teachers aware of explicit vs implicit approaches to vocabulary teaching?

The category **Explicit/implicit** was used to answer this question. The teachers in this study have varying levels of knowledge about explicit vs. implicit approaches to vocabulary teaching. Only one of the informants had any familiarity to the terminology, however, all of them had some general thoughts about the concept once it was explained to them what explicit and implicit instruction was.

Teacher 1 had heard of the terms explicit or implicit instruction, but he did not use the terms when planning, nor consider them in the planning process. He stated that it was not something he focused on when planning a lesson. *Teacher 1* implemented both approaches in his lessons, but it was not a conscious choice to use one over the other. He stated that he liked variation in his lessons, and that that was the biggest focus he had when planning one, not explicit vs implicit approaches. *Teacher 1* implemented mostly explicit instruction in the lesson I observed, and only used one implicit technique that I made note of, which was using the language throughout class.

Teacher 2 had not heard of the terms explicit or implicit instruction. After the terms were explained to him, he stated that he used a combination of the two. Much like *Teacher 1*, *Teacher 2* also stated that his focus was on using a variation of methods, thus varying between implicit and explicit approaches. *Teacher 2* did not have a preference of one over the other. This was also evident in my observations where the two types of instruction were both represented. There was notably more implicit vocabulary learning/teaching, but there were some activities that included explicit instruction as well.

Teacher 3 was familiar with the terminology and stated that which approach he chooses is very situational and based largely on which grades he is teaching. He argues that the lower the grade, the more explicitly you have to teach and the higher the grade the more implicitly you should teach. The reasoning behind this, he says, is that in the lower grades you deal with less text and analyze it and dissect it in every way so that the students understand it. You do this to build knowledge. In the higher grades, the students have already built a level of knowledge of the English language, which allows the teacher to use longer and more complex texts, where the focus is on the content rather than the words themselves. Regardless of this, he still states that he maintains a certain level of focus on vocabulary, whether it be implicit or explicit.

Teacher 4 was not familiar with the terminology, but after they were explained to him, he had similar thoughts as Teacher 3 about it. In the early stages of language learning you should teach one and one word at the time with examples, and then when they get higher up, they should implement more context and meaning centered tasks. The same words should be put in different contexts as well, and not individually in one context, presumably to show how words can mean different things in different contexts.

Discussion

In the category of *Explicit/Implicit*, only two out of the four informants had heard of the terms explicit and implicit approach to teaching, and only one out of four stated that they made a conscious choice of approaches based on grade and skill level of the students. This is not to say that the teachers who had not heard of the terms did not have thoughts on the matter. Teacher 4, who had not heard the terminology before, had similar ideas as Teacher 3, who had heard of them, on the topic. The teachers who had not heard of it before, and the teacher who stated that they did not give much thought to it during planning, seemed to make an unconscious choice based on experience and what has worked in the past, but this was not stated by the teachers and cannot be assumed to be true. As to the specific research question, one teacher could explain it in his own words and considered it during the planning phase. The other three recognized it after it was explained to them but did not make any special considerations in relation to this in their planning. The teachers are somewhat aware of explicit and implicit instruction, but most of them are not aware of the terminology and do not make any special considerations in relation to this.

Teacher 3 and *Teacher 4* both made an interesting claim on when you should which type of instruction. They stated that one should use explicit instruction when the students are younger, and implicit when they are older. This answer is especially interesting, because when it comes to first language acquisition, most of the word knowledge is acquired through implicit instruction (Ratner, 2010, pp. 377-378). However, theories on first language acquisition are not necessarily applicable to second language acquisition so the opposite might be true in this situation. Their claim is one I have heard several times before conducting this study, yet it does not fit the present research on first language acquisition. This would be an interesting topic to conduct further research on.

Research on the topic states that both implicit and explicit approaches yield a large quantity of vocabulary knowledge, but the greatest gains come when they are combined. The theory that explicit is better for younger learners, and implicit is better for older learners might be correct to a certain degree, but according to most research both should be included almost equally to best increase vocabulary knowledge. An article by Choo et al. (2012), which summarizes the findings of several studies on the subject, states that one study "pointed out that incidental learning is best followed up with intentional learning" (Choo et al., 2012, p. 854). My interpretation of this is that teachers need to vary their methods to include both extensive reading and writing, as well as specific, explicit focus on relevant words to the texts they are working with; something that all of the teachers did to varying degrees. A problem might arise if a teacher does not know of this and instinctively choose one approach over the other, but I have insufficient evidence that any of the teachers in this study prefer one approach more than the other as none of them stated that they did. Most of the informants also stated explicitly that they had a focus on varied teaching methods, which entails variation both in approach and type of instruction.

4.2.3 How do teachers interpret competence aims in relation to vocabulary teaching?

This question falls within the category **Competence aims**. The teachers state that the curriculum (LK-06) is incredibly vague, but that you can find support in it to teach vocabulary. It is up to the individual teacher how it is interpreted, and this can lead to varying degrees of vocabulary teaching. All the teachers agreed that the new curriculum (LK-20) would improve the students vocabulary development, because it would give them greater repeated exposure to unfamiliar words due to the cross-curricular nature of LK-20.

All teachers stated that the current competence aims (LK-06) are very vague when it comes to content and that it is mostly up the individual teacher how they choose to approach the different competence aims. After the introduction of the interviews, I opened by asking the teachers about what their thoughts were about LK-06 and LK-20 for English in relation to vocabulary, and if they thought that it was represented enough, not enough, too much, etc. *Teacher 1* said that "you can find very good support in it", explaining that it sets teachers up to teach vocabulary, but it is vague in its phrasing. Teacher 3 argues that the curriculum is too open when it comes to content, especially for new teachers. Teacher 3 argued that some guidelines could be useful to help newer teachers to include all aspects of English. There was one teacher, Teacher 4, who was unsatisfied

with how vocabulary was represented in the curriculum. He stated that there should be a greater focus on vocabulary in general throughout the competence aims. Though it is indirectly mentioned a couple of times, there should be a bigger focus on vocabulary specifically.

When it came to the new curriculum (LK-20) that is slowly being introduced to Norwegian schools, all teachers agreed that it was an improvement from the old one (LK-06). The introduction of a more cross-curricular school is something that almost all of them stated would greatly improve the student's ability to learn vocabulary. This being due to increased exposure to unfamiliar words, as well as a higher chance of the unfamiliar words being repeated multiple times during a semester.

Teacher 3 argues that this is beneficial for vocabulary development because repeated exposure to unfamiliar words over time increases the chance of the students learning them, and not "forget them by the end of the week". This is supported by researchers such as P. Nation (2014, p. 2), who states that "an essential condition for learning is repetition", continuing that it is not enough that the students encounter the words, but they need to encounter them "often enough to have a chance of learning them". Teacher 3 states that it has improved in all aspects of teaching English, not just vocabulary.

Other than the newly introduced focus on cross-curricular lessons, the teachers were also positive to the fact that there were fewer competence aims. Teacher 2 said that even though it was slimmed down, it provided a better framework to work within, which Teacher 4 agreed with, saying that it is more concrete in its wording. It is still "very open" they say, but it has improved in many aspects, including in how vocabulary is set up to be taught.

Discussion

On the topic of the competence aims in the curriculum (LK-06) the teachers mostly agreed that you can find support for vocabulary teaching in it. They did, however, also state that is was incredibly vague, and that it is very much up to the individual teacher how they choose to teach the various competence aims. Teacher 3 argued that it was in some cases "too open" and that a few more specific guidelines would be beneficial, especially for newer teachers. When it came to the new curriculum (LK-20), all of the teachers agreed that it was an improvement to the old one (LK-06). It had fewer competence aims, but they were less vague and easier to work with. It also opened to a more cross-curricular school, which they all agreed would be beneficial for learning

new vocabulary. This due to a greater exposure to unfamiliar words and a higher chance of repeated exposure to said unfamiliar words.

As mentioned in section 2.3, vocabulary is mentioned a couple times in the current curriculum (LK-06). However, the competence aims that explicitly mention vocabulary are in similarity with the rest of the curriculum, very vague. The competence aims are intentionally vague when it comes to what knowledge students are supposed to have (Andreassen, 2016, p. 241). The curriculum puts its trust in the competence of the teachers to decide which words are important to learn. I interpret this as LK-06 having little influence on the level of focus the teachers have on vocabulary. This is not to say that the informants in this study focus too little on vocabulary, only that their chosen focus does not come from the curriculum, at least not much of it. It seems, based on their answers, that you can justify most approaches to English teaching, given the vague nature of the curriculum. The new curriculum (LK-20) may have a bigger influence in how teachers teach. It is difficult to see exactly how much LK-20 will influence how teachers will structure their lessons, but with more cross curricular lessons the students will indubitably be more frequently introduced to unfamiliar words on a repeated basis.

4.3 Suggestion for further research

Just as research should inform teachers, teachers should also inform future research. Based on the findings of this study, I would suggest to study whether or whether not the research reaches out to teachers. The biggest obstacle I see for the informants in this study is that they did not have explicit knowledge of the terminology related to vocabulary development. This suggests that they have not encountered the terms frequently enough, for example through research papers, that they are familiar with the terminology. The study could see if the trend that I see in my selection is representative for teachers in general, and if so, how to make the research more accessible for English teachers.

5.0 Conclusion

The project presented in this thesis aimed to answer the question *How do teachers work with vocabulary development in the English subject and why?* The project has provided insight into the topic of vocabulary instruction. As I have presented in this thesis, vocabulary is an essential aspect of language learning, and it can be both valuable and challenging for teachers to implement effectively in their lessons. There is evidence that teachers implement a variation of methods, many of which are proven to be effective towards vocabulary development, but that there is a noticeable gap in knowledge about the research behind the methods. This may lead to using methods which are not effective, as well as not using methods which are proven to be effective. The findings of the project is limited to the informants who participated in it.

The teachers in the study agree that vocabulary is one of, if not the most important aspect of learning English. They find support in the competence aims for the English subject, but the vague nature of the competence aims makes it difficult to discern exactly how they should proceed. All of the teachers in this project had different approaches to vocabulary teaching, and only a couple of them based some of their methods on research. Several methods that were used were implemented based on pre-made activities in the textbook, activities they enjoyed doing personally, activities their students enjoyed doing, or recommendations from other teachers. The informants had, most of the time, no explicit familiarity with the terminology related to vocabulary development, but they had a conscious relationship to the practice that the terminology described when the meaning of the terms was explained to them. Teachers in this study, much like the textbooks they often base their methods on, do not seem to have a systematic, research based approach to vocabulary development (Schmitt, 2019, p. 266).

There are many ways one could further explore this topic. Some suggestions that I have would be to first examine if the research reaches out to the teachers. When inquiring about explicit/implicit instruction, most of the teachers had not heard of the terminology, however, they did have thoughts on when to use which type of instruction. Their unfamiliarity with the terminology could be due to them not being introduced to the research. It could therefore be interesting to do a quantitative study on teachers in Norway about their familiarity with various terms within the topic of vocabulary development.

There is no undisputed right or wrong answer when it comes to approaches for vocabulary development. Some methods will always work better in one class than in another, and some will always work worse in one class than another. However, the findings show that more knowledge on the topic can give the teachers a solid ground to stand on to support their chosen methods, as well as introduce them to methods which they had previously not considered. Some methods might be overlooked, or not utilized because of spread of misinformation regarding the effectiveness of said methods. By increasing teachers' competence, the teachers are better suited to increase students' vocabulary knowledge, and consequently language proficiency. I advise all teachers to not take any assumptions about vocabulary development for granted and to keep themselves updated on research about the topic.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Informere om prosjektets bakgrunn og formål. Innhente samtykke

Oppstart/intro

1. Hvor lenge har du undervist i engelsk?
2. Hvilke trinn underviser du på nå?
3. Hvilken utdanning har du i engelsk?

Om lærerplanen

1. Føler du at lærerplanverket har et godt nokk fokus på vokabular?
   a. Fokuserer det for mye/lite, hvorfor mener du dette?
2. Hvordan forstår du disse kompetansemålene fra LK-06?
   a. «-forstå og bruke et ordforråd knyttet til kjente emner»
   b. «-uttrykke og begrunne egen mening om kjente emner»
   c. «-forstå hovedinnholdet i selvvalgte tekster»
3. Hvordan ville du jobbet med disse kompetansemålene fra fagfornyelsen?
   a. «-lytte til og forstå ord og uttrykk i tilpassede og autentiske tekster»
   b. «-uttrykke seg forsåelig med et variert ordforråd og høflighetsuttrykk tilpasset mottaker og situasjon»

Om vokabular

1. Hva er tankene dine om vokabular i forhold til læring av engelsk?
   a. Er det viktigere enn grammatikk, er det mindre viktig?
   b. Er det viktigere enn kommunikasjon/tale?
   c. Hvordan føler du det har sammenheng med kommunikasjon
2. Kan du med egne ord forklare hvordan du mener vokabular utvikler seg i elever?
3. Har skolen hatt et fokus på vokabular/begreps-forståelse, hvis ja kan du utdype hva skolen gjorde?
4. Hvordan forstår du eksplisitt vs implisitt metode for vokabularundervisning?

Vokabular under planlegging

1. Planlegger du ofte timer som har fokus på vokabularutvikling?
2. Opplever du at støtte til vokabularutvikling er viktig i planleggingsarbeidet ditt?

3. Hvilke metoder bruker du i disse timene?

4. Hvilke vurderinger/avgjørelser gjør du underveis i planleggingsprosessen til en undervisningsøkt om vokabular

Utfordringer og muligheter

1. Er det noen deler av undervisning av vokabular som kan være utfordrende?

2. I hvilke undervisningssituasjoner føler du vokabularutvikling fungerer godt/dårlig?

3. Hvordan legger du opp til differensiering i arbeid med vokabular

Avlsutning

1. Før vi avslutte intervjuet, er det noe mer du ønsker å ta opp i relasjon til temaet?

   a. Er de noe du vil presisere om svarene dine under intervjuet?

2. Har du noen spørsmål til meg om intervjuet eller prosjektet?

   a. Andre tilbakemeldinger du ønsker å gi?

3. Om jeg har spørsmål angående tolkningen av intervjuet kan jeg kontakte deg via e-post?

Takke informanten for deltakelsen i studiet

Appendix 2 – Observation chart

Hvordan introduseres ppgaven/timen?	
Hva slags metode bruker læreren for å undervise vokabular (FonM, FonF, FonFS) og (eksplisitt vs implisitt), evt. Kombinasjoner i forskjellige deler av timen?	
Hva slags læremidler benyttes i økten (lærebok, ordbok, internet, osv.):	
Var lærestoffet på et faglig nivå tilpasset elevene:	
Var det noen utfordringer som handlet om ulikheter i faglig nivå i undervisningsøkten, g hvordan ble de håndtert?	

1. Setting: What does the physical space look like? What objects are there? Are there designated areas for specific activities?

2. People (or actors): Who uses the space? How do they use it? How does the space facilitate or constrain their actions? How do they interact with each other?

3. Behavior: How do people behave in the space? Are there rules governing behavior (e.g., turn-taking in a classroom)? What routine activities take place?

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet
"Vocabulary development in the English classroom"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å finne ut hvilke tanker engelsklærere har om vokabular og hvilke metoder de bruker for å undervise det. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med prosjektet er å utforske hvilke tanker engelsklærere har om vokabular i engelskfaget. Forskningsspørsmålene omhandler hvilke metoder lærere bruker og hvorfor disse metodene brukes. Det skal intervjues lærere som underviser i Engelsk, og noen undervisningsøkter skal observeres i sammenheng med prosjektet. Prosjektet er deskriptivt og vil bare beskrive hva som gjøres og hvorfor det gjøres på denne måten. Dette prosjektet er en masteroppgave.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

UiT: Universitetet i Tromsø - Norges arktiske universitet

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Utvalget er engelsklærere som underviser på 5.-10.-trinn. Henvendelsen sendes til skoler jeg har hatt tidligere kontakt med, eller som jeg har fått anbefalt av veileder.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at jeg får observere en undervisningsøkt i Engelsk og at du deltar i et intervju. Det vil ta deg ca. 45 minutter å fullføre intervjuet. Intervjuet inneholder spørsmål om tanker rundt vokabular i engelskundervisning, planlegging av en

undervisningsøkt og relaterte kompetansemål i læreplanverket. Svarene dine fra intervjuet tas opp via en opptaksenhet og transkriberes.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Du kan trekke deg fra prosjektet via epost eller melding.

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.

- Student og veileder er de eneste med tilgang til opplysningene innhentet i prosjektet
- Navnet ditt og kontaktopplysningene dine oppbevares adskilt fra øvrige data og vil bli anonymisert i arbeidet med prosjektet. Alle opplysninger oppbevares på passordbeskyttet PC.

Beskriv om deltakerne vil kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon eller ikke, og eventuelt hvilke type opplysninger som vil publiseres.

Deltakerne i prosjektet vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon. Opplysningene som publiseres er hvilken utdanning læreren har, hvilket trinn læreren underviser på og hvilket fag læreren underviser i.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 15.05.2020. Personopplysninger og lydopptak slettes ved prosjektslutt.

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller 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 UiT: Universitetet i Tromsø – Norges arktiske 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:
- UiT: Universitetet i Tromsø – Norges arktiske universitet ved Christopher Loe Olsen, christopher.l.olsen@uit.no eller student Eskil Løkke, eskil.lokke@gmail.com .
- Vårt personvernombud: Joakim Bakkevold
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Christopher Loe Olsen

Eskil Løkke

(Forsker/veileder)

(Student)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Vocabulary development in the English classroom», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- ☐ å delta i intervju med lydopptak
- ☐ å delta i observasjon

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. 15.05.2020

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)