

# MASTERGRADSOPPGAVE

## Reading and Writing Difficulties in English as a Foreign Language

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## **Abstract**

The topic of this thesis is adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties. More specifically, I have investigated English methodology teachers' understanding of adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL) for students with reading and writing difficulties. I have further investigated to what extent these methodology teachers report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction of English language student teachers. Through the use of a semi-structured interview guide, I have interviewed 5 methodology teachers who are currently working in Southeast Norway either at a university or a university college.

The results of the interviews indicate that these methodology teachers have solid knowledge and understanding of adaptive instruction as a general term but limited knowledge and understanding of adaptive instruction related specifically to students with reading and writing difficulties.

While on the one hand each methodology teacher is able to describe some adaptive instruction that may benefit students with reading and writing difficulties, all of the informants are hesitant to specifically connect these adaptations to students with reading and writing difficulties. This hesitation appears to reflect the methodology teachers' reported lack of knowledge of reading and writing difficulties. When asked to what extent these methodology teachers report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, none of the informants report explicitly teaching this topic in their English methodology courses. The methodology teachers refer to special educators and further education classes as possible sources for teaching adaptive instruction in an EFL class for students with reading and writing difficulties.

The results of this research open up for further research in several areas: 1) identifying the degree of knowledge and understanding student teachers, teachers, and special educators have of adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties, 2) the availability in Norway of further education in EFL and adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, and finally 3) the use of specific methods for adapting instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties.

## **Sammendrag**

Temaet i oppgaven er tilpasset opplæring (TPO) i engelsk som fremmedspråk for elever med lese- og skrivevansker. Jeg har undersøkt engelsk didaktikk lærernes forståelse av TPO i engelsk som fremmedspråk (EFL) for elever med lese- og skrivevansker. Jeg har videre undersøkt i hvilken grad disse didaktikk lærerne rapporterer undervisning i TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker i deres instruksjon av lærerstudenter i engelsk. Gjennom bruken av en semi-strukturert intervjuguide har jeg intervjuet fem didaktikk lærere som jobber i Sør-Norge, enten ved et universitet eller en høyskole.

Resultatene av intervjuene indikerer at didaktikk lærere har solid kunnskap om og forståelse for TPO som et generelt begrep. Men kunnskapen og forståelsen for TPO spesielt for elever med lese- og skrivevansker er begrenset. Alle didaktikk lærerne klarer å beskrive noen TPO metoder som elever med lese- og skrivevansker kan ha nytte av, men informantene nøler for å koble disse TPO spesielt til elever med lese- og skrivevansker. Dette ser ut til å reflektere didaktikk lærernes egen rapportering av mangel på kunnskap om lese- og skrivevansker. Ingen av informantene rapporterer å undervise eksplisitt TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker i sine engelske didaktikk timer. Didaktikk lærerne viser til spesialpedagoger og videreutdanning som mulige kilder for TPO i EFL for elever med lese- og skrivevansker.

Resultatene av denne forskningen åpner opp for videre forskning på flere områder: 1) identifisere kunnskapen og forståelsen som lærerstudenter, lærere og spesialpedagoger har av TPO i EFL for elever med lese -og skrivevansker, 2) kartlegge mulighetene i Norge for videreutdanning i EFL og TPO for elever med lese -og skrivevansker, og 3) bruken av bestemte metoder for TPO i EFL for elever med lese- og skrivevansker.

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Although Professor Ivar Bråten and my informants have contributed dramatically to my thesis, it is my husband and my four kids who have sacrificed the most. My husband has had the biggest job filling in the gaps I have left while writing. He has taken the kids on vacation alone, driven the kids to activities and followed up their schoolwork, all of which allowed me the time I needed to finish my thesis. My kids have also contributed by making the majority of dinners and cleaning the house while I sat at my desk and wrote. Without my family, I would be still writing today. And finally, I would like to thank my friends for giving me words of encouragement when I was in doubt and for inviting me out again and again, even though I often canceled with the same excuses over and over again.

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# Table of contents

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>ABSTRACT</b> .....  | <b>i</b>   |
| <b>SAMMENDRAG</b> .....  | <b>ii</b>  |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....  | <b>iii</b> |
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....   | <b>iv</b>  |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....   | <b>1</b>   |
| 1.0 Introduction .....   | 1          |
| 1.1 Research background .....  | 1          |
| 1.2 Key definitions and limitations .....  | 4          |
| 1.3 Purpose and research question .....  | 6          |
| 1.4 Thesis outline .....   | 7          |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>2. THEORY</b> .....   | <b>8</b>   |
| 2.0 Introduction .....   | 8          |
| 2.1 English in Norway .....  | 8          |
| 2.1.1 ESL or EFL? .....  | 8          |
| 2.1.2 The English Curriculum for primary and secondary schools .....                                 | 10         |
| 2.1.3 Programs and curriculum aims for English teachers .....  | 11         |
| 2.2 Reading and writing difficulties and EFL .....   | 13         |
| 2.2.1 Three areas of language learning that can cause difficulties.....                              | 13         |
| 2.2.2 Dyslexia .....   | 14         |
| 2.2.3 Influences of L1 difficulties on L2 learning .....   | 15         |
| 2.3 Foreign language teaching methodology and adaptive instruction .....                             | 17         |
| 2.3.1 Foreign language teaching methodology .....  | 17         |
| 2.3.2 Adaptive instruction .....   | 22         |
| 2.3.3 Suggested adaptive instruction in a FL class .....   | 25         |
| 2.4 Teachers' influence on students' achievement .....   | 29         |
| 2.4.1 Teachers' knowledge of reading and writing difficulties.....                                   | 30         |
| 2.4.2 Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards students with reading and writing<br>difficulties..... | 31         |
| 2.4.3 Teachers' propensity to change .....   | 32         |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>3. METHODS .....</b>  | <b>35</b> |
| 3.0 Introduction .....   | 35        |
| 3.1 Research Strategy and Design.....  | 35        |
| 3.2 Method .....   | 36        |
| 3.2.1 Informants .....   | 37        |
| 3.2.2 Interview guide .....  | 39        |
| 3.2.3 Interview procedure and data collection .....  | 41        |
| 3.2.4 Data analysis.....   | 43        |
| 3.3 Reliability and Validity .....   | 44        |
| 3.4 Ethical issues .....   | 48        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>4. RESULTS .....</b>  | <b>50</b> |
| 4.0 Introduction .....   | 50        |
| 4.1 Understanding of adaptive instruction .....  | 50        |
| 4.1.1 Informant A .....  | 50        |
| 4.1.2 Informant B.....   | 52        |
| 4.1.3 Informant C.....   | 54        |
| 4.1.4 Informant D .....  | 55        |
| 4.1.5 Informant E .....  | 56        |
| 4.1.6 Summary .....  | 58        |
| 4.2 Understanding of reading and writing difficulties .....  | 59        |
| 4.2.1 Informant A .....  | 59        |
| 4.2.2 Informant B.....   | 60        |
| 4.2.3 Informant C.....   | 62        |
| 4.2.4 Informant D .....  | 62        |
| 4.2.5 Informant E .....  | 64        |
| 4.2.6 Summary .....  | 65        |
| 4.3 Personal experience with teaching students with reading and writing<br>difficulties.....   | 66        |
| 4.3.1 Informant A .....  | 67        |
| 4.3.2 Informant B.....   | 67        |
| 4.3.3 Informant C.....   | 67        |
| 4.3.4 Informant D .....  | 68        |
| 4.3.5 Informant E .....  | 68        |
| 4.3.6 Summary .....  | 69        |
| 4.4 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction of students with reading and writing<br>difficulties to English language student teachers..... | 70        |
| 4.4.1 Informant A .....  | 70        |
| 4.4.2 Informant B.....   | 71        |
| 4.4.3 Informant C .....  | 73        |
| 4.4.4 Informant D .....  | 74        |
| 4.4.5 Informant E .....  | 75        |
| 4.4.6 Summary .....  | 76        |
| 4.5 Summary of results.....  | 78        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>5. DISCUSSION .....</b>   | <b>80</b>  |
| 5.0 Introduction .....   | 80         |
| 5.1 How do English methodology teachers understand adaptive instruction in EFL<br>for students with reading and writing difficulties? .....  | 80         |
| 5.1.1 Adaptive instruction as a general term.....  | 80         |
| 5.1.2 Adaptive instruction in EFL.....   | 82         |
| 5.1.3 Examples of adaptive instruction from informants .....   | 84         |
| 5.2 To what extent do English methodology teachers report teaching adaptive<br>instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction<br>of English language student teachers?..... | 87         |
| 5.2.1 Reported teaching in methodology classes .....   | 87         |
| 5.2.2 Suggestions for teaching adaptive instruction in EFL.....  | 88         |
| 5.3 Reflections on the results and the research process .....  | 89         |
| 5.4 Further research .....   | 90         |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>6. CONCLUSION .....</b>   | <b>92</b>  |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>  | <b>94</b>  |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>APPENDIX 1: Letter to informants .....</b>  | <b>102</b> |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>APPENDIX 2: Interview guide in Norwegian.....</b>   | <b>104</b> |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>APPENDIX 3: Interview guide in English .....</b>  | <b>107</b> |

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.0 Introduction**

“I don’t know what to do with him! He shouldn’t be forced to learn English!”

The above quote from a teacher-colleague is the springboard that started my research on reading and writing difficulties in English as foreign language. How to teach English to students with reading and writing difficulties seems to elude even the most experienced teachers, and the absence of information on how to teach to these students intrigued me. Who could I approach to learn more about this specific field? In this chapter, I will further explain my choice of researching English methodology teachers by placing the topic of English as a foreign language (EFL) and reading and writing difficulties in the context of Norway’s educational system. I will thereafter define the concepts I use in this thesis before I present my research questions. The chapter ends with a short explanation of the structure of this paper.

## **1.1 Research background**

As stated above, the frustrations of my colleagues initiated my search for methods to teach EFL to students with reading and writing difficulties. Learning English for these students seemed to be filled with disappointments and frustrations, and I was often asked the question of whether these students should be *forced* to learn English at school at all. This led me to begin my research by looking into the requirements for learning English in the Norwegian school system and then eventually into the requirements for the teachers who teach EFL in Norway system.

The English requirements for pupils in the Norwegian school system are quite extensive. English is a required subject throughout primary and secondary education in Norway. As of 2006, obligatory English education starts in the first grade and ends after the first year in upper secondary education. The number of years required for English education expresses a deliberate emphasis in Norway on the importance of English. The purpose and goals for learning English in Norway are described in the first paragraphs of the English curriculum. Here English is described as a necessary tool needed for forming each individual. English is needed for accessing information found outside of Norway, for learning about the Norwegian culture as well as other cultures, and for giving the students the tools needed to participate as a citizen in the



Norwegian democratic society (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006). The emphasis on English learning in school and the purpose statement in the English curriculum clearly present an expectation that all pupils in the Norwegian society, including pupils with reading and writing difficulties, should learn English. But is this realistic? How can teachers meet this goal? What are the expectations for the teachers who are teaching these students with reading and writing difficulties in English?

In the past few years, the Ministry of Education has directed attention towards special needs students, focusing on the knowledge and skills of our teachers who are working with these students (NOU 2009:18; St. meld. Nr. 11 (2008-2009)). The importance of teacher competence is emphasized in these documents, concluding that the knowledge and skills of each teacher towards these pupils create a critical framework necessary for the pupils' educational development and personal growth. As a response to the need for increased competency for teachers, the Ministry of Education developed a new teacher education program that started in 2010 (Rammeplan for grunnskolelærerutdanningene, 2010). In this new teacher education program, the aims in the curriculum for general teacher education clearly state that all teachers are expected to be able to present adaptive instruction in response to the needs of the pupils. After finishing their education, all teachers are expected to be able to implement several teaching methods, using a variety of resources, and to understand the connection between subject aims, content and evaluation. In addition, all teachers are expected to understand how subject aims, content, and evaluation influence learning based on the needs of each pupil. This focus on adaptive instruction towards the needs of each pupil is reinforced in the curriculum aims for *English* teachers, both at the universities and university colleges. The curriculum aims for English teachers in the programs offered at these institutions of higher education state for example that English teachers are to be able to “plan, lead, and evaluate pupils learning while taking into account the pupils' diversity and special needs” (my translation, Nord-Trøndelag, 2012), and English teachers are to be able to “facilitate linguistic progression for the individual” (my translation, Stavanger, 2012). So the law and the expectations of the institutes of higher education clearly state that all teachers should be able to adapt instruction to teach to the needs of each student.

Pupils who are diagnosed with reading and writing difficulties do not always fulfill the requirements necessary to receive special education. Thus adaptive instruction becomes their access to what is being taught in a regular classroom. However, for English teachers who are to teach these students, some special education knowledge is presumably necessary in order to know how to adapt their instruction. Bele's (2010) research supports this assumption with her findings on teachers' own evaluation of their competency for teaching pupils with special needs. In her research, formal education plays a significant role in the teachers' reported ability to adapt their instruction. Bele's research indicates that formal education, with respect to special needs students, is important for increasing the ability for teachers to implement adaptive instruction. Formal education in Norway is offered for English teachers at the universities and university colleges in teacher education courses and English methodology courses. Do these courses offer the formal education necessary to adapt English as a foreign language instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties?

Reading and writing difficulties, especially dyslexia, have been extensively researched for many years. However research focusing on foreign language learning difficulties and reading and writing difficulties is relatively new. It is within this area that I have chosen my research topic: reading and writing difficulties and English as a foreign language. Although there are several aspects that have been researched within the topic of foreign language learning difficulties, such as biological causes of the difficulties and first language (L1) and second language (L2) influences, my initial interest for acquiring teaching tools for students with reading and writing difficulties has led me to focus in my research on teacher education. Research in Norway on special education and adaptive instruction has for the most part focused on knowledge and skills of teachers in the primary and secondary schools, while research that focuses on knowledge and skills of teachers in higher education is scarce. It is my belief that an understanding of the knowledge and skills of teachers at the higher education level can give an indication of what is being presented to student teachers at Norwegian universities and university colleges. Therefore, in order to gain this insight, I have chosen to interview English methodology teachers at the University of Oslo and at three university colleges located in Southeast Norway.

## 1.2 Key definitions and limitations

Before I further define my research question and its purpose, I will explain my choice of words used in this thesis and define the concepts I will be using throughout. Writing English in a Norwegian context presents interesting challenges with regards to choosing words that need to be similarly understood in English and Norwegian. In the following paragraphs, I will try to explain my choice of words to help facilitate a common understanding of the concepts I use, with the hope that my thesis is understood whether it is read by an English or Norwegian speaker.

The first set of terms refers to education in Norway. I start with the terms pupils and students. Although the term pupil is seldom used in American English, I have chosen to use the word pupil to refer to those taking primary and secondary education. The term student is used mainly for those taking higher education. However, in the instances when referring to those in primary, secondary, *and* higher education, I have chosen to use the term students. Primary education in this thesis is the education that takes place from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade; lower secondary education is education from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade; and upper secondary education is the final three years of the Norwegian public school system that is free to all citizens. For higher education, I have chosen to use the term university colleges for the Norwegian term *høyskole* which refers to a higher educational institution that is often smaller in size and has a limited ability to award educational degrees higher than a bachelor. In my research, it is important to differentiate between the university colleges and the universities due to the differences in their teacher education programs.

The second set of terms relate to my research question. Earlier in this thesis I have referred to teachers at the universities and university colleges as teachers of education and English methodology teachers. I refer to teachers of education as the teachers who have the responsibility for teaching the subject of education, which includes theories of learning, theories of motivation, and theories of development. English methodology teachers are the teachers who have the responsibility for teaching the subject of English, along with the theories and practices needed to be able to teach English. During my interviews I used the term English methods teachers, which caused some confusion. Many Norwegians consider the term *methods teacher* to be too narrow, referring only to the practical aspects of teaching English, or the *methods*, and not to the theories and reflections behind the methods. In Norway, the term didactic teacher is used

to include the teaching of the theories and reflections that are behind why a method is used, and for many Norwegian teachers they would prefer to be titled as an English didactic teacher. However, for a native English speaker, the word didactic has the negative connotation of being forced to learn in a specific way, being told what to do, ironically the opposite of the Norwegian usage. To accommodate for these differences, I have chosen to use the term methodology, a term that will be further explained in Chapter 2. The simple term *English teacher* refers to English teachers who teach at the primary and secondary schools.

The term English education has several different definitions. Is English being taught as native language (L1), a foreign language (EFL) or as a second language (ESL)? The Ministry of Education and Research (2003) referred to English being taught in Norway as ‘English as a second language’ in a report which aimed to highlight the emphasis placed on English language education in Norway. This report created a discussion about to what degree EFL or ESL is taking place in Norway. With regards to English teacher education, the outcome of this interesting discussion has implications to what teachers do in the classroom, implications that will be discussed in chapter two. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I refer to English education in Norway as EFL.

I have chosen the term *adaptive instruction* for the Norwegian term *tilpasset oppl ring*, a difficult term that in essence means teaching to the needs of each student. In Norway, the content and significance of adaptive instruction has changed with time and with the politics of the society (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006). A full definition for this difficult and complex term requires more attention than the scope of my thesis. For this thesis, adaptive instruction refers to the instruction that takes place in the community of the classroom. Adaptive instruction is what teachers do to meet the needs of all students. Although Buli-Holmberg and Ekeberg (2009) include special education in their definition of adaptive instruction, due to the focus of my research, I have chosen to limit my definition to the instruction that occurs within the classroom without the support of a special education teacher or the support of extra funding. All students in Norway have the right to adaptive instruction, a right that is expressed in the Norwegian Education Law, §1-3 (Oppl ringsloven, 1998).

Because I have chosen to use the term adaptive instruction and not special education, I have chosen to use the general term, *reading and writing difficulties*. Sometimes a more specific

learning disability such as dyslexia releases extra resources, including teaching hours with a specialist in the field of reading and writing. However, in each classroom, there are pupils who read and write below the expected level of their peers and have been assessed as having reading and writing difficulties but do not receive any extra resources. Therefore, in this thesis, the term reading and writing difficulties includes all pupils who perform significantly below the expectations of their grade level. Thus, this term also includes pupils with dyslexia.

The final set of terms I would like to define is Language 1 (L1) and Language 2 (L2). L1 is defined as the first language learned or native language. L2 is the second language learned. In chapter 2, when presenting theories of language learning, L1 does not necessarily mean Norwegian nor does L2 always mean English, although in the other chapters of this thesis, L1 and L2 most often refer to Norwegian and English respectively.

### **1.3 Purpose and research question**

The purpose of my research is to better understand to what degree English methodology teachers in higher education take the concepts of adaptive instruction and reading and writing difficulties into consideration in their methodology courses. To what degree do English methodology teachers believe that addressing adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties is part of their teaching responsibility? And to what degree do English methodology teachers instruct their student teachers on this topic? Hopefully, answers to these questions can lead to further discussions on adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties and possibly discussions on the education of English teachers in Norway. With this purpose in mind, I have chosen the following research questions:

**How do English methodology teachers' understand adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties?**

**To what extent do they report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction of English language student teachers?**

## **1.4 Thesis outline**

The following thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter 1 gives a short background and specific descriptions of concepts that are relevant for the topic, research question and its purpose.

In chapter 2, I look at theories and research that form the framework for my thesis. I begin by presenting an overview of EFL in Norway, including an outline of the different educational programs for EFL teachers in Norway. The second section presents reading and writing difficulties, paying particular attention to how these difficulties can affect learning a foreign language. In the third section I present an overview of foreign language methodology, adaptive instruction and how two particular methods can be adapted to students with reading and writing difficulties. The final section provides theories and research that discuss how teacher's knowledge, attitudes and skills affect the quality of teaching and student achievement for students with reading and writing difficulty.

In chapter 3, I present the research methods I have used to gather the information necessary to answer my research questions. In this section, I describe the process of creating the interview guide, choosing my informants, preparing for my interviews, and analyzing the results. I finish this chapter by discussing the reliability, validity, and ethical implications of my research.

In chapter 4, the results of my research are presented through the use of the categories developed in the interview guide. The results are then discussed in chapter 5. I complete my thesis by highlighting the conclusions found in my research, conclusions that perhaps can facilitate further discussion or research in the area of reading and writing difficulties and EFL.

## **Chapter 2: Theory**

### **2.0 Introduction**

In chapter two, I will provide the framework necessary for understanding adaptive instruction for English language learners with reading and writing difficulties. In order to do this, I will separate this chapter into four sections. The first section focuses on the subject of English in Norway. The second section centers on reading and writing difficulties and learning a foreign language. In the third section, I will present foreign language methodology and how some methods can affect students with reading and writing difficulties, ending with suggestions for adaptive instruction. The final section will present research that discusses how teacher's knowledge, attitude and skills affect student achievement.

### **2.1 English in Norway**

Chapter 2.1 begins with discussing how the differences found in ESL and EFL affect teaching English to pupils with reading and writing difficulties. I then briefly describe the English curriculum aims in Norway for primary and secondary education, followed by how the expected learning outcomes for the pupils can impact instruction for pupils with reading and writing difficulties. This section in chapter 2 concludes with a presentation of the different teacher education programs, including the learning outcomes expected for English student teachers.

#### *2.1.1 ESL or EFL?*

What is the difference between English as a second language (ESL) and English a foreign language (EFL)? In general, it is the students and the location that define English education as either ESL or EFL. ESL education takes place when English is taught to students of other languages in an English-speaking country, for example Australia or the USA. When English is taught to students outside of an English-speaking country, the English education is considered EFL. Using this definition, all English education in Norway is EFL, although as briefly stated in the introduction, a debate has recently taken place as to whether English education in Norway is ESL or EFL (Graddol & Meinhoff, as cited in Hellekjær, 2009). For teachers of English, the difference between teaching EFL and ESL can be found in the content and methods used in the class. ESL students often have a more practical and immediate need for the language, providing

a direct motivation to learn the language. The content in ESL classes may center on survival situations, such as giving and receiving directions, filling out job applications, and understanding public information. For younger ESL learners, the content may have a balance between survival English and English needed to understand the subjects being taught at school, for example, math, social studies, and sciences. ESL students have a wealth of opportunities to experience the language outside of the classroom. In an ESL classroom, there is often no common first language, requiring the ESL teacher to use over-simplified English while communicating with the students. Finally, the ESL classroom can be seen as a connection between the students' own culture and the English speaking culture they are currently living in, focusing on integration into the new culture.

EFL classrooms differ with respect to the students and content of the classroom. In contrast to the ESL students, who have different cultural backgrounds, EFL students most often come from the same cultural background, allowing the EFL teacher to use first language explanations when necessary, and allowing EFL teachers to focus on the cultural differences found in the country being studied and the country of which the students live. Language exposure also distinguishes the two types of education: while the language opportunities for ESL students are many, EFL student may be limited to the classroom and dependent on the EFL teacher. It can be argued that Norwegians have many language opportunities outside of the classroom, similar to an ESL situation. However, much of the English language Norwegians experience is filtered language through TV, radio, or films, thus placing a demand on teachers as a source of more advanced language and subtle cultural awareness (Helland, 2008). Hellekjær (2009) refers to this filtered English language influence found outside of the classroom in his research where he shows that that an increase in the number of teaching hours does not necessarily lead to a higher level of English reading fluency among high school pupils in Norway. This suggests that the amount of English outside of the classroom can have as strong an influence as classroom teachers on the English level of pupils finishing upper secondary education. Finally, sources of motivation differ for ESL and EFL students. ESL students find motivation for learning English from the need to communicate in English outside of the classroom. For EFL students motivation is often dependent on the EFL teachers' ability to expose EFL students to living English, and to the cultural and communicative aspects of the language. EFL students can easily lose track of why



they should learn the language. Although a degree of motivation to learn English lies outside the classroom in Norway due to films, music and the Internet, motivation to advance beyond immediate oral competency often is challenged in the Norwegian EFL classrooms (Hellekjær, 2009).

How does this apply to teaching English to students with reading and writing difficulties? As described above, EFL teachers become a significant source for language input and culture. To motivate struggling students, EFL teachers must have an above average knowledge of the language as well as a variety of approaches to teaching the language (Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Helland, 2008; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). They must have the tools to motivate students with reading and writing difficulties in order to maintain the motivation necessary to learn the language. However, the relatively protected EFL classroom also provides for opportunities for well-structured lessons aimed at the needs of students with reading and writing problems. I will further discuss these demands on EFL teachers and their opportunities in the classrooms in the section describing methods for teaching EFL (section 3).

### *2.1.2 The English curriculum for primary and secondary schools*

In 2006, the Norwegian Ministry of Education issued a new curriculum for the public schools, called in English LK06 (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006). In addition to increasing the number of teaching hours for English, LK06 also defines specific learning outcomes expected after the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and the first year of upper secondary school (Vg1). These learning outcomes are the guiding principles for the content in the EFL classrooms in Norway. The learning outcomes are separated into three areas: 1) language learning 2) communication and 3) culture, society, and literature. A closer look at the language learning outcomes for Norwegian pupils reveals the expectation of pupils not only to be English language users, but also English language learners. Under the heading of language learning, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are to be able to give examples as to when and where they can use English. In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, they are not only expected to use the concepts of grammar and syntax but also expected to describe their own learning of the language using these grammatical terms. The learning outcomes for pupils at the end of Vg1 expect pupils to select and use reading, writing, listening, and speaking strategies appropriate to the situation (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006). Being able to select an appropriate

strategy involves being able to evaluate situations where and when to best use them. These learning outcomes require cognitive functions that lie beyond the simple use of the language and as will be discussed later in the thesis, can both create extra challenges for pupils with reading and writing difficulties but also create a platform that can help them.

### *2.1.3 Programs and curriculum aims for English teachers*

There are two possible programs available in Norway to become certified as an English teacher. The first program is the teacher education program, a four-year program offered at the university colleges. As mentioned earlier, this program was revised in 2010. The new program divides teacher education into two programs, one program that specializes teachers to teach grades 1-7 (GLU1) and another program that specializes teachers to teach grades 5-10 (GLU2). In the GLU1 program, Norwegian, math, computer technology, entrepreneurship, and education theories are required subjects for all. The rest of the subjects studied in this program are chosen from a list of subjects taught in the public schools, including English. GLU1 students are required to study a full-year specialization in Math, Norwegian, or English. Although English is one of the choices for specialization, English is not one of the required courses for all student teachers, creating a situation where newly educated GLU1 teachers can be asked to teach English in their classrooms with only the English competency from one year of upper secondary school (VG1). GLU2 also provides choices for students who will become teachers. However, GLU2 students are required to further specialize, equivalent to one year of study, in two subject areas instead of one. As with GLU1, English is not a required subject for all student teachers, but rather a specialized choice subject. The requirement for teaching English at the lower secondary level (8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade) is 1/2 year of study in English at an institution of higher education. Additional requirements are currently being reviewed, with the suggestion of requiring a full-year study of English at an institution of higher education. However, this requirement will not affect teaching 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. So as in GLU1, some GLU2 students can be asked to teach English, at least in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade, without any further English than the English they received at their upper secondary school.

The second program available for becoming an English teacher is offered both at the university and the university colleges. The program is called *Praktisk Pedagogisk Utdanning* (PPU). PPU

is offered to those who have finished a degree in higher education or have practical working experience seen as relevant to teaching at the public schools. PPU, with focus on English foreign language teaching, is offered to those students with a minimum of one year study of English at an institute of higher education. However, many of the university PPU students have finished a bachelor of English. PPU for English student teachers is a one-year intensive program and offers educational theory, English methodology, and practical experience. After finishing PPU, student teachers are certified to teach English at the lower and upper secondary schools.

A closer look at the curriculum aims, or intended learning outcomes, for students in both of these programs reveal a common focus on adaptive instruction in their theories of education classes. As mentioned in the introduction, curriculum aims for each program includes being able to plan, adapt and execute instruction adapted to the learning abilities of the pupils (Kunnskapsdepartementet , 2010; UiO Universitet i Oslo, 2011.).

The content and focus of the courses for English teaching methodology in the GLU and PPU program differ. For example at the university colleges, the GLU1 and GLU2 programs incorporate English teaching methodology along with teaching English as a subject; in other words, while GLU students are learning English, they are also learning how to teach it. In the PPU programs, there is no focus on teaching English as a subject. An English PPU students may receive straight methodology classes for teaching a foreign language in general, and not specifically teaching English as a foreign language. In these PPU methodology classes, PPU students wishing to teach English as a foreign language are placed in the same class as other foreign language PPU students where the common language of the class is Norwegian, not English. In addition, the specific curriculum aims focusing on adaptive instruction may also differ among the institutions and the PPU and GLU programs, as each institute of higher education is allowed to create their own subject curriculum. However, as mentioned in the introduction, there is common curriculum goal in all education classes that requires student teachers to have the competency to plan, justify, implement, and evaluate adaptive instruction. This common curriculum goal in education classes, must be seen as an overriding goal that includes being able to adapt instruction in EFL classes.

## **2.2 Reading and writing difficulties and EFL**

In this section, I will give a general orientation of reading and writing difficulties to aid in understanding how these difficulties may influence EFL. An in-depth description of reading and writing difficulties, including dyslexia, is beyond the scope of this thesis. I will instead describe three areas of language learning that are most often the source of difficulties with the written language. I will also give a brief description of dyslexia. I will end this section with focusing on theories of how difficulties in the first language (L1) may influence learning a second language (L2).

### *2.2.1 Three areas of language learning that can cause reading and writing difficulties*

Reading and writing difficulties differ depending on the levels of severity and the combination of the difficulties found in these three language learning areas: 1) the phonological / orthographic area 2) the syntactic area, and 3) the semantic area (Bråten, 2010; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Gillet, Temple, Crawford, Mathews II, & Young, 2000; Nijakowska, 2010; Pressley, 2006). Students who have difficulties with the phonological and orthographic area of language learning have problems with distinguishing the sounds of the language, for example vowels and consonants. In addition, they often have trouble with remembering the sound and letter combinations, making it difficult to sound out words in the decoding process. Students who have phonological and orthographic difficulties often have basic difficulties pronouncing, reading, and spelling words. Problems with the syntactic area of language learning manifest themselves as problems with grammar and how words are related in the sentence. Pupils with such problems may have trouble with the correct use of verb tenses, plurals, and possessives. Incomplete sentences may also occur for these students while writing. The third area, the semantic area, relates to meaning of words in the context of the text. Problems with semantics may affect reading comprehension. Students with semantic difficulties may have had problems in early childhood with understanding directions or information given to them orally (Gillet, et. al., 2000; Hulme & Snowling, 2009). As stated above, reading and writing difficulties occur in degrees of severity and vary with combinations of these three areas. However, difficulties in the

phonological / orthographic area represent the most common area for students with reading and writing difficulties, and for students who experience difficulties in learning a foreign language (Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Gillet, et al., 2000; Nijakowska, 2010; Pressley, 2006; Schneider & Crombie, 2003).

### 2.2.2 Dyslexia

Much of the research I use in this study that focuses on reading and writing difficulties and learning a foreign language has been done with students with dyslexia (Helland, 2008; Helland & Morken, 2011; Miller-Guron & Lundberg, 2000; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). Because the concept of *reading and writing difficulties* includes dyslexia, a general understanding about dyslexia is also necessary. Research on dyslexia is complex and results are often conflicting, and although dyslexia has been intensely researched for many years, there are still disagreements among specialists as to the causes of dyslexia (Helland, 2008; Hulme & Snowling, 2009; Høien, 2008; Lyster, 1999; Lyster & Frost, 2008; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). However, one way of grasping a basic understanding of dyslexia is by looking at dyslexia from three different perspectives: biological, cognitive, and behavioral. As with general reading and writing difficulties, students with dyslexia have varying degrees of severities within each area. A biological explanation of dyslexia focuses on the functions of the brain, where students with dyslexia have been found to have a biological disorder that influences the area in their brain where language processing takes place (Hulme & Snowling, 2009; Lyster, 1999). A cognitive explanation of dyslexia focuses on the dyslectic's reduced working memory, poor phonological processing, and slow if not incomplete automatization of word recognition (Hulme & Snowling, 2009; Høien, 2010; Lyster, 1999). From a behaviour perspective, dyslexia refers to behavioural symptoms that manifest themselves due to either cognitive or biological disorders. Such behavioural symptoms may be reading and spelling difficulties, difficulties in recognizing rhymes and sound differences, difficulty with motion sensitivity, and difficulty with maintaining balance (Hulme & Snowling, 2009; Nijakowska, 2010). Additional behavioural manifestations for many students with dyslexia occur in the form of ADHD, anxiety and depression (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Hulme & Snowling, 2009; Tønnessen, Bru, & Heiervang, 2008). In the following, I will discuss how the above mentioned difficulties in L1 may influence learning of L2.

### 2.2.3 Influences of L1 difficulties on L2 learning

Difficulties in learning a foreign language have been researched since the early 1960's, when Paul Pimsleur and his colleagues proposed for the first time that students' ability to work with sounds and sound – symbols in L1 was one of the deciding factors for their success in learning L2 (Ganschow, Sparks, & Javorsky, 1998). Later, Sparks and Ganschow (1991 and 1993) introduced a linguistic coding deficit hypothesis (LCDH) which connects areas of language learning, *linguistic codes* (specifically phonological, orthographic and syntactic skills), in L1 to learning L2, stating that a deficit in L1 will have a direct effect on learning L2. That is to say, students who have difficulties with recognizing sounds and symbols in L1, the phonological and orthographic area, will also struggle in L2. While studying a FL, students with syntactic difficulties in L1 will also struggle recognizing and learning new grammatical structures in L2. In addition to the phonological, orthographic, and syntactic challenges, students with reading and writing difficulties may experience extra challenges in a FL related to reduced working memory capacity, ADHD, and psychological difficulties, such as anxiety and depression (Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Nijakowska, 2010; Sparks & Ganschow, 1993).

When looking at reading in L2, it may seem obvious that the technical skills required to read in L1 are the same skills needed to read in L2. However, we may not be able to automatically assume that good reading skills in L1 automatically transfer to good reading in L2. There are additional challenges for all readers when reading in L2, challenges that become even more significant for students with reading and writing difficulties. Alderson (2005) states that both knowledge of reading skills and knowledge of L2 are important when reading in L2 but knowledge of the second language may have a stronger influence on L2 reading than L1 reading abilities. Alderson refers then to the linguistic threshold. The linguistic threshold can be defined as sufficient amount of L2 knowledge (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and discourse) that is needed to make use of the skills and strategies used in L1 reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Readers cannot expect any L1 reading ability to transfer to L2 reading if they have not reached this threshold. How does this affect students with reading and writing difficulties? Grabe (2002) states that the most significant factor in the linguistic threshold is a sufficient amount of vocabulary in L2. As mentioned above, students with reading and writing difficulties may struggle with the initial recognizing and understanding of new words due to phonological and

orthographical difficulties, but they may have an additional struggle with retaining this vocabulary due to reduced working memory capacity and the ability to store the vocabulary in their long-term memory.

Further research on difficulties in learning a FL has focused on the *affective* factors of learning a FL, such as motivation, anxiety, and attitude, describing students who struggle with learning a FL as students who show less motivation, higher anxiety and more negative attitude for learning a FL (Kozaki & Ross, 2011; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1992; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Young, 1991). As stated earlier, students with reading and writing difficulties can also display behaviours such as anxiety and depression, both of which can interfere with learning a FL (Bru, 2008; Egen, 2008; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Skinner & Smith, 2011; Tønnessen, et al., 2008; Young, 1991). Although the above researchers show a correlation between anxiety and motivation on the one hand, and attitude and learning a FL on the other, they do not show that high anxiety, low motivation and poor attitude are causes of difficulties in learning a foreign language. Many researchers have put forward the hypothesis that it is the difficulties in L1 causing difficulties in learning a FL, that create the high anxiety, low motivation, and poor attitudes towards learning a FL (Crombie, 2001; Downey, et al., 2000; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Ganschow, et al., 1998 ; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991; Sparks & Ganschow, 1993).

Not all research supports the linguistic coding deficit hypothesis. Miller-Guron and Lundberg (2000) have researched a handful of dyslexic students who prefer reading in English as a second language, presenting a challenge to the assumption that efficient word decoding in L1 is a prerequisite for efficient L2 reading, at least when L2 is English. In their study, Miller-Guron and Lundberg point to positive socio-cultural and emotional factors these dyslectic students may have encountered in their early contact with ESL. In addition, Miller-Guron and Lundberg suggest that since dyslectic L1 readers often can compensate for their phonological decoding difficulties by focusing on whole words and using the context to understand the reading, this reading strategy may actually become an advantage for dyslectic students learning to read in ESL due to the orthography of the English language. Therefore, I will end this section with a short description of how the orthography of a language, the relationship between the phonemes

(sounds) and the graphemes (letters or groups of letters representing the sounds), may influence the learning of a second language, especially for students with reading and writing difficulties in their first language.

Different languages differ with respect to their orthography. Some languages, such as Spanish, are considered transparent. Transparent languages have a strong, if not one-to-one correspondence between each sound and the letters that represent the sound. Norwegian is considered a semi-transparent language with 29 letters and 36 graphemes representing the 40 Norwegian phonemes. English, on the other hand is considered deep or non-transparent, with 26 letters, 561 graphemes representing 44 phonemes (Birsh, 2011; Helland & Kaasa, 2005). For Norwegian students who struggle with the phonemic and orthographic aspect of language learning, such as students with dyslexia, learning *English* as a foreign language can present an even stronger challenge to language learning due to the lack of transparency of the language. However, it is also this non-transparency of English that gives the above mentioned dyslectic students who preferred reading in ESL the advantage, as they may have developed other strategies for written language processing and learning that are not so dependent on the relationship between phonemes and graphemes (Miller-Guron & Lundberg, 2000).

## **2.3 Foreign language teaching methodology and adaptive instruction**

In the third section of chapter 2, I will provide a brief overview of FL methodology, focusing on two current approaches to language learning and how these approaches can be realized in the form of FL teaching methods. I will then give some examples how these methods can affect students with reading and writing difficulties. I will end this section by providing a possible definition of adaptive instruction, and then using current research, I will describe six suggestions for adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties.

### *2.3.1 Foreign language teaching methodology*

The term methodology when used in the context of language teaching can be broken down into smaller units including approaches, methods, techniques, and procedures/models. Approaches include the theoretical beliefs of language learning that govern the practices and principles of language teaching. Methods are the practical realizations of an approach, and within a method,



there are various techniques that are made up of procedures or sequence of events (Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In the following, I will present two basic approaches to FL teaching that are currently in use. The scope of my thesis requires me to simplify the complex body of knowledge of FL methodology. This simplification, although necessary, can also be misleading for the reader, as methods and techniques used to implement these approaches may share aspects of both approaches.

Before the 1970's much of the FL teaching was based on a view of language learning where a FL was to be learned through repetitive drills of language structures, leading to language acquisition (Howatt & Widdowson , 2004). This view of language learning was challenged by several linguists who emphasized social interactions as also necessary when learning a language. Noam Chomsky is one of these linguists, who also introduced the concept of a language acquisition device (LAD), which is described as an innate language device that helps us learn a universal grammar that underlies all languages. As cited in the book, *A History of English Language Teaching*, (Howatt & Widdowson , 2004), Chomsky argues that language learning is not based on learning a set of grammatical structures to be memorized but rather based on acquiring the universal grammar that underlies all languages, and the acquisition of this universal grammar is what allows us to put together the variety of grammatical structures that make up our language. According to Chomsky, this acquisition of the universal grammar happens for the most part innately and in social interactions (Howatt & Widdowson , 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Obilinovic, 2006). Although both approaches I describe below support the theories that language learning is more than just learning (memorizing) language structures, each approach has its own specific view on the best way to utilize the students' LAD and their cognitive ability to learn. The two approaches I will describe below are a *naturalistic* approach and a *cognitively oriented* approach to FL teaching. I believe it necessary to understand these language learning approaches when talking about methods and techniques for FL teaching of students with reading and writing difficulties. As will be discussed further in the last section of chapter two, teachers' attitudes, knowledge and skills likely play an important role while teaching FL to students with reading and writing difficulties (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Crombie, 2001; Helland & Morken, 2011; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). And if teachers are not aware of the approaches that their teaching methods and techniques derive from, they may be less likely to

understand the adaptations that are necessary for teaching FL to students with reading and writing difficulties (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The first approach, the *naturalistic* approach, is based on much of the research of Krashen (1982). Methods and techniques built on a naturalistic approach to FL teaching include no formal language structure instruction. In a naturalistic approach to teaching, there is a distinction between learning and acquiring a language. Students *learn* when the focus in the classroom is on the form (grammar, syntax, semantics) or function (requesting, demanding, questioning) of the language. In contrast, students *acquire* the language when the focus in the classroom is on meaningful communication (Harmer, 2001; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The naturalistic approach focuses on language *acquisition*, which comes naturally when students are given enough comprehensible input and are required to participate in activities that are meaningful. In naturalistic methods, teachers take on the role of caretakers, where they interact with students in activities that require using the language for communication (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Obilinovic, 2006).

A *cognitively oriented* approach to FL teaching is based on the theory that although students may or may not have an active LAD after a certain age, when learning L2, teachers should and can use the cognitive superiority of students who have learned a first language. A cognitively oriented approach to FL teaching believes that forms and functions can be *learned*, not just acquired. Using the advanced cognitive skills available to students, FL teachers should focus on the form and functions of the language. Methods and techniques that use a cognitively oriented approach to FL teaching will teach these forms and functions either inductively or deductively. That is to say, the teachers will directly teach the forms and functions in lectures or presentations (deductive) or the students will “discover” the forms and functions by the controlled activities provided by the teacher (inductive). It is here that the two approaches, naturalistic or cognitively oriented, can be easily confused or interchanged as it is difficult to know whether a language form or function is *learned* inductively by using a method in a cognitively oriented approach to FL teaching or *acquired* by using a method from a naturalistic approach to FL teaching (Drew & Sørheim, 2009; Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Obilinovic, 2006). So how do

realizations of these approaches manifest in a classroom setting and how do they affect students with reading and writing difficulties?

One realization of the natural approach to language learning is Task Based Learning (TBL) (Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In a classroom where TBL is present, the focus is on using English to complete a task. The teacher's job is to organize tasks where students are required to use the language in order to complete the task. The target language is used throughout the activity, both in the teacher's presentation of the task and in the student's completion of the task. Communication-gap activities, such as filling out a time-table where each member of a group has only part of the information needed, are good examples of TBL activities. In TBL classrooms, the target language, English, is used to create meaning for completing tasks, and the teacher acts as an advisor to help complete these tasks while using English.

A method that falls under a *cognitively oriented* approach to FL teaching is a communicative language teaching method (CLT) (Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). CLT focuses on teaching the function of the language. Within this method, students are presented with a variety of communicative activities where a particular language function is practiced. For example, students in an intermediate level course using CLT may be given an authentic newspaper article that predicts the outcome of a sports event. The students are to read the article and find the sentences that express the reporter's predictions, inductively *discovering* the function of the language in the newspaper article that expresses degrees of certainty. The students are then to say which predictions they believe the reporter is most certain of and least certain of. A follow-up activity may be to then write down these sentences that show predictions in order of degree of certainty. The class then can look at these sentences to learn the forms and the vocabulary of the function that appear in these sentences. A follow-up activity, within the same lesson, may be a group game where each student is given cards that describe a weekend activity. The students are then to guess the degree of certainty of whether a student will do the given weekend activity, based on an open dialogue, focusing on the language forms and functions learned earlier in the lesson. In CLT lessons, many of the activities are open-ended, allowing for a variety of language use. The use of games makes for real communication where the students receive an immediate

response for understanding. The activities are meant to present meaningful real-life communicative opportunities in order to practice the language function. In the classroom, the target language is used for communicating throughout the entire lesson (Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The choice of method used likely affects the learning of all students. However, for students with reading and writing difficulties, this choice can become the deciding factor for successful or unsuccessful FL learning (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Crombie, 2001; Drew & Sørheim, 2009; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Helland, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). Both of the methods described above can include positive learning conditions for students with reading and writing difficulties. For example, they both have a potentially high motivation factor, as the students are engaged in meaningful communication using the language to be learned. The focus on oral language in both these methods can also allow for positive learning conditions for some students who struggle with the written word. However, both methods can also present a variety of difficulties for these same students.

The first, and perhaps most obvious difficulty with the CLT method, is the reading activity itself, the activity that is the foundation of learning the language function to be taught in the lesson. Due to the student's reading difficulties, the teacher cannot assume that the student understands the text without further supportive instruction (Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Santamaria, Fletcher, & Bos, 2002; Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Nijakowska, 2010). In addition to the reading itself, there are other, fundamental aspects of these teaching methods that challenge students with reading and writing difficulties. As stated earlier, one of the difficulties students with reading and writing difficulties can have is syntactic difficulties, that is, difficulties understanding the relationship between the words within a sentence. In the above CLT example, the students are to implicitly recognize the words used to show the degree of certainty. There is no direct teaching of the words or function being used in the classroom. The use of such inductive instruction is based on the assumption that students' engagement in creating the concept to be learned creates a stronger chance for learning to take place. Assuming students with reading and writing difficulties, especially students with dyslexia, can discover a language

function or form conflicts with the difficulty many of these students have, which is the capability to recognize relationship between words within a sentence. Thus, implicit learning situations can create situations where these students are more likely to fail.

The open-endedness of the activities used in both methods can also present challenges for students with reading and writing difficulties. Again, as stated above, some students with reading and writing difficulties, including dyslexia, have working memory difficulties and behavioral difficulties such as ADHD and anxiety. The open-ended communicative activities in these lessons are not structured, requiring students to concentrate, self-regulate and focus on the purpose of the activity. Students with weakened working memory and attention capacity can struggle with these unstructured lessons. Finally, open-ended activities present opportunities for failure, as the students themselves must create the language needed to communicate. These activities require a certain degree of language ability in order to be able to successfully execute them. The anxiety or uncertainty already found in many students with reading and writing difficulties can be thus compounded by the openness of the activity, and resulting in emotional interference that can make it even more difficult for these students to learn the foreign language (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1992; Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991; Young, 1991).

### *2.3.2 Adaptive instruction*

An understanding of adaptive instruction in the Norwegian school system is necessary for understanding the responsibilities and possibilities of using adaptive instruction in the FL classroom. In addition, a more general understanding of adaptive instruction may provide for a framework around which the methodology teachers' description and experiences of adaptive instruction in the FL classroom presented in chapter 4 can be better understood.

An equal, inclusive, and adapted education is the backbone of the Norwegian education system. It is the guiding principle in school and is anchored in the Education Law §1-3, which states that the pupils' education shall be adapted to their individual differences and abilities (my translation) (Opplæringsloven, 1998). There is an underlying ideological tension with the term adaptive instruction. This tension is created by two terms that seemingly oppose each other, inclusion and

adaptive instruction. Teachers may experience this tension when balancing the rights of each individual and the right to be included in the classroom community (Haug & Bachmann, 2007). Haug and Bachmann (2007) conclude that the means to adaptive instruction is not through simple changes in methods but rather through the teachers' awareness of making ethical choices between the individual and the classroom, between focusing on the demands put forth in the curriculum and the interests and needs of the pupils. Strandkleiv and Lindbäck (2004) write that adaptive instruction occurs when the focus at the school and in the classroom is learning for *all* pupils. They define adaptive instruction as adapting for *learning* based on the where the pupils are, both in abilities to learn and motivation to learn. They continue by explaining that the knowledge and understanding of the pupils' abilities and personalities is necessary in order for learning to occur. And learning *only* occurs in the space between what pupils can currently achieve and what the pupils are capable to achieve in the near future. In other words, in order to practice adaptive instruction within the community of the classroom, teachers need to know how to evaluate where the pupils are academically and motivationally. Moreover, the teachers need to know how to differentiate such that pupils can achieve what they are capable of achieving (Buli-Holmberg & Ekeberg, 2009; Haug & Bachmann, 2007; Strandkleiv & Lindbäck, 2004).

Adapting to individual differences demands a degree of differentiation within the classroom. So what is differentiation with respect to adaptive instruction? Dale and Wærness (2006) and Dale (2008) use seven different categories for discussing differentiation in adaptive instruction. These categories include 1) pupils' abilities, 2) work plans and learning outcomes 3) tasks and tempo, 4) organizing of the school days, 5) learning environment and tools for learning, 6) means and methods of teaching, and 7) assessment. These categories allow for a discussion of differentiation in adaptive instruction in a structured manner. However, due to the scope of my thesis, I have chosen to collapse these seven categories into three larger categories. The first two categories are organizational differentiation and pedagogical differentiation, also used by Strandkleiv and Lindbäck (2004), and the final category is assessment.

*Organizational differentiation* includes Dale and Wærness' categories of pupils' abilities, work plans and learning outcomes, and organization of the school days. An example of organizational differentiation is using the pupils' abilities to group according to levels of learning or creating

individual work plans according to pupils' abilities. This type of differentiation can make it easier to adapt the activities and tasks to the needs of the pupils. Although the pupils may receive adapted materials and methods with organizational differentiation that may positively aid in learning, they may also experience an exclusion from the classroom community.

*Pedagogical differentiating* includes Dale and Wærness' categories of learning environment and tools for learning, means and methods of teaching, and tasks and tempo. Pedagogical differentiation also means differentiating the quality of learning, which may include offering a variety of texts differing in their difficulty, flexible working methods, such as cooperative learning, learning workshops and pair work and using teaching aids such as computers to adapt to the individuals. Finally pedagogical differentiation concerns the quantity of learning where teachers can increase or reduce the amount of work expected from the students in order to adapt to their needs and abilities (Buli-Holmberg & Ekeberg, 2009; Haug & Bachmann, 2007; Strandkleiv & Lindbäck, 2004).

The final category is *assessment*, a category that is closely related to both of the previous categories. Formal and informal assessment is a necessary part of adaptive instruction (Buli-Holmberg & Ekeberg, 2009; Haug & Bachmann, 2007). In 2010, the Department of Education began a 4-year program called *Assessment for Learning* which focuses on improving the assessment practices in the Norwegian schools (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012). In this program, the Department of Education uses the terms *assessment of learning* and *assessment for learning*. *Assessment of learning* includes formal evaluation, evaluation such as standardized tests and end-of-term evaluations. *Assessment of learning* has the purpose of describing the level of pupils' achievement in relationship to learning goals, in relation to teachers and students' expectations and often in relation to others. *Assessment for learning*, or informal assessment, takes place during the learning process, and has the purpose of helping the pupil to achieve the learning goals and expectations (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012; Weaver, 2011). With *assessment for learning*, a constant dialogue between the pupils and the teachers on the assessments made in class is necessary in order to know and understand where the pupils are, what the pupils can be expected to learn, and how best to implement that learning. As mentioned

earlier, this knowledge and understanding is a necessary element when implementing adaptive instruction, including pedagogical differentiation and organizational differentiation.

### 2.3.3 Suggested adaptive instruction in a FL class

The general overview of adaptive instruction given above serves as a backdrop for the following suggestions for adapting instruction specifically for the challenges students with reading and writing difficulties may have with learning a FL. As will be apparent, most of the suggested adaptations fall in the category of pedagogical differentiation, an area where teachers have a strong influence.

The following six suggestions reoccur in the literature on FL learning difficulties and teaching a FL to students with dyslexia. A full description of these adaptations and relevant supporting evidence can be found especially in two books recently published on FL learning and dyslexia: *Dyslexia and Foreign Language Learning* by Schneider and Crombie (2003) and *Dyslexia in the Foreign Language Classroom* by Nijakowska (2010). Although some of the literature I refer to in the following makes references to teaching students who have difficulties in learning a FL and not specifically to students with reading and writing difficulties, I have chosen to include them because many of the adaptations I will describe are also supported in the literature on teaching a FL to students with dyslexia. In addition, Sparks and Ganschow (1991 and 1993) offer strong evidence that supports the assumption that difficulties in learning a FL stem from L1 difficulties with phonological processing, a L1 difficulty that is most often the source of reading and writing difficulties. When reviewing these six suggestions, it is clear that the suggestions most often are implementable when using a cognitively oriented approach to teaching a FL, although not all of these suggestions can be used when implementing the specific CLT method mentioned above. However, is it realistic to believe that FL teachers adhere strictly to one method? Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Harmer (2001) point out that teachers seldom use one method in its original form, but rather pick and choose from techniques and methods according to the needs of their students. In this view, teachers do not accept or reject complete methods but rather pick and choose from each method the parts that work well in the particular learning situation. A teacher who subscribes to this pluralistic position is said to be eclectic. *Principled eclecticism* occurs when the choices that are made are based on a coherent philosophy of the teacher. Teachers who



practice principled eclecticism can answer the question why they have chosen a method or part of the method based on their philosophy of language teaching (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Therefore, while describing the suggestions for adaptive instruction below, I refer to both approaches and methods, well aware that a combination of approaches and methods most likely take place at any time in the classroom.

The six suggestions for adaptive instruction are the following: 1) Use explicit and structured instruction, 2) Provide for frequent review and repetition, 3) Use multisensory instruction, 4) Teach language learning strategies, 5) Lower the anxiety for the pupils by allowing for L1 use, and 6) Allow for alternative assessments. Each of these suggestions is described below.

1) Use explicit and structured instruction: Directly teach the language forms and functions.

Neither task based learning (TBL) or communicative language teaching (CLT) support the use of directly teaching of forms and functions. However, the cognitively oriented approach does. For students with reading and writing difficulties it is important for the teachers to focus in the early stages of language learning on the letter-sound relationship of the language and move towards the syntactic and semantics of the language as students develop in their language learning. By directly teaching these forms and functions, the teachers ensure that those students who struggle to infer meaning from text or to recognize grapheme- phoneme relationships receive the information necessary to continue their language learning. Study guides, summary sheets, graphic representations, and semantic maps can help structure what is being taught and give the students reference guides for information they may struggle to remember. The research on the benefits of explicit instruction in L1 for students with learning difficulties in the primary and secondary schools is extensive, and although the data is more limited when it comes to FL learning, there is a growing research base that supports explicit instruction also in FL learning (Crombie, 2001; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Helland & Morken, 2011; Schwarz, 1997; Skinner & Smith, 2011; Sparks, et al., 1998; Nijakowska, 2010).

2) Provide for frequent review and repetition: The CLT method supports this suggestion for adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties as the variety of activities presented in the classroom are meant to repeat the function being learned. TBL, on the other

hand, does not specifically allow for this frequent review because the teacher's role in a TBL classroom is as an advisor that focuses on the task to be done, leaving the choice of tasks up to the pupils. As stated earlier, reduced working memory, poor phonological processing, and slow if not incomplete automatisaton of word recognition are often found in students with reading and writing difficulties. These difficulties make it a necessity to frequently review and repeat what is being taught in order to promote automaticity (Crombie, 2001; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Helland & Morken, 2011; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003).

3) Use multisensory instruction: Both TBL and CLT have a potential for being adapted with multisensory instruction. Multisensory instruction focuses on using all senses for learning, and by adding real-life experiments, which is the basis of TBL, or tasks that include sensory stimulus in CLT, pupils have the opportunity to use touch, smells, and sight for learning. A more structured approach to learning that is suggested for students with reading and writing difficulties is called Multisensory Structured Language (MSL). MSL is a highly structured approach to language learning and due to this, TBL and CLT methods cannot be adapted with MSL. However, the cognitively oriented approach to foreign language learning can allow for this structure, as this approach accepts that forms and functions can be learned deductively. MSL instruction has been internationally researched, showing significant positive results in assisting learning disabled and at-risk students both in L1 and L2 (Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Skinner & Smith, 2011; Sparks, et al., 1998). MSL method uses multiple input/output strategies – visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. Often these strategies are used simultaneously. The MSL initially introduces letters (graphemes) that represent sounds (phonemes) and then combines them to form new words. To learn the grapheme-phoneme relationships of the language, students are not only presented with pictures of the letters, but are also asked to write the letters, for example in re-usable sandboxes while *saying* the sounds. To help learn correct pronunciation of a sound, students are asked to use mirrors to see how their mouths are formed or to physically touch their mouths while creating the sound, thus using a variety of senses in the input and output phases of learning. Grammatical rules are introduced one at a time in a sequence from simple to complex by using color-coded cards to depict the function of the word in a sentence. Vocabulary is built by teaching students to build new words using knowledge of prefixes, suffixes and roots. The semantics of a text are

also taught explicitly using multisensory strategies, for example color-coded cards depicting linking words and phrases or topic sentences and conclusions.

4) Teach language learning strategies: Directly teaching learning strategies is difficult to incorporate in TBL or CLT methods. Neither methods, nor the approaches that are the basis of these methods integrate learning strategies. However, research on what good language learners do, indicate that good language learners actively use a variety of language learning strategies, for example, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensatory strategies (Alptekin, 2007; Oxford, 2009; Skinner & Smith, 2011). Teaching FL learning strategies to students with reading and writing difficulties can help them compensate for their individual difficulties (Helland & Morken, 2011; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). Research has shown that *metacognitive strategies* for reading, such as predicting what will be read in a text and monitoring understanding during reading, will aid in reading comprehension for all readers, including readers with reading and writing difficulties (Andreassen, 2010; Baker, 2008; Gillet, Temple, Crawford, Mathews II, Young, 2000; Pressley, 2006). These same metacognitive strategies for reading may become even more important for reading in a foreign language, especially for students with reading and writing difficulties (Aebersold & Lee Field, 2001; Egen, 2008; Schwarz, 1997; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). But it is not only metacognitive strategies that help students learn a foreign language: *affective strategies*, such as self-talk and self-encouragement, are strategies students can use to lower their anxiety level, which may also help in learning a FL (Egen, 2008; Horwitz, et. al., 1986). *Social strategies* help the students work with others by learning to ask for help or joining in to a group, making real communication in a FL possible (Oxford, 2009). *Memory strategies*, such as mnemonics, can help students who struggle to internalize new vocabulary and grammar rules (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Skinner & Smith, 2011). *Cognitive strategies*, which also include memory strategies, may help organize material the students are to learn. Cognitive strategies can include mind-maps, visualization, and analyzing contrasts with the use of a graphic organizer. And finally, *compensatory strategies*, which are strategies that may help FL learners compensate when they do not know the expression being used or they do not know the expression they would like to use. For example, a compensatory strategy may be to use a synonym or L1 when speaking to

others, guessing meanings by context, or using body language to express a meaning (Oxford, 2009).

5) Lower the anxiety for the pupils by allowing for use of L1: In the past 10 – 15 years there has been a strong debate on the use of L1 in FL instruction (Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). After the shift that began in the 1970's towards focusing on the social context of learning a foreign language, the approaches and methods used for teaching a FL focused on the sole use of the target language (Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Both the TBL method and the CLT method mentioned above use the target language as the instructional language. However, for students with reading and writing difficulties, using L1 may be necessary for creating a platform to learn the FL (Crombie, 2001; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003).

6) Allow for alternative assessment: As stated earlier, one category in adaptive instruction is assessment. Assessment *of* learning, or formal assessment, of students with reading and writing difficulties may need adaptations. One such adaptation is the use of a computer for writing or the opportunity to be assessed orally. Helland og Kaasa (2004), in cooperation with Eikelund center for competency and the Romanesque Institution, University of Bergen, have developed an English test for students with dyslexia. This formal assessment can be used for oral assessment as well as reading and writing. Assessment *for* learning, or informal assessment, also may need adaptations. For example, students with reading and writing difficulties may benefit from writing assessments that focus on content and text structure rather than spelling and verb usage (Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003).

## **2.4 Teachers' influence on students' achievement**

The first three sections of chapter 2 provide a framework for English as a foreign language in Norway, reading and writing difficulties and EFL, and EFL methodology with adaptive instruction. In this last section, I will present research that discusses how the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of teachers may affect students' achievement. I will end this section with some reflection on teachers' propensity to change.

#### 2.4.1 Teachers' knowledge of reading and writing difficulties

What knowledge is needed in order to be able to teach English as a foreign language to students with reading and writing difficulties? Teachers' knowledge can be divided into four dimensions that are involved in the process of teaching: 1) subject-matter content knowledge, 2) pedagogical content knowledge, 3) curricular knowledge, and 4) personal practical knowledge (Fang, 1996).

*Subject-matter knowledge* for FL teachers include knowledge about language acquisition, knowledge about word structures such as phonemes, graphemes, morphemes, spelling, word meanings and vocabulary development and syntax, along with knowledge about literature and culture. *Pedagogical content knowledge* includes the dimensions of teaching that relate to presenting ideas and information in such a manner that is comprehensible for the pupils.

*Curricular knowledge* includes knowledge of the materials being used and alternative materials available for the topic or subject being presented at that time. *Personal practical knowledge* includes classroom management skills and instructional techniques and knowledge about the pupils' learning strategies, interests, needs, strengths and difficulties (Fang, 1996). The interplay between these dimensions is essential for effective teaching of pupils with reading and writing difficulties.

Subject-matter knowledge that directly relates to reading and writing difficulties includes the knowledge of the cause for reading and writing difficulties along with how these difficulties can manifest themselves in the students. What do teachers know about reading and writing difficulties? Several studies have been made to document the knowledge mainstream teachers and teachers in training have of reading and writing difficulties and although some research indicates an increase in awareness of these difficulties (Kirby, Davis, & Bryant, 2005; Leyser, Greenberger, Sharoni, & Vogel, 2011; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003), there still remains many misconceptions of the difficulties pupils have with reading and writing (Bell, McPhillips, & Doveston, 2011; Fang, 1996; Moats & Foorman, 2003). For example, in their study, *What Educators Really Believe about Dyslexia*, Wadlington and Wadlington (2005) found that over 50% did not believe dyslexia was inherited.

As for *subject-matter knowledge* relating to reading in general, several reports have shown a lack of understanding of basic word structures, such as sound structure, syllable structure, and morphology, in teachers and teachers in training (Bell, et al., 2011; Fang, 1996; Gwernan-Jones

& Burden, 2010; Hornstra, Denessen, Bakker, van den Bergh, & Voeten, 2010; Kirby, et al., 2005; Leyser, et al., 2011; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Wadington & Wadlington, 2005; Washburn, Joshi, & Binks-Cantrell, 2011). Lack of word structure knowledge has consequences for pupils who have reading and writing difficulties. For example, lack of word structure knowledge can result in poor or missed assessment, inappropriate examples of words for instruction, and inappropriate feedback on errors (Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003).

However, expert word structure knowledge alone is not enough to build an appropriate teaching practice for students with reading and writing difficulties. Teachers need knowledge and understanding of the cognitive and behavioral difficulties that may also affect students with reading and writing difficulties (Snow, 2005). After assessing the students' needs, teachers must also use their *pedagogical knowledge* and their *curricular knowledge* to create a platform for learning for these students.

Research shows a strong connection between the knowledge of teachers and the literacy achievement of their students (Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003; Spear-Swerling, Brucker, Alfano, 2005). Luckily the knowledge of teachers is not static. Research has also shown that with focused instruction on literacy knowledge, teachers' knowledge base increases (Moats & Foorman, 2003; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003). Thus, the more teachers know about the four dimensions of teaching, the more likely pupils will learn.

#### *2.4.2 Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards students with reading and writing difficulties*

Teachers' conceptualization of reading and writing difficulties is likely to impact classroom practices in addition to impacting how teachers interpret and meet the individual needs of the students (Bell, et. al., 2011). So how do teachers' beliefs and attitudes affect students' academic performance and their self-concept? Recent findings show that people's levels of achievement are influenced by how they feel about themselves (and vice-versa) (Humphrey, 2002). In a foreign language classroom setting, high achieving FL pupils have been shown to have low anxiety levels and high self-esteem, while low achieving FL pupils have high anxiety and low self-esteem (Sparks, Ganschow, Artzer, Siebenhar, & Plageman, 2004). Teachers' attitudes and beliefs can help address this affective aspect of learning a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties as shown in the examples below.

The classic research of Rosenthal and Jacobson on ‘Pygmalion effect’ (as cited in Woodcock & Vialle, 2011) shows that positive expectations may result in higher student achievement, and the follow-up research of Eccles and Wigfield called the ‘Golem effect’ (as cited in Woodcock & Vialle, 2011) shows that negative expectations may result in lower pupil achievement. After these original studies, there have been several follow-up studies supporting these results; a positive attitude, including the belief and expectation of learning, towards students who struggle with reading and writing, may influence their self-esteem and their academic achievement (Hornstra, et al., 2010; Humphrey, 2002; Tsovoli, 2004; Woodcock & Vialle, 2011).

So what impacts teachers beliefs and expectations? Several variables may impact teachers’ attitudes and willingness to allow for accommodations for students with disabilities. Leyser et al. (2011) found that teachers with more experience working with students with disabilities and teachers with more training and information express more positive attitudes and willingness to adapt instruction for students with disabilities. Interestingly, in this same research, Leyser, et al. found that teachers with a doctorate degree were less likely to have positive attitudes and willingness to adapt instruction for students with disabilities. Although this last variable is based on a relatively small group, the results indicate that an increase in knowledge outside of reading and writing difficulties does not necessarily result in better accommodations for students with these difficulties.

#### *2.4. 3 Teachers’ propensity to change*

The above mentioned research of Leyser, et al. (2011) focuses on faculty members at 7 teacher training colleges in Israel and the changes in knowledge and attitudes towards students with disabilities over a ten-year span. Although results showed an increase of knowledge and an increase in willingness to adapt instruction at these colleges, there were less than 50% of the respondents that expressed interest in obtaining more information about disabilities and accommodations. This lack of interest presents an interesting dichotomy in the development of teacher training. On the one hand, research indicates a need for increased knowledge of reading and writing difficulties, while on the other hand those who are to have this knowledge may not be receptive to getting it. In addition, although some teachers may learn and understand new information about reading and writing difficulties, there is some question as to whether they will be willing to change their practices in the classroom (Lortie, 2002; Fang, 1996; Nilssen, 2010).

Lortie (2002), in his sociological study of school teachers, points out how the relative autonomy of teachers allows them to self-select their teaching focus. And since teachers in his study report group achievement as rewarding, one can speculate that teachers will choose to focus on classes where there is high group achievement. In the same study, in classes where achievement was poor, the teachers attributed this to the students and not to own their teaching. Thus, although teachers may have the specific knowledge for dealing with students with reading and writing difficulties, they may still choose to focus on the groups of students who show success; research shows that students who have learning difficulties in a FL increase their language fluency with adapted instruction but they seldom reach the same level as students who do not have these difficulties, thus possibly making the improvements of these students less rewarding for the teachers (Sparks, et al., 1998).

Lortie (2002) explains that people attracted to teaching tend to favor the status quo. Teachers' beliefs and practices may be strongly influenced by their own educational experiences before they reach the university or university colleges. These findings have been supported by later research that continues to document the strong influence of teachers' personal educational experience, where student teachers have often internalized the practices of their previous teachers (Harrington & Jandrey, 2000; Nilssen, 2010). Therefore, what teachers bring from the past in the form of beliefs and attitudes should be examined as they learn new alternatives from the present.

In recent years, there has been a shift in how teacher educators view and define learning to teach. Traditionally, learning to teach has been seen as a transmission of a body of knowledge learned in the theory classes to the practical implementations of that knowledge in the classroom. More recently, teacher educators have focused on teacher cognition, that is the beliefs and attitudes teachers have about teaching and the teaching profession (Fang, 1996; Golombek, 1998; Hamton, 1994; Harrington & Jandrey, 2000; Pennington & Richards, 1997). By allowing for the opportunity to reflect on their beliefs and practices, teachers can take control of their development by consciously examining the beliefs that otherwise may have remained tacit, and unspoken knowledge is difficult to change (Fang, 1996; Hamton, 1994; Harrington & Jandrey, 2000; Smith, 1994). The cited studies support the assumption that being able to teach does not begin and end with a methodology course but is rather a life-long process that requires reflection



on one's beliefs and practices, and that it is through these reflections teachers open up for the opportunity to change and adapt practices for students with reading and writing difficulties.

In my research, I have focused on investigating English methodology teachers' understanding of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. I have also asked them to reflect on how they have presented this understanding to their student teachers. Building on research on the influence of knowledge and skills of the teachers on students' learning, as well as on prior research on teachers' propensity to change, I hope to be able to frame the individual methodology teachers' responses into a larger picture of teaching EFL to students with reading and writing difficulties.

## Chapter 3: Methods

### 3.0 Introduction

Newby (2010) states that goals for educational research include exploring issues such as identifying and specifying problems in education, shaping educational policy, and improving educational practice. He continues by saying that to conduct credible educational research, the researcher must understand the issues being researched and be able to convince others that the outcome of the research is valid. In chapter 2, I presented theories and prior research important to understand the issues of adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for pupils with reading and writing difficulties. In this chapter, I will account for the methodological approach I have used in this thesis, which I hope will support and validate the outcome of my research. I will begin by explaining the choice of approach and the research design before I will detail the methods I have used for gathering and analyzing data. I will end by discussing issues of reliability and validity along with ethical considerations that are relevant for my research.

### 3.1 Research strategy and design

Using a survey and a quantitative approach is one possibility when researching the knowledge and skills of English methodology teachers and their approach to adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. Lund and Haugen (2006) explain that in a quantitative approach, researchers are concerned with objectivity, system, and control in order to gather a large amount of information with many respondents, and by means of statistics, researchers then can present their results in an objective manner. The objective and systemized organization of quantitative research is a strength of that approach, as is the possibility to apply findings to a larger population. However, a quantitative approach also comes with some disadvantages.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Thagaard (2009) say that the research question should be a determining factor for choice of approach. My research questions are the following: *How do English methodology teachers understand adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties, and to what extent do they report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction of English language student teachers?* When using those research questions as a basis for

methodology choice, a qualitative approach seems to be a natural choice. In a survey, I would lose the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to insure that the answers given by the English methodology teachers represented their true understanding of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. However, it was not only the research questions that directed me towards a qualitative approach. The number of available English methodology teachers in Norway, along with the possibility of a low response rate to a survey, could have also been problematic in a quantitative approach. These possible threads added to my decision of a qualitative approach.

Compared to a quantitative approach, the researcher is more subjective and involved in a qualitative approach. Instead of gathering a large amount of information from many respondents, the qualitative researcher uses fewer informants and tries to gather deeper and more detailed information. It is said that the main purpose of qualitative research is to understand a phenomenon within the social context it is found. One implication to this understanding is by analyzing the meanings which people attach to that phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009). My research questions lend themselves to this type of analyzing of the phenomenon adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language and reading and writing difficulties. So the combination of my research questions and the low number of possible respondents were among the deciding factors for why I chose a qualitative approach to my research. It is a challenging task in qualitative research to gather enough relevant data and analyze the data that the researcher, himself or herself, has co-constructed. Good qualitative researchers should be well experienced in the field they are researching, and conducting a good interview requires practice (Gall, et al., 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009).

### **3.2 Method**

The method of inquiry for a qualitative approach is generally characterized by openness and has as the goal to better understand a social phenomenon. Often the method is concerned with generating theories rather than testing them, thus using an inductive scientific method (Thagaard, 2009). Although this study does not attempt to generate a theory, I have used an inductive method for analyzing the data. The methods of data collection for qualitative research include interviews, case studies, observations and documentary analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

In my study, semi-structured interviews were used as the means of gathering the participants' understandings and opinions of the phenomenon of adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for pupils with reading and writing difficulties.

The process of gathering and analyzing data in this study utilized a phenomenological approach, in which subjective views gathered through interviews form the basis of a deeper understanding of the experiences. Gall, et al. (2007) and Thagaard (2009) explain that in a phenomenological approach, researchers try to create a coherent understanding of a phenomenon through a deeper understanding of the parts that make up the phenomenon. I will give a more detailed description of this procedure in section 3.2.3.

### *3.2.1 Informants*

The selection of informants in a qualitative interview is crucial for the research (Gall, et al., 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Newby, 2010; Thagaard, 2009). Qualitative researchers use informants that have the qualifications that can provide relevant and comprehensive information for the research. These qualifications play a critical role when generalizing beyond the informants themselves and thus aiding in the validity of the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009). In addition, the informants used in qualitative interviews should have knowledge which is not readily available to the researcher (Gall, et al., 2007).

In this study, I began by using a criteria-based selection process. The first criterion was that the informants had to be methodology teachers with English as their subject area. Since teacher education in Norway occurs at institutions of higher education, the second criterion was that the English methodology teachers had to be working at a university or a university college. Due to time limits, the third criterion was that the university and university colleges needed to be within a driving distance, which meant located in southeast Norway.

The initial list of 7 names was found by searching the internet and calling the institutions. All initial requests were sent by email, where I gave information about myself, my research topic, and the interview procedure. In the email, I also included a letter of consent (See appendix 1). From the first set of inquiries, I received two quick and positive replies, one from the university and one from a university college. Reasons for the negative replies included work load, change of teaching situation and no interest or experience in the area being researched. The last five

informants were identified by a snowball sampling, where the research participants identified one or more additional persons who met the criteria for becoming an informant (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009).

In this study, I contacted twelve possible methodology teachers within southeastern Norway and received five positive replies, all of which I have used. Three of my informants are women and two are men. Informants A-C work at a university college and informants D-E work at a university. Informant A has worked eight years in lower and upper secondary schools and fourteen years in higher education. She has also been involved with teacher in-service training, implementing the knowledge promotion curriculum. She is currently working as an English methodology teacher with students in the new teacher program GLU1-7. Her areas of research include applied linguistics and assessment practices of oral language skills. Informant B has worked thirty years as an English methodology teacher in higher education. Her areas of research include cultural communication and cultural knowledge found in foreign language classes and use of songs in teaching EFL. She is currently doing research on assessment practices. Informant C has worked two years at an upper secondary school and eleven years in higher education. Four of those years have been as an English methodology teacher. His areas of research are British civilization and intercultural communication. He is currently researching assessment practices. Informant D has worked 13 years in upper secondary schools and twelve years in higher education, whereas six of those years have been at the university. Areas of research include reading in a FL and English medium instruction in both higher education and secondary schools. He is currently teaching and advising English masters students while researching language needs in business, in higher education, and for FL teachers. Informant E has worked eleven years in lower and upper secondary schools and is currently finishing her first year at the university where she teaches English masters students in English methodology. She has been involved with teacher in-service training for use of reading/writing and learning strategies. Her research areas include English literature and usage of reading and writing strategies in EFL.

### 3.2.2 Interview guide

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe an interview as an exchange of views between two or more people who discuss a topic that is of interest for those involved. It is a special type of exchange where the goal of the interviewer is to elicit information from the informant by asking questions. In this study, a semi-structured interview method is used for gathering data. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer uses an interview guide that contains the themes or topics that are to be taken up during the interview. In addition, the interview guide includes specific questions about the themes or topics relevant to the research question (Thagaard, 2009). It is important that the specific questions in the interview guide elicit in the best possible manner the information being sought after in the research, and in this manner aid in understanding the concepts being researched (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Assuming that educational background, work experience and context in which the informants worked might be important to understanding and interpreting the data, I chose to begin the interview by asking questions that would elicit this information. I was also interested in how they described their contact with students by asking about the size of the group they taught along with their method of teaching these students, for example, lectures, group sessions, or individual instruction. An understanding of the students' English language ability was also of interest as it may have indicated to what degree the English methodology teachers needed to use their teaching time for the teaching of English rather than the teaching of English methodology. I then separated the main interview into the four parts as I will describe in the following.

In the interview guide, I formulated the main questions to cover four topics which were to help clarify the informants' understanding of the phenomenon being researched. The research questions, *how do English methodology teachers' understand adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties, and to what extent do they report teaching adaptive instruction to English language student teachers*, were divided into these four categories: 1) adaptive instruction, 2) reading and writing difficulties, 3) personal experience, and 4) reported teaching of adaptive instruction for reading and writing difficulties to student teachers. As stated in chapter 2.3.4, an understanding of adaptive instruction in the Norwegian school system is necessary for understanding the responsibilities and possibilities of using adaptive instruction in the FL classroom. In the interview guide, open questions were used to

elicit informants' interpretation of this concept, for example: 1) *how do you interpret adaptive instruction*, 2) *Describe with as much detail as possible a situation where you believe good adapted instruction has taken place*. Chapter 2.2 and 2.4.1 explain how a general understanding of reading and writing difficulties is necessary for understanding how these difficulties may influence EFL. Therefore, the informants' understanding of reading and writing difficulties was researched by questions such as *how would you describe a student with reading and writing difficulties*. In connection with their own experiences, the study guide questions focused on their own use of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties along with their own beliefs and attitudes about adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. I used questions such as *do you believe knowledge about reading and writing difficulties should be /is a part of your job as a methodology teacher* and *to what degree do you emphasize or prioritize adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in your methods class* to try and establish a connection with the research discussed in chapter 2.4.2 which state how teachers' knowledge, attitude and beliefs may influence what they teach in the classroom.

Hopefully, by addressing these four areas I uncover a deeper understanding of the research questions. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain that the interview guide can be used not only as a checklist to make sure that all the relevant topics are covered, but also as a means to make the data collection more systematic for each informant, which in turn helps when analyzing the data. However, although the interview guide creates a structure for the interview, in a semi-structured interview, the interview itself unfolds partly depending on the situation at hand. The questions in the interview guide are such that they can be asked in any order providing for a flexibility which allows for addressing any special issues that the informants feel are important during the interview. At the same time, the interview guide can re-focus the interview if the informant strays too far from the research question (Gall, et al., 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009). For a person who is new to the art of interviewing, the interview guide can also provide a much needed support for conducting the interviews.

While designing the interview guide, it was important to avoid dichotomous response questions ("yes" or "no" questions) as the goal was to gather data that showed a deeper understanding of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. Open-ended questions with

several possible follow-up questions are one way to minimize the chance of gathering data with predetermined responses (Newby, 2010). As presented earlier, I used questions in the interview guide that allowed for personal descriptions to probe the informants' experiences and opinions.

My initial interview guide was written in Norwegian, but as two of the five informants were native English speakers, I also developed an interview guide in English. However, in the end, all interviews were given in English. Both the Norwegian and the English guides are included (see appendix 2 and appendix 3).

### *3.2.3 Interview procedure and data collection*

Before conducting a qualitative interview, researchers should be aware of the challenging role that is inherent while conducting the interview. Researchers are both interviewers and researchers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As researchers, they are interested in gathering information that best answers the research questions. This drive to answer the research questions can interfere with being a good interviewer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe certain qualification criteria for being a good interviewer. Meeting these qualification criteria aids in making the interview more ethical and valid. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the qualifications of an interviewer not only include being knowledgeable about the topic but also having knowledge about social interactions. The interaction in an interview is not equal as it is the interviewer that controls the questions being asked, which then controls the interview situation (Mellin-Olsen, 1996; Thagaard, 2009). It is important, then, that the interviewer avoids as best as possible misusing the interviewer's influence.

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) describe several aspects of a qualitative interview. A "deliberate naivety" (my translation, p47) is one of those aspects. In order to achieve this, I needed to reflect on my own opinions and prejudice before the interviews and then try to set them aside in order to portray an openness that might elicit answers beyond the surface level.

Before the first interview, I chose to do a pilot test of the interview guide. Pilot testing is considered one way of ensuring that the interview questions are easy to understand and that they are directed towards the research questions (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). I was unable to find a methodology teacher for the test interview, so I interviewed an experienced teacher who has



had contact with student teachers doing their practical internship. The pilot test resulted in some minor changes to my questions. In addition, listening to the transcription of my pilot test gave me feedback on how to better listen to the informants along with how to present the questions in the interview guide more directly.

To better guide the informants through the interview, I started by presenting a rough overview of the four categories to be taken up in the interview. I then stated my goal for the interview and followed by introducing myself. I included my working experience in order to give informants some background for why I have chosen this research area. In his book, Lortie (2002) describes the importance of being part of the teaching profession in order to gain acceptance among teachers. I believe that being an English teacher may have helped open the dialogue with the informants.

The interviews were done in a period of 4 weeks starting at the beginning of January. Each interview lasted between 50-75 minutes. The last interview was perhaps influenced by a limited timeframe, as the informant was due to give a talk directly after the interview. Each interview was done at the informants' place of work, with only one interview given outside of a personal office. The familiarity of their offices and work place may have provided a non-confrontational atmosphere. My informants appeared to be comfortable talking about their understanding of the topic, along with giving examples from their teaching experiences. In order to capture the informants' own words, I recorded each interview. I did not take any notes during the interview, but rather focused on listening to what each informant said and giving feedback in the form of eye contact, a nod of the head, or small encouraging words. After each interview, I made several reflections on both the content as well as the implementation of the interview. I then tried to use these reflections to better my interview techniques in order to elicit even deeper information in the following interviews.

Each informant was given the option of doing the interview in English or Norwegian. None of the informants expressed a preference. I then offered to give the interview in English, as this is my native language, with the full acceptance of a mixture of Norwegian and English if and when necessary. All informants in this study taught English at the university or university college level, and therefore all had a very high level of English proficiency.

I transcribed two interviews before finishing my final interview. Transcribing gave me yet another insight on how to improve my interview techniques. All five interviews were transcribed within a short period after the final interview.

#### 3.2.4 Data analysis

Traditionally, researchers have made a distinct division between collecting data and analyzing data (Gall, et al, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this traditional view, data analysis begins with transcribing the interviews. When researchers transcribe from an oral interview to a written text, practical as well as fundamental challenges present themselves (Gall, et al., 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In an interview, a social interaction takes place that is difficult if not impossible to capture when transcribing into words. A well-spoken and understandable oral exchange can become incomprehensible or wordy when written as a text. Thus researchers must be aware of the influence they have on the text when deciding how detailed the transcription will be (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, transcribing an interview into written texts provides the researcher with data that may be easier to analyze. Transcriptions allow for structuring and re-structuring the texts which then may create a better overview of the phenomenon being researched (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In this study, I transcribed all interviews myself in order to have control over the details of the transcriptions. I began by transcribing verbatim with all sounds and half-words, but ended up transcribing by focusing on the meaning of what was being said. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) point out that it is important that researchers are aware the influences they may have while interpreting these sounds and half-words. In this study, however, I believe by focusing on meaning I created a more coherent transcription that gave me more readable data for my research.

Once transcribed, the data needed to be further analyzed. Thagaard (2009) describes an issue-focused analysis as one where the topics are in focus as opposed to the informants themselves. In an issue-focused analysis, researchers compare information on each topic given from each informant. In my study, I chose to analyze my data in this manner. Using a phenomenologist approach, Kvale og Brinkmann (2009) describe a five-step process of analyzing a text called *the condensing of meaning* (my translation). The first step is to get an overview. In my analysis, I began by several careful readings of each of the transcripts. The next step is to discover units of

meaning found the text. In this manner, I digressed from a phenomenologist approach, and used the four categories I have mentioned earlier. This helped me organize and reduce the data. Thagaard (2009) suggests at this point that it is important for the researcher to focus only on the meaningful texts. Therefore, I extracted the texts I believed relevant to each category and then placed them in separate documents with the heading of each category. I then read through my text extractions, and challenged my choice of texts for each category. Was the text useful to my research? In this manner I eliminated even further unnecessary data. In the third step, the researcher is to code each text segment in a simple and clear manner. In my study, I used descriptive words for coding. For example, I coded the informants' reported understanding of reading and writing difficulties as biologically, cognitively, or behaviorally. I coded reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties as high priority or low priority. The fourth step is to examine these descriptions in light of the research question. After this coding process, I tried to examine the results from the perspective of the student teachers and of students with reading and writing difficulties. I used the theories I presented in Chapter 2 and my own understanding of the context in which the data was found in order to present my analysis. This shift in perspectives helped me to interpret and describe the text segments more fully. The final step is to combine the important elements found in the interview in order to create a descriptive representation of the results. I present these results in chapter 4. During this phase in my analysis, I tried to see any similarities or differences found while interpreting results, and I tried to use similarities and differences that I believed might add to understanding the phenomenon being researched. The summary of this final stage is in chapter 5, *Discussions and Conclusions*.

### **3.3 Reliability and validity**

A *quantitative* definition of reliability can be defined as the degree of which the results are based on random errors, where less frequent randomness creates stronger reliability. Can the research be repeated with the same or similar outcomes (Lund & Haugen, 2006)? Using this definition, reliability in a *qualitative* research project which uses interviews would be difficult, as the data gathered in a qualitative interview is dependent on the context of when, where and with whom the interview is given (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009). Repeating an interview with the expectation a similar outcome would thus be unreasonable. So a somewhat different

approach to reliability is necessary for qualitative research. One approach, as described in Thagaard (2009), is that reliability depends on the credibility of the researcher and the research process. Thagaard (2009) explains that in qualitative research, the researchers must *argue for reliability* by accounting for the process of gathering data, that is to say, reporting specific details on the procedures used when choosing informants, gathering data and analyzing them. A detailed account of the whole research process can make qualitative research *transparent* for the reader, leaving the reader to make the final judgment on reliability (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Thagaard, 2009). Accordingly, in this study, I have tried to make the research process transparent by reporting on how I chose my informants, where and when I gave the interviews, and how I transcribed and analyzed the data, all of which have been described in the earlier sections of chapter 3.

Thagaard (2009) presents an additional aspect that can increase the reliability in qualitative research: theoretical transparency. Theoretical transparency is accounting for the theoretical assumptions on which the researcher has based the research. Earlier, I have mentioned the theoretical assumptions on which I have approached my research, an approach that is aligned with a phenomenologist approach where the researcher is more interested in how people experience a phenomenon rather than in how the phenomenon really is (Newby, 2010). In my research the phenomenon is adaptive instruction in English as a second language, and I have tried to study individual experiences of what many (teachers) would call “real world” or an experienced world. By taking a phenomenologist’s approach, I make the assumption that this “reality” is how my informants perceive it to be and my job as a researcher is to better understand it (Thagaard, 2009). In this study, a hermeneutic approach is also used to analyze the data. Throughout the whole process of gathering and analyzing the data, I have tried to develop meaning through an interaction between the parts and the whole, a process that is called a hermeneutic circle (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Newby, 2010; Thagaard, 2009). In other words, I have tried to understand the parts, that is the individual understandings of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulty, while also trying to place these understandings in the larger picture of English methodology teachers in general. Also, I had to be aware that my overall impressions of the informants at any time could be changed by the comments they made during the interviews, while, at the same time, their comments made during the interviews were

bound to the contexts of the interviews, and thus needed to be understood also in the contexts they were made (Mellin-Olsen, 1996; Thagaard, 2009).

There needs to be a degree of *reliability* in order to achieve *validity* (Thagaard, 2009). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) define validity as concerning to what degree the results of the research actually represent the phenomenon that is being studied. In quantitative research, validity focuses on four areas: 1) Statistical validity, 2) Internal validity, 3) Construct validity, and 4) External validity (Lund & Haugen, 2006). Of these four concepts, qualitative approaches are interested in *internal validity*, the validity of the research process, *construct validity*, the validity of the representation of the construct (phenomenon) being researched, and *external validity*, the validity of the results of the research (Gall, et al., 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009; Wolcott, 1990). A valid research depends on the quality of validity in these three areas.

However, showing validity in research does not belong to one particular phase in research but is rather an ongoing process throughout the whole research project (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009) As with reliability, the concept of *transparency* is used in describing the process of validation in qualitative research (Newby, 2010; Thagaard, 2009). In order to think in terms of process, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) present seven stages of research (using a qualitative interview) along with examples of how these stages can best be validated. Validation of these seven stages can help make the research more transparent, and thus validate the entire project. The seven stages are *developing the research question, planning the research, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating, and reporting*. In the following I will use the first five of Kvale and Brinkmann's stages to show where I have tried to make my own research more transparent.

Validity in the first stage depends on whether the research questions can logically be derived from previous research. In this sense, I have validated my research by explaining the purpose and the background of my study and presenting prior research and discussing the need for further investigation of the phenomenon. In the second stage of my research, *planning*, validity is based on choice of methods, development of the interview guide, and preparation for the research. Previously in this chapter, I have explained my choice of method and the development of the interview guide, and further validated my research by explaining the use of a semi-structured interview guide along with piloting the interview.

In the third stage of research, *interviewing*, validity has to do with the credibility of the interviewer, along with the quality of the actual interviews. Relevant to this stage, I have discussed my own credibility by describing the research I did before the interviews and my own work experience in the field I am researching. However, my inexperience in conducting research interviews cannot be disregarded as a threat to validity. Although I believe the questions in my interview guide were open-ended and relevant to my research questions, I was not able at all times to keep to these questions in the actual interviews. In addition, it might be questioned whether I was able to listen to my informants in order to ask follow-up questions that revealed a deeper understanding, or whether I asked questions that were predominately surface level and perhaps less threatening to my informants. To lessen the threat, I tried to learn the informants' backgrounds and ask questions that were more relevant to their personal experiences. However, there is still some question as to whether my informants felt a professional threat by my questions, and therefore presented themselves in a more positive light. On the other hand, the fact that all my informants are also researchers can be seen as positive, as they themselves are aware of the importance of gathering valid data, which then perhaps encouraged them to make a stronger effort to give me honest responses to my questions. In addition, in my initial request for interviews, each informant was made aware of the possibility to withdraw at any time from the research. None of my informants have expressed this desire. In chapter 5, I will further discuss the results of these interviews, leaving the final question of validity for the reader to infer at that time.

The fourth stage, *transcribing*, refers to the choice of linguistic style used for transcribing. In this study, I chose to transcribe with the focus on meaning, as the study is not a study of the language being used but rather the ideas and meanings being said. Further detail of the transcribing process has also been described earlier in this chapter, making the process more transparent, which aids in validation.

The final stage, *analyzing*, is validated by the degree of which the questions a researcher poses to the text are relevant and to what extent is the researcher's interpretations of these questions logical. Earlier, I have described the process of analyzing the texts, using four topics to separate the text and descriptions of how the texts within these topics may illuminate the phenomenon, using previous research to guide the descriptions. The results of this process is presented in

chapter 4 and discussed in chapter five. However, it is the reader who is eventually left with the final judgment of validity.

The above stages of validation lead to *external validity* which is concerned with the extent to which the new understandings developed in the research can be generalized to other contexts (Gall, et al., 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009). In qualitative research based on qualitative interviews, the opportunity of using statistics to support generalization is usually lost. According to Thagaard (2009), it is therefore the researchers who must argue for whether the results of the study can have relevance in a larger context. To do this, researchers need to be able to extrapolate the special traits or features found in a study and show how they can be supported by known theories or by previous research done with the phenomenon. In this manner the researcher can argue the possibility of generalization. In my research, I am not able to *directly* rely on previous studies, as no known studies have been done in Norway on this phenomenon. However, it is my hope that the discussions in chapter 5, and the use of other relative theories and research will support a degree of external validity. It is my understanding that complete validation can never be attained, however, the more valid data the researcher obtains, the more confidence s/he can place on the inferences and interpretations made from data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

### **3.4 Ethical issues**

Ethics in educational research can be defined as the principles and guidelines that help researchers safeguard basic human rights, such as the right to privacy, the right to freedom from surveillance of one's behavior, and the right to know if one's behavior is being manipulated (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In all research, precautions must be made to safeguard these basic human rights (Lund & Haugen, 2006). In order to achieve this, researchers must reflect on their own ethical attitudes, which can strengthen their ability to make appropriate ethical decisions during the research process. The book, *Ethical Research Guidelines for Social Science, Humanities, Law and Theology* (NESH, 2008) offers several guidelines for reflection. In the first sections of this chapter, I tried to make transparent my decision-making process which also presented the ethical decisions I had to make.

In doing educational research, it is necessary to respect the informants while at the same time gather and report new information that may be of use to the society. Anonymity is one way of respecting informants (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Due to the relatively few methodology teachers in Norway, my informants could easily be recognized. However, I insured anonymity and confidentiality of the informants by using numbers instead of names when storing and transcribing the data. All taped interviews were stored on an external hard disk that has been kept separate from my working data. Each recording was erased after the transcribing process was finished. In the presentation of each informant, anonymity also played a role in the amount of details I have chosen to reveal about each informant.

Before the actual interviews began, I gained informed consent by sending out information on my research in the original email, attaching a form of consent to the email, and explaining one more time the purpose of my research in person. By keeping open about my research, I hoped to eliminate feelings of being manipulated, which is one of the basic rights mentioned earlier. Feelings of being manipulated can also occur during an interview, where researchers may ask questions that the informants perceive threatening (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Thagaard, 2009). During the interviews, I tried to balance respect for the informants with gathering information that the informants otherwise may not have made public.

Finally, analyzing data also presents ethical dilemmas (Thagaard, 2009). In the analyzing process, the informants are not available to confirm or deny interpretations. However, researchers do not agree as to who has interpretation rights to the data, the researcher or the informant (Thagaard, 2009). In my research, I did not send my transcripts and results to my informants for feedback before turning in my thesis. Interpreting the data alone made me responsible for the ethical dilemma of balancing the interests of my informants with the desire to produce relative data for the study. In addition, I had to be aware of how my professional background influenced my analysis of the data, knowing that at all times I would be placing my own interpretations on what my informants have said.



## Chapter 4: Results

### 4.0 Introduction

In chapter 4, I will present the results of the interviews. The chapter is divided into four sections that correspond to the different sections of the interview: The informants' 1) understanding of adaptive instruction, 2) understanding of reading and writing difficulties, 3) experience with adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, and 4) reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties to student teachers. In all sections I present information from each informant, leaving further discussion of the data to chapter 5.

### 4.1 Understanding of adaptive instruction

The purpose of the first section of the interview is to investigate the methodology teachers' interpretation of adaptive instruction. A better understanding of how these methodology teachers interpret this term may indicate what they present to their students. I open this part of the interview by asking them to describe what they first think of when they hear the term adaptive instruction. I then ask them to define the term in their own words and then describe a situation where they believe good adaptive instruction takes place, either in their own teaching experience or their experience with other teachers or students. I end this section of the interview by asking them to discuss to what degree they agree or disagree that adaptive instruction is difficult or problematic.

#### 4.1.1 Understanding of adaptive instruction- Informant A

Informant A has had long experience working with pupils from different cultural backgrounds and first languages. She has experience teaching ESL along with EFL. Her work experience indicates having a wide range of opportunities for differentiating instruction. When asked the opening question on her thoughts about adaptive instruction, she responds with an initial hesitation.

*Hmm.. well... I can, uff, tell you what I tell the students.*

Her initial reaction indicates a degree of hesitation or reservation about adaptive instruction, but when she begins defining adaptive instruction, clear and strong opinions become more evident.

She begins by defining adaptive instruction using the Education Law §1-3 as the cornerstone of her definition. She then adds to her definition both theoretical and practical perspectives.

*Adaptive instruction in a sense is just a tool, actually, to insure the democratic right of every pupil in the classroom to an education... It is based on a set of principles and a set of ideas. I think it is also based on information gathering. You have to gather information from your students to see if there is progress or not.*

Her definition of adaptive instruction incorporates knowing where the pupils are in their learning and using this knowledge to build a series of lessons that will ensure learning for all, a definition that is similar to Strandkleiv and Lindbäk's (2007) definition of adaptive instruction that says adaptive instruction occurs when the focus is learning for *all* pupils based on where the pupils are both academically and motivationally.

When asked to describe good adaptive instruction, informant A clarifies that adaptive instruction does not occur in one lesson but in a series of lessons that allows for both assessment and eventually adaption. She then chooses to use a situation where she has evaluated her own students' ability to adapt instruction in a writing assignment for 7<sup>th</sup> grade pupils. The assignment focuses on assessing writing and giving appropriate feedback so that the pupil will be able to develop his/her written English. Informant A's example emphasizes her focus on the need to assess first in order to adapt instruction.

In response to adaptive instruction as difficult or problematic, informant A shows no hesitation in agreeing. However, she sees this difficulty as something positive. Although her students often want a definitive answer for what to do after assessing, informant A concludes that there is no one answer, making adaptive instruction problematic.

*That is why teachers find it (adaptive instruction) so difficult. My students find it difficult because in a sense, they often want the answer from me and I don't have the answer... Adaptive instruction is tied to a context. It is tied to the group of students you have... but it is the most exciting area of teaching because it is dynamic!*

Her response to adaptive instruction not only indicates an understanding of the complexity involved with adapt instruction, but also indicates that part of teacher education requires the

student teachers to reflect over the decisions that are necessary for developing adaptive instruction. Informant A indicates an awareness of teacher education as more than just a transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the student teacher.

#### *4.1.2 Understanding of adaptive instruction – informant B*

Informant B has had no teaching experience in the public school system. She began working in higher education immediately after finishing a masters degree in English. She has, however, over 30 years of experience working with student teachers, and through the years has had many opportunities to see a variety of teaching practices. Informant B sees many more opportunities for adaptive instruction in the public schools than at the university college level, citing the use of an easier version of texts used in the classroom as one means for adaptive instruction. Informant B also describes adaptive instruction as everything that is done in the classroom, using the term communication as the instrument for adaptive instruction.

*You know, we don't have ONE lecture or five lectures of a topic called that (adaptive instruction), but the way I see it, that is what we do all the time... In English we have SO many opportunities. We have sort of a basis of everything we do and it is called communication. And that represents such a solution and such a possibility for us, because if you know that many words or that many words, you can say simple sentences or complex sentences. You can always communicate!*

To illustrate her point, informant B gives the example of asking open-ended questions that allow each pupil to answer at his or her level. For example, the question “How do you like school?” can be answered by a simple, “I like it” or “I like it because...”. The opportunity to differentiate the levels of response represents a form of adaptive instruction. In informant B’s definition and her following example, the approach to adaptive instruction signals placing the responsibility for adaptive instruction on the pupil’s ability to adjust their communication according to their English level.

Informant B further discusses adaptive instruction by describing the tension that occurs when making a choice between the demands put forth in the curriculum and the demands put forth from the needs of the pupils. For example, she explains how all of her students at the university college are required to read certain books, although for some students this requirement is above

their ability. In another example she provides as adaptive instruction, informant B uses the written and oral feedback she gives to her students in response to their school work. In this example of adaptive instruction, she bases her feedback on an assessment of where the students are in their learning. However, she also indicates that although she gives adaptive instruction in the form of written and oral feedback, she is aware that the guidelines she has to follow for giving grades and preparing students for exams are often above the academic levels of the students and thus the feedback to the students creates a tension for the teacher.

*Of course they have a pensum (curriculum). They have to read these 16 novels, right? Our pensum is pretty much fixed. You know. And then we try to help them in relation to that.*

However, in response to whether adaptive instruction is difficult or problematic, informant B replies that that adaptive instruction is not difficult, referring to her previous statement that communication is something everyone can do, and communication is the backbone of English classes. When asked how she responds to students who ask for advice on adaptive instruction, she answers the following:

*Well, MY answer is...I don't DO adaptive instruction. Well of course VERY special needs, reading and writing difficulties... you know you need skills, you need to know what materials there are... but in a USUAL class, in an ENGLISH class, I don't buy the claim that adaptive teaching is difficult because what is not adaptive teaching?*

I interpret the above quote that informant B makes a clear distinction between adaptive instruction that would require the skills of a special educator and adaptive instruction required of a classroom teacher, suggesting that special educators have special skills for adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, but that all instruction that occurs in a regular classroom is also considered adaptive instruction as long as the focus is communication. And when the focus in the classroom is communication, adaptive instruction is not difficult. On the other hand, informant B explains that the *systems* put into practice in the classrooms that are meant to be adaptive instruction are the roots of the difficulty teachers experience. To illustrate this point, she describes work plans with three levels of differentiation as too complicated for most teachers to use, causing difficulty for the teachers. Since she believes these work plans do not produce better learning, she sees these work plans as not seen good adaptive instruction.

#### 4.1.3 Understanding of adaptive instruction- informant C

As with informant B, informant C has had much of his work experience in higher education. After finishing his masters in British civilization, he worked two years at an upper secondary school before beginning work in higher education. He has worked directly with student teachers for four years, a working experience that has also given him opportunities to observe several teaching practices in the public schools. Informant C describes adaptive instruction as something all teachers must relate to, using the Norwegian Education Law §1-3 as the reason for this description. He continues his definition from a more theoretical point of view by describing adaptive instruction as a basic Norwegian value. He explains adaptive instruction from a cultural perspective.

*(Some cultures believe) there are some people who are strong and there are some people who are weak, and that's the way it is supposed to be- whereas in other cultures, we (Norway) want to change that. We want everyone to be on the same level. This is the backdrop to the Norwegian situation. We aim for the average students, so that it will be easy for the weaker students to follow. And I would call that adaptive teaching.*

To illustrate this point, informant C explains how giving lectures directed towards the average student allows for the weak students to follow. However, the strong students are expected to study the subject further on their own if they are to attain a higher level of understanding of the topic.

In his theoretical definition, informant C suggests that through adaptive instruction, the schools can achieve a level of equality for all pupils. However, by using the example of aiming for the average student, he also suggests that it is the pupils who have the responsibility to adapt to the instruction given; the weaker students have to exert extra effort to achieve the average students' level and the above average students can only achieve higher than average by studying on their own.

He then goes on to explain how it is easier to adapt instruction when all students start at the same level of understanding, allowing for presenting information at the same level but then adapting to the needs of the students after the initial instruction, by using follow-up activities directed at different levels so that those that need more repetition can receive such tasks and those that are

ready to move on can have the opportunity to do so with more advanced activities. By giving differentiated activities aimed at the level of the students, the teacher shows an ability to adapt instruction. However, this description of adaptive instruction can also indicate a belief in level differentiation within the classroom as one means for adaptive instruction as he expresses the desire of starting the instruction with students who have the same level of understanding.

#### *4.1.4 Understanding of adaptive instruction- informant D*

With 13 years working in the public school system, informant D has had the most working experience in the Norwegian public school system of all the informants. His experience in the public school system comes from upper secondary education, including some experience working as a special education teacher for students with dyslexia. He defines the concept of adaptive instruction as the following:

*It is the fig leaf for a law that can't be followed. It is misused and abused on the one hand (by the politicians who write the laws), but on the other hand you (teachers) can within limits, organize and adjust to the students.*

Informant D shows in his definition the tension Education Law §1-3 creates between the demands of the individuals and the demands of the whole class. I interpret his definition of adaptive instruction as an unrealistic goal for all pupils, but a realistic goal for many. He further explains that the English subject allows for adaptive instruction by allowing for task differentiation, for example listening to a text instead of reading a text or speaking the answer instead of writing the answer.

He continues by emphasizing not only adapting instruction for the weaker students but also for the stronger students, indicating that including stronger students as needing adaptive instruction is not usually considered part of adaptive instruction.

*I have a different view of individually adjusted learning, because some of the kids we fail most seriously are the brightest.*

In this portion of the interview, the questions are focused on adaptive instruction as a general concept, not specifically adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. As informant D is the first to comment about the brightest students, it is difficult to evaluate to

what degree the topic of my thesis, reading and writing difficulties, has influenced the responses of the other informants towards defining adaptive instruction for those with difficulties. However, informant D is specific in including adaption for the stronger students.

When asked if he agrees that adaptive instruction is difficult or problematic, informant D replies positively, stating that the reason adaptive instruction is difficult or problematic is because the concept hasn't been thought through. As with informant B, informant D explains a similar frustration with the systems that are meant to be adaptive instruction, for example differentiated work plans. He further explains how these systems not only fail in helping the weaker students, they also produce larger achievement gaps among all pupils. To exemplify this position, informant D explains how work plans and work-station learning, which are often used as examples of adaptive instruction, place the responsibility for learning on the pupils, creating schools where there is a large gap between the pupils who take this responsibility and those pupils who are not able to do so on their own. Informant D's response indicates an awareness that adaptive instruction is a responsibility that lies with the teachers, not with the students.

According to informant D, good adaptive instruction is rooted in the needs of the pupils, and understanding or knowledge of the problem is necessary before adaptive instruction can be effective. Here, informant D expresses the need for teachers to be able to assess their students in order to create good adaptive instruction.

#### *4.1.5 Understanding of adaptive instruction- informant E*

Informant E has had 11 years working at lower secondary and upper secondary schools. During this time, she has worked as the head of the English department and has also worked in continuing education, giving lectures to teachers on implementing different learning strategies. She now teaches English methodology to master students at the University. When asked for her reaction and interpretation of the concept adaptive instruction, informant E does not hesitate to say,

*People...well... they hate it because it is so difficult!*

However, informant E then immediately goes on to describe adaptive instruction as instruction that is differentiated after assessing the pupils. She elaborates on this by distinguishing the difference between adaptive instruction and instruction variation.

*I think a lot of teachers think that if they just apply enough variation during the lessons, then that is adaptive instruction. I think that in order to implement adaptive instruction, you have to start with the pupils first. You have to assess.*

To describe a situation where good adaptive instruction has taken place, informant E uses an example from her own experience at a lower secondary school. At this school, the teachers had the opportunity to divide the class into groups according to assessments taken by teachers. The groups were formed through a variety of assessments including, among others, academic achievement, learning styles and learning motivation. Within these different groups, the teachers were then able to adapt their instruction to the specific group.

Informant E's example can be interpreted as promoting level differentiation as a means of adaptive instruction. However, informant E describes the groups as based on specific learning criteria indicating a degree of flexibility depending on the learning criteria that is currently being focused on. If the groups are fluid and based on specific learning and varying criteria, this example can also be interpreted as adapting instruction focused directly towards the needs of the pupils in order to achieve specific learning goals.

As shown in her first reaction to the term, informant E agrees that adaptive instruction is difficult, and depending on the culture of the school, implementation of adaptive instruction can also be problematic.

*We were given the opportunities that we wanted because she (the principal) trusted that we did good work... I have been lucky, because I have worked in environments where this (grouping) works. ...But it was a struggle because they (the teachers) thought it was difficult... I think it has to do with the school type.*

In the above quote she refers to the support she was given by her administration for the type of adaptive instruction she uses in her above example. She indicates that not all administrations are willing to allow for this type of grouping. One way to interpret the reluctance of administration to support grouping is an acknowledgment that grouping by levels in the Norwegian school system is not supported in the educational law, and thus may cause some resistance both from the administration and from fellow teachers. Another interpretation may be that resistance to grouping is due to channeling economic resources to smaller groups. Finally, the difficulty can



be interpreted that working with groups in this manner requires cooperation from everyone, teachers and administration, which may be difficult at some schools.

#### *4.1.6 Understanding of adaptive instruction- a summary*

The term adaptive instruction triggers strong reactions from all informants, suggesting that it plays a significant role in all of the informants' work as methodology teachers. The reactions, however, differ to the degree of which the concept provokes a positive reaction or a negative reaction. Only informant A specifically describes adaptive instruction as a positive part of teaching, stating that the dynamics of adapting to the individual is what makes teaching exciting. Informants C, D and E indicate a resignation to the concept as a part of the educational system, a system that informant D indicates is controlled by the politicians, while the others refer to the Educational Law requiring all teachers to administer adaptive instruction.

When defining the term adaptive instruction, all informants show an awareness of the necessity for understanding where the students are academically in order to implement adaptive instruction, with four informants mentioning specifically the need for well-informed assessment practices in order to implement adaptive instruction. As stated earlier, only informant D included gifted students when referring to adaptive instruction, which could indicate that the other informants define adaptive instruction in the terms of helping students who have difficulty following the set curriculum. However, it is also unclear how much the topic of my thesis has influenced the responses of the informants towards focusing on students with difficulties.

Whereas the informants agree that assessment is necessary before adapting instruction, the informants do not demonstrate a clear common understanding of how to adapt instruction after assessment of the students has taken place. On the one hand, all informants mention examples of pedagogical adaptations that can be used after assessment, for example easier texts or oral activities to compensate for reading difficulties. However, only informant E additionally describes organizational adaptations in the form of groups. In contrast to informants A, D, E, informants B and C give examples of adaptive instruction that rely on the students to adapt to the instruction rather than the teachers adapting their instruction to the students, indicating a difference in their understanding of the term.

To a point, there is an agreement among the informants that adaptive instruction is difficult and/or problematic. Although informant B states that adaptive instruction in itself is not difficult, she also states that the systems put into practice because of adaptive instruction are difficult, and in this manner she indicates that adaptive instruction can be problematic. Her criticism to the systems for adaptive instruction is also shared by informant D. All informants give varying reasons for why adaptive instruction is difficult or problematic, but each informant refers to in some manner the number of students and the variety these students represent as a challenge for teachers and a challenge for adaptive instruction. Two informants accommodate for this challenge by expressing that adaptive instruction does not mean individual instruction to each student but rather specific instruction to groups of students, thus alleviating some of the tension that occurs with teaching to the individual while accommodating for an entire class.

#### **4.2 Understanding of reading and writing difficulties**

In this section of the interview I am interested in finding out how the English methodology teachers understand reading and writing difficulties. As discussed in section 2.4, teachers' knowledge of reading and writing difficulties along with their beliefs and attitudes towards students with reading and writing difficulty have been shown to influence the learning outcomes of these students. Moreover, in order to influence the knowledge of student teachers, it can be assumed that those who are teaching student teachers need to have some basic knowledge of reading and writing difficulties. Similar to adaptive instruction, the informants are asked to define reading and writing difficulties and describe students who have these difficulties. In addition, the informants are asked to rate the degree of their own knowledge of reading and writing difficulties along with to what extent they believe knowledge of reading and writing difficulties should be expected of English teachers and expected of methodology teachers.

##### *4.2.1 Understanding of reading and writing difficulties- Informant A*

Informant A expresses uncertainty when asked to define reading and writing difficulties, using general terms such as pupils *who have language difficulties*. However, she is positive towards the need to be able to recognize and identify pupils who are struggling, and once these pupils are identified, she believes it necessary to call for help from a specialist.

*Those who actually have it (reading and writing difficulties) can't really overcome it, I guess. It doesn't disappear.*

*Sometimes there are certain conditions. I don't know all of the conditions, but... if you go over a long time and there is no progress, then perhaps you need help.*

The above quote suggests on the one hand some knowledge that reading difficulties can be biological. However, on the other hand, saying that difficulties cannot be overcome can suggest a degree of resignation towards the difficulties and perhaps possibility of help. Informant A describes possible consequences of these difficulties as expressed in poor spelling, difficulty with sequencing ideas and difficulty with structuring the students' own learning. This description of students with reading and writing difficulty reflects an understanding of the behavioristic perspective of dyslexia as presented in chapter 2. She also includes in her description the psychological challenges many students may have, such as being reluctant to tell their teachers that they are struggling.

Informant A rates her knowledge of reading and writing difficulties as low. She explains that the knowledge she has of reading and writing difficulties she has learned from her colleagues, as she herself has not had much education on reading and writing difficulties. Although she expresses the need for English teachers to be able to identify the difficulties, she does not suggest that English teachers need to know specific definitions and causes of reading and writing difficulties. Instead, she refers to knowing how and when to get help from a specialist as most important.

#### *4.2. Understanding of reading and writing difficulties- Informant B*

Informant B does not give a definition of reading and writing difficulties and admits to knowing little about the subject. She refers to the books they use in English methodology classes, explaining that the books they use have no information on the subject, and therefore reading and writing difficulties is not specifically taken up in class. The knowledge she has about reading and writing difficulties she has learned from a TV show with Håvard Tjora called *A Clean Start* (my translation) that was shown on the Norwegian State TV channel (NRK). In addition, she has had contact with Dyslexia Association in Norway, where she has learned that reading phonetically can be difficult for students with reading and writing difficulties. She indicates here that she understands that one type of reading difficulty may stem from difficulty with phonetic

processing. When referring to phonetic difficulties while learning English, informant B states the following:

*I've heard teachers say some students with reading and writing difficulties find it easier to write in English...In English it (the phonetics) is difficult for EVERYBODY! ...you just have to memorize the picture, the word.*

Since English is difficult for all students, informant B can be indicating that she believes students with reading and writing difficulties may feel more on the same level as the other pupils in the learning environment of an English class. However, the above statement can also indicate that she believes students with reading and writing difficulties automatically have the ability to memorize the whole words or find it easier than other students to learn whole words as a means of learning English. Finally, informant B's understanding of reading and writing difficulties indicates a strong belief that oral English can compensate for reading and writing difficulties.

*Students can orally train and then hopefully, if they do that enough, reading and writing difficulties will not hinder them.*

When describing pupils with reading and writing difficulties, informant B shows implicit understanding of some possible behavioral consequences of reading and writing difficulties, such as not wanting to speak the language due to possible negative experiences with learning English. However, she also includes in her description of pupils with reading and writing difficulties the positive influence teachers may have over them by simply believing that these pupils have the ability to learn. The previous statement places responsibility on the teachers to support students with reading and writing difficulties. This statement, however, contrasts in part from the following statement where she mentions that it is the pupils who best know how to explain their reading and writing difficulties and how to deal with them.

*ONLY the kid will know what is difficult and what he or she will be able to learn...listen to the kid and find out.*

In the first statement it is the teachers who have the influence and control to enhance learning. In the second statement, informant B suggests that it is the pupils who are to take control of their learning difficulties.

When asked whether English teachers have the responsibility for understanding reading and writing difficulties, she answers positively: *of course!* However, she indicates that these issues are not taken up in English methodology classes but rather are taken up in the Education classes. Although the information is not taken up in methodology classes, informant B expresses in the interview her need to better understand reading and writing difficulties, including assessment tools and the terms used to define reading and writing difficulties. This statement can indicate that informant B believes that understanding reading and writing difficulties should be part of her job as a methodology teacher.

#### *4.2.3 Understanding of reading and writing difficulties- Informant C*

As with informant B, informant C does not give a specific definition of reading and writing difficulties. He also rates his understanding of the topic as low.

*I definitely need to read up on this.*

While describing students with reading and writing difficulties, informant C shows an understanding that students with reading and writing difficulties may be slow readers, needing more time to complete a reading task. He also includes in his description of students with reading and writing difficulties students who may need to have larger fonts when reading. Recommending larger fonts when reading may indicate that informant B includes visual impairment as part of reading and writing difficulties.

The knowledge informant C has on reading and writing difficulties stems from the education classes he had while studying for his teaching certificate several years earlier.

When asked if the knowledge of reading and writing difficulties should be part of being an English teacher, he responds positively, emphasizing that English requires reading and writing, and thus part of the requirements for English teachers should be an understanding of reading and writing and the difficulties that pupils may have while learning to read and write in English.

#### *4.2.4 Understanding of reading and writing difficulties- Informant D*

Informant D defines one kind of reading and writing difficulties as biological difficulties that can be inherited. He then describes his experience of discovering several members of a family with

dyslexia. In his description of pupils with reading and writing difficulties, he also shows an understanding of how difficulties with reading and writing can have behavioral consequences. He gives the following description:

*Many of those I have encountered have lost their self-confidence and in part their motivation simply because they have struggled and all too often never got an answer why they have trouble. This has affected them.*

In this description of students with low self-confidence and low motivation, informant D seems to express a belief that informing pupils of their difficulties may encourage a better self-image that can lead to higher motivation and better learning.

In addition to the biological and behavioral perspective of reading and writing difficulties, informant D also defines one type of reading and writing difficulty as a result of poor teaching practices, which he calls *pedagogical dyslexia*. To exemplify this, informant D describes teachers who have focused too much on the text books and too little on reading literature outside of the textbooks as one of the main reasons for poor reading. This definition may indicate a positive attitude towards the ability of teachers to help students with reading and writing difficulties, shifting the focus from a difficulty that lies within the student to a difficulty that lies within the teaching practices.

The knowledge informant D has on reading and writing difficulties stems from his personal interest in dyslexia after having experienced several pupils with dyslexia who struggled with reading and writing in English. He has had no formal education on the subject, but has rather learned through his own studies. Informant D is never directly asked whether it is the responsibility of an English teacher to understand reading and writing difficulties, but he does state that those who are in the Department of special needs education in Oslo, i.e. at the University of Oslo, are those who have the knowledge of reading and writing difficulties, suggesting that the responsibility for understanding reading and writing difficulties lies in special needs education. He also indicates later on in the interview that the Department of education has reading and writing difficulties in their curriculum.

#### 4.2.5 Understanding of reading and writing difficulties- Informant E

As with informant B and C, informant E does not give a specific definition of reading and writing difficulties. However, her descriptions of students with reading and writing difficulties imply some knowledge of a biological and behavioral perspective of reading and writing difficulties. When asked to describe a student with reading and writing difficulties, she is reluctant to use the term reading *and* writing difficulties together, pointing out that some students have reading difficulties without any writing difficulties and some have writing difficulties without reading difficulties.

*I would say that some have difficulties in writing, some with oral production, some with oral interaction, some with reading and possibly reading and listening comprehension.*

Because in the interview she is not asked to further this explanation, it is difficult to know whether she believes that these difficulties are only found separate or whether they can occur at the same time in some students. In addition, no further explanation is given to help understand whether informant E believes that writing difficulties could be a consequence of reading difficulties or the opposite. However, she does show an understanding of the complexity that is involved with learning English as a foreign language, a complexity that includes reading, writing, and oral competency, and that some students may have special difficulties related to these different areas of language learning.

Informant E describes some students who struggle with writing as students who struggle putting words on paper because of low motivation and low self-confidence. She says that some students who have the ability to write simply do not get started because of low motivation and low self-confidence. In this description she emphasizes that low motivation and low self-confidence are the causes of the difficulties rather than the results of other difficulties they may have. These students, according to informant E, need strategies that will help them start the process of writing.

She then refers to a biological perspective of writing difficulties where she states that she cannot name the specific causes of the difficulty since she is not a special needs teacher.

*Then you have the one who struggles with writing, which could be...again, I am not a special needs teacher. I don't know what causes it.*

She finally uses the term, a dyslectic student, when describing writing difficulties, where she again states that this is an area that is unknown for her as she is not a special needs teacher. She says while some dyslectic students may struggle with reading, they write profusely.

Unfortunately, the poor spelling of these students hinders the reader from understanding what they have written. In this context, she implies that the dyslectic student does not really have a writing difficulty since the student is willing to write a lot.

Informant E then goes on to describe reading difficulties in the same manner as she describes writing difficulties, dividing up the non-readers due to low self-confidence and low motivation and poor readers due to biological reasons such as dyslexia. Finally, informant E also expresses an understanding that reading difficulties can be a result of poor teaching, describing teachers who give students texts that are too difficult without giving further instructions, without modeling the reading or without giving the students specific reading strategies.

As indicated several times above, informant E ranks her knowledge of reading and writing difficulties as low stating the following:

*I am NOT a special needs teacher, and even though I feel competent as a teacher in many ways, I really feel that I come short when it comes to dyslexia. ... I cannot even try to say that I know what special needs are.*

Informant E often refers to not being a special needs teacher throughout the interview which could indicate that she does not see the need to know more about reading and writing difficulties. However, the above quote could also indicate a feeling that she does not know enough and that she should at least know more about dyslexia.

#### *4.2.6 Reading and writing difficulties – a summary*

Although only informants A and D give a specific definition of reading and writing difficulties, all informants have some ideas of behaviors that can result from having reading and writing difficulties. For example, informants A, B, D, and E refer to low motivation and low self-confidence that may result from reading and writing difficulties, while informants A and E refer to spelling difficulties. Informant C refers the students as slow readers who may need extra time to accommodate for their difficulties. In their descriptions of students with reading and writing difficulties, however, none of the informants mention difficulties with recognizing rhymes and



sound differences which are some areas students with reading and writing difficulties may have. Only informant B refers to phonological difficulties, which along with orthographic difficulties, represents the most common area of language learning difficulty found in students who struggle with reading and writing. None of the informants mention difficulties with the syntactic or semantic area of language learning, nor is it mentioned that students with reading and writing difficulties may struggle with reduced working memory and slow if not incomplete automatization of word recognition. Of the five informants, only two informants name the influence of pedagogical practices on reading and writing performances, stating that some students have difficulties with reading and writing due to poor teaching.

When asked to rate their own knowledge of reading and writing difficulties all informants regard their knowledge as minimal, with four informants indicating that this minimal knowledge is also insufficient. Informants B and C state directly the need to read and learn more about the topic while the comments of informants A and E indirectly suggest they believe their knowledge is insufficient.

The informants differ to what degree they indicate that knowledge of reading and writing difficulties should be part of English methodology classes. Informants B and C directly state that knowledge of reading and writing difficulties should be part of English methodology classes, while informants A and E refer to being able to recognize the difficulties as most important, and then knowing when to refer to special needs teachers for help. Informant D states more directly that understanding of reading and writing difficulties is part of the special needs department and the department of education.

#### **4.3 Personal experience with teaching students with reading and writing difficulties**

In the third section of the interview, I am interested in the experiences the methodology teachers have had with teaching to students with reading and writing difficulties. The focus is then moved from adaptive instruction as a general term and towards using adaptive instruction specifically for students with reading and writing difficulties. The third section of the interview in combination with the second section of the interviews can be seen as creating a platform for the discussion of what methodology teachers present to their students regarding adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. The informants were asked to describe their

own experience with teaching to students with reading and writing difficulties both with pupils in the lower and upper secondary schools and with students in higher education.

#### *4.3.1 Personal experience- informant A*

Informant A has had experience with adapting instruction to students with reading and writing difficulties both as a teacher at secondary schools and in higher education. While teaching at the secondary school level, informant A describes several adaptations she has made. One adaptation she describes is with alternative assessment for reading comprehension for a pupil with reading and writing difficulties. She explains how instead of writing answers to reading texts, the pupil is given six boxes where he can draw the events in the texts, showing his reading comprehension.

As a teacher in higher education, she reports helping some students identify their own reading difficulties by referring them to the specialists and then helping them receive support in the form of extended time given during exams. However, she also reports that her experience with students with reading and writing difficulties in higher education is limited, citing that the students who have reading and writing difficulties at the higher education level often have already developed strategies to deal with their difficulties and thus have not asked for extra support during the school year.

Informant A reports both positive and negative experiences when dealing with students with reading and writing difficulties, recognizing that although the difficulties may be identified, finding adaptations that help the students develop as good language learners is often difficult.

#### *4.3.2 Personal experience- informant B*

Informant B has only had experience with students in higher education. The experience she reports includes directing some students towards books on tapes and extended time for exams. Informant B also indicates that there are only a few students in her program that have reading and writing difficulties, and similar to informant A, she states that those students who do have difficulties often have their own strategies for adapting their learning.

#### *4.3.3 Personal experience- informant C*

Informant C remembers one pupil while teaching at an upper secondary school. This pupil had such difficulty getting through a reading assignment that informant C spent time after school to read the text aloud with the pupil. In this manner, informant C reports orally discussing what

was read, allowing the pupil to show her understanding of the text orally. Informant C does not report any other experiences from upper secondary school.

The experiences informant C reports from higher education center not around a specific student but rather around how he has adapted his lecture format to pacing the lectures slowly, changing the font size in his slides and limiting the amount of texts used in each slide. He also has allowed for more time during exams. As with previous informants, he reports experiencing few students in the program who have reading and writing difficulties, and those students who do report having difficulties often take responsibility for their own learning.

#### *4.3.4 Personal experience- informant D*

With several years in secondary school, informant D has had several experiences with adapting instruction for English pupils with reading and writing difficulties. He reports adapting for reading and writing difficulties by introducing technical support through use of computers and books on tape, introducing easy-reader texts, using oral language for checking for reading comprehension, reducing grammar instruction, and increasing reading strategy instruction.

As a teacher in higher education, informant D reports being a source for helping teachers at the secondary schools with adapting exams for pupils with dyslexia. He does not, however, report any experience with his own students in higher education, which may indicate a similar experience as the other informants, where students in higher education become less visible due to their own ability to adapt their learning.

#### *4.3.5 Personal experience- informant E*

Although informant E explains several times that she is not a special needs teacher, she does report several experiences with adapting to pupils with reading and writing difficulties at the secondary school level. She includes in her adaptations, use of role playing to initiate prior knowledge and interest before reading texts and focusing writing development on structure and content over grammar and spelling for pupils with dyslexia. In addition, she reports adapting grammatical assessment for pupils with dyslexia, by limiting the focus for improvement to only a few mistakes that she regards as necessary to improve the reader's comprehension of the pupil's text. With this limited focus, she reports allowing the pupils with reading and writing difficulties to delay working on all grammatical mistakes found in their writing. She reports having special

agreements for pupils with dyslexia on how and what she assesses in writing. In addition to individual adaptations, informant E reports adapting through the use of differentiated groups within the class, based on individual assessment.

Her experience in higher education has not provided her with the need to adapt instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties.

#### *4.3.6 Personal experience- a summary*

Each informant varies in their degree of personal experience with teaching to students with reading and writing difficulties. However, experience working outside of higher education appears to play a significant role as to the amount of experience each informant has had with adapting their teaching to students with reading and writing difficulties. Informants A, D, and E, all of which have had over 8 years of teaching experience in lower and upper secondary schools, report having several experiences with teaching students with reading and writing difficulties. All of the informants are able to explain several adaptations they personally have made for these students. While on the other hand, informants B and C, who have had fewer years' of experience outside of higher education, report fewer experiences with adapting their teaching to students with reading and writing difficulties.

All informants suggest a common agreement that there are few students with reading and writing difficulties in their programs in higher education. In addition, the informants suggest that many of those students in higher education who do have difficulties do not report their difficulties. The informants suggest that these students have control over their own learning difficulties. However, those students who do report their difficulties have received from the informants some adaptations, focusing mostly on extension of time in exams and the use of technical support.

#### **4.4 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties to English language student teachers**

The purpose of the last section of the interview is to examine to what extent the informants report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their English methodology classes. I have asked the informants to specifically address these areas of teaching EFL: vocabulary learning and use of L1. They are then asked to evaluate the degree of which they believe the topic of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulty is presented in their English methodology classes and to give reasons for their evaluation. Although I intended to ask all informants to evaluate what degree they believed their students left their classes prepared to handle the challenges of teaching students with reading and writing difficulties, I presented this specific question to only three informants, a mistake due to not rigorously following my interview guide.

##### *4.4.1 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties - informant A*

Informant A describes the method she presents to her students for teaching vocabulary at school. She explains that EFL teachers need to ask three questions about teaching vocabulary: 1) What does it mean to know a word? 2) How can you build on a simple word to expand your vocabulary? 3) When and where does this new word come back again? She advises students to teach new vocabulary in a structured manner using seven different activities that include noticing, identifying, sorting, categorizing, ranking, and matching. With regards to use of L1, informant A prefers the use of simple language in English rather than use of L1. However, using L1 to teach grammar or learning strategies is okay, depending on the needs of the pupils.

Informant A does not report teaching *explicitly* adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. However, she does report teaching explicitly adaptive instruction as a general term. When asked about how ideas for adaptive instruction for students for reading and writing difficulties may have been implicitly presented in her classes, she reports focusing on teaching the student teachers to recognize and assess the pupils who do not show language improvement, thus recognizing when it is necessary seek help from the special needs teachers. In the course of the interview, informant A emphasizes several times the importance of making

student teachers aware of assessment practices and how these assessments can be used for adapting teaching.

When asked if she believes her students are prepared for the challenge of teaching students with reading and writing difficulties, she answers with doubt.

*I think that the students leave and they're very enthusiastic... when they get out into the classroom there are so many other challenges that they don't know quite what to do.*

In her statement, she raises the issue of the challenges new teachers face in their first years as a teacher. Although she reports creating enthusiasm towards the profession, she also indicates that this enthusiasm does not necessarily prepare them for the challenges they will meet.

However, informant A explains that she believes the teaching profession is a profession that takes time to develop. So instead of focusing on developing specific skills or teaching practices, for example skills for teaching students with reading and writing difficulties, she has chosen to shift the focus of her teaching towards developing the skills to ask the right questions when difficulties occur, and then to instill in the student teachers the willingness to continue their development as teachers to find the answers to these questions in the coming years.

*I think there has to be an understanding that it takes so many years to actually develop good teaching practice...of course the more methods you have, the more you have to choose from and the more you are able to do it, but I think that happens over time, and not just one time, done.*

The above statements suggest two reasons why the topic of reading and writing difficulties is not specifically taught in informant A's methodology classes. One is due to the limited capacity of student teachers to absorb all the information. The other is a belief that specific skills such as teaching to students with reading and writing difficulties will be learned as the student teachers develop into their profession.

#### *4.4.2 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties - informant B*

Informant C reports learning vocabulary as one of the most important aspects of learning a foreign language, but she does not report teaching any specific methodology that may aid in

learning vocabulary. With regards to use of L1 in the English classroom, informant B states that using L1 can be dangerous since pupils will then stop speaking in L2 and wait for the explanation in L1.

Similar to informant A's methodology classes, the topic of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties is not explicitly taught in informant B's methodology classes. However, she mentions that adaptive instruction, as a general term, is explicitly taught and is the main topic in one of the teacher practice sessions that all second year student teachers must be part of. In these sessions, the student teachers are asked to observe practices where they see adaptive instruction taking place and then they are asked to reflect on these practices. Although the student teachers are not specifically directed towards observing adaptive instruction for reading and writing difficulties, it can be assumed that adaptive instruction for reading and writing difficulties may be part of their observations, discussions, and personal reflections.

As for why the topic of reading and writing difficulties is not explicitly taught in English methodology classes, informant B gives no specific reason, but rather suggests that more focus on adaptive instruction is necessary.

*But you have got me thinking that we should probably discuss the concept of adaptive teaching more with our students.*

Although more focus on adaptive instruction as a general term may be necessary, informant B also suggests *specific* focus on the topic of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties is not necessary.

*I thought... we should perhaps have done that (one session or topic on adaptive instruction for reading and writing difficulties)... but then I think NO! I mean that the teaching is everything we do. And everybody has reading and writing difficulties of some sort.*

It is unclear in the above statement whether informant B believes that learning to read English is difficult for all students and therefore students who have specific reading and writing difficulties will be taken care of in a general class or whether informant B believes that the students with specific reading and writing difficulties do not need specific teaching practices.

Informant B is not directly asked to what degree she believes her students are prepared to teach students with reading and writing difficulties.

#### *4.4.3 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties - informant C*

Informant C does not report any specific method for teaching vocabulary, but rather implies that the students must be able to learn the vocabulary on their own. He does not disregard the usefulness of simply learning by heart weekly vocabulary lists. As for use of L1 in the classroom, informant C states that English should be used from the first day. However, he does see the challenges that may occur with students who have reading and writing difficulties, thus opening up for limited use of Norwegian.

Although informant C expresses strong agreement on the importance of teaching the topic of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, he reports that the topic is not explicitly taught in his English methodology classes. He refers to the constraints of time, level of students' English knowledge and the amount of information student teachers are required to understand as reasons why adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties is difficult to incorporate into the program.

*I think it is definitely part of the construct of language ability of student teachers... but we also see one of the general problems is if you try to add something (to the new teachers' program) you don't take away...they (student teachers) are doing so many things, and that some are struggling just to understand the vocabulary they need to use.*

To make up for the lack time spent on the topic in English methodology classes, informant C indicates that there is a focus on reading in the education classes. In addition, he mentions that for English teachers, reading could be integrated into an in-service course where focus on students with special needs would be part of that course.

Although informant C is not directly asked if his students are prepared to adapt English instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, he does indicate strongly the need for more information on the topic, indicating that he perhaps doubts the knowledge level of his students.



#### *4.4.4 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties - informant D*

Similar to informant B and C, informant D does not report any specific methodology for teaching new vocabulary words. However, he does see some benefit of the act of learning by heart weekly vocabulary lists. As he reports this, he also suggests an understanding that many foreign language teachers would disagree with him. He also reports a strong opinion for using only English in the classroom, stating that there are enough poor teachers out there using Norwegian to teach English.

Informant D reports teaching to his students the importance of extensive reading and teaching reading strategies, both of which may help pupils with reading and writing difficulties, and in this manner he reports teaching some adaptive instruction that may benefit students with reading and writing difficulties. However, he also indicates that the instruction he offers is mostly on the surface level, indicating that he does not expect the student teachers to be able to use extensive reading or teach reading strategies on the basis of his instruction alone. On the other hand, he indicates that learning strategies are taken up in the education classes.

*I make them aware (of the importance of extensive reading and reading strategies) but I never really get that far. We don't have that much time. And part of the learning strategies I consider to be the domain of the pedagogues. So I expect that to be handled elsewhere.*

Informant D's response indicates that no explicit teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties occurs in his English methodology classes. He additionally indicates in this quote that the specific topic of teaching reading strategies is not expected to be part of the English methodology courses but rather part of the education courses taught to all student teachers.

However in response to a direct question of who *should* take this responsibility, his answer shows a willingness to incorporate it more into his teaching practice.

*I know a bit about it (teaching reading strategies for students with reading and writing difficulties), but I haven't taught it systematically, so I have to work a bit more on it. I do consider it important, across the curriculum.*

Informant D does not respond directly to whether his students are prepared to teach students with reading and writing problems but he does respond that many of his students have returned to him saying that his instructions on reading have given them a direction towards which they can follow in the coming years. On the other hand, informant D describes himself as a pessimist, saying that most new teachers will become socialized into a school system that does not necessarily agree to the instructions he has given. I interpret his pessimism as an awareness of the constraints new teachers may experience in their first years of teaching and the difficulty they may have going against the norm that is found within the school.

When directly asked about alternative ways of spreading the information about extensive reading and reading strategies out to the schools, he suggests giving in-service courses and writing articles in educational magazines as possible methods. Finally, informant D believes that state-wide mandatory reading assessments in English in the upper secondary schools is also necessary in order to pressure English teachers into focusing on extensive reading along with reading strategies in their English classes.

#### *4.4.5 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties - informant E*

Informant E describes vocabulary learning as an activity that teachers should work with all the time. She has focused mostly on vocabulary building as a pre-reading or a pre-writing activity, disregarding the use of learning vocabulary lists with translations. Informant E is not directly asked about using L1 in teaching English.

As with all the other informants, informant E does not explicitly teach adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, although adaptive instruction as a general term is definitely part of the program. She uses a lot of time teaching learning strategies and reading strategies that may help students with reading and writing difficulties and in this manner indirectly teaches adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties.

*Strategies are always part of what I do. Learning strategies, reading strategies, always... I talk about how to teach it to the students ... I seldom refer to the dyslectic ... but I usually talk about this as adaptive instruction.*

Although informant E reports that her students seldom come to class with questions about special needs, they do come to class with questions about how to adapt. She suggests that her students leave her classes with a feeling of being able to adapt instruction because she places her students in practical exercises in order for them to be able to try out the adaptations. However, she also is aware that many students leave believing that they can adapt to every need of each student. In response to this, informant E reports helping student teachers to understand that after assessment of the pupils, they have to adapt to their individual needs by separating the pupils into smaller groups rather than teaching to each individual.

Outside of the university classroom, informant E has experience with in-service courses for teachers, among them English teachers. Her courses involve teaching reading and writing strategies that may help students with reading and writing difficulties. Although these courses may indirectly help practicing teachers to adapt instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, as with her methodology classes at the university, she does not explicitly use the term adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. After teaching how to assess pupils, the pupils then can be divided into groups, where 10% of the lowest achievers may include special needs pupils. She then teaches how adaptive instruction may occur within these groups. However, she hesitates to use the term students with reading and writing difficulties, using instead the words *having trouble with* or *struggling learners*, because she is not a special needs teacher.

*To me, I cannot even try to say that I know what the special needs are, but I am a teacher in the classroom with a wide spectrum of student needs. And I have to adapt to their needs. So that is my approach.*

It is unclear in this quote whether informant E feels the need to know more about special needs students or whether she believes it is enough for an English teacher to be able to assess levels without this knowledge.

#### *4.4.5 Reported teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties – a summary*

Although all informants indicate that learning new vocabulary is essential for learning a foreign language, only informant A reports specifically teaching various methods for teaching new

vocabulary. Informants C and D report using weekly vocabulary lists as one method for teaching new vocabulary. Informant E focuses vocabulary learning as part of the act of reading and writing instead of a separate act of learning a list of words. Of the four informants that were asked about using L1 in the classroom, all of them indicate that L1 should not be a part of the classroom language, although informants A and B indicate that this focus can be problematic, allowing for some L2, depending on the students' abilities.

All informants indicate that *explicit* teaching of adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties is not a part of the program for English methodology classes. On the other hand, all informants indicate that teaching adaptive instruction as a *general term* is part of the English methodology programs. Although informant D and E report explicitly teaching specific methods in their English as a foreign language methodology classes that may help students with reading and writing difficulties, both informants hesitate connecting their specific methods to students with reading and writing difficulties but rather refer to these methods as simply good teaching methods that would benefit all students.

Informants A, B, C, and E indicate lack of time and amount of information necessary to teach student teachers as reasons for not additionally teaching adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties. They all indicate that the addition of this topic would amount to too much information for the new teachers. However, informants A, C and E specifically indicate that this information can and should be taken up later as further education. Only informant D indicates that he expects the topic of adaptive instruction for reading and writing to be part of special education or general education courses rather than an English methodology course. As a result of this, the three informants who answer to what degree their students are prepared to adapt instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties indicate that their students do not leave their courses with enough knowledge to adapt their teaching to students with reading and writing difficulties.

#### 4.5 Brief summary of results

The results reported in chapter 4 provide for some insights to the questions I have presented in this thesis: 1) how do English methodology teachers understand adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties and, 2) to what extent do English methodology teachers report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction of English language student teachers?

The results of the interviews indicate that all informants include adaptive instruction as a *general term* in their English methodology classes. Likewise, all informants indicate a common understanding that in order to adapt instruction, teachers need to assess students. This common understanding appears to be independent of whether the informant teaches at a university or a university college. When specifically focusing on the thesis question of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, the informants show more hesitation than when focusing on adaptive instruction as a general term. This hesitation can be seen in the light of their own description of their knowledge of reading and writing difficulties; all informants describe their knowledge as minimal. The specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties each informant has appears to depend on who the informant coincidentally has had contact with or the informant's own personal interest. The informants' level of education and place of work do not appear to influence the degree of knowledge the informants have of reading and writing difficulties. However, there appears to be a difference in the informant's ability to give examples of adaptive instruction that may help students with reading and writing difficulties. Those informants who have worked the longest in lower and upper secondary schools appear to more easily describe several examples of adapting instruction that may help students with reading and writing difficulties than those informants who have less experience in lower and upper secondary school.

When referring to my second research question, all informants report little or no explicit teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction of English language student teachers. The informants explain that the amount of information student teachers are required to understand hinders incorporating in their methodology classes adaptive instruction that specifically focuses on students with reading and writing difficulties. The amount of information English students are required to understand appears to be

burdensome whether the students are part of the GLU program at a university college or part of the PPU program at the university. Interestingly, the majority of the informants agree that teachers need to understand how to adapt to these students, with informant B and C specifically stating that English methodology classes should include this information. Informant A and E indicate that specific knowledge on reading and writing difficulty is not expected of English teachers while the ability to recognize when to get help is expected of English teachers. Only informant D, who has had many years' experience both in the lower and upper secondary schools and in higher education, indicates that information on adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties is and should be taken up in special education and general education classes rather than in English methodology classes.

In the following chapter, I will further discuss these findings in light of the theory and research discussed in chapter 2.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I presented the results from the interviews, comparing and contrasting the results among the informants. I concluded the chapter by using my research questions to briefly summarize the results, presenting possible similarities and differences among the informants. Jacobsen (2005) writes that to interpret results of an investigation is to put the results into a larger context, which is the purpose of chapter 5. I will divide chapter 5 into four sections. Section one and two focus on discussing the results in light of my research questions and the research presented in chapter 2. In section three, I will reflect on the research process, including strong and weak points of my research, and in section four I will present further possible research.

### **5.1 How do English methodology teachers understand adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties?**

#### *5.1.1. Adaptive instruction as a general term*

The results of the interviews indicate that the informants have a solid view of adaptive instruction as a guiding principle in the Norwegian school system. They understand the responsibility teachers have with regards to the Norwegian Education Law §1-3. Although not all informants appear to embrace the term with the same enthusiasm, all informants show an understanding that adaptive instruction is required of all teachers in the school system in Norway.

When it comes to adaptive instruction as a practical tool, the informants seem to vary in the degree of which they can exemplify good adaptive instruction, a variation that appears to be connected with personal experience in classrooms in the lower and upper secondary schools. As all informants report few students in their teacher-training programs as needing adaptive instruction for reading and writing difficulties, it is reasonable that practical experience outside of higher education provides for greater opportunities to practice adaptive instruction, thus accounting for why those methodology teachers with more experience outside of higher education appear to more easily give a variety of examples of adaptive instruction than those who have had less experience outside of higher education. None the less, it is important to note

that this assumption of experience outside of higher education is based on only few informants within three English departments found in Southeast Norway. A relevant question is therefore: How would methodology teachers in other departments or other areas of Norway report on adaptive instruction?

Using the three categories of differentiation in adaptive instruction which are presented in chapter 2, the informants describe most often *pedagogical differentiation* as examples of adaptive instruction, citing the use of differentiated levels of materials used in the classroom, technical help through computers, and time allotted to do the tasks as good means to adapt instruction. As most teachers have the freedom to choose their pedagogical approach without the need to cooperate with other teachers or the administration, making pedagogical differentiation in adaptive instruction can be seen as the most readily available adaption for teachers, and therefore supporting why this type of differentiation is exemplified most often.

In contrast to pedagogical differentiation, *organizational differentiation* often requires more cooperation and support from both the administration and fellow teachers, which may perhaps be why only one of the informants uses grouping, an organizational differentiation, as an example of good adaptive instruction. However, as mentioned in chapter 4, placing students in groups according to academic levels is problematic, as permanent grouping is prohibited in the Norwegian education law, which may be another reason why so few informants give organizational differentiation as a means of adaptive instruction. Differentiating work plans is the other example of organizational differentiation given by two informants. The informants describe work plans that include A, B, and C activities according to the ability of the pupils. Although these work plans are given as examples of adaptive instruction, both informants suggest that this type of adaption is difficult for the teachers to manage, questioning whether work plans should be used as adaptive instruction. One informant suggests that that too much responsibility is placed on the pupils when using work plans and that work plans do not necessarily lead to better learning.

The final category of differentiation in adaptive instruction is *assessment* which all informants mention when discussing adaptive instruction. Each informant reports the importance of focusing on individual needs when adjusting what the teachers assess and how they assess the students. However, all informants also show an awareness that certain assessments are not as



flexible as they would like, for example, final exams. These assessments force teachers to eventually evaluate how they can balance adaptive instruction and evaluating students using a common grading scale with predefined learning outcomes. Their awareness of this tension suggests the developed understanding of adaptive instruction as defined by Haug and Bachmann (2007), who state that adaptive instruction is more than a simple method or organizational change but rather an awareness of the ethical decisions one must make in order to implement adaptive instruction.

All informants indicate without hesitation that English can and should be learned by all, and using adaptive instruction is one way to achieve this goal. This attitude reflects positively the view of Strandkleiv and Lindbäck (2004) that adaptive instruction occurs when the focus is learning for *all* students. In addition, all informants show an understanding that adaptive instruction must be based on assessment of the students, an understanding that is also supported by Buli-Holmberg and Ekeberg (2009), Haug and Bachmann (2007) and Strandkleiv and Lindbäck (2004). In this manner, the informants reflect knowledge of adaptive instruction that goes somewhat beyond the surface level of simple methodological variation.

### *5.1.2 Adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties*

In my interviews, I am ultimately interested in finding out the degree of knowledge and understanding my informants have of adaptive instruction *specifically* for students with reading and writing difficulties. As stated in chapter 2, Strandkleiv and Lindbäck (2004) define assessment as understanding where the students are in their ability to learn and their motivation to learn, and that knowledge and understanding of the students' abilities and personalities are necessary in order to make an assessment. Using this definition, my informants' knowledge of reading and writing difficulties would then seem to be an important aspect of assessment and eventually implementing adaptive instruction.

As shown above, my informants reveal both knowledge and understanding of adaptive instruction in general, but when focusing on adaptive instruction in English as a FL for students with reading and writing difficulty, the results are different. To begin with, my informants show little specific knowledge and understanding of reading and writing difficulties. Although two informants do reveal some specific knowledge of the term dyslexia, all informants indicate a general lack of knowledge of reading and writing difficulties. This lack of knowledge of reading

and writing difficulties is similar to the studies mentioned in chapter 2 that document the knowledge of reading and writing difficulties of mainstream teachers and teachers in training (Bell, et al, 2011; Fang, 1996; Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010; Hornstra, et al, 2010; Kirby, et al, 2005; Leyser, et. al, 2011; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Wadington & Waldington, 2005; Washburn, et al, 2011). Of the five informants, three indicate that specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties lies beyond the expectations of a foreign language teacher, while two indicate that although their own personal knowledge is limited, they believe EFL teachers should have this knowledge. These differing viewpoints signal a disagreement of what should be taught in an English methodology class. This disagreement is understandable as there is no specific mention of knowledge and understanding of reading and writing difficulties as an intended learning outcome for EFL student teachers in either the PPU program or GLU program. If at all, knowledge and understanding of reading and writing difficulties would fall only under the broader category of adaptive instruction in an English methodology class.

As mentioned earlier, all informants agree that assessment is necessary in order to adapt instruction. One can question, then, whether it is realistic to believe that teachers can make an informed assessment of students with reading and writing difficulties without having some specific knowledge of these difficulties. It is a danger that without specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties, teachers may assess the difficulty a student may have with working memory or phonological decoding as unwillingness to try or simply lack of motivation to learn new words, or that a teacher who does not understand that some students struggle with the syntax area of language learning may assess a student's poor ability to understand a text as lack of the necessary vocabulary needed. In addition to aiding in assessment, specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties can also be seen as necessary in order to develop good adaptive instruction after the assessment has been made. For example, knowing that some students may struggle with the phonological and orthographic area of language learning can help justify the choice between teaching grammar and spelling inductively or teaching them directly. For students who struggle with syntax, adapting instruction that aids only in learning new vocabulary would not address the specific difficulty of helping students organizing word relationships within the text. So although three of the informants in this research indicate that specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties is beyond the expectation of the knowledge of English teachers, one could argue that lack of this knowledge may affect their

ability to adapt instruction due to poor assessment and poor choice of adaptive instruction. The benefit of teachers knowing and understanding reading and writing difficulties is supported in several studies that show that the more teachers know and understand about all aspects of reading and writing, the better the students perform (Akbari & Allvar, 2010 ; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Snow, 2005; Spear-Swerling, et al, 2005). None the less, all informants agree that the ability to adapt instruction to students with reading and writing difficulties is expected of English teachers.

When asked where teachers can learn about adapting instruction to students with reading and writing, three informants point towards the general education classes included in the teacher preparation courses. For practicing teachers, two informants suggest in-service courses. However, it is interesting to note that in Norway, no mandatory further education is required of teachers after they have received their teaching degree. Thus any further education on reading and writing difficulties is dependent on the interest of the individual teacher, who personally wishes to further their knowledge of reading and writing difficulties.

### *5.1.3 Examples of adaptive instruction from informants*

Each informant is asked in the interview to give examples of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. Using the list in chapter 2 of suggested adaptations that can be used in a foreign language class, the informants show a degree of knowledge of adaption for students with reading and writing difficulties. In the following I will discuss the examples given by the informants and how they are similar or different to the suggestions given in chapter 2.

*Use explicit and structured instruction and teach language learning strategies* are two suggestions for adaptive instruction listed in chapter 2. Informants A, D and E all describe explicit instruction for teaching reading and writing strategies. In addition, informant A describes explicit and structured strategies for learning new vocabulary, which is a specific *language learning* strategy. Their emphasis explicitly teaching strategies for reading and writing and vocabulary learning indicates a *cognitively oriented* approach to FL teaching, an approach that according to the research presented in chapter 2 can have a positive influence on learning a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties. In contrast to informants A, D, and E, informant B does not report the need to teach the language explicitly but rather focuses on communication as the most important means for learning English. This focus on

communication indicates a *naturalistic* approach to learning a foreign language. As presented in chapter 2, the naturalistic approach to learning a foreign language can cause difficulties for students with reading and writing difficulties due to the openness of the activities and requirements on a stronger working memory, all of which may lead to an anxiety that can negatively affect the learning of students with reading and writing difficulties (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1992; Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991; Young, 1991). Although these differing views of explicit teaching in language learning found in my research only represent the informants' personal views, these differences do present the possibility of student teachers being exposed to varying degrees of information that may help or hinder English language learning for students with reading and writing difficulties.

Another adaptive instruction suggestion for students with reading and writing difficulties is to provide for *frequent review and repetition*. All informants report a general understanding of the importance of frequent review and repetition. Informant B strongly states the importance of repetition, especially when working orally, while informant A reports structuring repetition in order to teach vocabulary. However, there also seems to be an acknowledgement that time constraints can inhibit the amount of repetition actually used in the classroom, opening up for the individual teachers to decide on the degree of review and repetition that is presented in the classroom. As with explicit and structured instruction and teaching language learning strategies, there appears to be randomness as to the degree these adaptive instructions may or may not be emphasized. A relevant question is: would better knowledge and understanding of reading and writing difficulties help methodology teachers prioritize these types of adaption in their methodology classes?

*Allowing for L1 use to lower anxiety* is another suggestion given for adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. Many of the informants report understanding that students with reading and writing difficulty may also have varying degrees of anxiety in the foreign language classroom due to previous negative experiences with language learning. This understanding is supported by research both in the field of reading and writing and in the field of second language learning (Bru, 2008; Ganschow & Schneider, 2006; Horwitz, et al, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1992; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). However, only two informants

indicate a willingness to use L1 in the classroom in order to lessen the anxiety some students with reading and writing difficulties may experience in the foreign language classroom. Although the reluctance of methodology teachers to allow the use of L1 is understandable, in the light of reading and writing difficulties, a better understanding of these difficulties may lessen the emphasis of using L2 in the classroom in some cases. Nevertheless, allowing for L1 use to lower the anxiety is an example of the challenge adaptive instruction presents when balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of the group, for although some students may benefit from L1 use (Nijakowska, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Sparks R. L., et al, 2004), research also supports that frequent use of L2 allows for better L2 learning for many students (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Of the suggestions for specific adaptive instruction that can benefit students with reading and writing difficulty presented in chapter 2, one suggestion is not mentioned by any of the informants: *use multisensory instruction*. It is unclear whether the methodology teachers do not have any knowledge of multisensory instruction or whether they have simply not mentioned this as an example of adaptive instruction. None the less, the lack of this suggestion in all of the interviews indicates that this type of instruction may be little known to English methodology teachers. In recent years, several of the leading researchers on foreign language learning difficulties state that the use of multisensory instruction provides for the explicit structure necessary for these students to learn a foreign language (Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Sparks, et al., 1998). The lack of knowledge of multisensory instruction may indicate a lost opportunity for English methodology teachers to present yet another viable adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties.

As shown above, all informants are able to report examples of adaptive instruction that may benefit students with reading and writing difficulties, however all of the informants also show hesitation to specifically state that these adaptations may benefit students with reading and writing difficulties. This hesitation to connect their adaptive instruction to students with reading and writing difficulties most likely reflects the methodology teachers' limited knowledge or understanding of students with reading and writing difficulties. Would their hesitation be the same if they reported having specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties?

## **5.2 To what extent do English methodology teachers report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction of English language student teachers?**

### *5.2.1. Reported teaching in methodology classes*

In the previous section, I state that all informants report an understanding of adaptive instruction and the responsibility teachers have with regards to the Norwegian Education Law §1-3. It can be assumed then that these methodology teachers most likely include information on adaptive instruction in their English methodology classes. However, all informants report no explicit instruction for adapting to students with reading and writing difficulties, stating time restraints and the amount of other required information needed to be taught as reasons for not including this specific topic. Lack of specific instruction on this topic must also be seen as a reflection of the methodology teachers' own limited knowledge on the subject, which as presented in the previous section, is reported as being minimal. In addition, three of the informants specifically state that they do not teach particular *methods* to their student teachers. As explained in chapter 2, methods are the practical realization of an approach, made up of various techniques, procedures and sequences of events (Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). These informants state that they instead present opportunities to reflect on the practices student teachers see and experience during their practicum. The move away from direct teaching of methods towards more personal reflection reflects the current view of teacher education presented in chapter 2, where the focus of teacher education is on discussing beliefs and practices rather than memorizing methods ( Fang, 1996; Hamton, 1994; Harrington & Jandrey, 2000; Smith, 1994). However, by not taking into account that the choice of a method can affect students with reading and writing difficulties, methodology teachers may miss the opportunity to inform student teachers on possible adaptations that may help these students. Omitting specifically teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulty in English methodology classes can therefore be seen as a result of time restraints, amount of information needed to be taught, lack of knowledge about reading and writing difficulties and a reflection of the current view of teacher education.

In addition, as stated earlier, three of the informants indicate that specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties is beyond the expectations of English teachers and one of the informants

states specifically that the topic is and should be presented elsewhere. Stating that specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulty is beyond the scope of an English methodology class can indicate that the English methodology teachers will be less likely to seek out voluntarily further education on this topic. Limited willingness to learn more about reading and writing difficulties is supported by the findings presented by Leyser, et al. (2011), where over 50% of the faculty members in their research show little interest in obtaining more information about disabilities and accommodations. On the more positive side, the two informants in this research who state most strongly the need to learn more about reading and writing difficulties are the two informants with the least amount of experience in lower and upper secondary education and who have shown the least experience with adaptive instruction. Their strong statements may indicate a more willingness to further their education on this topic.

Although the reported restrictions stated above indicate that explicit teaching of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties will most likely not be presented in the methodology classes of my informants, it is important to note that all of my informants strongly express the need for more knowledge on how to adapt to students with reading and writing difficulties in English as a foreign language. So although some of the informants indicate that specific knowledge of reading and writing difficulties and their suggested adaptations do not necessarily belong in their methodology classes, all informants support the need for more knowledge on the subject. The question is then who should have the responsibility for this knowledge and when and where should this knowledge be presented to teachers?

### *5.2.2. Suggestions for teaching adaptive instruction in EFL*

Three informants indicate specifically that special educators are those who possess the special knowledge of reading and writing difficulties. However, the informants leave unanswered whether it is reasonable to expect special educators to have the specific knowledge of learning a foreign language, which is also needed in order to appropriately adapt instruction for learning English as a foreign language. In this manner, adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties falls between two professions, special education and teaching English as a foreign language. Schneider and Crombie (2003) address this issue by suggesting the need for special educators to be taught about foreign language learning and, at the same time, the need for foreign language teachers to be taught about special needs students.

When the informants are asked to provide ideas as to where and when the information can be taught, three informants indicate courses in further education as possible opportunities to acquire this information. In this manner, these methodology teachers support the recent trends in teacher education, stating that being able to teach is a life-long process that goes beyond the methodology classes presented in teacher training programs ( Fang, 1996; Hamton, 1994; Harrington & Jandrey, 2000; Smith, 1994). However, as of today, there is no specific requirement in Norway for teachers to further their education past the initial courses taken to receive a teaching degree, which means that any additional education on adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties relies on the interests of individual teachers and the willingness of the teacher or school system to pay for it.

### **5.3 Reflections on the results and the research process**

At the start of this research, I became quickly aware of the diversity of fields of study that I needed to understand in order to investigate my topic: reading and writing difficulties, foreign language learning, foreign language learning difficulties, foreign language teaching and teacher education, and although the process of learning more about each field of study has been personally enriching, I believe this same diversity has created an extra challenge during my research. Several times, I have had to question whether the research from one field of study, such as research on teaching literacy in L1 is relevant to use in my research on teaching EFL. In addition, I was challenged at times with the body of knowledge on foreign language difficulties, as there seems to be differing views as to whether learning a foreign language stems from L1 difficulties or whether foreign language difficulties originates in the learning of L2. As I am researching EFL methodology teachers, perhaps presenting my research questions in terms of students with foreign language learning difficulties instead of students with reading and writing difficulties would have appeared more relevant to my informants and would have produced different results.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) distinguish between two perspectives of the interviewees: as an informant or a representative. I do not consider the methodology teachers I interviewed as representatives of all methodology teachers or classroom English teachers, but rather as informants of their own experiences with adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties. Using the phenomenological perspective, I have tried to place the



informants' subjective experiences as central to my discussions. I believe I have been able to keep this perspective by using interview questions that focus on the informants own experiences. None the less, I can see that the material I have used for my research has its limitations. The discussions above are based on only five interviews. This small amount of informants can raise the question as to the validity of my research. How would the discussions differ with a larger base of informants? In addition, I must look critically at the five informants who were interviewed; two of them have had less than 5 years of experience as a methodology teacher, and one of my research questions specifically focuses on experiences as methodology teachers. More informants with a wider range of experience would definitely have enriched my results.

I can also see where my inexperience as an interviewer at times has hindered me from gathering the deeper understanding a more experienced researcher may have gathered from the same informants. A stronger adherence to the semi-structured survey questions along with more developed follow-up questions would have truly helped gather a more rich data base.

However, it is my hope that I have been able to adhere to a structure in my research that has aided in using the data I did receive in such a manner that the results I have presented can be seen as a reliable, albeit modest, contribution to the areas of special education, teacher education, and foreign language learning.

#### **5.4 Further research**

The results of this research have opened up for several new areas that would be interesting to further investigate in the context of reading and writing difficulties and learning EFL in Norway. Further research may include mapping out in a larger scale actual knowledge student teachers have after finishing either the GLU or the PPU programs of adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties. Is this topic addressed in the education classes? Further research may also include mapping out the degree of knowledge special educators working in the field have on this specific topic.

Three of my informants suggest further education as a possible means to learn about adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties. In the light of their suggestion, research on the availability in Norway of further education courses and the ability of these courses to influence change in teacher behavior with regards to implementing adaptive

instruction in EFL classes for students with reading and writing difficulties would be a relevant area of research. Finally, I am personally intrigued by the results shown in the research on multisensory instruction as a means for aiding students with reading and writing difficulties both in L1 and L2. Further research in Norway using this method would possibly bring more knowledge of multisensory instruction to Norway and thus perhaps better support the use of this method in Norway for teaching English to student with reading and writing difficulties.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this research, I have investigated English methodology teachers' understanding of adaptive instruction in English as a foreign language for students with reading and writing difficulties. I have further investigated to what extent these methodology teachers report teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in their instruction of English language student teachers. Through use of a semi-structured interview guide, I have interviewed 5 methodology teachers who are currently working in Southeast Norway either at a university or a university college.

The results of the interviews indicate that these methodology teachers have solid knowledge and understanding of adaptive instruction as a general term, which is required by the Norwegian Education Law §3.5. However, knowledge and understanding of adaptive instruction specifically for students with reading and writing difficulties are limited. The methodology teachers vary in their ability to describe examples of adaptive instruction in an EFL classroom that may benefit students with reading and writing difficulties, and while on the one hand all of these methodology teachers are able to describe some instruction that may benefit students with reading and writing difficulties, all of the informants are hesitant to specifically connect these adaptations as adaptations for students with reading and writing difficulties. This hesitation appears to reflect the methodology teachers' reported lack of knowledge of reading and writing difficulties.

Consequently, the English methodology teachers in my research do not report explicitly teaching adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties to English language student teachers enrolled in their methodology classes. However, the results do indicate that English student teachers may *implicitly* receive some information as suggested by the examples given by their methodology teachers. Three of the informants state that teaching adaptive instruction specifically for students with reading and writing difficulties is beyond the expectations of their English methodology classes, using the English level of their students, time constraints, and amount of other information that must be taught to justify their statement. These methodology teachers refer to special educators and further education classes as possible sources for teaching adaptive instruction in an EFL class for students with reading and writing difficulties.

The results of this research open up for further research in several areas: 1) identifying the degree of knowledge and understanding student teachers, teachers, and special educators have of adaptive instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties , 2) the availability in Norway of further education in EFL and adaptive instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties, and finally 3) the use of multisensory instruction as a method for adapting instruction in EFL for students with reading and writing difficulties.

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## Appendix 1

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5. desember 2011

### **Forespørsel om deltakelse i mastergradsprosjektet: "Lese- og skrivevansker i engelskfaget"**

Mitt navn er Gini Lockhart-Pedersen og jeg jobber som engelsklærer på Begby barne- og ungdomsskole i Fredrikstad. Jeg er også masterstudent i spesialpedagogikk ved Høyskolen i Østfold, avdeling for lærerutdanning. Sammen med professor Ivar Bråten som veileder har jeg i min masteroppgave valgt å se nærmere på hvordan man best kan tilrettelegge engelskopplæringen for elever med lese- og skrivevansker.

I den forbindelse ønsker jeg å intervjuere pedagoger som underviser i engelsk fagdidaktikk. Spørsmålene skal i hovedsak dreie seg om erfaringer med lese- og skrivevansker.

I den forbindelse ønsker jeg å komme å intervjuere deg en gang i løpet av januar 2012. Hvis du aksepterer, vil jeg ta kontakt med deg før jul for å avtale nærmere tid og sted.

Selve intervjuet vil ta maksimalt en time. Hvis det er greit for deg, ønsker jeg å ta opp intervjuet på lydbånd. Jeg har taushetsplikt, så opplysningene du gir, vil ikke bli gitt videre. Lydbåndene vil få et løpenummer som knyttes til en navneliste. Lydbåndene og samtykke-erklæringen (se neste side) vil bli slettet ved prosjektslutt, som er beregnet til siste kvartal 2012. Jeg understreker at deltagelsen er frivillig og at du kan når som helst trekke deg fra prosjektet uten å oppgi grunn. Dersom du trekker deg vil alle innsamlede data om deg bli slettet.

Dersom du aksepterer å delta, er det fint om du kan svare meg snarest via e-post. Samtykkeerklæringen ordner vi på intervjuet. Hvis det er noe du lurer på, så ring meg gjerne på ..... Du kan også kontakte min veileder, professor Ivar Bråten ved Pedagogisk Forskningsinstitutt på e-post [ivar.braten@ped.uio.no](mailto:ivar.braten@ped.uio.no)

Med vennlig hilsen

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## Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt informasjonen om studien av lese- og skrivevansker i engelsk og er villig til å være med på et intervju under den forutsetning at min informasjon behandles konfidensielt og vil slettes etter prosjektet er avsluttet eller når jeg ønsker det.

Dato/Sted .....

Signatur .....

## Appendix 2

### Interview guide in Norwegian

| Introduksjon                                     |   |
|--|---|
| Hvorfor masterprosjekt?                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Min bakgrunn og erfaring</li> <li>• Søk for hjelp</li> <li>• Hvordan oppfatter og behandler engelskdidaktikk lærere tilpasset opplæring (TPO) for elever med lese- og skrivevansker</li> <li>• Fokus på ungdomstrinn og Videregående</li> </ul>                        |
| Bakgrunn av respondent                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fortell meg litt om utdanningen din.</li> <li>• Fortell meg litt om hva du har jobbet med og hva du jobber med nå.</li> <li>• Engelsk didaktikk forsknings erfaring? Andre typer erfaringer? Beskriv noen oppgaver du har hatt som engelsk didaktikk lærer.</li> </ul> |
| Beskrivelse av studentene og lærings situasjonen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kan du beskrive de studentene du jobber mest med? Alder? Bakgrunn? Engelsk erfaring? Motivasjon?</li> <li>• Er timene pålagt?</li> <li>• Kan du beskrive kontakten med studentene? Forelesing? gruppearbeid? veiledning</li> </ul>                                     |

| 1) Hvordan oppfatter og behandler engelskdidaktikk lærere TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker.  |  |
|---|--|
| Forsknings spørsmål   | Intervju spørsmål  |
| <p>Hvordan <b>oppfatter</b> didaktikk lærere begrepet TPO?</p> <p><i>Begrepet er brukt mye i fagplanene for lærere og engelsk fagdidaktikk.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hva tenker du på når du hører begrepet TPO?</li> <li>• Hva legger du selv i begrepet TPO? Din egen definisjon som du oppfatter det.</li> <li>• Beskriv så detaljert som mulig en situasjon hvor du mener det var bra TPO enten fra din egen undervisning eller fra en annen undervisningssituasjon. Du definerer selv hva som er "bra"</li> <li>• Hvordan beskriver du din egen kunnskap om TPO?</li> <li>• Hvor har du evt. fått din kunnskap om TPO?</li> <li>• Hva har evt. hindret det i å skaffe deg kunnskap om TPO?</li> <li>• Det er noen lærere som opplever TPO som vanskelig eller problematisk.</li> <li>• I hvilken grad er du enig? Kan du utdype det? Fortell meg mer</li> </ul> |

| <b>2) Hvordan oppfatter og behandler engelskdidaktikklærere TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker?</b> |  |
|--|--|
| Forsknings spørsmål  | Intervjuspørsmål   |
| Hvordan <b>oppfatter</b> didaktikklærere begrepet lese- og skrivevansker?                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hva legger du selv i begrepet lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• Når jeg sier lese- og skrivevansker, hva tenker du på?</li> <li>• Hvordan vil du beskrive en elev med lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• Hvordan beskriver du din egen kunnskap om lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• Hvor har du evt. fått din kunnskap om lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• Hva har evt. hindret deg i å skaffe kunnskap om lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• Det er noen engelskfaglærere som mener at det ikke forventes å ha kunnskap om lese- og skrivevansker. I hvilken grad er du enig i dette? Kan du utdype det?</li> <li>• Opplever du lese- og skrivevansker som en del av din felt som engelskdidaktikklærer?</li> </ul> |

| <b>3) Hvordan oppfatter og behandler engelskdidaktikklærere TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker?</b> |  |
|--|--|
| Forsknings spørsmål  | Intervjuspørsmål   |
| Hvordan <b>behandler</b> didaktikklærere TPO for studenter med lese- og skrivevansker.                     | <p><b>I det følget vil jeg at forklarer ut fra din egne undervisningspraksis og hva du har erfart i timene dine nå eller evt. tidligere.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Har du hatt studenter som har lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• Hvordan har du evt. tilpasset opplæring for studentene? Evt.</li> <li>• Hva har forhindret det i å kunne tilpasse ti disse elevene? Evt.2</li> <li>• Hvordan ville / kunne du forklare mangel på behovet?</li> <li>• Er det noen andre måter du jobber selv med TPO i timen?</li> </ul> |



| 4) Hvordan oppfatter og behandler engelskdidaktikklærere TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker.  |   |
|--|---|
| Forsknings spørsmål  | Intervjuspørsmål  |
| <p>Hvordan <b>behandler</b> engelskdidaktikklærere tilpassetopplæring for elever med lese- og skrivevansker i sin praksis?</p> <p><i>Husk å bli enig om hvilken trinn vi snakke om</i></p> | <p><b>Nå vil jeg at du tenker som didaktikklærer. Jeg er interessert i hvordan du vektlegger og tar opp TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker i timene som engelsk didaktikklærer.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hvor ofte blir temaet TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker tatt opp i engelskdidaktikk timene?</li> <li>• På hvilken måte tar du/dere dette opp? Beskriv noen situasjoner hvor TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker i engelskfaget blir tatt opp i engelskdidaktikk timene.</li> <li>• Blir temaet tatt opp som et planlagt tema eller mer uformelt tema?</li> <li>• Hvordan mener (tror) du den beste måte å tilpasse engelskopplæring for elever med lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• På hvilken måte tilrettelegger du didaktikktimeene slik at lærerstudentene får informasjon og erfaringer om TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker?</li> <li>• Eksempler?</li> <li>• Hva mener du er viktig for engelsk faglærere å kunne når det gjelder TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker. (Hva slags informasjon vektlegger du?)</li> <li>• Tror du faglærere få med seg denne informasjon i engelsk didaktikktimeene?</li> </ul> <p>Hvis nei:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hvordan tror du TPO for elever med lese- og skrivevansker i det engelske faget er / bør / kan bli behandlet ellers?</li> <li>• Hva slags plikt har engelskfaglærer for å skaffe seg informasjon om TPO for elever med lese- og skrive vansker.</li> </ul> |
| Avslutning   |   |
| Oppsummering av de fire områdene vi har snakket om   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hvordan du <b>oppfatter</b> TPO</li> <li>• Hvordan du <b>oppfatter</b> lese- og skrivevansker</li> <li>• Hvordan du <b>behandler</b> TPO i timene</li> <li>• Hvordan du <b>vektlegger</b> TPO i timene som didaktikklærer.</li> </ul>  |
| Åpent for kommentar  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vil du legge til noe mer?</li> <li>• Noe jeg har glemt som du mener bør også være med i intervjuet?</li> </ul>   |
| Veien videre   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ferdig med intervjuene i jan</li> <li>• Transkribering + oppsummering i feb</li> <li>• 16 mai innlevering</li> </ul>   |

### Appendix 3

#### Interview guide in English

| Introduction                                    |   |
|---|---|
| Why I chose this topic                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My background and experience</li> <li>• Where do I get help?</li> <li>• How do English methods teachers interpret adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties and how do they apply this interpretation during their instruction of English language teachers?</li> <li>• Focus on lower secondary education (jr. and sr. high school)</li> </ul>   |
| Background of respondent                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about your educational background. Where and when did you go to school?</li> <li>• Tell me a little about your job experience? Where have you been teaching? What subjects?</li> <li>• Can you explain in some detail your current position? Responsibilities?</li> <li>• What if any areas of research have you had?</li> <li>• Do you have any other relevant job experiences? Courses or projects?</li> </ul> |
| Description of students and teaching situation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe your students. Educational background, English language competencies, teaching experiences, motivation.</li> <li>• Are your classes required or optional?</li> <li>• Can you describe your teaching situation? The contact you have with your students? How often do you meet? How many students in your classes? How do you set up your classes? Group work? Lectures?</li> </ul>                              |

1.

| 1) How do English methods teachers interpret adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties and how do they apply this interpretation during their instruction of English language teachers?  |   |
|---|---|
| Research question   | Interview questions   |
| <p>How do English methods teachers <b>interpret</b> adapted instruction?</p> <p>The term adapted instruction is an underlying concept in the core curriculum. It is also used in the curriculum for English methods courses both at the college and University level.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think of when you hear the term adapted instructions?</li> <li>• How would you interpret this term? Give adapted instruction your own definition.</li> <li>• Describe with as much detail as possible a situation where you believe good adapted instruction took place, either with your own teaching or in your experience with other teachers \ students. You can define yourself what you mean is “good adapted instruction”</li> <li>• How would you describe your own knowledge of adapted instruction?</li> <li>• How have you acquired this knowledge?</li> <li>• OR—What has prevented you from acquiring this knowledge?</li> <li>• There are some teachers who say that adapted instruction is difficult or problematic. Do you agree? Can you explain more?</li> </ul> |

| 2) How do English methods teachers interpret adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties and how do they apply this interpretation during their instruction of English language teachers? |  |
|--|--|
| Research question  | Interview questions  |
| <p>How do English methods teachers <b>interpret</b> the term reading and writing difficulties.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think of when I say the term reading and writing difficulties?</li> <li>• How would you explain or define this term? For example?</li> <li>• How do you describe a student with reading and writing difficulties?</li> <li>• How would you describe your own knowledge of reading and writing difficulties?</li> <li>• Where have you received this knowledge?</li> <li>• Evt. What has prevented you from acquiring this knowledge?</li> <li>• There are some who believe that English teachers are not / should not be expected to know about reading and writing difficulties. To what extent do you agree with this comment?</li> <li>• Do you believe knowledge about reading and writing difficulties should be / is a part of your job as a methods teacher</li> </ul> |

| 3) How do English methods teachers interpret adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties and how do they apply this interpretation during their instruction of English language teachers? |  |
|--|--|
| Research questions   | Interview questions  |
| How do English methods teachers <b>apply</b> their interpretation of adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties during their instruction of English language teachers ?                  | <p><b>In the following, I want you to be thinking about of your own instruction experience and how you have used adapted instruction for reading and writing difficulties.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you had any students with reading and writing difficulties in your class?</li> <li>• How have you adapted your instruction for these students?<br/>Evt.1</li> <li>• What has prevented you from adapting your instruction for these students?<br/>Evt.2</li> <li>• How would you explain the lack of students with reading and writing difficulties in your classes?</li> <li>• In what other ways have you had to adapt your instruction?</li> </ul> |

| 4) How do English methods teachers interpret adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties and how do they apply this interpretation during their instruction of English language teachers?   |   |
|--|---|
| Research question  | Interview questions   |
| How do English methods teachers <b>apply</b> their interpretation of adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties during their instruction of English language teachers ?<br><br><i>Remember to agree on the level of English instruction.</i> | <p><b>In the following I am interested in how you approach the topic of adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in your methods classes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often does adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties get taken up as a topic in your methods class?</li> <li>• How does the topic get taken up? By whom? Can you describe a situation?</li> <li>• To what degree do you emphasize or prioritize adapted instruction for students with reading and writing difficulties in your methods classes?</li> <li>• How do you / could you facilitate for opportunities for your students to discuss or experience adapted instruction for reading and writing difficulties?</li> <li>• Examples? What information do you / would you prioritize or see as important for your students to know and understand?</li> <li>• How do you believe is the best way to adapt instruction for</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>students with reading and writing difficulty? Examples?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you believe this information conveyed in your methods classes?</li> </ul> <p>If no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who do you think has the responsibility for conveying this information? How do you believe this should be done?</li> <li>• What responsibility do the English language teacher have?</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

| Closing comments                      |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Summary of the four areas of question | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you interpret the term adapted instruction</li> <li>• How do you interpret the term reading and writing difficulties</li> <li>• How do you apply TPO as a teacher</li> <li>• How do you apply TPO as a teacher educator?</li> </ul> |
| Open comments                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything more you would like to add?</li> <li>• Is there something I have forgotten to ask about or discuss that you believe would be important to the topic?</li> </ul>  |
| The next steps                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finished with the interviews in January</li> <li>• Transcribing and summarizing in Feb.</li> <li>• 16th of May is the due date.</li> </ul>   |