

# MASTEROPPGAVE

Online L2 English education in Upper Secondary School in Norway during COVID-19 lockdown in Spring 2020.

Anastasiya Kulikova

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**ABBREVIATIONS:**

L2 – second language

ICT- information and communications technology

CATs – computer-adaptive tests

**ABSTRACT:**

Being a technologically highly developed country, Norwegians value on the edge technology and gladly implement technology in their everyday life. Norway also values English language skills and emphasizes the status of the English language in Norwegian society as a second language. When the Covid-19 pandemic started spreading around the globe at a staggering pace at the beginning of 2020, social distancing was introduced as a preventive measure to stop spreading the virus. Workplaces and educational institutions had to make an overnight transition to online platforms. As a result, L2 English education in upper secondary school in Norway became “online L2 English education”. This master’s thesis explores how teachers and students experienced the online L2 English education in upper secondary school in Norway during the spring semester of 2020 and what impacted their perception. The thesis starts with an overview of the main differences between online education (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008; Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020; Rubio, 2015) and emergency remote teaching (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Dudley, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020, Ribeiro; 2020). Next, it presents major requirements for institution (Hodges et al., 2020; McAvinia, 2016), online teacher (Compton, 2009; Joksimovic et al., 2015) and online learner (Sundqvist & Sylven, 2016; Su, Zheng, Liang, & Tsai, 2018) in order for online education to be considered successful. Then, this thesis introduces two surveys created for a group of teachers and a group of students respectively aimed at analyzing the respondents’ experience of the online L2 English education. Finally, as a result of the data analysis, conclusions about the teachers’ and the students’ experiences are made and the main discrepancies and overlaps between the two groups of respondents are highlighted. In the end, my thesis offers a brief overview of limitations and suggestions for further research.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

With an exceptional speed of only 50 years English has reached the status of a global language. The current role English plays internationally is unprecedented and unlike the role of any other language at any moment in history (Sundqvist & Sylven, 2016). Such spheres of our everyday life as education, politics, business, commerce, science, entertainment rely mostly on English to facilitate communication between countries anywhere in the world (Garside, 2017). Consequently, the majority of the countries in the world has acknowledged the importance of English education for its citizens to secure being part of the globalized world.

Norway is among such countries. According to the Kachru model “The Three Circles of English” that introduces principles of grouping English varieties in the world (Bauer, 2010), Norway is a country in the expanding circle, meaning that in this country English is taught as a foreign language (Bauer, 2002; Sundqvist & Sylven, 2016). However, having no official status in Norway, English is still very important for functions such as education, international business and tourism. In other words, having a good command of English is highly valued in Norwegian society. As a matter of fact, English is taught in Norwegian schools from the first grade of elementary school and until the eleventh year of education (the twelfth year for vocational studies). The English subject at school has its own curriculum that differs from the curricula of other foreign languages taught in Norway (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013).

Therefore, English in Norway seems to be approaching the status of a second language (L2). With this being said, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training emphasizes that

English is an important subject when it comes to cultural understanding, communication, all-round education and identity development. The subject shall give the pupils the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Therefore, with communication being the dominant purpose of the English language, Norwegian learners of English need to be linguistically, sociolinguistically and pragmatically

equipped to be able to communicate both orally and in writing with native and non-native speakers of English (Bieswanger, 2008).

However, year 2020 jeopardized communication in general as the COVID-19 pandemic broke into the world from the city of Wuhan in China and spread at a staggering rate across the whole globe (Cohen & Sabag, 2020; WHO, 2020). Rapidly, “social distancing” including working from home, providing flexible working hours for employees and closing of many institutions where people could infect one another with COVID-19 were introduced as preventive measures aimed at curbing the spread of the deadly virus. Protocols to shut down buildings involved schools, universities and many other educational institutions (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Almost overnight, multiple spheres of life including all-level education had to take a leap of faith and make a rapid transition over to online platforms, offering online education for all subjects, including English.

The question of whether technology could be seen as directly supporting language learning or simply as an aid to teaching is not new, as it was first posed by Garrett in 1991. Now, three decades later Norway had to check first-hand whether technology could facilitate L2 English teaching and learning in a fully online setting. Previous experience and research have shown that it was absolutely possible for students enrolled in online language courses to achieve similar levels of language proficiency as the students enrolled in face-to-face education (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020; Rubio, 2015). Moreover, the proper use of technology can increase student involvement in the process of language learning as it enables for easier access with the concept of “anytime-anywhere learning” (Blake, 2015). With no time for second thoughts, Norway embarked on a journey of online education for L2 English students in Upper Secondary School in the spring semester of 2020.

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM

Three weeks into full digital teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown the Faculty of Law at University of Oslo carried out a survey focusing primarily on secondary education in Norway. The survey showed that teachers in secondary schools in Norway embraced the online teaching quickly, and that many teachers had to change their teaching methods as a result of online teaching (Faculty of Law, University of Oslo, 2020). Considering the aforementioned, I in this thesis investigate how teachers and students in Upper Secondary School in Norway experienced the online L2 English education during the COVID-19 lockdown. Therefore, my research question is how teachers and students experienced L2 online English



teaching and learning in Upper Secondary School in Norway during the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring semester of 2020.

To answer this question, I have created and carried out a survey in a form of a questionnaire that dwells on both the teachers' and the students' experience of L2 English online teaching and learning in Upper Secondary School in Norway during the spring semester of 2020. As a result of this study, I am going to explain what impacted the teachers' and students' perception of the online L2 English education and to highlight the main discrepancies and overlaps between the two groups of the respondents.

### 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

My thesis includes five chapters: Introduction (Chapter 1), Theoretical Framework (Chapter 2), Methodology (Chapter 3), Data Analysis (Chapter 4), Discussion (Chapter 5) and Conclusion (Chapter 6). Chapter 1 starts with the background for my study, research question and a general overview of the thesis. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework related to online education and explains what type of online education was adopted in Norway during the COVID-19 lockdown. Furthermore, Chapter 2 summarizes requirements for successful implementation of online learning as far as institution, staff and learners are concerned. Finally, it ends with advantages and disadvantages of online L2 English learning for both teachers and students.

Then Chapter 3 follows. It starts off with describing the research context, then moves on to presenting the participants of my study and justifying the choice of the instrument required to carry out my study. Chapter 3 ends with an overview of the data collection process.

Chapter 4 of my thesis starts with a presentation of the questionnaires for the teachers and the students respectively highlighting their main challenges and achievements of the two groups of the respondents.

Chapter 5 relates the teachers' and the students' perspectives on the online L2 English teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 to the theoretical background presented earlier in Chapter 2. Also, on the basis of my findings Chapter 5 offers a sum-up of the main discrepancies and overlaps between the two groups of the respondents.

Chapter 6 contains a conclusion about a general attitude towards the online L2 English education among Upper Secondary School teachers and student in Norway during the spring semester of 2020 and dwells on potential for further research.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 ONLINE LEARNING VS EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING

Online learning is not a new discovery, as first online college degrees already appeared back in the 1980s. In Norway the first online courses were originally designed as part of the government's initiative to raise the quality of teaching practices in primary education and they were also meant to meet the demand for educators to be trained to the updated standards, including digital competence (Krzyszowska & Mavrommati, 2020).

The theoretical framework that lays foundation for online learning derives from a socio-constructivist pedagogical framework, wherein learning takes place through the active effort of individuals to make sense of environmental stimuli on their own as well as negotiate and construct meaning with others (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008). Both Vygotsky and Piaget promoted collaborative learning as an effective learning strategy that promotes skills of self-regulation and efficient communication between group members (Gregory & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2017; McAvinia, 2016; Salmon, 2011).

Naturally, working together for learning purposes has been a tradition in many parts of the world. A group of Scandinavian educators write about the concept "folkebildning" (folk education) – a tradition of over 100 years old, where social meetings take place with the purpose of learning, stimulating curiosity and critical thinking (McAvinia, 2016). Thus, in online education participants encounter each other and understand the world by means of technology and language and construct new knowledge by being involved in a learning process with other participants. This learning process should be highly purposeful and have planned goals, outcomes and directions (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019; McAvinia, 2016; Salmon, 2011).

Even though students engaged in online education have continuously shown high results in language proficiency and despite the fact that online education has been on the rise ever since the early 2000s, this type of education has always been looked at solely as a useful alternative, but not as a model to ensure continuity of education (Ribeiro, 2020). However, that changed completely when COVID-19 forced educational institutions to shut down and to transition to remote learning on a short notice (Ribeiro, 2020).

With the COVID-19 crisis all educational institutions in Norway had to make a precipitous move online as the spread of the deadly virus caused unexpected disruptions of traditional teaching and learning methods. Yet all learners attending school in Norway were still able to access education without having to leave their homes as communication

technology ensured continuous education for Norwegian pupils and students. Almost overnight educational institutions implemented online education in all subjects for all their students – a form of education that has long been considered “nice-to-have yet not a mission-critical model” (Ribeiro, 2020) and therefore remained neglected – until March 2020.

Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) claim that since the beginning of the millennium, students’ motivation for learning has increased as a result of persistent increase in technological innovation and internet accessibility. The number of students embarking on online education has skyrocketed. Most scholars agree that online education is an interdisciplinary field that has evolved over time and caters well to learners’ needs. Online education can be defined as the use of technological devices, tools and the internet for educational purposes. Scholars also agree that effective online education is completely dependent on adequate planning and thorough design of instruction (Bozkurt & Sharma,2020).

For example, Hodges et al. (2020) declare that effective online education requires careful instructional design, planning and determination to create an effective learning ecology. In other words, online education goes way beyond uploading course material for the course participants. Instead, it rather aims at creating a learning community where learners have certain responsibilities, flexibility and choice. Consequently, online education emphasizes interaction between different parties and lets learners be more engaged in the learning process, thus becoming more student-centered (Joksimovic, Gasevic & Kovanovic, 2015; McAvinia, 2016). In sum, even despite the fact that technology is pivotal for mediating the learning process, in online education the focus is on the learner’s experience as central to knowledge construction (Joksimovic et al., 2015; Blake, 2011; McAvinia, 2011; Salmon, 2016).

Online education can be of two types: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous online education is synonymous with attending an online synchronous seminar or a lesson. A synchronous online seminar/lesson has a clear-cut structure with a start and finish time. During an online seminar/lesson specific goals are introduced by the teacher and time is allocated to work on the achievement of these goals. The participants of a synchronous online lesson/seminar are either present at the lesson or not. If they are present at the lesson, they cannot be doing much besides participating in the lesson. Asynchronous online education, on the contrary, is a type of “any place – any time” education, meaning that time is not bounded and that students are free to manage their time according to their own preferences (Salmon, 2011).

However, during the COVID-19 lockdown another type of technology-mediated learning emerged in many countries, including Norway. As the transition to online education in Norway had to be done literally overnight, what the instructors were able to offer to their students in the end could not be considered fully featured or well-planned, given that “planning, preparation, and development time for a fully online university course is six to nine months before the course is delivered” (Hodges et al., 2020). This obviates the distinction between an effective online education and the attempt at online education offered in Norway during the COVID-19 lockdown. The type of online instruction implemented with scarce planning and minimum resources should not be equated with effective online education. For this purpose, it is rather an example of emergency remote teaching (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Dudley, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Ribeiro, 2020).

Emergency remote teaching is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternative delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face and that would return to the regular format once the crisis is over. Education planning in the time of crisis requires creative problem solving that helps meet the new needs for learners and communities. In other words, emergency remote teaching is a barebones approach to standard instruction. It is a way of thinking about delivery modes, media and methods when resources such as faculty support and training are limited. Finally, unlike regular online education that has always been an alternative and a more flexible option for learners, emergency remote teaching is an obligation for students (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020), meaning that students are expected to be present in online classes and will be reprimanded if they choose not to do so.

## 2.2. OPPORTUNITIES OF ONLINE LEARNING

First and foremost, according to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), online education worldwide contributes to the battle for eradication of the COVID-19 pandemic, as various institutions align their practices both locally and globally to overcome the spread of the coronavirus, while maintaining the academic calendar.

Second, among the advantages of online learning is the fact that it is readily available and does not require the participants to travel to a certain place. As a result, both teachers and students are able to save precious time and effort as they do not have to commute. This contributes to reducing the participants’ stress level, thus improving their quality of life.

According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), online education is known to offer “any time – any place” learning to its participants, therefore online education opens for more flexibility and a better time management on behalf of the students. It enables them to self-pace their learning process and adds flow and rhythm to their online studies.

Moreover, online education makes communication interactive. With communication technology providing the opportunity for students to choose themselves whom to work with and how to explore the resources, some participants of online education may find it easier to initiate a conversation with a peer in an online setting compared to a regular classroom or maybe even to ask for help more willingly (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Zimmerman, 2020; Salmon, 2011).

In fact, comparing online education to in-person education obviates other certain advantages of online education. Supporters of in-person education often claim that the fundamental assets of in-person education is the human interaction. However, in a regular classroom setting students are expected to sit quietly for a long time while the teacher speaks. Moreover, during a classroom discussion only one person is allowed to speak at a time, whereas the rest of the class need to wait for their turn in silence. Therefore, we may conclude that in-person education with the aforementioned models of modern classroom communication may seem to be creating somewhat of social isolation instead (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019; Joksimovic et al., 2015). However, online education often resorts to forum discussions as a method of communication (Joksimovic et al., 2015). Notably, forum discussions open for instantenous contribution from multiple participants. Therefore, compared to a regular classroom education, online education allows multiple participants to partake in a lesson simultaneously without having to wait for their turn to reply to a task. This enhances dynamics of the learning process and enforces student involvement in the task (Joksimovic et al., 2015).

Also, modern online education allows students to have cameras off during an online lesson. With focus removed from aspects such as age, appearance or race, some students are given an opportunity to participate in education without being judged or discriminated against. This in general eliminates anxiety, minimizes stress and improves motivation for learning (Salmon, 2011).

In addition, some participants consider the lack of in-person or face-to-face interaction to be a freedom. Undistracted by social “games”, online course participants can disagree on a certain matter without arousing excessive emotion and still maintain a positive learning environment. In addition, in online education students are able to concentrate on a task better

than they would have done in a regular classroom as students in regular classrooms may be noisy and distracting (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Salmon, 2011).

Finally, online learning may potentially reform instruction delivery in education. The longer the pandemic lasts, the longer online education will be treated as a generally acceptable mode of teaching and learning. Therefore, more participants of online education will make use of digital tools on a daily basis. As a result, both educators and course participants will enhance their digital competence (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

### 2.3. CHALLENGES OF ONLINE LEARNING

Design and implementation of online education in practice obviate certain challenges. Firstly, some students tend to rely on school computers and school internet dependent on physically open schools. This is no longer possible when educational institutions are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, as online education is entirely dependent on communication devices, those with outdated devices or possessing no devices at all are also likely to be denied access to online education (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

Secondly, insufficient digital skills of teachers and students also hinder online education. Many students and faculty members are considered digital natives, meaning that they were born and raised during the digital period. However, many teachers and students are far from being tech-savvy and often lack digital competence. Digital competence is a set of certain skills, knowledge and attitudes needed when using ICT and digital devices for problem solving and collaboration with both students and teachers with respect to effectiveness, efficiency and ethics. Unfortunately, not all digital natives possess digital competence. As a result, students and instructors with low digital competence are liable to lag behind in online learning (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Compton, 2009; Joksimovic et al., 2015; McAvinia, 2016).

Thirdly, online education may lead to an intensified feeling of loneliness and isolation on behalf of the participants. Online learning should be highly scaffolded, but in fact learners are often left alone to acquire knowledge. They watch videos and do self-assessment tests that check correct application of facts. Therefore “any time – any place” learning often means a relationship between an individual and a screen (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019), when a student does most of his work individually without being involved in any form of a social discussion or a group activity.

Also, research on online learning has shown that some participants regard the lack of non-verbal and non-visual clues in online interaction as a challenge that can result in a sense of depersonalization and hence negative feelings (Compton, 2009; Salmon, 2011). Moreover, online communication requires a certain level of knowledge about how to communicate in social media and/or how to use netiquette. Possessing such skills is important for the development of digital literacy which is an essential construct of any online learning environment. Lack of such skills may lead to misunderstandings, and as a result, feelings of exclusion for some students (McAvinia, 2016).

In addition, in online education teachers are responsible for adjusting the content they are teaching to the learning platform to make it learner friendly (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Salmon, 2011). As online education offers “any time – any place” learning, teachers are often expected to be available for questions round the clock. As a result, a demand for constant access to teachers may lead to teachers becoming burnt out.

Another challenge of online education that both teachers and students can relate to is understanding of “internet time” (Joksimovic et al., 2015; Salmon, 2011). Teachers tend to spend too much time working online, whereas students lack time to participate in forum discussions. One way or another, the concept of time often emerges when online education is analyzed. As time is a social construct, it gives people an idea that we are to some extent able to control our lives. However, asynchronous internet time is different from what we are used to in our everyday lives and therefore requires a change in perspective to accommodate this new concept of “online time” (Compton, 2009; Salmon, 2011).

Furthermore, despite online education being a relatively new educational model (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020), online education to date still largely relies on old-school teaching methods. More precisely, formal educational systems mostly rely on memorization and reproduction of texts by individual students. Consequently, linear transmission of knowledge from teacher to student and testing of the correct application of facts are still the predominant modes of learning and teaching also in online formal settings (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019; McAvinia, 2016).

Finally, many teachers are still finding their way around assessing online learning that takes place in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions (Miller, 2020). As a result, students may lack a timely, formative and personalized feedback (Joksimovic et al., 2015), something that may have a negative impact on students’ motivation.

## 2.4. REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION

### 2.4.1. REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTITUTIONS

Salmon (2011) argues that the introduction of technology into teaching and learning should include effective technical support and training, otherwise the outcomes of online education are likely to be meagre and unsuccessful. Therefore, a successful implementation of online education into practice in today's society would be a result of several constituents on behalf of three entities – the institution, the online teacher and the online learner.

Before transitioning over to online education, the school's biggest responsibility is to consider quality of internet access and the variety of platforms available. The school is first and foremost supposed to make an investment in a secure and accessible platform for learning that meets the requirements of both teachers and students. Second, the institution must provide educational continuity while also helping teachers develop skills to work and teach in an online environment (Hodges et al., 2020; McAvinia, 2016). Educational continuity is possible to reach with, on the one hand, the help of technicians who focus on technical solutions and help securing the work of suitable technology platforms. Learning technologists, on the other hand, can provide training to all teachers who wish to teach effectively online so that the student's perspective always remains at the core of the teacher's work (Compton, 2009; Dudley, 2020).

Finally, the school is required to provide adequate course material suited for all levels of student abilities (McAvinia, 2016). In online education digital content is preferable over books, therefore the school's focus should be on providing an open license to the students to enable their access to educational resources (Dudley, 2020).

### 2.4.2. REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE TEACHERS

Modern online language teaching requires new teaching skills that are different from those used in language teaching in a regular classroom. Moreover, these new teaching skills are crucial and unique for language teaching online, as teaching English online requires skills that are different from teaching any other subjects online. The old assumption that a teacher who is good at teaching in a face-to-face environment can easily transition to teaching an online class is simply a myth, as the instructor's role within the online learning environment differs from the traditional classroom (Compton, 2009; Joksimovic et al., 2015). According to Compton (2009), there are three major major sets of skills required of a modern online



teacher: a) technological skills in online language teaching; b) pedagogical skills in online language teaching; c) evaluation skills in online language teaching (Compton, 2009).

Firstly, for online learning to take place an online teacher should possess adequate ICT skills. These skills ensure a continuous dialogue between teacher - student and student – student occurring in the online learning environment. Also, as development in communication technology is a continuous process, the online teacher is expected to constantly acquire new competences to be able to select appropriate technologies. In other words, to secure successful online education online teachers should in their daily practice apply new attitudes, new knowledge and new skills of operating in the online environment (McAvinia, 2016; Salmon, 2011).

Secondly, the next set of skills required of the online teacher is a set of pedagogical skills. According to Compton (2009), pedagogical skills in online teaching include virtual management skills and virtual communication skills. As knowledge in online education is not something that is “fixed”, but rather something that can be easily codified and transferred from one participant to another (Salmon, 2011), online language teaching should be based on a “culture of interaction” (McAvinia, 2016). Therefore, the virtual management skills of the online teacher will help create and manage online learning communities where participants will be able to look for meaning and value from contributions from other participants, not just from the teacher. For this purpose, the online teacher should be able to design and facilitate activities that promote discussion and reflection (Salmon, 2011).

Furthermore, the online teacher’s virtual communication skills are necessary to motivate the students and to promote human interaction for the purpose of building new knowledge and formation of new skills (Salmon, 2011). Obviously, students express their ideas more freely and participate in online discussions more willingly if a safe environment is created. Therefore, the online teacher should ensure communication within the online group that promotes participants’ respect for the unique qualities of each other and removes any risk of stereotyping or labelling (Krzyszowska & Mavrommati, 2020; Salmon, 2011).

Finally, summarizing research on the requirements for the online teacher, the online teacher’s evaluation skills should be focused on (Compton, 2009; Joksimovic et al., 2015). In order to sustain students’ motivation and to secure successful online education, the online teacher should be able to provide feedback to the students, to correct their misconceptions and to assess their progress based on their language output (Gregory & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2017; Krzyszowska & Mavrommati, 2020). However, as has already been discussed, online learning is highly social, therefore the online learning environment obviates the plethora of

students' responses and interpretations. Therefore, the online teacher should open for course participants to provide feedback to each other and to do self-reviews on the basis of the feedback. When a learner receives two or more reviews from peers in addition to feedback from the teacher, the diversity of opinions provides more input for the student than just a teacher's single judgement (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019).

#### 2.4.3. REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE LEARNERS

The International Society for Technology in Education outlines the association's standards for online learning: "online learners are expected to be knowledge constructors, creative communicators, and empowered digital citizens" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019). Based on this description of online learners we may conclude that the following sets of skills are required for online learners: 1) self-regulatory skills to successfully complete an online education (Joksimovic et al., 2015) 2) social learning skills to be able to construct knowledge 3) communicative skills to actively participate in the online environment 4) adequate ICT skills to be able to navigate in the online environment.

Firstly, self-regulatory skills include such skills as time management, self-motivation and self-discipline as absolutely crucial for the online learner. As stated earlier, online education opens for a certain degree of freedom and flexibility, thus benefitting students with academic self-control and threatening the achievement of those who procrastinate (Dabbagh, 2007). In the context of learning ESL, self-regulation is closely connected to self-efficacy where self-efficacy is understood as people's belief in their abilities to complete specific tasks and attain specific goals. So, learners with a strong academic self-efficacy are more likely to undertake challenging tasks, and vice versa (Sundqvist & Sylven, 2016; Su, Zheng, Liang, & Tsai, 2018). Consequently, in the online environment self-regulation is closely connected with the students' academic success – a high sense of self-regulation enhances learners' belief in their academic efficacies (Su et al., 2018). Therefore, self-regulation is what creates an effective online learner. Students who can employ self-regulatory strategies become more challengeable and more confident in understanding course material or participating in course activities (Gregory & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2017; Joksimovic et al., 2015).

Secondly, according to Blake (2011) online learning requires from students the development of social learning skills. In the online environment the students are expected to not only engage with online content but to maximize their learning through the development of social learning skills. Social learning skills include such skills as critical thinking,

reflection skills, decision-making skills, trust-building skills, conflict management skills and evaluation skills in addition to cognitive learning skills. These skills enable meaningful interaction and efficient collaboration among the online course participants in the process of knowledge construction that is considered one of the pillars of online education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019; Dabbagh, 2007).

Furthermore, the fact that online learning is a social act where students together negotiate meaning and develop understanding makes social interaction formally a part of the learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019). To be able to successfully engage in a social learning activity with peers, students need to possess efficient communication skills both orally and in writing. Moreover, communication skills when it comes to seeking help from the online teacher should not be underestimated. As the online learning environment is often deprived of non-verbal cues that prompt the process of knowledge construction in a regular classroom (except for the cases when the teacher actually sees their learners), it is difficult for the online teacher to guess when students are experiencing troubles with the online course. Therefore, it is the students' responsibility to communicate their concerns to the online teacher or to ask for guidance in a manner that is appropriate for the context of a country where online education takes place.

Finally, let us focus on the importance of the digital literacy (McAvinia, 2016) of the online learner. As the course content and the interaction between the course participants are computer-mediated, the online learner should first and foremost have access to the Internet and possess the necessary equipment. Also, the online learner is required to possess adequate ICT skills to be able to engage in online learning activities that support interaction and collaboration between the course participants (Dabbagh, 2007). When these requirements are met, the journey on the way to successful online learning will begin. As a result of technology-mediated L2 English learning, the students' self-regulatory skills will be enhanced and their overall self-efficacy will be positively impacted (Blake, 2015).

## 2.5. ASSESSMENT IN ONLINE LEARNING

According to Joksimovic et al. (2015) online learning involves learning communities where the instructor actively participates in the process and where interactions between student-student, student-teacher and student-content are promoted through scaffolding and timely formative feedback. Needless to say, "assessment and feedback are critical drivers of student learning" (Salmon, 2011, p. 163), but how does one provide technology-enhanced assessment of language proficiency when there is no face-to-face teacher-student interaction?

This question has occupied the minds of online education practitioners for a while now. On the one hand, assessment in an online setting is a relatively new phenomenon and there exists little research of its specific nature, compared to assessment in a regular classroom. On the other hand, the process of online language learning should be evaluated in terms of the learner's progress rather than achievement (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008), so assessing students' language proficiency online "is not radically different from assessing learning through any other mode" (Salmon, 2011, p. 163).

For this reason, if assessment in an online setting resembles assessment in a regular classroom setting, then in the online learning environment it is also reasonable to talk about formal and informal assessment. Informal assessment is typically non-judgemental and includes anything from incidental comments or responses to impromptu pieces of oral advice. Formal assessment to the contrary usually refers to planned assessment designed with the purpose of evaluating certain skills and knowledge. Traditionally we differentiate between two types of formal assessment: formative assessment and summative assessment. However, as far as young learners are concerned, formative assessment should be used (Sundqvist & Sylven, 2016). Formative assessment takes place during the instructional process and provides information about the learning process to the teacher (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008), thus impacting adjustment of teaching methods with the purpose of developing certain skills.

However, before addressing the question of how assessment should be facilitated in the online environment, we should focus on the notion of language proficiency. Blake (2015) states that language proficiency implies a complex set of relationships among many factors, such as L2 phonology, lexis (not only words, but collocations), syntax, semantics, pragmatics, intercultural knowledge, and sociolinguistics. Therefore, language proficiency takes a long time to achieve – approximately ten years in a natural setting and even longer if limited only to classroom input, especially when this input happens in an online learning environment as all learning courses vary enormously in terms of quality and practice. Fortunately, an ever-expanding array of technological tools that exists in online education allows teachers to leverage technology to be able to incorporate all the necessary components that facilitate L2 acquisition and proficiency assessment (Blake, 2015; Rubio, 2015).

So, how to assess language proficiency in an online setting? Firstly, several studies suggest self-assessment and peer assessment. For example, Salmon (2011) states that instead of always providing feedback themselves online, teachers should build on their students' ability to give and receive effective feedback, which will make online students "more self-supporting" (Salmon, 2011, p. 163). It is a fact that writing lends itself quite easily to online

peer assessment as it simply involves the uploading of a file for the peers' review. Moreover, learner collaboration on written projects is fairly easy to achieve as tools such as wikis or web-based applications such as Google Docs not only allow for multiuser editing, but also for tracking changes and crediting contributors (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008). Notably, peer evaluation complies perfectly with the frame of online education as online students are supposed to participate actively in learning and therefore function as knowledge constructors (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019; Gregory & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2017).

Secondly, a study by Su et al. (2018) suggests that in the online setting instructors should pay special attention to learners' self-evaluation in order to promote their English self-efficacy (Su et al., 2018). According to the results, self-evaluation is identified as the most influential factor explaining students' sense of self-efficacy in English listening, speaking and reading. As a matter of fact, reading and listening skills are the easiest to self-evaluate online by doing such tasks as fill in the blanks, ordering, multiple choice, matching, short answers, etc. Technological innovations provide access to computer-based placement tests for students to receive constant and timely feedback on their learning process and for teachers to receive score reports every time a test is taken. Common among these types of instruments are computer-adaptive tests (CATs) and it is important for online language teachers not only to know about these types of free online CATs, but also to encourage their students to take them so that they can easily monitor their own progress, thus practicing self-assessment (Su et al., 2018).

While reading, writing and listening skills lend themselves quite easily to online assessment, be it self-assessment or peer assessment, oral skills assessment is a totally different story. How should online teachers assess speaking skills in a synchronous online setting with multiple participants tuned in simultaneously, when only one participant is able to contribute at any given moment? It is no wonder that in online settings both development and assessment of speaking skills get far less attention than in a regular classroom setting. Time spent on oral language practice during an online class is insufficient for the development of a desired level of oral proficiency (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008). However, this problem is possible to solve if samples of meaningful oral speech are elicited from online course participants in an asynchronous mode. Even though synchronous online communication more closely imitates interaction, it may be argued that it is asynchronous online communication that enables assessment of oral skills (Lyddon & Sydorenko, 2008). In an asynchronous mode online learners can upload audio files containing samples of oral speech for teachers to evaluate at a later point in time.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. RESEARCH CONTEXT

Working as an L2 English teacher in Upper Secondary School in Norway, I could experience first-hand the transition over to online L2 English education in Spring 2020 when COVID-19 brought all-level educational institutions in Norway to a total lockdown. Both students and teachers embarked on the online education journey almost overnight without previous experience or knowledge of the latter. Also, both teachers and students tried their hardest to facilitate continuous L2 English teaching and learning in a fully online setting. However, several studies that were published later in Spring of 2020 showed a considerable disparity: teachers across the whole country claimed to have worked more, whereas students of various levels of education seemed to have learned less during home school, compared to a regular classroom setting (Gilje, Thuen & Bolstad, 2020; Kindt & Rogstad, 2020; Nordahl, 2020).

For this reason, in my thesis I decided to investigate how teachers and students experienced L2 online English education in Upper Secondary School in Norway in Spring 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown and what exactly impacted their perception. To achieve the aim, I needed to collect data from both teachers and students about their experiences of and attitudes to the online education that took place in Norway during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having analyzed the collected data, the aim is to answer the question of how teachers and students experienced L2 online English education in Upper Secondary School and to conclude whether the overall experience may be considered successful or not and present the reasons for the outcome. Before proceeding with the study description, it is important to point out that the entire study is limited to what happened solely in Upper Secondary School during the Spring of 2020.

As my study deals with the question of how L2 online English education is perceived by both teachers and students, it opens for qualitative analysis. In other words, the actual experience of L2 online English education in Upper Secondary School in Norway will be derived from the research results (See Rasinger, 2013).

However, part of the results will be collected using a quantitative method. For instance, I am going to look at how many students and teachers were disappointed with L2 online English education vs how many students and teachers were content with it. Also, I am going to look into how many teachers experienced their teaching practice as more time-consuming vs how many teachers noticed no difference in their preparation time compared to a regular

classroom setting. In other words, in addition to qualitative data, I am also going to collect quantitative data, or information that is quantifiable. Such information can be put in numbers, graphs or charts and can be processed using statistical procedures (See Rasinger, 2013). Therefore, given the fact that both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected, I can conclude that a mixed method will be used to operationalize the study.

### 3.2. PARTICIPANTS

In order to design a valid and reliable study, the concepts of population and sample had to be taken into consideration (Sealey, 2010). The focus of the study was on teachers and students with experience of L2 online English education from Upper Secondary School. However, to collect written responses from the entire relevant population of teachers and students would have been challenging, to say the least. Therefore, the population had to be broken down into smaller chunks to create samples that still shared the same characteristics as the population at large, thus being representative for the population (See Rasinger, 2013).

Two sample populations are involved in this study: a sample of L2 English teachers with experience of L2 online English teaching in Upper Secondary School in Norway and a sample of second year students with experience of L2 online English learning in Upper Secondary School in Norway. It was pivotal to include second year students in the research project, as their experience of L2 online English learning would have been solely from Upper Secondary School, and not from Middle School. With this being said, the sample of teachers and the sample of second year students was created by random sampling (See Rasinger, 2013) based on the assumption that all Upper Secondary School L2 English teachers and second year students that accepted to participate in the study would be included in the sample.

The task of recruiting participants for the study was challenging to some extent, especially when it came to the teachers. A simple request for help in one of the Facebook groups for teachers in Upper Secondary School in Norway resulted in my being banned from the group for having violated their non-request policy. Furthermore, I had to ask my colleagues for their professional network acquaintances from other schools and get in touch with them without knowing them personally, videoconferencing via Microsoft Teams. Numerous requests were sent out to Upper Secondary school teachers asking them to share their experiences of L2 online English teaching, yet only few of them agreed. In the end, these are the 8 teachers who became my respondents. The rest either kindly turned down the invitation to partake in the study with no further explanation or simply did not respond at all.

All in all, participation in the study comes from 3 schools in total, all located in the same county. The sample of teachers comprises 8 respondents from 3 different schools, whereas the sample of second year students comprises 53 respondents from the respective schools. In relation to the students' participation, it is worth noting that the students attend both General and Vocational Studies and are enrolled in programs such as Business, Healthcare and Media & Communication. To preserve the anonymity of all institutions, the schools involved in the research project were referred to as "schools" only (See Sealey, 2010).

### 3.3. INSTRUMENTS (QUESTIONNAIRES)

Moving from the nature of the question to the choice of the method, I initially intended to research the problem by applying several research methods or instruments, among which I leaned mostly towards questionnaires and interviews. Notably, the use of multiple methods to research the problem helps minimizing the risk of a method distorting the evidence (Sealey, 2010). However, interviewing 60 people would have taken longer time than what I had at my disposal when working on my master's thesis. Therefore, I chose to base my research upon data solely collected by means of questionnaires. If designed and carried out properly, questionnaires certainly do help accumulate vast amounts of high-quality data (Rasinger, 2013).

To measure the respondents' attitudes to online L2 English teaching and learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, two sets of questionnaires were created – one for teachers and one for students. Both sets were created with the help of Microsoft Forms that is an online survey creator and part of Office 365 (Microsoft Forms, 2021). The choice of a survey created in Forms can be also justified by the fact that answering such a survey a respondent is supposed to choose among limited pre-determined choices, thus part of the data analysis can be done by a computer program, where responses to each question would be identified, counted and turned into percentages (Sealey, 2010). However, the qualitative part – the categorization and analysis of the responses to open-ended questions still had to be done by me by means of descriptive analysis.

Both questionnaires comprised open-ended and multiple-choice questions. Responses to multiple-choice questions provided quantitative data, whereas responses to open-ended questions provided qualitative data. Also, both questionnaires started with a few general questions about the respondents' background, age, hobbies, etc. (See Sealey, 2010). The questionnaire for teachers was compiled in English, whereas the questionnaire for students was compiled in Norwegian. Norwegian as the language for the questionnaire for students



was chosen deliberately with a purpose of catering to all kinds of students with both advanced command of English and those who have been learning English for a short period of time, but instead had a sufficient command of Norwegian to be allowed to attend the second year of Norwegian Upper Secondary School. The aim was to secure answers from as many respondents as possible and offering students a questionnaire in Norwegian seemed like the best option.

As far as the questionnaire for teachers is concerned, the final draft of the questionnaire included 25 questions (See Appendix 1), whereof 12 questions were open-ended questions (See Appendix 1, Questions 1-3, 6, 8-11, 13, 14, 23, 25) and 13 questions were multiple-choice questions with tick-answers (see Appendix 1, Questions 4, 5, 12, 15-22, 24). Open-ended questions were meant to secure individual experience (*i.e., what would you do differently if you had to teach English online once again*), whereas multiple-choice questions provided respondents with a range of possible answer options (at least 3) that could be relatable to teachers in general (*i.e., what is your general impression of teaching English online during Spring 2020: excellent, good, satisfactory, poor, other*). The questionnaire contains two parts: a short introduction and a main part. The introduction includes 3 questions about the respondent's background (See Appendix 1, Questions 1-3). The answers to these questions serve as a background and help understand the specific of the group better. The main part dealing with the teachers' experience of L2 online English teaching is divided into 3 subsections: online course design (See Appendix 1, Questions 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 18-20), challenges vs. accomplishments (See Appendix 1, Questions 4, 7, 10-13, 15-17, 24) and assessment (See Appendix 1, Questions 21-23).

When it comes to the students responding to the questionnaire, their attitudes were measured through 35 questions, whereof 16 were open-ended (See Appendix 2, Questions 1-7, 14-16, 23, 24, 32-35), and 19 questions were multiple-choice questions (See Appendix 2, Questions 8-13, 17-22, 25-31). The reason why the questionnaire for students contained 10 more questions compared to the questionnaire for teachers is partly due to the fact that the questionnaire for students put more emphasis on the students' individual differences in terms of hobbies, education program currently enrolled in, favorite subject at school, favorite leisure time activity using English, etc. (See Appendix 2, Questions 1-9).

The main part of the questionnaire dealing with the students' experience of L2 online English learning is divided into 3 subsections: course arrangement (See Appendix 2, Questions 9, 14, 15, 18, 19), challenges vs accomplishments (See Appendix 2, Questions 10-

13, 21-25, 31-35) and assessment/feedback received from their teachers (See Appendix 2, Questions 29, 30).

When the questionnaires were finally designed, both of them were checked for content validity (See Sealey, 2010) in a pilot test with respondents from the target group (own colleagues and students). The test-retest method made it possible to see whether the questionnaire actually measured what it was designed to measure (See Sealey, 2010) and to revise the questionnaire to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings. The draft was given to 4 teachers of English as an L2 to obtain their opinions on whether the questions were relevant for the purpose of the questionnaire, as well as possible wording and interpretation problems. Finally, the permission to run the survey was granted.

Despite the pilot respondents' approval of the survey, an ambiguity in some questions turned out to have remained a problem for some students, as the data analysis stage revealed. 2 questions had to be left out of the calculation as they lacked statistical value due to having been misinterpreted by the students. More information about these statistical downfalls will be presented in Chapter 4 "Data analysis".

### 3.4. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for the study was designed to be undertaken in one single step – distributing questionnaires to the respondents. As my research was subject to ethical approval from its participants (See McAvinia, 2016; Rasinger, 2013; Sealey, 2010), the Heads of the English Departments in three different schools in the county in question were contacted prior to the study. They gave their approval to my contacting teachers and students in these schools with a request to participate in the study. Firstly, potential respondents among teachers were briefed in a message on Microsoft Teams as to the purposes of the study and a future master's thesis deriving from it. In the email sent to the teachers prior to the survey, anonymity was guaranteed, and a link was provided for those who wanted to answer the questionnaire. In total 8 teachers from 3 different schools submitted their written answers and it took them on average 14 minutes and 39 seconds to complete the questionnaire.

Secondly, the teachers who participated arranged for me to join their lessons with potential respondents among their second-year students on Microsoft Teams to explain the purpose of the survey. In a video call with the students on Microsoft Teams, anonymity throughout the whole process was once again guaranteed. The students were also informed of their right to withdraw from the project at any stage without any further explanation (See

Rasinger, 2013). The link to the questionnaire was provided to the students in a message on Microsoft Teams and 53 second-year students from three educational programs in three different schools responded to the questionnaire. It took them on average 12 minutes and 57 seconds to submit their answers.

The dataset analyzed and presented in this thesis was collected between August-December 2020 in Norway. The dataset is cross-sectional data as it was acquired at one given point in time (Rasinger, 2013). Despite the time span of 5 months, the data was collected from each school within a short time frame, whereas the rest of the time was spent on establishing contacts in various schools and handling the formalities. Moreover, the dataset was collected simultaneously, thus ruling out the changes in perception and attitudes that might occur over time, as the processual changes were not part of my project.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

#### 4.1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Participation in the research project came from 8 respondents belonging to 3 different age groups, whereof 4 participants belonged to the age group 24-30 years old, 2 participants belonged to the age group 35-40 years old and 2 participants to the age group 45 +. So, teachers aged 24-30 years old were the most represented group in the research. So, 4 respondents had 0-5 years of teaching experience, 3 respondents had 10-25 years of teaching experience and 1 respondent had 7-10 years of teaching experience.

In addition to teaching English, all of the respondents were qualified to teach in a wide spectrum of other subjects, such as Norwegian (3 respondents), Social Sciences (4 respondents), History (2 respondents), Sociology (1 respondent) and Spanish (1 respondent). In other words, the research project was dominated by teachers who could teach both English and Social Science.

#### 4.1.2 ONLINE COURSE DESIGN

When asked if they have ever let their students choose their own tasks during the online L2 English teaching, 3 respondents answered negatively. However, 2 respondents answered affirmatively and 3 respondents answered “to some extent”. This means that most of the respondents to some extent let their students choose their own task during the online L2 English teaching. When these 5 respondents were asked to specify what kind of freedom their students were given, the following information was provided: 3 respondents mentioned that

they let their students choose their own topics to work with or their own thesis statements, 1 respondent noted that the students could choose their own short stories to read or different levels in reading comprehension tasks, and 1 respondent claimed to have let their students choose whether they wanted to present their task orally or make a recording of it (See Appendix 3, Question 5 and 6).

When asked what their lessons contained more of when teaching English online, 5 respondents replied that their online English lessons contained more of individual work. 2 respondents answered that their lessons contained more of group work, yet 1 respondent answered that their lessons contained a combination of group and individual work. Obviously, the majority of the teachers who participated in the study created tasks that required individual work from their students (See Appendix 3, Question 8).

Consequently, when asked what their online lessons contained less of, 4 respondents replied “lectures”. 2 respondents replied that their online lessons contained less of “group work”, 1 respondent answered that there was less of “class discussions” and 1 respondent claimed to have included less of “oral activity”. Therefore, we may conclude that digital English lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic were designed differently and contained less lectures and group work compared to a regular classroom setting (See Appendix 3, Question 9).

When asked what digital aids were used when teaching English online, the respondents mentioned numerous platforms, software and sites such as Forms, Padlet, TV2 Skole, NRK, Screencast-o-Matic, NDLA, quizlet, WatchTogether, YouTube, EF Classroom, Kahoot. However, 6 respondents answered that they used mostly Microsoft Teams and OneNote, probably because these are the platforms that have recently facilitated most of the communication between teachers and students in Upper Secondary School in Norway.

When asked if their online English lessons contained varied learning activities, 6 out of 8 respondents answered “yes” and the remaining 2 respondents answered “to some extent”. This is also a positive answer in the sense that all the teachers who participated in the study claimed to have tried to offer their students varied learning activities during their online L2 English teaching. Moreover, 4 out of 8 respondents claimed to have created tasks suited for the different learning abilities of their students, while 3 respondents answered that they tried to do so “to some extent”. In other words, according to the teachers’ own assessment of their work, “variation” and “differentiation” have dominated the online L2 English teaching during the pandemic (See Appendix 3, Question 19, 20).

#### 4.1.3 ACCOMPLISHMENTS VS CHALLENGES

When asked how they would evaluate their overall experience with teaching L2 English online during the COVID-19 pandemic, 4 respondents replied that it was challenging, whereas the other 4 respondents answered that their overall experience was good. Not a single respondent replied that their experience was excellent, at the same time no one has chosen the option “poor” either (See Appendix 3, Question 4).

However, 5 out of 8 respondents pointed out that the students “were not engaged” or “not participating in class”. In other words, the main challenge as experienced by a majority of the respondents was the students’ lack of engagement or activity during L2 online English teaching. In addition to lack of motivation, other challenges were also mentioned. Among them are such answers as “student fallouts”, “hard to differentiate” and “lack of oral interaction or communication with students”. They were provided by 1 respondent each.

Lack of students’ participation in online English classes may be closely connected to the level of their motivation for the online L2 English education. As 3 out of 8 respondents stated, the level of students’ motivation during L2 online English education decreased. 2 respondents answered that the students’ motivation remained the same as in a regular classroom setting, whereas the other 2 respondents answered that the students’ motivation varied from student to student. Finally, 1 respondent was “not sure” about the level of students’ motivation during L2 online English classes.

In addition to having to deal with unmotivated students, some teachers who participated in the study claimed that they spent long hours preparing for online L2 English lessons. When asked to evaluate their preparation for L2 online English classes in relation to preparation for regular in-class English lessons, 6 out of 8 respondents answered that preparation for L2 online English classes became more time-consuming. So, a majority of teachers experienced work overload and spent more time on designing L2 online English lessons compared to regular in-class English lessons. However, 2 of the respondents “noticed no difference” in their preparation time. Unfortunately, the survey did not contain any follow-up questions as to why these two respondents noticed no difference in their preparation time compared to teaching in a regular classroom setting.

Those teachers who answered that their online lesson-planning became more time-consuming were also asked to specify in what ways they experienced their lesson-planning as more time-consuming. The following answers were provided: 3 respondents pointed out that their L2 online English lessons required “more detailed planning of tasks and activities for students to be able to solve on their own”. 1 respondent stated that they had to be “more

available online to answer questions”. 1 respondent answered that they had to “provide clear instructions to avoid confusion”. Finally, 1 respondent claimed to have experienced need to “differentiate more and use more varied tasks and teaching methods”.

Moving on to the next challenge during the online L2 English teaching, the respondents were asked to evaluate the support from their workplaces to ensure transition over to digital schooling. 1 out of 8 respondents answered that there was no support. 2 respondents answered that there was support and 5 respondents answered “to some extent”. Obviously, the majority of teachers to some extent received help from their workplaces in the process of transitioning over to digital schooling, but probably more thorough guidance could have been provided by the workplaces (Appendix 3, Question 15).

As a follow-up to the previous question, the respondents were asked to evaluate their ICT skills. 5 out of 8 respondents answered that they did have adequate ICT background for online L2 English teaching. However, 3 respondents answered that they did not have adequate ICT background for online L2 English teaching (Appendix 3, Question 16).

Furthermore, when asked if they had any form of pedagogical training for teaching English online, 3 out of 8 respondents answered negatively, 1 respondent answered affirmatively and 4 respondents answered “to some extent”. The overall picture is however that pedagogical training was not highlighted enough, and so the teachers’ competence was correspondingly moderate (Appendix 3, Question 17).

Next, the respondents were asked to evaluate their students’ overall response to L2 online English teaching. 7 out of 8 respondents answered that the students’ response was “both positive and negative”, whereas 1 respondent answered that the response was solely “positive”. Consequently, the teachers must have received both positive and negative feedback from their students about L2 online English education (Appendix 3, Question 24). This obviates that the teachers who participated in the study certainly succeeded in many aspects upon the encounter with a totally new teaching setting, yet there is always potential for improvement and the students did not shy away from communicating their wishes.

Finally, the respondents were asked to reflect on their online teaching experience and think about what they would do differently if they had to teach L2 English online again. 3 of 8 respondents mentioned that they would “have fewer assignments”. Also, 3 other respondents said that they would offer “more varied tasks”. 2 respondents said that they would have “more group work”.

To sum up, one of the major accomplishments is that most of the teachers partaking in the study evaluated their experience of L2 online English teaching as “positive”. However, there

was another accomplishment that emerged when the next question was asked: “did all the competence aims from the Curriculum receive the same focus?”. To this question 3 out of the 8 respondents answered affirmatively; the other 2 respondents answered “more or less”, whereas one of them also specified that “yes and no. Yet I believe we should focus on what is efficient for students to attain now when they are not in school”. Finally, 2 respondents answered negatively, and 1 respondent specified that competence aims related to the development of oral/speaking skills did not receive the same focus. On a larger scale, this illustrates that most teachers tried to cover various competence aims from the Curriculum to the best of their abilities.

#### 4.1.4 ASSESSMENT

The sub-category “Assessment” from the questionnaire for teachers includes only three questions. When asked about how they provided feedback to their students during the online L2 English teaching, all 8 respondents answered that they provided feedback both orally and in writing (Appendix 3, Question 21).

To the question “Did your students learn from the feedback during the online English classes” 1 respondent answered positively, and 1 respondent answered “unsure”. However, 6 out of the 8 respondents answered that students learned “to some extent” (Appendix 3, Question 22). In other words, most teachers confirmed that their students learned from the feedback that was provided both orally and in writing.

Finally, the teachers were asked to specify in what way their students learned or did not learn from the feedback that was provided. The following answers were received: 3 out of the 7 respondents answered that the students used the feedback to improve their performance during the next activity or task. 1 respondent answered that the students’ progress could be checked “through individual conversations with students several times a week”. 1 respondent answered that they were unsure whether the students learned from the feedback or not because “the same mistakes highlighted as feedback still emerged in new tasks”. 1 respondent claimed that feedback did not matter that much for students with low motivation, as they “did not even bother to engage with a topic at hand and gave up on tasks before they even tried to solve them”. However, according to the same respondent, “students with high motivation went above and beyond when it came to the amount of work required to solve each task”.

## 4.2. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

### 4.2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Now we move from a rather small group of teachers (8 respondents) to a much larger group of students (53 respondents), which justifies the use of percentage for calculation in this chapter. The introductory part of the questionnaire for students included nine questions about the students' background, including questions about their name, age, study program they are enrolled in, hobbies and interests, favorite subjects at school, what they use English for in their spare time, what activities they like working with in the English class, etc. From all the background information that has been collected about the respondents, it is worth noting that the largest group of the respondents (34%) is enrolled in the Media and Communication study program, whereas the least represented group of the respondents (7,5%) consists of students enrolled in Health Studies.

Furthermore, English has been chosen as their favorite subject at school by 30% of the respondents, so topping the list, followed by Social Sciences (24% of the respondents). Also, 99,4% of the respondents answered that they use English in their spare time. The most popular activity related to English is watching films in English (30,06% of the respondents). It is followed by "all mentioned above" (19,6%) and gaming (17%). In fourth place is reading books and/or news in English (16,6%). So, we can conclude that the younger generation is aware of the importance of learning English and uses English for multiple purposes in their free time (Appendix 4, Question 8).

### 4.2.2 ONLINE COURSE DESIGN

The students were asked to reflect on their favorite types of activities to do in an English class. The list was topped by oral activities (29% of the respondents), group work (29% of the respondents) and project work (19% of the respondents). Meanwhile, the least favorite activities to do in an English class were reading (8,7% of the respondents) and writing (10,5% of the respondents). Consequently, students enjoyed working in groups and they preferred speaking activities to writing or reading (Appendix 4, Question 9). It may also be assumed that writing and reading ended up among the least favorite activities, because these are the activities that students were often asked to do during the online L2 English education. This conclusion is drawn from the answers to the following question: what do you wish your online L2 English lessons had contained less of? 32% of the respondents replied that they wished for fewer "written tasks" (Appendix 4, Question 24).



The next question for the respondents was to recall what oral tasks they were working with during the L2 online English lessons. Surprisingly, the most frequent answer (30%) turned out to be the answer “nothing/I do not remember/I do not know”. Some students specified their answers by providing the following information: “not many oral tasks during online English lessons”, “we devoted little time to oral activities”, “I did not do anything, since there was no one to speak English to” (These and following quotes translated by me). Several students (4%) pointed out that they worked solely with written assignments. The second most frequent answer (28%) was “presentations”, which was followed by the answer “group work” (13%). Among other answers were the following: “conversations with teacher over Teams” (6%), “role plays in English” (6%), “making recordings of written tasks” (6%), “playing games in English” (4%), “creating podcasts” (4%).

When asked about the tasks aimed at developing writing skills in English, only 19% of the respondents answered “nothing/I do not remember/I do not know”. However, this time around, the respondents recalled a wider variety of written than oral tasks that were offered to them during L2 online English lessons. The most frequent answer was “writing about history, people, events” (40% of the respondents). However, one of the answers was supplied with a comment: “it helps nothing. It is repetition. It does not improve my English anyhow”. Other answers included the following: “writing essays” (13% of the respondents), “answering questions from the textbook in writing” (9.5% of the respondents), “writing about COVID-19” (4%), “writing film reviews” (4%), “doing tasks related to grammar practice” (4%) “writing emails to friends” (2%).

In close connection with the previous question was the question about what skills the students developed the most during the online L2 English education. The answers to this question revealed that 45% of the respondents claimed to mostly have developed writing skills, 36% of the respondents claimed to have developed speaking skills, 9.5% of the respondents claimed to have developed their knowledge of society and cultures, whereas 3.7% of the respondents said that they had developed their language skills (correct use of grammar). (See Appendix 4, Question 18).

Furthermore, the students were asked if they were given enough time to complete assignments during the online L2 English lessons. Approximately 70% of the respondents answered affirmatively (See Appendix 4, Question 19). The remaining 30% of the respondents in the next question were supposed to specify how they perceived the problem of the lack of time and the reason behind it. Unfortunately, the question aimed solely at those who answered negatively was also answered by those who answered affirmatively to the

question above. This distorted the calculation, hence the answers to the follow-up question cannot be included in the data analysis.

In the next question the students were asked to evaluate the correlation between individual work versus group work during the online L2 English education. 57% of the respondents claimed that they had to work mostly individually. However, approximately 34% of the respondents answered that there was a combination of individual and group work (See Appendix 4, Question 26).

The answers to the next question gave no clear picture. The question was aimed at finding out if there was variation in the tasks offered to students during the online L2 English lessons. Surprisingly, the three most frequent answers demonstrated little disparity percentagewise. Approximately 34% of the respondents claimed that there was variation in the tasks, but only to some extent. 30% of the respondents disagreed and claimed that there was little variation in the tasks. Yet 26% of the respondents stated that they were offered varied tasks to work with (See Appendix 4, Question 27).

Finally, the last question in the subcategory Course Arrangement was to agree or disagree with the statement that the tasks offered to the students during the online L2 English lessons were suitable for the students' different learning abilities. 42% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 45% of the respondents agreed to some extent. In other words, most of the respondents experienced that they were given the right tasks according to their learning abilities (See Appendix 4, Question 28).

#### 4.2.3 CHALLENGES VS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In this subcategory of the survey the students were asked to evaluate their L2 online English lessons in the spring semester of 2020. 40% of the respondents replied that it made no impression, meaning that they had no particular thought about it. 34% of the respondents evaluated their experience as positive, whereas 17% of the respondents evaluated their experience as negative. 9% of the respondents chose the option "other" and specified "other" in the following way: "some things were ok, others not so good and it was hard to focus", "working on a podcast was alright, but hand-in tasks are the worst, including reading out loud" (Appendix 4, Question 10).

Also, the students were asked to evaluate their motivation for L2 online English lessons. 36% of the respondents could boast of high motivation, whereas just as many (36% of the respondents) said that their motivation was low. 28% of the respondents answered "other" and specified their answers in the following way: "not any different than at school",

“just like at school”, “it varied, but mostly high motivation”, “average, despite the fact that I had to study by myself”. However, 73% out of those 28% of the respondents claimed that their motivation was “average” (Appendix 4, Question 11).

When the students were asked to reflect on how well they worked with the English subject during the online L2 English education, 45% of the respondents answered that they “worked well with the subject but could have done better”. 41% of the respondents answered that they worked “as hard as they could”. 6% of the respondents confessed that they did not work hard enough with English. The final 6% of the respondents wrote “neither hard work nor laziness” (Appendix 4, Question 12).

Among the factors that influenced the students’ motivation for the English subject during the online L2 English lessons 29% of the respondents chose “ability to focus on the task without disturbance” as a leading factor to enhance their motivation. The second most frequent answer was “boring tasks” (20% of the respondents), meaning that 20% of the students were demotivated by the tasks they received. However, 18,8% of the respondents answered that they “received fun tasks that they liked to work with”. Finally, 14% of the respondents liked working individually. Among other factors that impacted the students’ motivation were “lack of a study partner” (7% of the respondents), “lack of feedback” (2%), “no social activities” (2%). The answers to this question show that negative factors were brought up more often, meaning that more factors impacted the students’ motivation negatively, yet statistically more students (62%) mentioned positive factors that impacted their motivation (Appendix 4, Question 13).

When asked if the students had adequate ICT skills to be able to participate in the online English lessons, 77% of the respondents answered affirmatively, whereas 19% of the respondents answered “to some extent”. Generally, the survey showed that the students claimed to have sufficient ICT skills to access and participate in the online English lessons (See Appendix 4, Question 21).

The next question was to reflect on whether the students received the help they needed from their teachers during the L2 online English lessons. 64% of the respondents answered affirmatively. Also, 26% of the respondents replied that they received help from their teachers to some extent. Thus, the answers to this question reveal that the students were mostly satisfied with the help they received from their teachers during the online English education (See Appendix 4, Question 22).

The next question went as follows: “you wish your online English lessons had contained more of...”, where students had to complete the phrase with their own answers. The

answer “more group work” (17% of the respondents) topped the list. The second most frequent answer was “more oral tasks” (12,5% of the respondents). Finally, the answer “more live teaching from the teacher” was on the third place with 10% of the respondents.

Unfortunately, such answers as “I do not know” (12,5% of the respondents) and “nothing” (10% of the respondents) also occurred. They are difficult to interpret, as it is quite unclear if the students were content with the online English teaching or simply did not bother to answer the question. Further, such answers as “watching more movies” and “video chatting with the teacher” were provided by 6,2% of the respondents respectively. Lastly, the answers “more fun tasks” and “easier tasks with shorter deadlines” were provided by 4% of the respondents respectively. Also, 4% of the respondents answered that they wanted more written tasks.

Some students, instead of completing the sentence, provided positive feedback to their teachers: “I was satisfied with the online English lessons. I enjoyed group work and I liked to hear my teacher speak English live” (2% of the respondents) and “I liked the way our online English lessons went” (2% of the respondents). Finally, each of these answers was provided by one respondent respectively; “I did not like online English lessons”, “I wish we had more active tasks, as I was tired of sitting at home all day long”, “more interesting tasks, not just reading and writing”, “I wish I had more motivation”.

In accordance with the previous question, the students were asked to think about what they wished their online English lessons had contained less of. Two most frequent answers emerged clearly. The answer “fewer assignments” topped the list with 28% of the respondents (15 respondents), followed by the answer “less writing” with 24% of the respondents (13 respondents). 15% of the respondents answered “I do not know”. 5% of the respondents wished for “fewer oral presentations” (3 respondents). The other 5% of the respondents wished for “less group work” (3 respondents). Such answers as “fewer Teams meetings” and “I was content with everything” were provided by 4% of the respondents respectively (2 respondents). “Fewer boring tasks”, “less individual work”, “less reading”, “fewer texts”, “too short deadlines”, “fewer tests”, “less grammar work”, “less school in general” were given by 2% of the respondents respectively (1 respondent).

Further, when asked what they liked the most during their online L2 English lessons, 12% of the respondents answered, “I do not know” and 12,5% of the respondents answered “nothing”. Luckily, the other answers conveyed more information. For example, almost 15% of the respondents liked the opportunity to concentrate better on the tasks, as “home is quieter than a classroom” (7 respondents). 10% of the respondents enjoyed being responsible for their own time-management during the day. 8% of the respondents enjoyed working individually.

6% of the respondents answered that they mostly enjoyed being able to sleep in. Also, 6% of the respondents like “group work” the most. Finally, 4% of the respondents liked having more free time. One respondent replied that he liked “everything”. Among other one-respondent answers were such answers as: “kind teachers”, “actual Teams meetings, as I felt less lonely then”, “instant feedback”, “varied tasks”, “not having to speak English in front of a whole class”.

Finally, the students were asked to reflect on what they felt they mastered during the online L2 English lessons. This question revealed an immediate leader, as 41% of the respondents answered “I do not know”. Not being aware of one’s strengths in the subject could indicate the teachers fail to communicate the students’ achievements to the students. Still, there were students who did feel sense of accomplishment during their online L2 English lessons. 26% of the respondents claimed to have mastered mostly writing in English. 15% of the respondents mastered speaking English. 2 respondents (3,7%) said that they mastered working independently. 2 respondents (3,7%) claimed that they mastered working in groups. One-respondent answers contained the following answers: “completing tasks”, “grammar”, “getting better mental health”.

#### 4.2.4 ASSESSMENT / FEEDBACK FROM TEACHER

Finally, when it comes to assessment, the students were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: “I learned from the feedback provided by my teacher and could therefore improve my English skills”. 13% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 40% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 45% of the respondents agreed with the statement to some extent. This shows that most of the students learned from the feedback provided to them by the teachers during the online English education (See Appendix 4, Question 29).

The follow-up question aimed at finding out how those 13% of the respondents who did not learn from the feedback would rather receive feedback failed and therefore cannot be included in the data analysis. Designed solely for those who answered negatively to the previous question, this question was once again answered by all the respondents, hence providing no insight into how students would rather prefer to receive feedback to enhance their learning.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a comparison between the teachers' and the students' perspectives and relates the findings to the theoretical background from Chapter 2. I will start off the chapter with presenting a closer look at the teachers' experience. However, the teachers presented a very small sample of data in my study (only 8 respondents), therefore the results cannot be generalized.

To begin with, the teachers described their online work during the lockdown as a positive yet challenging experience. They claimed that among the challenges that posed particular difficulty were the students' low motivation, disengagement and lack of activity. However, only 17% of the students who took part in the study described their experience with the online L2 English lessons solely as negative, whereas 34% of the respondents described their experience as positive. The teachers claim that the students' motivation decreased, yet a surprising 36% of the students could boast of high motivation. Moreover, 41% of the students claim that they worked with English as hard as they could. Finally, 45% of the students said that they worked well with English but could have worked even better. Still, such high proportion of hard-working students is a good point of departure for successful online education.

What we see here is a discrepancy between the answers from the two groups to the effect that the students' motivation was perceived by the teachers as low when from the student perspective it was actually relatively high. Moreover, 27,6 % of the students claim to have English as their favorite subject. Could the reason for this "wrong interpretation" of the students' motivation lie in potentially less successful teaching methods chosen by the teachers to facilitate the online L2 English lessons? For, as we know, the instructor's role within the online learning environment differs from teaching in a traditional classroom setting. Moreover, teaching English online in particular differs from teaching any other subject (Compton, 2009; Joksimovic et al., 2015).

So, why did the teachers experience their online English teaching as challenging? As we know, successful online education poses several demands on the teacher, among which are good technological skills, pedagogical skills in online language teaching and evaluation skills in online language teaching (Compton, 2009). 77% of the teachers in this study evaluated their digital skills as adequate, meaning that they had enough competence to facilitate online English lessons. Clearly, the challenge does not lie in operating different platforms and software. Rather, a skillful online teacher is someone who is able to create an online "culture

of interaction” (McAvinia, 2016) where participants create meaning and acquire knowledge in a learning process together with other participants (Salmon, 2011).

However, my study has revealed that instead of creating learning environments where participants could create knowledge together, the teachers during their online L2 English lessons offered mostly individual work to their students and resorted to teacher-centered teaching methods where knowledge was transmitted linearly from teacher to student.

The predominance of individual work during the online L2 English education was also confirmed by the students who participated in the study, as 57% of the respondents stated that they mostly had to work individually but would rather work in groups instead. Considering that successful online education has the socio-constructivist pedagogical theory at its foundation and this theory emphasizes the student as the center of knowledge construction upon interacting with other students (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019; McAvinia, 2016; Salmon, 2011), it would have been constructive for the teachers to offer more group work and group projects to their students as an inherent part of successful online English teaching. That may be the point where most of the teachers have come up short.

Furthermore, another reason why the teachers’ experience of online English teaching was somewhat challenging may have been rooted in the fact that the teachers almost had to be constantly available for their students without taking a break from their computers. Notably, 6 out of the 8 teachers responding to the survey answered that organizing their digital lessons was more time-consuming than their regular classroom lessons. At the same time, almost 86% of the students were happy with the help they received from their teachers during the online L2 English lessons specifying that their teachers were always available for answering questions and providing extra assistance and guidance. This confirms the aforementioned statement about online education being learner friendly (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Salmon, 2011), when teachers in their turn experience a demand for constant access and assistance. This leads to the teachers’ feeling over-worked and exhausted. No wonder then that in general online English teaching is perceived by the teachers as challenging.

Apart from challenges, there were many achievements during the online L2 English teaching the teachers should be praised for. For example, the analysis of the teachers’ data has shown that most of the teachers claimed to have offered their students varied activities during online English lessons that were suited to each and every student’s learning ability. This statement is confirmed by 87% of the students. The students agreed that they were given the right tasks in relation to their learning abilities. Moreover, 60% of the students experienced more or less varied tasks. However, when asked about what teaching methods prevailed, 30%

of the students replied that it was “reading and writing”. This discovery goes to prove that online education, despite being a relatively new educational model, still largely relies on teacher-centered teaching methods (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Cope & Kalantzis, 2019; McAvinia, 2016). In order for online education to be successful and on the edge of technology, it should be facilitated by modern teaching methods that differ from regular classroom teaching methods (Compton, 2009; Joksimovic et al., 2015).

The analysis of the students’ data provides a conflicting picture of how the students experienced online English lessons. At the beginning of the survey the students were asked to evaluate their experience with online English lessons. 34% of the respondents described their experience as positive, 17 % of the respondents described their experience as negative, whereas 40% of the respondents claimed that online English lessons made no impression at all, probably implying that their experience was neither positive nor negative and that they just worked with the tasks that were offered in order to get a grade they needed. However, the survey also ended with a similar question, yet this time the students were asked if they were satisfied with online English lessons. This time 70% of the respondents answered positively.

However, the study has shown that 36% of the students experienced a decrease in their motivation during the online L2 English lessons. Why did so many students experience this? Probably, short deadlines and multiple assignments in various subjects could be experienced as overwhelming by quite a number of students. Also, according to Cope and Kalantzis (2019), students are motivated for online education when they feel that they “own” the product of their work. Knowing what activities students enjoy working with in their English classes is important here. Data analysis of the students’ favorite activities in English has revealed that 29% of the respondents enjoy working with oral tasks and 48% of the respondents like group work.

At the same time, 5 out of 8 teachers partaking in the study claimed that they to a greater or lesser extent let their students influence the course design and choose their own tasks during the online English education. However, 45% of the students answered that they had to work with mostly written tasks during their online L2 English lessons, not oral tasks that they actually enjoy working with. Therefore, an absolute majority of the students had wished for more “more oral tasks” and “more group work” during their digital English lessons. Had the teachers taken into consideration the students’ preferences and put the students in charge of choosing their own tasks and work methods, maybe the 36% of the students would not have experienced a decrease in their motivation and the teachers therefore would have experienced their online teaching as less challenging.



On the other hand, 36% of the students could still boast of high motivation and 28% of the students managed to keep the same level of motivation during their digital schooling as before. The reason for this may have been because the students were able to focus on the task better at home compared to being in a regular classroom. As known, at home students are able to concentrate on a task better than they would have done in a regular classroom as in regular classrooms other students may be noisy and distracting (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Salmon, 2011). Also, the students could experience increased motivation as they could self-pace their learning process according to their own preferences (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Salmon, 2011).

Another factor that could have contributed to the students' positive experience of online English lessons is the fact that 77% of the respondents claimed to have had sufficient ICT skills, as this is one of the main constituent parts of successful online education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2019). If students can freely navigate in the online environment, they are most likely capable of coping with potential challenges that might occur during online lessons.

### 5.1. SUM-UP

In this sub-chapter the major discrepancies and overlaps between the two groups of the respondents will be highlighted. First off, the teachers perceived the online L2 English lessons as positive yet challenging. Among the challenges that the teachers emphasized were the students' low motivation for the subject and lack of activity during the online L2 lessons. However, not only is English chosen as their favorite subject by 1/3 of the respondents, but the students could also boast of relatively high motivation for the subject and claimed to have worked with English as hard as they could. This highlights a big discrepancy in the responses.

The teachers also claim to have given their students freedom to a greater or lesser extent in terms of choosing their own tasks to work with. Unfortunately, it is impossible to see if there is an overlap with the students' experience, as there is no corresponding question in the students' survey. In other words, it is impossible to check whether or not the students experienced any freedom in terms of being responsible for choosing their own tasks.

Second, the teachers designed their online L2 English lessons differently compared to regular classroom lessons. The online L2 English lessons contained fewer lectures and less group work. At the same time, the focus was on individual work and on testing the students' written skills. The teachers also claimed to have included few oral tasks in the course design, that resulted in oral skills not having received the same focus compared to a regular classroom setting. These findings are confirmed by the students, as they also experienced a major focus

on individual work where their written skills were tested. The students missed group work and wished for tasks that could test their oral skills instead. What is positive is that the teachers realized that they had to design their online English course differently if they had to do it all over again. As my study shows, the teachers would have included more group work and fewer assignments if they had to teach English online again.

Next, the teachers claimed to have possessed adequate digital skills to be able to facilitate the online L2 English teaching. It would have been possible to find out if the teachers' skills were really perceived as adequate by the students if a corresponding question was included in the students' survey. Unfortunately, it was not. This prevents finding out whether or not there is a correlation here. On the other hand, the students also claim to have had sufficient digital skills to be able to participate in the online L2 English lessons. Therefore, the survey has revealed that both students and teachers evaluate their digital skills as relatively high.

Furthermore, the teachers claimed to have experienced the work related to organizing the online L2 English course as more time-consuming compared to regular classroom lessons. A good majority of the students evaluated the cooperation and communication between student-teacher during the online L2 English lessons highly and agreed with the fact that their teachers were easily accessible and provided guidance when needed, meaning that there is an overlap between the answers from the two groups here.

The next overlap in the responses between the two groups of the respondents takes feedback. All teachers claimed to have provided feedback during the online L2 English lessons to their students both orally and in writing. The students confirmed that they learn best from the feedback when it is given both orally and in writing. Moreover, the teachers claimed to have seen improvement to some extent in the students' performance based on the feedback. Most of the students also claimed to have improved their skills based on the feedback provided by the teacher.

Finally, the teachers claimed to have offered their students varied learning activities that were suited to the students' learning abilities. This is again confirmed by the students who mostly agree with this claim. This leads us to the final point of this chapter, namely the students' perception of the online L2 English lessons. The teachers claim to have received both positive and negative responses from their students. Unfortunately, there is no question in my study that asks the teachers to specify the students' responses. However, when it comes to their own responses, the students claim to have been mostly content with the online L2 English lessons they were offered during the Covid-19 lockdown in the spring semester of 2020.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Finally, this thesis has explored how online L2 English education was facilitated in Norwegian Upper Secondary School during the Covid-19 pandemic to answer the overarching research question: how did teachers and students experience the online L2 English education in Upper Secondary School in Norway during the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring semester of 2020?

As a result of the data analysis, the following findings are highlighted: what we witnessed in Norway during the spring semester of 2020 is far from the potentials of online education as traditional online education is highly scaffolded and requires thorough planning. Online L2 English education in Upper Secondary school in Norway in the spring semester of 2020 was emergency remote teaching. Although online education allows for its course participants to work at their own tempo and manage their day according to their own liking, the online education in Norway during the spring semester of 2020 required students' daily presence in digital classes and reprimanded absence. Moreover, as soon as the spread of the Covid-19 virus was possible to curb, all educational institutions went back to a regular classroom setting.

However, this attempt at online education during the lockdown was perceived relatively positively both by teachers and students. Only a few downsides were mentioned by the students: lack of a study partner, overload of assignments, surplus of written and reading tasks and lack of group projects and oral assessment. Students' positive experience of the online English lessons was explained by high motivation for the subject, hard work and much effort, high ICT competence among the students, availability of the teacher to answer the students' questions, reasonable deadlines and having enough time to complete assignments, good communication between student-teacher, varied tasks to work with and tasks suited for the students' learning abilities. Also, the students mentioned ability to concentrate better when working at home.

On behalf of the teachers, their experience of the online education was negatively affected by a drop in students' motivation, fallouts and lack of face-to-face communication with the students. However, what contributed to the teachers' positive experience is the following: the teachers possessed necessary ICT skills and received necessary technical support from their workplaces to be able to facilitate online teaching. They made use of a wide variety of digital aids, platforms and resources to provide varied activities to their students. Lastly, they could see that their students learned from the feedback they received.

As we can see, certain challenges were listed by both groups of respondents, but all seem to have coped with them successfully, considering the novelty of the whole situation with fully digital school in Norway.

## 6.1 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are two limitations to my study. Firstly, only a few teachers have participated in the project and secondly, some questions in the survey were ambiguous. However, despite certain limitations my study provides findings as to how both teachers and students experienced online L2 English education during the lockdown in the spring semester of 2020.

My study shows that both teachers and students managed to embark on the challenge almost overnight and as a result, created an overall positive experience together. Further, future research may investigate to what extent students' grades were affected by the online education.

Also, further research may address the importance of feedback in online education. It may be interesting to investigate what type of feedback suits best for online setting and why. Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate the students' attitude to peer assessment as part of online L2 English education to see whether or not it is considered useful and why.

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## APPENDIX 1 (QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS)

1. Your age?
2. How long have you been teaching English in Upper Secondary School?
3. What other subjects do you teach?
4. How would you evaluate your overall experience with teaching English online during the pandemic?
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Challenging
  - Impossible
5. When teaching English online during the pandemic, did you ever let your students choose their own tasks/activities to do during English lessons?
  - Yes
  - No
  - To some extent
6. If you answered “yes” or “to some extent” to the previous question, please, explain what activities/tasks in English your students chose to do and how they responded to being put in charge of their own learning.
7. Did the level of students' motivation for the English subject change during online school?
  - Motivation increased
  - Motivation decreased
  - Students showed the same level of motivation as before
8. When teaching English online during the pandemic, your lessons contained more of\_\_\_\_\_.
9. When teaching English online during the pandemic, your lessons contained less of\_\_\_\_\_.
10. What were your main challenges when teaching English online during the pandemic?
11. Did all the competence aims from the Curriculum receive the same focus when teaching English online?
12. Preparation for online English lessons became\_\_\_\_\_
  - More time-consuming
  - Less time-consuming
  - I noticed no difference
  - Other
13. Explain in what ways preparation for online English lessons changed.
14. What digital aids did you use when teaching English online?
15. Was there support from your workplace to help you with the transition over to digital school?
  - Yes
  - No



- To some extent
  - Other
16. Did you have adequate ICT background for teaching English online?
- Yes
  - No
  - To some extent
  - Other
17. Did you have any form of pedagogical training for teaching English online?
- Yes
  - No
  - To some extent
  - Other
18. The learning activities you offered to your students were more suited for...
- Individual work
  - Group work
  - A good combination of both
  - Other
19. Did your online English lessons contain varied learning activities?
- Yes
  - No
  - To some extent
  - Other
20. When teaching English online, did you provide tasks suited for different learning abilities of your students?
- Yes
  - No
  - To some extent
  - Other
21. How did you provide feedback to your students when teaching English online?
- In an oral conversation
  - In a written message
  - Both orally and in writing
  - Other
22. Did your students learn from the feedback during online English lessons?
- Yes
  - No
  - To some extent
  - Other
23. How could you see that your students learned/ did not learn from the feedback that you provided during online English lessons?
24. What was the overall response of your students to online English lessons as you experienced it?
- Positive
  - Negative
  - Both positive and negative
  - There was no response
  - Other

25. What would you do differently with your lessons if you had to teach English online again?

## APPENDIX 2 (QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS)

1. Ditt navn?
2. Hva er din alder?
3. Hvor lenge har du gått på skole i Norge?
4. Hvor lenge har du lært engelsk på skole i Norge?
5. Hva er dine hobbyer og interesser?
6. Hvilken studielinje går du på?
7. Hvilke fag liker du best å jobbe med?
8. Hva bruker du engelsk til på fritiden? (mulig å velge flere svar samtidig)
  - Gaming
  - Snakke med venner på nettet
  - Se på engelsktalende filmer
  - Lese bøker/nyheter
  - Litt av hvert
  - Ingenting
9. Hvilke aktiviteter foretrekker du å jobbe med i engelsktimene? (mulig å velge flere svar samtidig)
  - Leseaktiviteter
  - Skriveaktiviteter
  - Muntlige aktiviteter
  - Prosjektarbeid
  - Gruppeoppgaver
10. Hvilken oppfatning fikk du av den nettbaserte engelskundervisningen under koronatiden våren 2020?
  - Positiv oppfatning
  - Negativ oppfatning
  - Gjorde ikke noe stort inntrykk
  - Annet
11. Vurder din motivasjon for den nettbaserte undervisningen i engelsk våren 2020.
  - Høy motivasjon
  - Lav motivasjon
  - Annet
12. Vurder din innsats i engelsk under den nettbaserte undervisningen våren 2020.
  - Jeg jobbet med faget så godt jeg kunne
  - Jeg jobbet greit med faget, men jeg kunne nok gjort bedre
  - Midt på treet
  - Jeg jobbet ikke godt nok med faget
13. Hva påvirket din motivasjon for engelskfaget under den nettbaserte undervisningen våren 2020? (mulig å velge flere svar samtidig)
  - Gode oppgaver
  - Jeg likte å jobbe individuelt
  - Jeg kunne fokusere på oppgaver bedre uten forstyrrelser
  - Det var ikke noe annet å finne på
  - Kjedelige oppgaver
  - Ingen samarbeidspartner
  - Annet

14. Hvilke oppgaver jobbet du med i nettbaserte engelsktimene for å utvikle dine muntlige ferdigheter i engelsk?
15. Hvilke oppgaver jobbet du med i nettbaserte engelsktimene for å utvikle dine skriveferdigheter i engelsk?
16. Hvilke oppgaver jobbet du med i nettbaserte engelsktimene for å utvikle din kunnskap om kultur og samfunn?
17. Jobbet du med grammatikk i nettbaserte engelsktimene i våren 2020?
  - Ja
  - Nei
  - Noe
  - Jeg husker ikke
18. Hvilke ferdigheter utviklet du best da du jobbet med engelskfaget under den nettbaserte undervisningen?
  - Muntlige ferdigheter
  - Skriveferdigheter
  - Språklæring (grammatikk)
  - Kunnskap om kultur og samfunn
19. Fikk du nok tid til å bli ferdig med oppgaver som ble gitt i engelskfaget under den nettbaserte undervisningen?
  - Ja
  - Nei
20. Hvis du svarte nei på forrige spørsmål, hva skyldes det at du ikke fikk nok tid til å bli ferdig med oppgavene? (mulig å velge flere svar samtidig)
  - For korte frister
  - For korte og vanskelige oppgaver
  - Jeg brukte tid på noe annet enn skole
  - For mange oppgaver i andre fag
  - Lite motivasjon for skole generelt
21. Hadde du tilstrekkelig med IKT-kompetanse for å kunne følge med på nettbaserte engelsktimene?
  - Ja
  - Nei
  - Til en viss grad
22. Fikk du den hjelpen du trengte fra læreren for å kunne delta i nettbaserte engelsktimene?
  - Ja
  - Nei
  - Til en viss grad
23. Hva kunne du ønsket det var mer av under den nettbaserte undervisningen våren 2020?
24. Hva kunne du ønske det var mindre av under den nettbaserte undervisningen våren 2020?
25. Vurder samarbeidet mellom elev-lærer under de nettbaserte engelsktimene våren 2020.
  - Utmerket, min lærer var alltid tilgjengelig
  - Bra, jeg fikk hjelp med det jeg hadde behov for
  - Ikke så bra, min lærer var vanskelig å få tak i
  - Dårlig, jeg skjønnte aldri oppgaver og fikk ikke hjelp med det jeg trengte

26. Under de nettbaserte engelsktimene i våren 2020 måtte du jobbe stort sett \_\_\_\_\_
- Individuelt
  - I grupper
  - Begge deler
  - Annet
27. Det var variasjon i arbeidsoppgaver i nettbaserte engelsktimene i våren 2020.
- Enig
  - Delvis enig, det var noe varierte oppgaver
  - Uenig, det var lite variasjon i oppgaver
  - Jeg husker ikke
  - Annet
28. I de nettbaserte engelsktimene under koronapandemien 2020 fikk jeg arbeidsoppgaver tilpasset mitt nivå.
- Enig
  - Delvis enig
  - Uenig
  - Annet
29. Jeg lærte av tilbakemeldingen læreren ga meg under de nettbaserte engelsktimene og jeg kunne forbedre meg.
- Enig
  - Delvis enig
  - Uenig
  - Annet
30. Hvis du svarte delvis enig eller uenig på forrige spørsmål, hvordan kunne du ha lært bedre av tilbakemeldingene gitt fra læreren din under den nettbaserte engelskundervisningen våren 2020?
- Jeg hadde likt å få tilbakemelding i en muntlig samtale
  - Jeg hadde likt å få tilbakemelding skriftlig
  - Jeg hadde likt å få en kombinasjon av både skriftlig og muntlig tilbakemelding
31. Generelt sett, var du fornøyd med engelskopplæring som ble gitt på nett under koronapandemien 2020?
- Ja
  - Nei
  - Annet
32. Hva likte du best med den nettbaserte engelskopplæringen under koronapandemien 2020?
33. Hva likte du minst med den nettbaserte engelskopplæringen under koronapandemien 2020?
34. Hva var dine største utfordringer med engelskfaget under nettbaserte engelskundervisningen?
35. Hva føler du at du mestret best med engelskfaget under den nettbaserte engelskopplæringen.

## APPENDIX 3 (QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS)

### Question 5

5. When teaching English online during the pandemic, did you ever let your students choose their own tasks/activities to do during English lessons?

[Flere detaljer](#)

● Yes	2
● No	3
● To some extent	3
● Annet	0



### Question 6

6. If you answered "yes" or "to some extent" to the previous question, please, explain what activities/tasks in English your students chose to do and how they responded to being put in charge of their own learning.

[Flere detaljer](#)

5  
Svar

Siste svar

*"Differentiating various levels , in reading comprehension tasks etc"  
"for example short stories, topics of their own interest in case of writin..."*

### Question 8

8. When teaching English online during the pandemic, your lessons contained more of \_\_\_\_\_.

8 Svar

ID ↑	Navn	Svar
1		Individual tasks and several conversations with the individual students to help them with tasks and keep them motivated
2		Videos (documentaries, ted talks), reading (short stories, articles)
3		Group discussions
4		Tasks and exercises
5		group activities
6		Reading, doing tasks in the textbook/online resources, working by themselves
7		guidance, explanation and very clear agenda
8		Shorter tasks, video clips - to motivate!

### Question 9

9. When teaching English online during the pandemic, your lessons contained less of \_\_\_\_\_.

8 Svar

ID ↑	Navn	Svar
1		Group work
2		Group work, whole class debate/discussions, oral activities in general
3		Class discussions
4		Lecture
5		Lectures
6		Lectures by the teacher, self assessment
7		"pragmatic" guidance
8		Language interaction

### Question 19-20

19. Did your online English lessons contain varied learning activities?

[Flere detaljer](#)

Yes	6
No	0
To some extent	2
Annet	0



20. When teaching English online, did you provide tasks suited for different learning abilities of your students?

[Flere detaljer](#)

Yes	4
No	0
To some extent	3
Annet	1



### Question 4

4. How would you evaluate your overall experience with teaching English on-line during the pandemic?

[Flere detaljer](#)

excellent	0
good	5
challenging	5
impossible	0
Annet	0



### Question 15

15. Was there support from your workplace to help you with the transition over to digital school?

[Flere detaljer](#)

Yes	2
No	1
To some extent	5
Annet	0



### Question 16

16. Did you have adequate ICT background for teaching English online?

[Flere detaljer](#)

Yes	5
No	3
To some extent	0
Annet	0



### Question 17

17. Did you have any form of pedagogical training for teaching English on-line?

[Flere detaljer](#)

Yes	1
No	3
To some extent	4
Annet	0



### Question 24

24. What was the overall response of your students to online English lessons as you experienced it?

[Flere detaljer](#)

positive	1
negative	0
both positive and negative	7
there was no response	0
Annet	0



### Question 21

21. How did you provide feedback to your students when teaching English online?

[Flere detaljer](#)

in an oral conversation	0
in a written message	0
both orally and in writing	8
Annet	0





Question 22

22. Did your students learn from the feedback during online English lessons?

[Flere detaljer](#)

● Yes	1
● No	0
● To some extent	6
● Annet	1



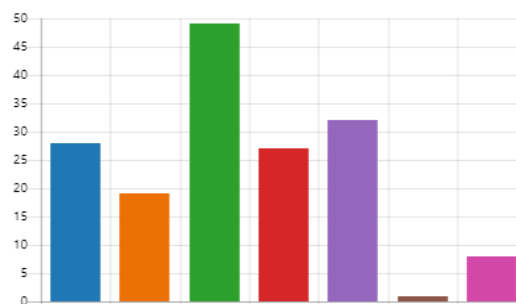
## APPENDIX 4 (QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS)

### Question 8

8. Hva bruker du engelsk til på fritiden?

[Flere detaljer](#)

gaming	28
snakke med venner på nettet	19
se på engelsktalende filmer	49
lese bøker /nyheter på engelsk	27
litt av hvert	32
ingenting	1
Annet	8

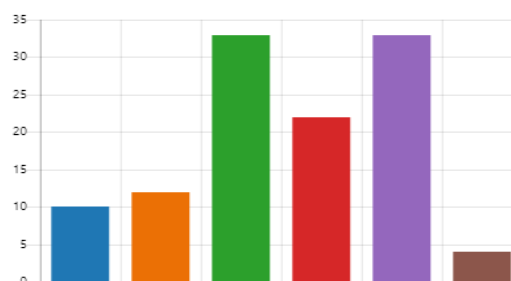


### Question 9

9. Hvilke aktiviteter foretrekker du å jobbe med i engelsktimene?

[Flere detaljer](#)

leseaktiviteter	10
skriveaktiviteter	12
muntlige aktiviteter	33
prosjektarbeid	22
gruppeoppgaver	33
Annet	4



### Question 10

10. Hvilken oppfatning fikk du av den nettbaserte engelskundervisningen under koronatiden våren 2020?

[Flere detaljer](#)

[Insights](#)

positiv oppfatning	18
negativ oppfatning	9
gjorde ikke noe stort inntrykk	21
Annet	5



### Question 11

11. Vurder din motivasjon for den nettbaserte undervisningen i engelsk våren 2020.

[Flere detaljer](#)

[Insights](#)

høy motivasjon	19
lav motivasjon	19
Annet	15

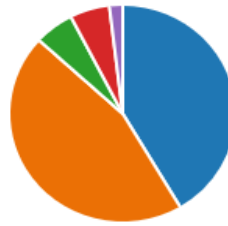


### Question 12

12. Vurder din innsats i engelsk under den nettbaserte undervisningen våren 2020.

[Flere detaljer](#)

● jeg jobbet med faget så godt j...	22
● jeg jobbet greit med faget, m...	24
● verken høy eller lav innsats	3
● jeg jobbet ikke godt nok med ...	3
● Annet	1

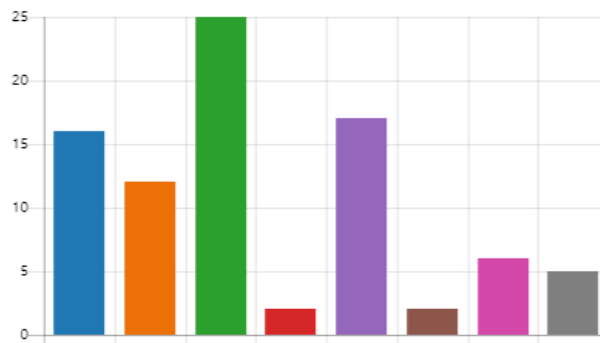


### Question 13

13. Hva påvirket din motivasjon for engelskfaget under den nettbaserte undervisningen våren 2020?

[Flere detaljer](#)

● gode oppgaver, jeg likte å job...	16
● jeg likte å jobbe individuelt	12
● jeg kunne fokusere på oppgav...	25
● det var ikke noe annet å finne ...	2
● kjedelige oppgaver	17
● jeg fikk ingen tilbakemeldinge...	2
● mangel på arbeidspartner	6
● Annet	5



### Question 18

18. Hvilke ferdigheter utviklet du best da du jobbet med engelskfaget under den nettbaserte undervisningen?

[Flere detaljer](#)


● muntlige ferdigheter	21
● skriveferdigheter	24
● språklæring (grammatikk)	2
● kunnskap om kultur og samfu...	5



### Question 19

19. Fikk du nok tid til å bli ferdig med oppgaver som ble gitt i engelskfaget under den nettbaserte undervisningen?

[Flere detaljer](#)

 Insights





 ja	37
 nei	16



### Question 26

26. Under de nettbaserte engelsktimene i våren 2020 måtte du jobbe stort sett \_\_\_\_\_

[Flere detaljer](#)


 individuelt	29
 i grupper	5
 begge deler	18
 Annet	1








### Question 27

27. Det var variasjon i arbeidsoppgaver i nettbaserte engelsktimene i våren 2020.

[Flere detaljer](#)

 Insights


 enig	14
 delvis enig, det var noe variert...	18
 uenig, det var lite variasjon i a...	16
 jeg husker ikke	4
 Annet	1







### Question 28

28. I de nettbaserte engelsktimene under koronapandemien 2020 fikk jeg arbeidsoppgaver tilpasset mitt nivå.

[Flere detaljer](#)

 Insights

 enig	22
 delvis enig	24
 uenig	5
 Annet	2



### Question 22

22. Fikk du den hjelpen du trengte fra lærere for å kunne delta i nettbaserte engelsktimene?

[Flere detaljer](#)

Insights

● ja	34
● nei	5
● til en viss grad	14



### Question 21

21. Hadde du tilstrekkelig med IKT-kompetanse for å kunne følge med på nettbaserte engelsktimene?

[Flere detaljer](#)

● ja	41
● nei	2
● til en viss grad	10



### Question 29

29. Jeg lærte av tilbakemeldingen læreren ga meg under de nettbaserte engelsktimene og jeg kunne forbedre meg

[Flere detaljer](#)

● enig	21
● delvis enig	24
● uenig	7
● Annet	1



## Reflection Note

Embarking on the journey of writing the master's thesis I had a vague idea of where the process would take me. Working as an L2 English teacher myself, I possessed average ICT skills at the beginning of the school year of 2020. Little did I know that not only would I enhance my own digital competence and start making use of a plethora of digital aids on a daily basis as a result of fully online education in Norway due to the pandemic, but that I would even dedicate my master's thesis to investigating a topic related to digital education.

Hence when creating a survey for both groups of the respondents in this study using Microsoft Software Forms, I could barely envision what results I could gather. This lack of my thorough planning at the initial stage of my research emerges quite clearly now when I can finally see a bigger picture. I wish I had included more questions in the survey for broader research, but this can be taken care of in the next chapter of my life.

As for now, below I would like to reflect on my project. Firstly, the surveys for the teachers and the students contained a question where the respondents are asked to evaluate their own digital competence. What is missing is a question for each of these groups where they were asked to evaluate each other's digital competence. It would be interesting to see if Norwegian students perceived their teachers' digital competence during the online English L2 education as adequate and vice versa. Also, the teachers claim to have used various digital sources and aids in their online lessons. I am curious to know if the students perceived it this way, too. As of now, no such question exists in my survey.

Furthermore, in the survey the teachers were asked to evaluate their preparation for the online L2 English lessons. There should have been an additional question for those who experienced preparation for the online L2 English lessons as more time-consuming to see if their work overload had something to do with correcting the written assignments that were offered to the students almost on a daily basis. Theoretically, there could have been a link there, but as of now, this connection is unclear.

Moreover, it was earlier stated in my thesis that assessment during the online L2 English lessons would be part of my focus. However, both surveys contained few questions about assessment. No clear conclusions were made from these questions except for the most obvious ones – that the teachers provided feedback both in writing and orally and that the students learned from it to some extent. In the future, it would be interesting to see what forms of assessment function best during online education and why. This could be a topic for a separate master's thesis.

Finally, a major challenge was to engage teachers in the survey. Due to unknown reasons a majority of the teachers who were asked to participate in the study turned down the invitation. The explanation could have been that after an exhausting year with digital school, teachers had nothing left for extracurricular activities that was not part of their job.

This way or another, this study has provided insight into how online L2 English education was facilitated in upper secondary school in Norway during the Covid-19 lockdown and what experience both teachers and students had from it.