«It was fun to have something different...more geared towards my interest»

Students’ and apprentices’ experiences with vocational English at school and in apprenticeships

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Abstract

This study looks into how students in school and apprentices at work experience the usefulness of the English common core subject. The focus of the study is into vocational orientation of English. The students have been asked to consider statements about English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), and to what degree their teachers have vocationally oriented their English lessons. Two apprentices were asked questions related to the same topic about their experiences from school and work life.

Theory on and research into the subject of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where EVP is one of many categories, are scarce when it comes to the upper secondary school level. The majority of international research and theory are on adult learners at university and college levels, or professionals working in different industries. Two studies in Taiwan and Singapore shed light on how English is taught to vocational upper secondary students in the two countries. In addition, research is now surfacing due to the FYR-project and the amended National Curriculum in Norway, focusing on vocational orientation. In this thesis, the students’ motivation is an important aspect alongside interdisciplinary cooperation between common core subject teachers and vocational teachers.

The survey and interviews accounted for in this thesis, show that the majority of the students experience both EVP and General English as useful for their future occupation, whereas the apprentices have yet to experience the need for English at their work places. Most students and both apprentices found EVP more interesting and thus more motivating to work with. The students in particular experienced that when working with EVP, their activity levels increased and results improved. The students also experienced that their teachers vocationally orientate their English lessons, and that their teachers take an interest in their vocational education programmes and future occupations. Both students and apprentices experienced little cooperation between their English teacher and their vocational teachers, showing that interdisciplinary cooperation is an area which still needs to be worked with in Norwegian vocational upper secondary schools.
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1 Introduction

I knew from the beginning of my master’s studies, that when the day came for me to write my thesis, the topic had to be vocational orientation of English. I have taught English at vocational upper secondary school since 2005, and have taught at most of the vocational programmes offered in Norway, for longer or shorter periods. In my teaching, I have noticed that as soon as the topics covered have been linked to the vocational education programme and the trades and industries the students plan to go into, their interest has peaked. The inspiration I get from working with students, who work with materials related to something they are interested in, motivates me to create hopefully inspiring lessons. Working with individual students who in their first English lesson at upper secondary school, say “I suck at English”, students who, when working with topics relevant for their future career, gets their first eureka moment, and experience that they master English after all, greatly motivates me.

My interest in working with vocationally orienting English grew even more once I became a part of the FYR-project in 2011. The FYR-project is a national effort in vocationally orientating common core subjects with the aim to decrease dropout from upper secondary school. The FYR-project will be described more detailed in sub-chapter 2.7.1. Working with English teachers from all over Norway, discussing vocational English and having the privilege to create and share vocationally oriented lessons and ideas, is also a great motivation. When I first started to work with the FYR-project, I searched for research in the field of vocational orientation, and found very little. This thesis is therefore my attempt to contribute to the development of this important field within English language teaching and learning.

Before looking more closely into vocational orientation of English a definition is in its place. The Ministry of Education upon the creation of the FYR-project used the Karlsen committee’s definition of vocational orientation.

With vocational orientation, we mean that subject matter, learning methods and vocabulary used in the teaching of the common core subject, as far as possible have relevance in the individual’s vocational occupation. The vocational orientation also includes explaining how competencies from the common core subject are used and
benefits the training in vocational subjects and in the occupational practice within the relevant occupations (Karlsen, 2008, p. 80, my translation).

This definition is quite broad, and states a mutual responsibility for common core subject teachers and vocational teachers, to convey to students the interdisciplinary aspects of their subjects. The common goal is to give the students a comprehensive and relevant education.

1.1 Focus of the project

My research into vocational orientation of English and English for specific purposes (ESP) in upper secondary school includes two linked, complementary parts. The thesis deals with students’ and apprentices’ experiences with the English course they have been taught, and its degree of vocational orientation. The first part of my research includes a digital, anonymous survey primarily aimed at second year students on vocational education programmes. Invitations were sent to three different upper secondary schools, and two predominately vocational upper secondary schools agreed to participate. The two schools combined would give a pool of about 150 respondents. I chose to focus on second year students as they are about to finish their mandatory English course, and thus are better equipped to respond to the statements in the survey. The survey will be conducted from April to mid-May 2014, as not to conflict with examination preparations.

The second part of the research consists of interviews with two apprentices from different occupations. These interviews were conducted in person. The interviews deal with the apprentices’ experiences with the English they were taught in school, and to what extent the mandatory course prepared them for work life. Interviewing two apprentices, provided more in-depth data, and thus complemented the second year student survey. These interviews were conducted in October 2014. During this period, there are seldom examinations and second year apprentices might have gathered some experience from work life.

1.2 Aim of study

In this master’s thesis, I will try to ascertain the extent to which the mandatory English course prepares the students and apprentices for life outside the schoolyard. The aim will be to try to find out whether vocational orientation of the mandatory English common core subject is
necessary to prepare students for work life, and whether apprentices experience a need for vocationally oriented English skills in their occupations.

2 Background

2.1 Small-scale study with teachers

As part of my method and project module of the master’s programme I conducted a small-scale study among vocational upper secondary English teachers and to what degree to find out how they vocationally oriented their English lessons. Seven teachers responded to the survey, and the findings indicated that the teachers mostly found vocational English worthwhile, albeit being challenging at times. The teachers used varied teaching methods and materials, following the textbooks closely, to using the Internet and interactive resources and the schools’ workshops. To what degree the teachers vocationally oriented their lessons depended on the students, the level and motivation of the students, education programme and access to resources. The teachers’ interests and knowledge also influenced the vocational orientation of the lessons. An interesting find was that the teachers did not seem to consider whether the materials used in vocationally oriented lessons worked as intended (Befring, 2013).

In the second part of the teacher study, the teachers reflected on how they thought their students received the vocationally oriented English lessons. The teachers responded that they thought their students performed better when working with vocationally oriented topics relevant to their future occupations. Another finding was that the teachers claimed the students saw the use of the knowledge they gathered from vocationally oriented English lessons. To what degree students with learning difficulties found vocationally oriented lessons easier to pass was, in my study, not conclusively answered (Befring, 2013).

2.2 Previous research and theoretical background

2.2.1 English for Specific Purposes

English for specific purposes (ESP) is a term used to describe the English language specific to academic fields of study or specific to occupational areas. Common for ESP is that the curriculum is designed for the specific needs that the students have, whether it is language needed to complete academic degrees or language needed to succeed in an occupation. There are many ways to define ESP and we will look at a few of them as referred by Tony Dudley-
Evans and Maggie Jo St John (1998) in their work *Developments in English for Specific Purposes* (p. 2-5) and by Ann M. Johns and Tony Dudley-Evans (1991) in their article *English for Specific Purposes: International in Scope, Specific in Purpose* (p. 297-298). Firstly, as ESP defined by Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters, ESP is an approach that does not relate to a particular sort of language, teaching method or material. According to Hutchinson and Waters need is decided by the reasons why the learner is learning English, which differ with the context (Hutchinson and Waters as quoted in Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p. 2-3). Secondly, Peter Strevens defines ESP through four absolute characteristics; (I) ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner, (II) related to content specific to occupations and disciplines, (III) language activities focus on syntax, lexis, semantics and discourse and (IV) ESP constitute a contrast to General English (Strevens as quoted in Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991, p. 297-298, and Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p. 4-5). Lastly, Pauline Robinson’s definition of ESP includes two key criteria together with specific characteristics found in ESP. According to her ESP (I) is goal-directed for the most part and (II) is taught in courses based on a needs analyses. Further, Robinson argues that ESP characteristics are that courses are limited to a specific time-period, and taught to a homogeneous group of adults in work or academia (Robinson as quoted in Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p. 2-5). Dudley-Evans and St John find both strengths and weaknesses with these definitions. They conclude that Streven’s definition is more comprehensive but can cause confusion, and that Robinson's statement on homogeneous learner groups can be equally confusing. Dudley-Evans and St John argue that an ESP definition should reflect that ESP teaching, linked to specific occupations or disciplines, uses different teaching methods compared to that of General Purpose English teaching (Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991, p. 297-298, Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p. 2-5, Kim, 2008, p. 4-5).

Diane (2009) also comments that ESP is English as taught to cater for the learners’ specific needs, and that the teaching methods are relevant for the specific occupation or academic field of study’s characteristics. However, this requires that the teacher or language instructors are comfortable with entering into a field that they might not have specific knowledge of, and that they are willing to reflect on whether the instructions given serves the learners’ specific needs (p. 1-3).

In classifying ESP, Dudley-Evans and St John present two tree diagrams in relation to ESP classification. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) is the term predominately used in the
United Kingdom, whereas the USA uses English for Vocational Purposes (EVP) for the same phenomenon (Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991, p. 306). The model is a tree diagram, described by Robinson and shows when ESP is taught (Robinson as quoted in Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p. 6).

**Figure 1, 1998**

In this diagram, we see that ESP is divided into EOP and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EAP commonly refers to English as needed within specific fields of academic study, whereas EOP is the English needed as a job-related language skill (Kim, 2008, p. 2). Both EAP and EOP in general seem to be designed to cater for adult learners who are studying either for academic degrees or for university level occupational studies such as engineering, medicine and nursing.

The mandatory English course taught in Norwegian upper secondary education programmes predominately covers General English. The course and the curriculum qualify students both in vocational and academic programmes. However, the students in vocational programmes cover a certain amount of EOP prior to the work life experience stage of their careers, whereas the academic programmes focus on EAP incorporated in the common English course, as shown in Figure 1 above.
The second model Dudley-Evans and St John present is also a tree diagram, which shows the sub-divisions within ESP (Dudley-Evans, St John, 1998, p. 6).

**Figure 2, 1998**

In this diagram, we see that EOP is further divided into English for Occupational Purposes (EPP) and EVP. EPP relates to English needed in specific occupations that require further education at university level. EVP is a term better suited for upper secondary school vocational programmes, as the students learn “Pre-Vocational English” while at school. At this stage, the students have not completed their studies and do not hold formal competence in a trade or occupation. “Vocational English” seems thus to be related to English as practiced once the students have completed their education, or as included in courses taken to complement student EOP skills.

So far we see that most of the research into ESP seems to focus on adult learners in homogenous groups at further education level. The research is primarily done in academia at
university level or into occupations that require university education. There is little research done in upper secondary vocational education. However, two surveys into vocational students and their experiences with vocational English have been done in Taiwan and Singapore.

2.2.2 Taiwanese study

Tzu-Ling Hua and Sue Beverton (2013) conducted a survey in Taiwan into how students perceive their English course and whether they are relevant to their future careers. Taiwanese upper secondary education is, as in Norway divided into vocational education programmes that prepare the students for a wide range of occupations, and general studies or academic education programmes that prepare students for further studies at university or college. The vocational programmes in Taiwan and Norway have their own specific curricula relevant for the occupations the education programmes qualify for. Both countries provide a common English core subject that is non-specific for the different occupations, and primarily give the students general English skills. Hua and Beverton claim that the General English mandatory course is not necessarily taught and learnt for a specific purpose, and that it might not be taught with the students’ needs in mind (p. 101-102).

Hua and Beverton argue that the use of English is changing for the students once they have completed their education. Students are expected to be able to communicate in English at different levels and in different jobs, from basic production work to high-level professional jobs. It is also expected that workers will be able to develop their English skills to be able to communicate across different fields during their career. All this is part of the developing global economy, and thus create a pressure for vocational English skills to be integrated into the vocational upper secondary education (Hua and Beverton, 2013, p. 103).

In their study, Hua and Beverton found that the majority of students participating in the study state that they learn English as part of their career development. The students’ goals with learning English are to enhance their future careers, and to be able to communicate with foreigners. These vocational students learn English for practical reasons and not with academic purposes in mind. The study shows that students, especially within tourism and data processing industry, value English as a career development strategy. Furthermore, the study shows that the students responding view English skills as useful not only as part of their career, but also in their daily lives and in communication with foreigners. They see a need for English beyond passing exams (Hua and Beverton, 2013, p. 106-110).
Findings from the survey indicate that the Taiwanese vocational students, not only recognize English as useful for career advancement, but also as a Lingua Franca. Hua and Beverton found that a slight majority of students said that the English they learn in school is relevant to their future career plans, whereas those who responded negatively to this question, stated that the situations presented in the textbook are irrelevant for the English used in Taiwan. The survey also found that many Taiwanese students do not see the relevance of General English in their future careers. Students in the hospitality and tourism industry state that conversational English is more useful than General English. The students feel that the English courses taught at school do not give them enough skills for their future careers. In the survey, the students were asked to state which types of English they would prefer to learn. To this they respond that English for vocational and social purposes is preferred. They prefer to learn English that they have a practical use for. They also respond that they feel vocational English is given little priority in their education (Hua and Beverton, 2013, p. 111-118).

2.2.3 Singaporean survey

The survey, conducted in Singapore by Rachel N.F. Lee and Ann-Marie Bathmaker (2007), is primarily about how textbooks are used in teaching English to vocational upper secondary school students. Further, Lee and Bathmaker discuss the place of English language learning in Singaporean upper secondary schools. The English examinations in Singapore are used to direct the students into various educational programmes, depending on their scores. The study demonstrates that teachers think that the use of standardised textbooks is insufficient to prepare for the General English examinations. In addition, such textbooks are thought to be too difficult for the vocational students. Lee and Bathmaker also found that teachers think that vocational students are not motivated to learn English and have a poor command of the language (p. 354-356).

Lee and Bathmaker emphasise three findings from their survey. Firstly, they found that many teachers are “teaching to the test”, and that there is a need to look at how teachers can teach English for more than only getting the students through the examinations. Secondly, the survey found that there is a lack of respect for teaching as a “craft of knowledge”. Lee and Bathmaker argue that change will come about only when teachers actively participate in developing their basis of knowledge, and take ownership of innovation of teaching and learning. Lastly, they find it is time to focus on meeting the needs of the unconventional
learners who are often found among vocational students. They state that it is not enough to provide English activities that primarily control behaviour, with the added bonus of accidental learning. Policy makers and curriculum developers need to provide a curriculum that addresses the vocational students and their English learning needs (Lee and Bathmaker, 2007, p. 368-369).

2.3 White Paper no. 20 – 2013: On the Right Track – Quality and Diversity in the Public School

On 15 March 2013, the Ministry of Education presented the White Paper no. 20, which is an evaluation of the current educational system. The White Paper reviews education from elementary education to upper secondary school, as well as the apprenticeship scheme and teacher training programmes. In addition to this, the White Paper also suggests changes in the current system to accommodate a more multicultural Norway (White Paper no. 20, 2013, p. 59-60, Befring, 2013, p. 12-14).

In regards to upper secondary education, the paper present challenges with student dropouts. Firstly, as many as 1/3 of students do not complete or pass their upper secondary education programme in the five years allocated to upper secondary school. This number relates to all upper secondary students, and reasons given for the dropout are that students lack the basic skills that they should have learnt in elementary school. Secondly, for vocational students, the paper reports that about 15% do not complete their education programmes and therefore cannot receive their craft or trade certificates. This number is high, particularly in view of the increasing demand for qualified crafts- and tradespersons in Norway. Moreover, it contradicts survey finds that students find it advantageous to finish their upper secondary education. Lastly, the White Paper finds it as a challenge to keep the contents of the education programmes relevant to the future competence needs of the work life and society (White Paper no. 20, 2013, p. 104, Befring, 2013, p. 12-14).

To try to remedy the content and quality issues in the education programmes, the Ministry of Education wishes to cooperate with the industries and other partners. The White Paper suggests giving qualified crafts- and tradespersons direct access to college or university. At present, vocational students have to complete a preparatory course to qualify for college or university. However, there are “short-cuts” that provide direct access, they are called “Y-
route” programmes. These exist only within engineering, and the Ministry of Education has expressed a wish to extend this option to also include health and social care (White Paper no. 20, 2013, p. 114-115, Befring, 2013, p. 12-14).

The White Paper also looks into the common core subjects in vocational education programmes. The common core subjects should give the students skills and knowledge needed in the work life and in society in general. The English common core subject is the identical for vocational and general studies students alike, they sit the same national examination and thus receive the same qualifications. This system was introduced in 2006 with the National Curriculum Knowledge Promotion (KP06) and has faced a lot of criticism. Since then the Regulations to the Education Act have been amended to include a requirement that lessons should be as relevant as possible for the students. The English common core subject must therefore be adapted to fit the vocational education programmes. The English common core subject curriculum has been amended to reflect this change in the Regulations, and thus make sure it secures vocational relevance. The FYR-project is an extension of these changes (White Paper no. 20, 2013, p. 128).

2.4 Trøndelag R & D Institute report

Trøndelag R & D Institute, on assignment from the Ministry of Education, published in January 2014 a report on vocational orientation and relevance in vocational upper secondary school. This report is the first report of two researching vocational orientation of common core subjects in Norway. The report is illuminating the research into this subject done so far. It also gives a comparison of vocational orientation in different countries. It is an overview of knowledge into the topic (Stene et al. 2014, p. 1).

The report begins with explaining several aspects of the common core subjects found in Norwegian upper secondary education today. The common core subjects are subjects that are the same regardless of education programme. The common core subjects today are Norwegian, Mathematics, Science, English, Civics and Social Sciences and Physical Education. These subjects are common for vocational and general studies education programmes. The reason for this thinking is that vocational students also should receive a wide, common education, and the common core subject curricula are thus not linked to the specific vocational programmes. Some of the common core subjects, such as English and
Civics and Social Sciences are completed by second year students, and give them general study competence. This general study competence gives them, with additional courses to complete the remaining common core subjects, access to most higher education programmes. Students, who have achieved a certificate in their occupation, have direct access to some engineering programmes through the “Y-route”, circumventing the completion courses (Stene et al. 2014, p. 5-6).

Vocational orientation in a Norwegian context is discussed in the report. The report refers to Tove Berg, a teacher of Norwegian for vocational teachers, who states that vocational orientation is not a new phenomenon in Norwegian upper secondary education. According to Berg, the term was first used in the 1960s when Mathematics and Physics were vocationally oriented due to high percentages of failure in the subjects. The term gained new favour with the Reform 1994, where more common core subjects were included in vocational education programmes. There are two approaches to vocational orientation, that of the vocational education tradition and that of the academic education tradition. In the vocational education tradition, vocational orientation means that the vocational subjects are oriented to be as relevant and close to the actual practise of the occupation outside school. Whereas, in the academic tradition, vocational orientation means that the teaching of common core subjects is relevant for the vocational subjects and/or occupations (Stene et al. 2014, p. 8-9).

Morten Stene, Anne Sigrid Haugset and Jon Marius Vaag Iversen (2014) have looked into international research on vocational orientation with the Norwegian definition of common core subjects in mind. They have concluded that there is very little international research published in this field. Stene et al. argue that the lack of international research into common core subjects in upper secondary school might be explained by the fact that there are many different definitions of vocational orientation and different educational systems, making comparisons difficult (p. 66).

As for research into vocational orientation and common core subjects in Norway, Stene et al. refer to sparse findings in altogether eight studies into different aspects of the common core subjects. These contributions deal with school results, the pedagogical and occupational competencies among upper secondary school teachers, students and their Science textbooks and the practice-based vocational education programmes among others. This research is not
directly tied to the core subjects themselves, but to peripheral aspects tied to the subjects (Stene et al. 2014, p. 69-92).

The report also refers to master’s theses that are usually not included in research reviews because of varying quality assurance for student work. Stene et al. include these particular master’s theses because as they are highly relevant for vocational orientation. Furthermore, these theses are mostly written by vocational teachers who have found a “new world” in the common core subjects, or who have based their theses on cross-curricular projects which they believe work well with vocational students. The report refers to seven master’s theses, which look into Norwegian, Mathematics or Civics and Social Studies and different aspects of vocational orientation (Stene et al. 2014, p. 69-92). To note, there is no research into English and vocational orientation among the projects referred to above. It seems that there is very little international and practically no national research into vocational orientation of English. Stene et al.’s meagre findings, in both international and national research, support my own lack of findings when looking for research in the field of vocational orientation (Stene et al. 2014, p. 69-92, Befring, 2013, p. 30).

2.5 Master’s thesis by Torleif Sleveland

Torleif Sleveland’s master’s thesis Fellesfag, yrkesretting og relevans, FYR – yrkesretting av engelsk på programfag for Teknikk og industriell produksjon, TIP VG1 was published after the Trøndelag R & D Institute’s report. Sleveland’s thesis deals with different categories of vocational orientation and the process of language learning. He has also conducted an English textbook analysis in relation to vocational orientation (Sleveland, 2014, p. 3-4). Sleveland refers to four categories of vocational orientation in his thesis. Vocational orientation: (I) through simplifying, (II) through the common core subject’s curriculum and work methods, (III) through the vocational subject’s curriculum and work methods and (IV) through integration of common core subjects and vocational subject working with problems which are realistic and practical, or tied to the specific occupation. He argues that there is a gradual movement between the four categories, and that elements from all of them can be part of vocationally oriented lesson plan. The most common he states, would be cross-curricular projects, where the lessons take place in workshops rather than in the classroom. From the textbook perspective, he argues that with good textbooks and lesson plans, the English teacher
can vocationally orientate without cooperating with vocational teachers (Sleveland, 2014, p. 9).

In his analysis, Sleveland shows that the English textbook with vocationally oriented material provides a help for English teachers who lack a vocational background. He argues that the textbook is the basis for vocational orientation. He also states that for successful English lessons at vocational education programmes, the textbook is a useful resource for the English teacher. His arguments are that the vocationally oriented material in the textbooks is concrete and often linked to activities that students do in workshop lessons. Sleveland says:

> If vocational orientation can make the lessons more meaningful to the vocational students, and it can have significance in completion of the [further] education, one should facilitate this through the use of good textbooks and brave teachers which vocationally orientate English [for the TIP classes] (Sleveland, 2014, p. 65, my translation).

He also argues that the combination of the traditional academic English common core subject and vocational education programmes is unfortunate. However, this can be counterbalanced by utilising workshop activities in the English lessons. This, he argues, does not make the vocationally oriented English lessons inferior to the traditional academic English lessons (Sleveland, 2014, p. 61-65).

### 2.6 National Curriculum

The National Curriculum Knowledge Promotion from 2006 standardised the English core subject, with the same examinations for students in the general studies programme as the students in vocational programmes. Since then the English common core subject curriculum has been amended several times, with a last amendment implemented in August 2013. With the current English common core subject curriculum, vocational orientation and ESP have been given more focus. The curriculum has four focus areas; language learning, oral communication, written communication and culture, society and literature. It is in the two communicative focus areas that the vocational orientation is seen. The students should be able to understand and use a wide general vocabulary and a specific vocabulary tied to their own specific education programmes. They should be able to understand the content and details in
oral and written texts about common and specific topics tied to their own education programme, and they should be able to acquire specific knowledge from their own education programme through reading. The curriculum aims, which are vocationally oriented, relate to the education programmes the students are in, and not the work life after school. The curriculum aims are open as not to exclude the general studies programme, yet perhaps too open for the vocational programmes. Albeit there has been an amendment towards more vocational orientation, there is still the same examination for the general studies programme and the vocational programmes (LK06, 2013, p. 11-12).

2.7 Vocational orientation in Norway
2.7.1 The New Possibilities and the FYR-project

The New Possibilities was a project that was initiated by former Minister of Education Kristin Halvorsen in the autumn of 2009 and ran through December 2013. The project’s main aim was to ease the transition from lower secondary school to upper secondary school for low-scoring students. In the second year term the low scoring 10th grade students would participate in intensive course in the common core subjects of Norwegian and Mathematics to increase their understanding and scores. These students were followed through their first year at upper secondary school receiving extra lessons in Norwegian and Mathematics (Gjennomføring i videregående opplæring, n.d. and New Possibilities brochure, n.d.).

As an extension of this project, the FYR-project (common core subjects, vocational orientation and relevance) was created in 2011 to try to decrease the dropout rate in vocational upper secondary schools. The FYR-project has been continued by the current Minister of Education Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, and will escalate and continue through to December 2016. Initially the focus lay with the common core subjects English, Norwegian and Mathematics, in 2012 Science was included in the project. The aim of the FYR-project is to create common core subject lessons and resources, which are vocationally oriented and relevant to the different vocational education programmes the students are studying at. This idea is supported by Hua and Beverton in their argumentation that EOP has a clear relevance to the learners’ needs and thus help motivate the students making their learning more efficient and quicker (Hua and Beverton, 2013, p. 102). The hope is that the students, low-scoring or not, should find their common core subjects more relevant and thus more interesting. The
intended result of this is that more students complete their vocational education and that low-scoring students pass the common core subjects (Yrkesretting og relevans, n.d.).

2.7.2 Official Norwegian Report no. 7 – 2014: Pupils’ learning in the School for the Future

The Ludvigsen committee was created by Royal Decree on 21 June 2013. Its mandate is to look into the primary and secondary education in Norway, and evaluate its capability to provide the students with competencies needed in the future. The committee published an interim report presenting the base of knowledge on which they will build their principal report. The interim report details the Norwegian school of today, the students’ learning and learning results. They also define competence, and investigate the current subjects in the primary and secondary education, as well as the curricula and systems of evaluation both in Norway and in other countries (Ludvigsen, 2014, p. 7-130).

The committee defines the term common core subjects as some of the contents being common for both vocational and general studies students. With the implementation of access to upper secondary education for all students in with Reform 94 in 1994, the common core subjects were to be vocationally oriented to make lessons more relevant for the different educational programmes and thus more interesting. An evaluation of the Reform 94 indicated that vocational orientation did not occur as intended and this affected the students who had problems with reaching the aims in the curricula. (Ludvigsen, 2014, p. 69).

Reform 1994 was followed by the Knowledge Promotion reform (KP06) in 2006. With the implementation of the KP06, vocational orientation of common core subjects have been prioritised though projects such as New Possibilities and the FYR-project. According to the committee the intention of KP06 was to make the common core subjects more relevant not only for vocational students but also the general studies students. There has been several discussions on whether the KP06 and the common core subjects have contributed to “theorising” the vocational study programmes, and thus created an extra burden on the students who struggle with theory (Ludvigsen, 2014, p. 70).

The interim report does also mention foreign languages, including English as taught in Norway. Today English in Norwegian schools encompasses different elements such as language learning skills, proficiency and language as a tool, as well as cultural knowledge to
promote democratic participation, citizenship and cultural understanding. The current curriculum reform KP06 cements English as a tool, a subject of formation and as a working language. The aim is that students should have knowledge about how to use language in different communicative situations, including in their future work lives (Ludvigsen, 2014, p. 78-79).

As for the future competencies, the committee refers to input from various organisations and businesses in Norway. These organisations emphasise the need for language and cultural knowledge as prominent in the future. Language and cultural skills are viewed in light of the globalisation. However, the organisations differ in their views on whether the common core subjects in upper secondary education should be continued or whether they should have different curricula in the different educational programmes. They agree, though, that especially good language comprehension among other skills is important for the future (Ludvigsen, 2014, p. 126-129).

2.7.2.1 Other contributors to the Ludvigsen committees’ work

In working with the interim and principal reports, the Ludvigsen committee created a blog. In this blog, researchers, experts and others can contribute with their thoughts on the future school and the report work. Two separate blog posts focus on language skills in the future, one written by Gro Elisabeth Paulsen and one by Elin Nesje Vestli.

Paulsen claims that language skills are not outdated. She argues that good language skills and development of concepts within different subject areas will be important in the future. To be able to process large amounts of information will also be crucial. She continues to argue that language skills are primary, being able to understand others and make oneself understood are important. She continues her argumentation that English skills today are superficial and not enough for work at the international business arena. She concludes that a well-developed vocabulary, accurate use of terms and the linguistic and cognitive enrichment one gets from learning foreign languages will be very important also in the future (Paulsen, 2014).

Vestli argues that “good language skills are a necessity in a globalised world” (Vestli, 2014, my translation). She continues by saying that today’s students are growing up in a world where good language skills are an advantage. The English common core subject is taught in Norwegian schools from the first grade in primary school, and ¾ of lower secondary school
students choose to specialise in a foreign language, including specialised English (Vestli, 2014).

2.7.3 Research into foreign languages in Norway

Eva Thue Vold (2014) has looked at the foreign languages’ purpose today and towards 2030. She discusses whether foreign languages, including English, are taught as an instrumental tourist language or a language of intercultural formation. Her focus lies on foreign languages as taught in Norwegian schools. She states that the foreign languages are taught with the utility and the formation perspectives in mind. The dual purpose of the subjects is to teach the students how to communicate and contribute to higher understanding and respect for other cultures. This is also clearly stated in the current national curriculum (LK06) Vold says (p. 1-2).

Students in school today prepare for an unknown future. This is also true for language use. It is difficult to predict what languages will be needed in the future, therefore Vold argues that students need to learn how to learn a language, how to implement learning strategies and how to establish a good grounding in evolving their intercultural competence. In society today the utility perspective has a high standing, Vold claims. There have been many campaigns to inform students about the need for language skills in the future. She states that it is necessary to show students what they can use language skills for in their lives, this means that students have to follow through with language learning all the way through university and college education (Vold, 2014, p. 11). This is, however, not the case with English, as it is a mandatory common core subject in upper secondary school.

Eva Thue Vold and Gerard Doetjes (2012) have looked into foreign languages in Norwegian work life, discussing the gap between the supply of and demand for foreign languages (p. 1-2). In their research in Norway, Vold and Doetjes compared advertisements from two of the major job listing web sites, nav.no and finn.no. Nav.no is the primary website for the public sector, and finn.no caters more for the private sector. The two websites differed in their advertisements when it came to language skills. Vold and Doetjes conclude that English, is by far, the most asked for foreign language. They argue that English is needed in the petroleum-related occupations as well as engineering, the sales and service industry and IT and finance. In the public sector, within areas such as health care and education, there is little mention of English language skills in the advertisements. It seems that employers in most advertisements
ask for language skills, but it is not stated as a requirement. In the advertisements, employers are more likely to request English language skills more often than other foreign language skills (Vold and Doetjes, 2012, p. 8-12).

In their discussion, Vold and Doetjes argue that there is a need for foreign languages, including English in work life in Norway. However, this is only to a very limited degree reflected in the job listings. Further, language skills are not necessarily rewarded. They question whether employers view language skills as useful qualifications for their employees. The results indicate that there is a discrepancy between the need uncovered by the needs analyses and comments in the media by prominent business leaders, and what is asked for in job listings. Vold and Doetjes doubt that the need can be less than presumed, as documentation and research support the need, there is a focus on occupational knowledge first and foremost, and employers are hesitant to ask for language skills which are not included in occupational education programmes, which would entail the risk of excluding potential applicants (Vold and Doetjes, 2012, p. 12-15).

### 2.7.4 Vocational orientation in upper secondary school

Pedlex (Norwegian School Information) published the booklet “Yrkesretting i viderergående skole” in 2013 (Repstad, 2013), which is an overview of the historical and current aspects of vocational orientation in upper secondary school in Norway. Kari Repstad states that the goal of vocational orientation of the common core subjects in upper secondary school has to be “to create a totality in the education so that students can see the connection between vocational subjects and common core subjects.” (Repstad, 2013, p. 7, my translation). Further, she argues that the goal of the vocational orientation has to be (I) that the knowledge the students acquire becomes more meaningful because it is tied to their chosen occupations, (II) that it contributes to the students’ motivation, (III) that more students complete their vocational education, and (IV) that students realise the connections between the vocational subjects and the common core subjects and see what the use of the common core subjects in their work lives (Repstad, 2013, p. 7).

The Regulations to the Education Act, paragraph 1-3 states that “the education should be adapted to the different education programmes” (Regulations to the Education Act, 7. July 2010 amendment, my translation). Repstad underlines that this amendment emphasises that
there is supposed to be a connection between the lessons in the vocational subjects and the common core subjects. Furthermore, she argues that the amendment does not specify how the adaptation between the common core subjects and the vocational subjects should be done, nor does it specify the extent of the adaptation. The amendment clearly indicates that teachers should think of relevance and connections to the vocational education programmes and work life (Repstad, 2013, p. 8).

Repstad further demonstrates that vocational teachers do not necessarily have specific knowledge of common core subjects within their own education programme. Most common core subject teachers have an academic background, having completed their education at university level. Therefore, the common core subject teachers might be unprepared for the demand of vocationally orienting their subjects, something that may create big challenges (Repstad, 2013, p. 28-27). The differences in the teachers’ education, backgrounds and work methods might be an explanation for the distinction between common core subject teachers and vocational teachers found in some schools. Repstad argues that this distinction might create mutual scepticism and hamper cooperation between the two categories of teachers. Lack of understanding of each other’s subjects and work methods even transfer to students through negative attitudes and statements. This is counter-productive, especially for students who to begin with are not motivated to work with common core subjects and struggle to see the relevance. As Repstad states, motivation is crucial in the students' completion of their education (Repstad, 2013, p. 10 and 27).

Repstad continues her arguments saying that it is the common core subject teacher’s responsibility to make sure the students see the connection between their occupation and the common core subjects. However, if vocational orientation is to be successful, the concept of vocational orientation and relevance should be made clear throughout all school levels. This is the school management’s task to make sure that the expectation of vocational orientation is clearly expressed and that there is support in place for the teachers to cooperate. Repstad lists several possibilities as to how the school management could accommodate for vocational orientation. The management should prioritise vocational orientation for a long period of time to make sure vocational orientation and cooperation is established as a common work method. Further, the management should encourage the teachers to acquire knowledge of each others’ subjects, curricula and textbooks to find commonalities and areas of cooperation. Continuing, the management should make sure that the teachers show each other results from tasks,
projects or cross-curricular activities, to learn from, motivate and inspire each other. Last but not least, the management should make sure that ample time is allocated (in the timetable) for discussions and cooperation on a more permanent basis and that common core subject teachers teach at the same education programmes for several consecutive years, to increase the teachers’ knowledge of the specific occupations and to establish cooperation (Repstad, 2013, p. 27-28).

3 Method

For my project, I have chosen to use a mixed method. The data were collected in a quantitative survey, and complemented with two qualitative interviews, an approach which is of course genuinely mixed.

3.1 Mixed method

The mixed method approach has developed since the 1950s and is sometimes referred to as the third research paradigm. The other two paradigms are the qualitative and quantitative research methods (Burke Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007, p. 113-114). The mixed method has become increasingly popular and accepted within, among others, the fields of social studies and education. There seems to be a disagreement about where in the research process the method mixing should come about. R. Burke Johnson and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie (2004) defines mixed method research as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17).

Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie lists both strengths and weaknesses with the mixed method. The strengths of the method are that words and illustrations may be used to give meaning to numbers and the numbers can, in their turn, give accuracy to the written word. The method includes the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods. It gives the researcher the opportunity to test theories and gives wider and more complete answers to questions asked, since the method does not restrict itself to the specificities of one single method. The conclusion of research conducted with a mixed method is based on stronger evidence, because the findings from the quantitative method can, in some instances, be confirmed or be found to be overlapping with findings from the quantitative method. One can also discover aspects that
might remain undiscovered with only one method. Further, with a mixed method it may be easier to generalise results (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 21). Dewan M. Hossain (2012) agrees with Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie and states that mixed method research should attempt to combine the advantages of qualitative and quantitative research. Combining the use of the strengths of one method may exclude the weaknesses of the other. Further, Hussain emphasise the complementary aspect of a mixed method approach – the findings extracted with one method can be compared (and supported) by findings extracted by the other method (p. 138).

Mixed method research has its weaknesses, in that it can be difficult for one researcher to complete a research project, which includes both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Mixed method research can be both expensive and very time consuming, as the researcher has to learn about and use several methods as well as understanding how to mix the methods appropriately (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 21).

3.1.1 Quantitative aspect

3.1.1.1 Vocational school student questionnaire

Alison Wray and Aileen Bloomer (2012) defines a questionnaire as a document filled out by an informant, either in writing or electronically. According to Wray and Bloomer questionnaires are commonly used in research into second- or foreign language learning (and teaching) motivation. A questionnaire can reach a large pool of respondents easily. As in all research, it is important also here that the respondents understand the questions. When selecting respondents, Wray and Bloomer advise researchers to be selective and ensure as reliable and representative respondents as possible. Wray and Bloomer refer to “random” and “judgement” samples, where a “random” sample is where there exist an equal chance of getting selected throughout the population, whereas a “judgement” sample is a group of respondents chosen because they fit a certain set of criteria set up by the researcher (p. 165-166). In my study I use a “judgement” sample according to the criterion that respondents should be students at vocational upper secondary schools. It goes without saying that this selection of respondents is not representative of all vocational upper secondary students in Norway; however, my study, albeit limited, gives indications of tendencies that may be worthwhile following up.
With a self-report questionnaire, there are some limitations to consider, such as whether the formulation of questions and choices will influence the responses through assumptions or omissions of information or not (Wray and Bloomer, 2012, p. 166-167). By taking a direct approach, stating the intention of the questionnaire and providing information to avoid misunderstandings, I have attempted to limit the risk of inaccuracies in the data gathered. The respondents are teenagers, who through their education have been asked to respond to numerous surveys and assessments, and thus might be weary of such work. Using a Likert-scale or attitude scale and asking the respondents to consider given statements, one might force the respondents to choose a response that might be inconsistent with their own opinions (Wray and Bloomer, 2012, p. 168). However, the teenage respondents in my survey have, as previously stated, responded to many different types of surveys, and they are thus familiar with and might even expect being presented with pre-set evaluation choices.

The digital questionnaire prepared for the vocational school students consists of ten statements regarding the students’ experiences with vocationally oriented English lessons. The questionnaire was sent out in Norwegian, to make sure that every student understood the statements. The students considered the statements using the Likert-scale alternatives ‘totally agree’, ‘partially agree’, ‘partially disagree’, ‘totally disagree’. The alternative ‘no opinion’ was excluded in order for the students not to be tempted to choose ‘no opinion’ just to finish the questionnaire (Appendix 3).

3.1.2 Qualitative aspect
3.1.2.1 Apprentices’ interviews

An interview is, in Wray and Bloomer’s definition, quite simply when the researcher presents questions to the informant orally, and records the responses in an audio recording (or takes notes) and later transcribes and analyses the data. Interviews have to be carefully planned, and can be stressful to conduct. The interview questions have to be appropriate and well planned as the information retrieved from them will be the basis for further analysis. Having open questions there is the opportunity to follow up on what the respondents say and allow them to expand on their responses, whereas closed questions may give short answers from the respondents, and with little possibility to expand. Using open questions will most likely provide responses that are detailed and in-depth, whereas closed questions will most likely give precise and detailed information. Results gathered with closed questions may be easier to
score and compare, yet, the respondents may also feel that the questions are patronising and not give serious answers. In analysing results gathered from open questions, you may discover relevant information you did not plan to ask for. Further, using open questions and changing them during the interview might change the responses so that comparison becomes difficult (Wray and Bloomer, 2012, p. 167 and 173-174).

In order to structure the interview to ensure the same process for all respondents, one needs first to plan for the different directions the interview might take with the questions with the pre-planned questions. It is impossible to foresee all answers the respondents might give, but the more planning, the less risk of being thrown off by the respondents’ answers. Second, the sequence of questions asked provides control over the interview situation. In an interview there is always the risk that the researcher’s own personality might influence the responses. Also being face to face in an interview situation might be difficult for the respondent to be open and honest, especially if the information asked for is embarrassing or sensitive (Wray and Bloomer, 2012, p. 174). However, in the interviews included in this thesis is not an issue, as the respondents are asked questions about their experiences with the English common core subject in school, and their use of English in work life, questions are neither embarrassing nor sensitive to answer.

Another issue with interviews is that the respondents’ intuitions are not necessarily scientifically accurate, and might not disclose the actual situation. The respondents might also hold back information or not have access to the information sought for. Speaking about language can be challenging, as it often requires specific vocabulary that the respondents might not have, and thus they may resort to giving only vague or short answers. Lastly, the respondents’ intuitions have to be filtered through both the interviewer and the respondents’ expressions and interpretations. Wray and Blossom point out that when interviewer and respondents do not share the same backgrounds and experiences, this may cause problems (Wray and Bloomer, 2012, p. 176). This is not a major issue in the present investigation, since I share the background of the apprentices, having completed a vocational education programme myself.

The interviews with the apprentices were done individually and audio recorded. Two apprentices were interviewed and were informed about the procedure and the anonymity issue (Appendix 4) before the interviews were conducted. On the day of the interview the
apprentices were informed on my definitions of central terms used in the questions (terms and examples from Appendix 3). The interviews were conducted in Norwegian to minimise the risk of confusion regarding the questions. Another aspect is that the apprentices might find it more challenging to express their experiences and opinions in English. The apprentices were asked nine questions about their experiences with English in school and work life, ranging from general to specific (Appendix 5).

4 Presentation of findings

4.1 Vocational school student survey data

The digital survey from which this data is collected was sent to approximately 110 students. Not every participant answered every question, therefore there is a variation in responses to the different questions. The respondents were primarily second year students, however, one group of first year students responded as well. This will not affect the results of the survey, as most of the vocationally oriented English teaching takes place within the first year. This is because the participant schools use the Tracks textbook series by Cappelen Damm, which is organised in specific textbooks for the different programmes in the first year, and a common textbook for the second year.

I. My English teacher vocationally orientates the English lessons (ties the lessons to my occupation).
In the first survey-statement, 110 students were asked to indicate how often their English teachers vocationally orientate their English lessons, and 104 chose to respond. 15.4% of the students say that the teacher always vocationally orientate their lessons, 28.8% experience vocationally oriented lessons 3 to 4 times per month. Those students, which respond that they experience vocationally oriented lessons 1 to 2 times per month, constitute 29.8% of the respondents. A minority of the students experience very few vocationally oriented lessons, constituting 20.2%, and 8.7% say that their teachers never vocationally orientate their lessons.

II. I am more motivated and active in the English lessons when the learning activities are vocationally oriented (tied to my occupation).

To the statement about their motivation and activity in vocationally oriented English learning activities 109 of 110 students responded. The results of the survey show that 23.9% of the students are in agreement that their motivation and activity levels are better when lessons are vocationally oriented. The majority of students partially agrees to the statement, constituting 54.1% of the respondents. Of those students who disagree, 20.2% partially disagree and 6.4% totally disagree that lessons tied to their vocation are more motivating and keep them more active in English lessons.
III. I achieve better results (i.e. marks) in English when the learning activities are vocationally oriented (tied to my occupation).

To the statement about to what degree the students agree that their results in English are better due to vocationally oriented lessons or not 110 students responded. The majority agrees that their results are better when they work with vocationally oriented learning activities, 15.5% totally agree, whereas 50.9% partially agree. Of those students who disagree with the statement, 28.2% partially disagree, and 11.8% totally disagree.

IV. What I learn in the English lessons when they are vocationally oriented is useful for me in the future.

With the fourth statement 109 of 110 responded to whether they agree or disagree with that vocationally oriented English lessons being useful for them in the future. To this statement a vast majority agree, 37.6% are in total agreement with the statement, and 43.1% partially
agree. Of the students who disagree with vocationally oriented English lessons being of any use in the future, 19.3% partially disagree, whereas 4.6% totally disagree with the statement.

V. English knowledge about other cultures, literature, films and everyday issues are important for me in the future.

To the statement about whether English knowledge of general topics such as culture, literature, film and everyday issues, 109 of 110 responded. Of the 109 students, 22.9% totally agree and 34.9% partially agree that such knowledge is important to them. Of the students who disagree, 32.1% partially disagree and 15.6% totally disagree with knowledge of general topics as being important to them.

VI. Vocationally oriented English lessons are easier to work with than traditional English lessons.
In the sixth statement regarding whether students experience vocationally oriented English lessons as easier to work with than the traditional lessons or not, the majority agrees. Of the 110 students responding 20.9% totally agree, and 50% partially agree that vocationally oriented English lessons are easier to work with. A minority of 26.4% students partially disagrees, and 8.2% totally disagree with vocationally oriented English lessons being easier to work with than the more traditional English lessons.

VII. There should be more vocationally oriented English lessons.

110 students responded to whether there should be more vocationally oriented English lessons or not. A majority of the students agree that there should be more vocationally oriented English lessons, with 26.4% totally agreeing and 45.5% partially agreeing. Of the 110 students, 27.3% partially disagree and 7.3% totally disagree with there being more vocationally oriented lessons.
VIII. It is easier to complete the English common core subject when the learning activities are vocationally oriented (tied to my occupation).

To the statement that it is easier to complete the mandatory English common core subject course, when learning activities are vocationally oriented, 110 students responded. Out of these 110 20.9% totally agree and 49.1% partially agree, which is the majority of the student group asked. 29.1% of the students partially disagree and 7.3% totally disagree that completing the English course is made easier with vocational orientation.

IX. My English teacher and my vocational teachers co-operate on vocational orientation (i.e. an assignment which is evaluated in several subjects or the same topic in several subjects).

The last but one statement regarding the cooperation on vocational orientation between the students’ English teacher and their vocational teachers, 110 students responded. 10% of the students totally agree that such a cooperation occurs, whereas 37.3% partially agree with this
statement. 35.5% of the 110 respondents partially disagree that there is cooperation between the English teacher and the vocational teachers, and 24.5% totally disagree.

X. My English teacher has knowledge about/interest in my occupation, which s/he uses in her/his lessons.

In the tenth and final statement about to what degree the English teacher has knowledge about or interest in their vocation which s/he utilises in the English lessons, 18.2% of the 110 students responding totally agree. 45.5% partially agree and 30% partially disagree with the teacher having knowledge about or interest in the vocation and using it in the lessons. 14.5% totally disagree with the statement.

4.2 Apprentices’ interview data

The apprentice interview data are collected from two apprentices, from here on known as Lukas and Iris (fictitious names), answering nine questions regarding their experiences with the English common core subject in and outside vocational upper secondary school. The interviews were done individually with apprentices who were close to completing their apprenticeship. Iris and Lukas represent two different trades; electricity and electronics on the one hand and construction on the other hand and thus represent a potentially different need and use of English in their trades.

The questions in the interview deal with three different sections of the English common core subject, from the general to the specific. The first section deals with Lukas’s and Iris’s experiences with English as a common core subject in general. In relation to question of
English lessons in upper secondary school, Lukas and Iris have quite different experiences. Lukas found the English lessons boring, but found the vocational aspect of the lessons more fun. As he says, “it was a bit more geared towards my interests” (my translation). Iris, on the other hand, has enjoyed English as a subject from the start. She has had motivation for and a clear idea of the use of English through communicating with friends in the UK. More specifically when it comes to English in upper secondary school, she says it was nice, and that she had a teacher who used varied teaching methods. She also states that she found vocational orientation of English a bit more interesting compared to English lessons in primary school.

Continuing with a question about what activities they had had in their English lessons, both Lukas and Iris stated that they watched films related to their respective trades. Both also said that they worked with vocabulary through different activities such as “name the tool” and memorising technical vocabulary. In relation to the question about whether the English lessons were adapted to them as students, they had different experiences. Iris experienced that the teacher practised student participation. As Iris says, “he asked us about different things [learning activities] we could test in class” (my translation). The teacher had an overall plan for the lessons set beforehand, however, Iris experienced that the students had a say in what they should do in the lessons.

In the second section, Lukas and Iris responded to questions regarding the vocational orientation of English. They have partly answered some of these questions in the first section, so they were asked to elaborate. To the question about how the English lessons were tied to the occupations they were training for, they both repeated that it was about learning specific vocabulary in English, focusing on memorising tools. Iris also learnt about different processes and work methods in her trade. Furthermore, in relation to the question about which learning activities were tied to their future occupations, Lukas referred to a task where he was asked to find some [construction] machines and equipment that he found interesting and then give a presentation about them. Iris referred to the films she had watched about her occupation, and that they mostly learnt, watched, categorised and worked in pairs talking, about the tools and processes in their future occupation.

Being asked about to what extent they experienced cooperation between the English teacher and the vocational teacher in regards to vocational orientation, Iris responded that she could not remember that there was any cooperation between the teachers on vocational orientation.
Lukas has similar experiences, and found that the vocational orientation was limited to the specific subjects. He found that there was cooperation only when they were going on excursions.

The third and last section deals with whether English as a common core subject prepares for the work life. To the question about whether the apprentices think that the English subject from school prepares for the need or use of English in their respective occupations, they both had quite similar responses despite being in quite different trades. Lukas states that he so far has not used English at work so much. He reflects, “It could probably be better for my part” (my translation). He refers to other aspects of his trade such as forestry or gardening as having a greater need for English at work. Iris has similar experiences as Lukas, she has, so far, not used English very much at work. She says that her company provides opportunities to work abroad on projects. Her only experiences with work related English has been working with an English-speaking colleague. As she says, “It was a bit stuttering English [talking] about the things you did not know so well” (my translation). However, she realises the potential need for English when living and working abroad.

Relating to the need for General English in their occupation, they both bring up using English to communicate with colleagues. As Lukas says, “you often stop and have a talk with people who are there, to create contact” (my translation). Iris says that there are workers in other trades at her work place from Poland and Romania who use English as their language of communication. However, she refers for the most part to using English in her private life. She states, “I have appreciated the things I have learned through school” (my translation). The last question relates to the use of vocational English in their work. Again, both Iris and Lukas have similar experiences. Lukas says, “I have never used it, I think” while Iris says, “There is little of it in my workday, because I mostly work with Norwegians” (my translations). Iris also experiences that she has forgotten some of the vocational English she has learnt, but that she thinks it will be easier to refresh should she need it in the future.
5 Discussion of findings

In this section I will discuss the findings of the survey answered by the vocational upper secondary students and the apprentices’ interview data in an attempt to find out whether vocational English as taught in Norwegian upper secondary school is experienced as meaningful and useful to students and apprentices. I will also discuss whether the students and apprentices think that the English common core subject prepares them for the life outside the schoolyard. The findings from the survey and the interviews will also be discussed in light of international research, to see whether there are similarities or not.

5.1 Motivation and interest

5.1.1 Students’ motivation and interest

Motivation has a major part in the students’ completion of their education programmes, as Repstad has pointed out in her work (Repstad, 2013, p. 27). If the English lessons are tied to the students’ future occupation, this is thought to help with the students’ motivation for learning English. This is also important in the FYR-project, assuming that once English lessons seem more relevant to the students, the completion of the course will increase. My study supports this with a majority of 78% of the students stating that they either totally or partially agree that vocationally oriented English lessons helps their motivation and activity level. The remaining students who do not agree with the motivation being helped by having vocationally oriented English lessons, can perhaps be explained by the fact that about 5% of second year students either choose a new first year or second year vocational course on their continuance in upper secondary education (Digre and Haugberg, 2014, p. 105). If the students are not interested in the vocational programme they are studying at, the motivation and activity level might be accordingly. Another reason for lack of motivation can be tied students at vocational education programmes being more practical in their learning, and thus find English to be too theoretical despite the teachers’ attempt to vocationally orientate the lessons. A study done by Dale et al. (2005) shows that vocational students prefer kinaesthetic/tactile learning styles (p. 156). Whereas, English lessons traditionally primarily cover the visual and auditory learning styles. My small-scale study shows that 85.8% of the teachers partially or totally agree that their students are more motivated and active when they work with vocational English learning activities (Befring, 2013, p. 25). Many students might also be weary of English, as they have had the subject during most of their education. Further, if they
have struggled with the subject previously, this might also affect their motivation in upper secondary school, despite the English lessons being linked to their chosen vocational programme.

My survey finds that 70.9% of the students either partially or totally agree with the statement that vocationally oriented English lessons are easier to work with than the more traditional English lessons (see appendix 3 for definition of traditional lessons given respondents prior to completing the survey). Again, this might be seen in light of the interests and motivation the students have in the vocational programme they are studying at. For instance, do many of the students in the technical and industrial education programme have a pre-existing interest in mechanics, vehicles and metalwork, similarly the students at the restaurant and food processing education programme have an interest in food, nutrition and service. Thus, their pre-existing interest in some aspects of their chosen education programme will affect their motivation, and by extension be experienced as easy to work with. In contrast, 34.6% of the students responded that vocationally oriented English lessons are not easier to work with than traditional English lessons. There might be several explanations for this. Vocationally oriented English is something most students have not worked with previously, it might be very technical and specific and thus difficult to learn. There might not be learning materials for the topics produced in Norway, so the teacher has to find authentic English language learning material, which might then not be adapted to EFL students. If the students also have learning difficulties, these technical and specific topics might seem insuperable and thus render the English lessons more difficult than the traditional lessons. The traditional English lessons often follow a structure that the students are used to from elementary school. The topics, text types and activities are familiar, and the students master them better than the vocationally oriented English activities.

5.1.2 Apprentices’ motivation and interest

The apprentices Lukas and Iris had different motivation for working with English whilst at school. Lukas found English boring in general, but he also expressed that vocational English was less boring, as those lessons were geared more towards his interests. Lukas also says that with hindsight he might have worked more with his English learning and that his language skills could have been better. Iris, on the other hand, states that she has enjoyed English as a subject since she started learning the language, and that she had a clear view of what she
might need English skills for. For her part it was mostly in communication with friends that her need for English occurred. She also states that she found vocational English interesting since it supplemented the English learnt in primary school. As seen from the statements given by Iris and Lukas, they are quite different in their motivation for learning English. Results from only two respondents cannot, of course, be used to generalise. However, throughout the interview it becomes clear that Lukas chose his occupation out of interest in doing something practical, rather than out of interest in the common core subjects. Iris seems to have a more holistic view of her education, seeing that English as a common core subject and her vocational subjects both play a part in her future.

Studies done by The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training show that gender might play a part as their recent reports reveal that girls tend to do better in school than boys (Kvittingen, 2014 and Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013 and 2014). From primary school girls tend to have a slightly higher mark in written and oral English than boys. In upper secondary school girls tend to do better than boys, also in foreign languages. In vocational upper secondary school there seems to be a similar slight difference in girls having higher marks in the English common core subject. The differences in the grade point average for boys and girls are minimal, and in primary school points the difference is 0.2 points. Although, researchers do not agree on whether gender does play a role or not, there is little research in the field to conclude to anything (Kvittingen, 2014 and Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013 and 2014). In my experience motivation, results and marks to some extent go hand in hand. If students do not receive a mark that corresponds with how much work the students feel they have put in, this affects their motivation. If effort does not seem to pay off, motivation will suffer and the students will eventually stop trying. Feeling unable to master a subject also affects the motivation. This might have been the case of Lukas’s and Iris’s different motivation for learning English. This is what the FYR-project and vocational orientation of English are supposed to remedy. Gearing the lessons towards the students’ interests, making them relevant, is supposed to boost the motivation and improve the mastering of the vocational topics in English, by extension boost the motivation for English as a common core subject, and thus have more students completing the course.

5.1.3 Teachers’ motivation and interest

Findings in the survey among vocational upper secondary students show that 58.6% of the students experience that their English teacher vocationally orientate their lessons 1-4 times a
month. This indicates that the majority of English teachers adapts their lessons to the students’ vocations some of the time. This might be seen in light of the English common core subjects’ distinctiveness and the fact that the curriculum also includes language skills and cultural and literary aims. The fact that 28.9% of the students seldom or never experience vocationally oriented English lessons might be linked to the teachers’ lack of confidence in teaching often very technical or specific topics which they have not been trained for. Most English teachers in Norway have an academic background, and thus might find teaching vocational English challenging. This is in part supported by findings in my small-scale survey of the teaching of vocational English. In this study, 3 out of 7 respondents found it challenging to teach vocational English, due to the specificities of the vocational education programmes (Befring, 2013, p. 18). A minority of students responded that their lessons were always vocationally oriented. This might be because the teacher either has a similar background as the students or has an interest in the topics relevant to vocationally orientating English.

The students were also asked to consider whether they think their English teacher has knowledge about or interest in their vocation, and whether s/he uses this in the English lessons. To this statement the majority, 63.7% of the students partially or totally agree. This might be explained with the teacher’s professional pride, being prepared and adapting lessons to the students’ levels, interests and vocational education programmes. The Education Act, paragraph 1-3, states that all students should receive teaching adapted to the student’s abilities and qualifications (Education Act, 2010 amendment, 2014, §1-3). Adaptation and vocational orientation are thus mandatory tasks for English teachers. In Lee and Bathmaker’s survey of teachers in Singaporean vocational upper secondary schools, there were no specific questions about the teacher’s interest or knowledge about the students’ education programmes. However, through being asked how they teach English, we might deduce something about their interest in that they tend to focus on examinations, and teach primarily General English. The Singaporean survey also finds that the English teachers at vocational education programmes do seem to view their students as less skilled in English, than general studies students (Lee and Bathmaker, 2007, p. 354-369). This might show that whereas Norwegian teachers take an interest in what their students are studying in their vocational programme, the Singaporean teachers do not.
With the teachers’ interest in teaching vocational English, Lukas and Iris again have different experiences. Iris experienced that her teacher practiced student participation, varied the lessons to include vocabulary exercises, worked with work processes and methods and showed videos relating to the future trades in the education programme. From Iris’s statements, it seems that the teacher had an interest in and knowledge about the education programme, shown through the variation of learning activities used and that the students participated in planning the activities. Lukas’s teacher also seems to have vocationally oriented some of the learning activities, to include vocabulary exercises, show videos and make the students give presentations on vocational topics. It is difficult to assess whether Lukas’s teacher was motivated for and interested in topics from his vocational education programme. The interview rendered too little information on this to draw a conclusion. If the teacher is not interested in the topics or has limited knowledge about the vocations within the programme, it is likely that the teacher only uses learning activities that are common in General English lessons, such as vocabulary exercises and oral presentations. The teacher uses familiar activities and might not add new approaches for the vocational orientation.

5.2 Students’ results and achievements

One can argue that the results that students achieve are linked to their motivation and interest in the topics they work with in English. If the English lessons are geared towards the interests and vocational education programme the students are studying at, it shows in their results. This seems to be the case with the respondents in my survey, where a 66.4% majority either totally or partially agree that vocationally oriented learning activities better their results. This also corresponds with the findings in my small-scale teacher study, where 85.7% of the teachers either partially or totally agree that their students perform better with vocational English learning activities (Befring, 2013, p. 26). Again, those student respondents which feel their results do not better with the vocationally oriented learning activities, may have chosen the wrong education programme, may have negative experiences from English lessons earlier in their schooling or they may struggle with learning difficulties which might affect their results despite the effort they put into their learning.
5.3 Usefulness of vocationally oriented English and General English

5.3.1 Students’ experiences

One can question whether the students have the knowledge and experience to determine whether vocational English will be useful for them in their work life. Depending on the vocational education programmes the students study at, they will have work placement for periods in their training. During these work placements, they have the opportunity to experience first-hand the language skills needed to succeed in their occupation. My study indicates that a large majority of 80.7% of the students either totally or partially agree that what they have learnt during vocationally oriented English lessons will be useful in their future. This seems to be supported by the findings in the teacher survey, where 85.7% of the teachers totally or partially agree that the students view the vocational English as useful in the future (Befring, 2013, p. 27). Juxtaposed to this, a smaller majority of 57.8% of the students partially or totally agree that knowledge in English about other cultures, literature, film and everyday life will be useful in their future. Most workplaces are social arenas as well as occupational ones; there is not only “shop talk” but also general conversations about everyday experiences. The reason why the students might not fully realise the need for general knowledge in English, is perhaps that their work placements are for shorter periods of time, where they work with specific tasks, and are not integrated into the social work environment in the same manner that a full time employee might be. Another reason for the results in the survey is that the students might see the use of General English skills outside the workplace, as part of their spare time and vacation travels.

The FYR-project is among other things meant to inspire and qualify teachers to vocationally orientate the English lessons to a greater extent than before. In my work as a FYR coordinator for English, I discuss vocational orientation with teachers both locally, regionally and nationally, and a comment I often get from teachers is that vocationally orienting English lessons is nothing new, and that they have done so for many years. It seems that many English teachers at vocational programmes find it natural to link English and vocational topics together to make the students’ learning relevant. The student survey shows that 71.9% of the respondents either partially or totally agree with the statement that there should be more vocationally oriented English lessons. A minority of 34.6% of the students either partially or totally disagree with the statement. As discussed previously, this might be seen in light of the level of interest in the vocational programme and the students having chosen the wrong education programme.
5.3.2 Apprentices’ experiences

Lukas and Iris have had some experiences with English usage through their time working as apprentices in their respective trades. Contrary to current research and statements from businesses and industries in Norway, Lukas and Iris say that they so far have not had much use for English in their work life (Vold and Doetjes, 2012). Lukas refers to other aspects of his trade having a greater need for language skills than the one he is currently in, and Iris states that her company does provide opportunities to work abroad and that language skills are useful in such a situation. From their responses, it is difficult to deduce whether they experience that school has prepared them for the use of vocational English at work, as they have had little use for it so far. However, I do think that through having worked with vocational English learning activities at school, they have learnt the strategies to expand their English usage when needed. As commented upon by Iris, she thinks she will be able to dust off her vocational English skills when she needs them.

Interestingly, it seems that both Lukas and Iris have had a greater need for General English. Lukas sees that there has been a use for General English in communication with colleagues at work, to create a contact and talk with people. Iris seems to use English mostly in her private life. Early in the interview, she talks about various situations where she has needed English, such as communicating with friends in the UK and when traveling. She also says that she appreciate the language skills she developed at school. Their experience with English at work, or the lack thereof might have many explanations. Firstly, the locations of their workplaces might play a part. A company based in a smaller place might have less need for English, than a company based in a larger city. The customers that the apprentices deals with are also likely to be local if the workplace is smaller. Secondly, the number of foreign workers might be higher in a city or town, than in the countryside. Even so, also smaller places usually have a number of foreign workers, which should indicate there is a need for English at work in some instances. Thirdly, an apprentice is still learning the trade, and thus might be shielded from the most challenging communicative situations. The apprentice is also less likely to communicate with customers in securing work, as it is the administration, supervisor and managers in the company, who most likely deals with such situations.

Evidently, two apprentices’ experiences with English usage at work and in their private life, is little to base any conclusions on. My results seems to indicate that there in some instances
might be a discrepancy between what the school prepares the students for, and what they actually experience in their work life. This begs the question of whether vocational orientation of English is worthwhile. To conclude on this, a larger pool of data from apprentices would be needed to get a more representative picture of the use of vocational English at work. To confirm language usage in different trades, research should be extended to also include experienced employees, who have worked in the trades for a number of years. However, that is far beyond the scope of this thesis, and constitutes another research project.

Both the students in my survey and Iris’s and Lukas’s statements seem to be supported by the finds in Hua and Beaverton’s survey among Taiwanese students, where these students find English not only useful in a occupational setting, but also as part of their daily lives and in communication with foreigners. As stated earlier, the Taiwanese students find English useful outside school, and finds from my studies corroborate this, especially the Norwegian students’ experiences (Hua and Beaverton, 2013, p. 106-110). As opposed to the Norwegian students and apprentices, who find General English learnt at school useful in their work lives, the Taiwanese students do not seem to see the need for General English at the same level as Norwegian students and apprentices (Hua and Beaverton, 2013, p. 111-118). This might be explained by Taiwanese industry being more export-oriented than Norwegian work life and industry, excluding the tourist and hospitality industries.

5.4 Students’ and apprentices’ experiences with teachers’ cooperation

As argued before, some English teachers find it challenging to vocationally orientate English lessons. The students were asked to consider whether they experience that their English teacher and their vocational teacher cooperate on vocationally orientating lessons. This could be through assignments which are evaluated in several subjects or that they work with the same topic in several subjects, etc. To this the majority of the students, comprising 60%, partially or totally disagree that such cooperation occurs between the English and the vocational teachers. Both Iris and Lukas experienced that there seemed to be very little cooperation between the English teacher and their vocational teachers. Both found that the English teacher vocationally oriented the lessons independently of what the vocational teachers did in their lessons. Lukas remembered that cooperation occurred only when an excursion was planned. Lukas’s and Iris’s experiences seem to correspond with the findings in the student survey. The Taiwanese students in Hua and Beaverton’s study, even though not asked specifically about teacher cooperation, revealed that the English lessons taught were not
necessarily in correspondence with the students’ needs (Hua and Beverton, 2013, p. 102). This can be interpreted to mean that English lessons were taught regardless of the students’ vocational education programme. The Taiwanese teachers did not take any interest in or gave any focus to the specificities of the vocational education programme their students were studying at. This seems not to be the case with the Norwegian students’ and apprentices’ experience.

Why so many students and the apprentices have these experiences, might be due to the difference in teaching traditions of English teachers and vocational teachers. Vocational teachers traditionally have a vocational background similar to the occupation the students are studying for, and having practiced their trade or craft for many years, before they have retrained as teachers. English teachers traditionally have an academic background. The English teacher’s teaching for the most part takes place in the classroom, whereas the vocational teacher’s lessons take place in a workshop, kitchen or in some other practical arena.

Repstad argues that the differences in the teachers’ education, subjects and work methods can explain the separation that exists between the common core subject teachers and the vocational teachers in some schools. This separation might also explain the general scepticism towards each other’s teaching tradition and methods, something that has prevented cooperation between these two groups of teachers. Lack of understanding of each others subjects and work methods is easily transferred to the students through teachers’ attitudes and statements. The differences and lack of understanding between the two groups of teachers prevents cooperation may explain the students’ experiences in my study. This does not mean that such cooperation does not exist. English teachers and vocational teachers do cooperate at different levels throughout many classes and classrooms. However, successful cooperation comes down to two aspects. Firstly, an existing interest from both teachers to cooperate in order to create the best, most relevant and interesting learning activities for their students, across teaching traditions and work methods. There must exist a mutual interest in pulling in the same direction, for the benefit of the students. If such mutual interest exists, cooperation will take place, despite there being little time and place for planning. Secondly, the school’s educational management has to accommodate for vocational orientation and interdisciplinary cooperation, make sure it is on the agenda and least but not last, it has to create meeting places where the two groups of teachers have time to sit down together, learn about each
others’ subjects, cooperate and create vocationally oriented and/or interdisciplinary lesson plans (Repstad, 2013, p. 27).

6 Conclusion

Vocational orientation of English in Norwegian upper secondary school is not a new concept. Teachers have, for a very long time, vocationally oriented their lessons to adapt to their student group, and making their lessons more interesting and relevant for the vocational education programmes the students are studying at. For some teachers it is a natural part of their teaching methods. As my previous small-scale survey shows, teachers find vocational orientation challenging, but experience that some students are more motivated and achieve better results when working with vocationally oriented learning activities (Befring, 2013, p. 18 and 25-26).

As a measure to decrease dropout from vocational education programmes, the Ministry of Education initiated the FYR-project in 2011. With this project, the Government puts a focus on vocational orientation of common core subjects, as a tool to prevent drop-out. Because of the increased focus, the upper secondary schools in Norway are mandated to put vocational orientation on the agenda and to create an environment for cross-curricular and interdisciplinary cooperation. According to Repstad, there might be some obstacles that prevent such cooperation taking place, among others the fact that vocational and common core subject teachers traditionally have had two different perspectives on teaching, and that these two perspectives do not necessarily match, and that the school management does not focus on cooperation (Repstad, 2013, p. 27-28). The schools are held responsible for giving the students vocationally oriented lessons. To what degree the school takes this responsibility seriously is too early to say. This might be revealed in reports from the closure of the FYR-project in 2016.

In my survey into 110 upper secondary students’ experiences and perceptions on general and vocationally oriented English lessons, some of the finds might infer something about vocational orientation today. The second part of my study included interviews with the apprentices Iris and Lukas. The survey and the interviews in the grand scheme of things might not be representative of Norway; however, my study might give some indications that might be transferable to other vocational schools and apprenticeships in Norway.
The majority of the student respondents state that vocationally oriented English lessons largely help their motivation and efforts in the subject. Furthermore, the majority of the students also state that English lessons which are geared towards their future occupation, are easier to work with, and that they experience better results. Iris found English enjoyable and thus agrees with the majority of the students asked, whereas Lukas had mixed feelings about the subject and therefore has similar experiences to the minority of the student respondents. This affected their motivation, where Iris worked well with English; Lucas admitted that he could have worked more with his English. Through Lukas’ interview, it becomes clear that his choice of vocational education programme, was based on his interest in practical work, whereas Iris seems to have had a longer perspective on her education programme, and the subjects it was comprised of.

The teacher’s interest in and knowledge about the vocational topics the students are interested in, may also affect the students motivation and results. The teacher’s attitude towards the vocational topics is easily picked up by the students, and thus affects the classroom and the learning activities. The majority of the students asked, state that they experience that the English teacher takes an interest in and has knowledge about their vocational education programme, and uses this in their lessons. Iris’s statements about her teacher’s use of vocational orientation in English, seem to coincide with the students’ experiences, whereas Lukas’s teacher seems to have focused less on vocational English. The teacher’s motivation, interest in and knowledge about vocational topics, will affect the degree of vocational orientation the teacher includes in his/her lesson plans, and a small majority of the students report that such orientation takes place 1-4 times a month. Why some teacher’s focus less on vocational orientation might be seen in light of their academic training, where cultural and literary aspects of English are prioritised. In addition, it may be a question of lack of confidence in teaching topics they have not been trained for.

A large majority of the students finds that the vocational English learnt at school, will be useful in their future, and a smaller majority also finds that knowledge about culture, literature and film learnt in English lessons, also will be useful in their future. These finds indicate that the majority of students are well aware of the usefulness of both EVP and General English and lessons that are experienced as relevant also increase their motivation. The minority of student respondents, who responded negatively to these statements, might be seen in light of previous negative experiences with English in primary school, lack of language skills and
learning difficulties. Despite the apprentices coming from very different trades, with few commonalities, they seem to have similar experiences with English usage at work. They both have had little use of English at work so far in their career. In this case, there is a discrepancy between what the students experience as relevant for their future, being still in school and having limited work experience, and the apprentices having gained some work experience, stating that English skills have so far been less needed. The findings from the interviews with the apprentices contradict the uttered need of language skills, including English, from the businesses and industries in Norway. The location of Iris’s and Lukas’s work places in smaller towns might be one explanation, as well as the fact that they are apprentices and still learning their trades, and thus are not given the same responsibilities as a fully qualified staff, and only have limited customer contact and administrative tasks. It seems that their need for English, so far has been in the private arena, with colleagues, friends and during travels. The majority of student respondents find that there seems to be little cooperation between their English teacher and the vocational teachers. Iris’s and Lukas’s experiences from school corroborate these finds. Iris’s teacher vocationally oriented his/her own lessons, to adapt to the vocational education programme, something Lukas’s teacher also seems to have done to some extent. Lack of cooperation, may be due to the different teaching traditions English and vocational teachers come from, as well as lack of facilitation from the school management, and preferences among teachers. Perhaps the teachers need to communicate the cooperation that takes place more directly to the students, so that they are made aware of the links and common skills between the English and vocational subjects. This could be achieved through common planning; however, this is only possible if the school management puts such interdisciplinary cooperation on the agenda.

Some of the finds from my survey and interviews seems to be supported by the Taiwanese study. It is in particular the students’ views on the usefulness of English which are similar. Students both in Norway and in Taiwan have quite a clear idea of what type of English they will need in their future, and a majority of both student groups experience their lessons as relevant. Both groups of students (and apprentices) see a use of both EVP and General English, in their work- and private lives.

So does the English taught at school, through vocationally oriented lessons and General English lessons prepare the students and apprentices for work life? My data do not give a conclusive answer to this question. The students still in school seem to have a clear idea that
the English common core subject will prepare them for life outside school. Whether they think so because they have been told so by their teachers, or it is gathered from their own limited experience from work placement, is difficult to say. The apprentices’ statements seem to contradict the views the students have, as they have yet to experience the need for EVP. Their need of English so far in their careers has been General English. From the data collected in this project, one may conclude that English, either it is EVP or General English, is to some degree experienced as useful and will be so for students and apprentices in their work lives at some point in their career, even though it might not be apparent in their apprenticeship period.

Another interesting find in both the survey and the interviews, is that students and apprentices experienced very little interdisciplinary cooperation between their English teacher and their vocational teachers. This is an area that clearly needs to be focused even more on. It is greatly beneficial not only for the teachers to find common topics to work with together (or individually); it is greatly beneficial also for the students. In finding commonalities in the different subjects’ curricula, planning together and having common assignments or projects for the students will firstly make it easier for the students to complete their assignments and having those assignments evaluated in more than one subject will alleviate the students’ workload, especially those who struggle with learning difficulties. The teachers will be able to rely on each other in the evaluation process, as well as reduce the risk of giving the students similar assignments in the different subjects. With vocational and common core subject teachers cooperating it will become clear to the students that the subjects interlock with each other, and something that will perhaps motivate the students to work well with their subjects.

For this interdisciplinary cooperation to take place, there needs not only to be a willingness in the individual teachers, the wall between the two different teaching traditions the common core subject teachers and vocational teachers come from has to come down. At least there has to be a mutual respect for each other’s teaching traditions and courage to step into the unknown and learn from each other. The vocational teachers have to open the door and invite the English teacher (and other common core subject teachers) into their workshop, and the English teacher has to invite the vocational teachers into his/her classroom. Interdisciplinary cooperation does not magically appear out of thin air, the school management has put such cooperation on the agenda and facilitate it through creating room for cooperation to take place in the schedules, and demand results from the teachers. Only in this way, will interdisciplinary cooperation become a natural common work method.
Despite the fact that vocational orientation has been in place for many decades, the recent focus on the topic through the FYR-project in Norway and the language skills demanded by industries and businesses, there is very little research done into any aspect of vocational orientation. This is the case both in Norway and internationally. This master’s thesis might shed a small light into the experiences students and apprentices have with vocationally oriented English and EOP in work lives. However, there is a great need for more studies and research into this important topic.
References


Hua, T-L. and Beverton S. (2013) General or vocational English courses for Taiwanese students in vocational high schools? Students’ perceptions of their English courses and their relevance to their future career. Educational Research for Policy and Practice (12.2), 101-120.


Appendix 1

Hei!

Eg studerer til master i framandspråk i skulen - engelsk, og skal til på masterarbeidet mitt. I samband med dette ønskjer eg å utføre eit forskingsarbeid som masteroppgåva skal bygge på. Bakgrunn for val av tema for masteroppgåva kjem av det at eg underviser engelsk på yrkesfagleg skule og mitt arbeid som FYR-koordinator i fylket. Tema for masteroppgåva mi er *yrkesretting av engelskfaget*, der eg vil forsøke å finne ut i kva grad VG2 elevar opplever at engelskfaget er yrkesretta eller relevant for det yrket dei tenkjer seg ut i etter skulegangen. Eg gjennomførde ei pilotstudie innanfor yrkesretting av engelskfaget i 2013, der lærarar vart spurde om yrkesretting. Difor ønskjer eg også å undersøkje om det samsvar mellom elevane og lærarane si oppfatning av yrkesretting av engelskfaget eller ikkje. I tillegg vil eg intervju nokre lærarar om korleis dei opplever behovet for engelskkunnskapar i yrket dei utdannar seg til, og om den kunnskapen dei tileigna seg på skulen har vore relevant.


Eg kan gjerne kome på skulen for å informere om masterarbeidet, og vere tilstades for å gjennomføre undersøkinga om ønskjeleg. Elles er det berre å ta kontakt for spørsmål.

På førehand takk for hjelpa!

Med venleg helsing

Kristin Befring

tlf. 99263181
tlf. arb. 57637426
Appendix 2

Til elevar og foresette ved Mo og Jolster vgs. og Øyrane vgs.

Som lærar i engelsk på vidaregåande skule held eg på med å ta mastergrad. Studiet master i framandspråk i skulen, engelsk er eit samarbeidsstudium mellom Høgskulen i Østfold, Gøteborgs universitet og Linnéuniversitetet. Studiet er eit praktisk retta, fagdidaktisk og knytt til arbeidet i klasserommet. Etter avslutta studium kan ein m.a. arbeide som lektor i skulen.

No er eg kome til masteroppgåva mi, som er den siste delen av studiet. Inspirasjon til tema for oppgåva mi har eg henta frå arbeidet mitt som FYR-bøtar i Sogn og Fjordane. FYR er eit prosjekt som m.a. jobbar med yrkesretting av fellesfag som eit ver kemiddel for å forhindre fråfall. I denne masteroppgåva mi skal eg m.a. gjennomføre eit forskingsarbeid, og i samband med dette ønsker eg å gjennomføre ei spørjeundersøking om yrkesretting av engelskfaget. Eg vil prøve å finne ut kva VG2 elevar meiner om å jobbe med yrkesretta engelsk, i kva grad dei finn det motiverande og nyttig for framtida. For å kunne finne ut av dette treng eg hjelp frå VG2 elevar. Spørjeundersøkinga vil vere digital, der elevane tek stilling til påstandar (einige-ueinig) og kryssar av for alternativ som dei meiner passar for si oppleving av engelskfaget. Det vil ikkje bli spurt om kjønn, alder, utdanningsprogram og andre moglege personidentifiserande ting. Spørjeundersøkinga er heilt anonym og er planlagt gjennomført i april 2014.

Ønsker de meir informasjon eller har spørsmål, kan de ta kontakt med meg på 57 63 74 26 (arbeid).

Med venleg helsing

Kristin Befring, engelsklærar og FYR-bøtar i engelsk.

Øyrane vgs.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Samtykke til deltaking i spørjeundersøking. Kryss av det som passar:

Namn: _______________________________________

Kan delta i spørjeundersøkinga ■

Kan IKKJE delta i spørjeundersøkinga ■

Venlegast returner slippen innan 30.mars 2014.
Appendix 3

Spørjeundersøking

Introduksjon

Du vil i denne spørjeundersøkinga få nokre påstandar om yrkesretting av engelskfaget å ta stilling til. Yrkesretting er at engelsktimane er knytt til yrket du utdannar deg til, i tillegg til tradisjonell engelskundervisning.

Dømer på yrkesretting i engelskfaget kan vere:

- at du lærer faguttrykk på engelsk (t.d. verktøy, utstyr, prosessar, arbeidsmåtar)
- at du les/lyttar til tekstar som handlar om yrket ditt
- at du skriv tekstar med tema frå yrket ditt
- at du snakkar om tema som er knytt til yrket ditt (t.d. i klassen, på verkstad/i praksis, på språklab, som framføring/prøve)
- at du ser og jobbar med videoar med tema frå yrket ditt

Tradisjonell undervisning er at engelsktimane fortset der 10.klasse slapp. T.d. tema kvardagslege tema frå engelskspråklege land, historie, urfolk, litteratur som novelle og dikt, spelefilm.

Læringsaktivitetar er arbeidsmåtane i engelskfaget. T.d. lese, skrive, lytte, sjå videoar, snakke, øve faguttrykk, ha prøve, innlevering, framføring, oppgåver på Internett, lekser.

Påstandar

1) Engelsklæraren min yrkesrettar engelsktimane (knyter timane til yrket mitt).
   o Alltid
   o 3-4 gongar i månaden
   o 1-2 gongar i månaden
   o Nokre gonger i terminen
   o Aldri
   o Veit ikkje

2) Eg er meir motivert og aktiv i engelsktimane når læringsaktivitetane er yrkesreta (knytt til yrket mitt).

   Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

3) Eg får betre resultat i engelsk når læringsaktivitetane er yrkesreta (knytt til yrket mitt).

   Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

4) Det eg lærer når engelsktimane er yrkesreta er nyttig for meg i framtida.

   Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig
5) Engelskkunnskapar om andre kulturar, skjønnlitteratur, spelefilm og daglegdagse tema er viktig for meg i framtida.

Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

6) Yrkesretta engelskundervisning er enklare å jobbe med enn tradisjonell engelskundervisning.

Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

7) Det burde vore fleire yrkesretta engelsktimar.

Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

8) Det er lettare å fullføre det obligatoriske engelskfaget når læringsaktivitetane er yrkesretta (knytt til yrket mitt).

Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

9) Engelsklæraren min og programfaglærarane mine samarbeider om yrkesretting (t.d. ei oppgåve som blir vurdert i fleire fag, same tema i fleire fag).

Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

10) Engelsklæraren min har kunnskapar om/interesse for yrket mitt som han/ho brukar i undervisninga si.

Heilt einig    litt einig    litt ueinig    heilt ueinig

Takk for hjelpa!
Appendix 4

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Eva L. Bjørk
Avdeling for økonomi, språk og samfunnsfag Høgskolen i Østfold
Remmen
1757 HALDEN

Vår dato: 28.08.2014
Vår ref: 39505 / 3 / ET
Deres dato: 
Deres ref: 

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 20.08.2014. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

39505
Yrkessetting av engelskfiget
Behandlingsansvarlig: Høgskolen i Østfold, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig: Eva L. Bjørk
Student: Kristin Befring

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldedeliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering refererer til prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.


Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaker Segadal
Lis Tenold

Kontaktperson: Lis Tenold tlf: 55 58 33 77
 Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
 Kopi: Kristin Befring kristin.befring@sfj.no
Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Informasjonskrav og samtykkeerklæring er noe mangelfullt utformet. Vi ber derfor om at følgende endres/tilføyses:
- informasjon om hvilken høyskole prosjektleder er student ved
- navn og kontaktnummer til veileder førsteamanuensis Eva L. Bjørk

Revidert informasjonskrav skal sendes til personvernombudet@nsd.uib.no før utvalget kontaltes.


Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Høyskolen i Østfold sine interne rutiner for datasekkerhet. Dersom personopplysninger skal lagres på privat pc/mobile enheter, bør opplysningene krypteres tilstrekkelig.

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkelen)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbetssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette lydopptak
Appendix 5

Informasjon om intervju om engelsk og yrkesretting

Eg heiter Kristin Befring og held på med å skrive masteroppgåve om yrkesretting av engelsk som del av min master i framandspråk i skulen. Til dagleg jobbar eg som engelsk- og samfunnsfagslærar på Mo og Øyrane vidaregåande skule. I samband med oppgåva mi skal eg utføre eit forskingsarbeid. Yrkesretting av fellesfag og engelsk spesielt finnast det lite forsking på både her i Noreg og i verda generelt. Difor er det eit viktig tema å få informasjon om slik at fleire kan verte meir merksam på yrkesretting av engelsk. Det er her du kjem inn. Som lærling har du fullført det obligatoriske engelskfaget på skulen og gjort deg nokre erfaringar med bruk av engelsk i yrket ditt. Difor ønskjer eg å intervjue deg om erfaringane dine frå skule og arbeidsliv.


Kva skal eg gjere med informasjonen? Informasjonen du gir vil samanliknast med resultatet frå VG2-elevane for å sjå om det er likskapar eller ulikskapar. Eg vil også nytte informasjonen til å diskutere om engelskfaget og yrkesretting førebur ein til yrkeslivet sin engelskbruk eller ikkje.

Korleis vert intervjuet organisert? Vi vert einige om ein dato og eit tidspunkt i løpet av oktober som passar, anten det vert i Førde eller ein anna stad. Eg kjem gjerne dit du er. Sjølve intervjuet tek om lag 1 time, alt etter kor mykje du har å fortelje. Om du har spørsmål må du gjerne ta kontakt med meg anten på kristin.befring@sfj.no eller 99263181 (får du ikkje svar på telefonen på første forsøk, kan det vere eg har undervisning, då ringjer eg deg oppatt når timen er slutt).

Med venleg helsing
Kristin Befring
INTERVJUSPØRSMÅL

a) Om fellesfaget engelsk
   I. Korleis var engelsktimane på vidaregåande skule?
   II. Kva læringsaktivitetar hadde du i engelsktimane?
   III. I kva grad var engelsktimane tilpassa deg som elev? (interesser, læringsmåtar, arbeidsmåtar)

b) Om yrkesretting av engelskfaget
   I. Korleis var engelsktimane dine knytt til yrket du utdanna deg til?
   II. Kva læringsaktivitetar hadde du i engelsktimane som var knytt til yrket du utdanna deg til?
   III. I kva grad samarbeidde engelsklærar og programfaglærar om yrkesretting?

c) Om i kva grad fellesfaget førebur til yrkeslivet
   I. Korleis syns du engelskfaget på skulen førebudde deg til bruken av/behovet for engelsk i yrket ditt?
   II. Kva nytte har du av generell engelsk i yrket ditt?
   III. Kva nytte har du av yrkesretta engelsk i yrket ditt?
Appendix 7

INTERVJU LÆRLING 1 transkripsjon

Om fellesfaget engelsk

I. Korleis var engelsktimane på vidaregåande skule?

Nei det var no litt kjedeleg som vanleg men. Nei det var no kjekt å ha noko anna enn den grunnskule-engelsken gjerne. Det var litt meir retta mot interessene eg hadde atte, kan du sei.

II. Kva læringsaktivitetar hadde du i engelsktimane?

Vi såg no eit par filmar på engelsk om faget som han sa. Ja me fekk nokre ark der me skulle namngje verktøy og slikt, ja på engelsk. Ikkje noko stort meir enn det eigentleg.

III. I kva grad var engelsktimane tilpassa deg som elev? (interesser, læringsmåtar, arbeidsmåtar)

Nei det var no greitt, me hadde nokre prosjekt der me skulle finna nokre maskiner som me likte godt å halda foredrag om dei. Det lærte no eg mykje av for min del. Men eller så vanlege timar tykkjer eg er heise trasig å sitta gjennom.

Om yrkesretting av engelskfaget

I. Korleis var engelsktimane dine knytt til yrket du utdanna deg til?

Eh… knytt opp til, nei det er no det at du lærer faguttrykk på eit anna språk. Men det er no ikkje alltid det blir like mykje brukt. Det er no helst i litt andre bransjar det er mykje brukt på grunn av utlendingane som kjem der. Det er ikkje så dominert yrke anleggsbransjen, med engelsktalande då.

II. Kva læringsaktivitetar hadde du i engelsktimane som var knytt til yrket du utdanna deg til?

Det var no då vi skulle finne oss maskinar og utstyr som vi tykte var interessante og fortelja om det, fordupe oss litt ned i utstyret som han sa.

III. I kva grad samarbeidde engelsklærar og programfaglærar om yrkesretting?

Det var heise opp og ned etter kva lærar du hadde eigentleg. Men eh.. timane var ganske individuelle , det var no visst vi skulle på turar eller slikt at me tok ut fri, men…ja det var no ei viss samkøyring der for så vidt. Men det var ikkje noko spesielt eigentleg.

Om i kva grad fellesfaget førebur til yrkeslivet

I. Korleis syns du engelskfaget på skulen førebudde deg til bruken av/behovet for engelsk i yrket ditt?


II. Kva nytte har du av generell engelsk i yrket ditt?
Ja du stoppar no ofte å tek ein prat med folk som er der for å skape kontakt. Men… nei det er ikkje noko særlig anna heller som han sa. Det har vore lite av det eigentleg. Men det er no lettast slik for meg då. Eg er ikkje så alvorleg god i engelsk.

III. Kva nytte har du av yrkesretta engelsk i yrket ditt?

Eh.. nei… eh… i og med at eg ikkje har brukt det noko særlig i yrket mitt så har eg ikkje hatt særlig bruk for det. Eigentleg. Eg har no faktisk aldri brukt det, trur eg… hm.

INTERVJU LÆRLING 2 transkripsjon

Om fellesfaget engelsk

I. Korleis var engelsktimane på vidaregåande skule?

Ehm.. det var .. eg har alltid likt engelsk ganske godt frå tidleg av ehm.. vi var ein tur i England når eg var lita og ikkje skjønte noko så da merka eg det ah eg må lære det språket her har faren min fortalte det så. Og så har eg hatt ei venninne som oppgjennom åra som var frå Wales som… og vi har hatt litt kontakt med ein familie som er i Buckingham ehm.. og da har det liksom vært litt kjekt med engleksfaget da. Og altså på videregående så var det veldig greitt, det var liksom, vi hadde ein flink lærar og han var dyktig å var flink å bytta litt, røkkerte på kva slags metodar vi brukte for å lære og forskjellige ting vi skulle gjere å. Og det det veldig greitt med yrkesrettinga det gjør det litt meir interessant kanskje gjerne forran påbygginga av engelskfaget i grunnskulen eh…ja. Så eg syns engelsk alltid har vært gøy.

II. Kva læringsaktivitetar hadde du i engelsktimane?

Ja .. vi så jo litt på film, vi har hatt høgtlesning, vi har hatt ja læring av ord og eh.. fraser, mye yrkesretta også slik at.. vi har og .. kva det heiter igjen då… ehm.. litt gloser og ja.. Ehm.. så har vi hatt boka å se etter og forskjellige oppgaver og oppgaveløysning og ja.

III. I kva grad var engelsktimane tilpassa deg som elev? (interesser, læringsmåtar, arbeidsmåtar)

Ja altså.. læreren vi hadde var…var ganske grei på det at vi ville…av og til så ville han at vi skulle at vi…eller spurte om forskjellige ting vi kunne prøve ut i timane og sånne ting da. Så det synst eg var ganske greitt da. Ehm… plan for læring det var jo litt fastsatt allereie da men likevel så hadde vi vel litt…litt å seie kva som skulle gjøres …og nei det var …det var veldig greitt syns eg når eg tenker tilbake.

Om yrkesretting av engelskfaget

I. Korleis var engelsktimane dine knytt til yrket du utdanna deg til?

Ja..nei det var jo mye … eg husker jo veldig godt vi satt og lærte verktoy å litt sånn forskjellig om prosessane i faget…ehm.. framgangsmåter … ehm så var det jo og filmer som var om eit oppdrag eller noko som skulle være gjort som.. som det yrket gjorde då ehm… så eg syns det var … det var godt…det eg husker godt var liksom at vi satt å pugga på verktoy og sånne ting da.

II. Kva læringsaktivitetar hadde du i engelsktimane som var knytt til yrket du utdanna deg til?
Ehm…nei vi så desse filmane som var om yrket. Så var det da å lære, å se, å skille ut og være to og to i lag å snakke om verkøyet og lærepross..eller prosessar i faget og uff..ja eh eg kommer på noe.

III. I kva grad samarbeidde engelsklærar og programfaglærar om yrkesretting?

Ehm…det kan eg ikkje huske eg har sett da, ehm.. eller visst om at de har gjort ..men det var jo litt ehm.. ja vi hadde jo boka som gikk inn på ein del ting da. Eg veit ikkje om han har hatt kontakt med andre lærere.

Om i kva grad fellesfaget førebur til yrkeslivet

I. Korleis syns du engelskfaget på skulen førebudde deg til bruken av/behovet for engelsk i yrket ditt?

Ja… no har eg ikkje jobba så mye med engelske…ehm fagmenn i mitt yrke da. Det er lite..ehm vi har jo i det firmaet eg jobbar i muligheten til å reise utenlands å jobbe .. ehm med forskjellige prosjekter. Så det er jo absolutt muligheter , og så var det jo en vi jobba med som var engelsk da men han var vel ulært da. Men det ble da litt sånn stotrende engelsk på de tinga du ikkje kunne så godt .. men altså eg ser jo verdien av det viss eg skulle komme i den situasjonen at en nå gjerne flytter utenlands eller har vikarfolk, det er gjerne litt sjeldnare i min bransje…ehm men eh…det … ja altså det er greitt å vite om viss en skulle tenke seg å flytte utenlands eller gjøre noe anna.

II. Kva nytte har du av generell engelsk i yrket ditt?

Eh…nei vi har jo ein god del ehm… sveiserar og stålarbeidere som er engelsktalande da …ikkje at de er.. de er gjerne frå Polen og Romania, men prater engelsk stort sett til oss andre da… så altså vi…eg bruker jo det ganske mye … eller eg bruker det litt i vertfall i løpet av kverdagen og så har eg det siste året vært i Skottland to gangar da ved to forskjellige anledninger det ene var en ferie det andre et bryllup så det … det satte eg veldig pris på at eg eg har fått lære gjennom skulen da.

III. Kva nytte har du av yrkesretta engelsk i yrket ditt?

Jo… altså det… det blir jo litt sånn i glømmeboka for eg bruker ikkje det til daglig. Det blir jo heller det at det blir lettere å friske opp viss en skulle flytte eller jobbe utenlands …det blir lite i min kverdag … for eg jobbar stort sett med norske.