

# Reading Strategies in Upper Secondary School

*How and to what extent are reading  
strategies taught and used in Norwegian  
upper secondary schools?*

Emma Karoline Norman Johansen



Mastergradsavhandling i engelsk fagdidaktik, ved  
Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleutvikling ved det  
Utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Vår 2013



**Reading strategies in upper secondary school – How and to what extent are reading strategies taught and used in Norwegian upper secondary schools?**

© Emma Karoline Norman Johansen

2013

Reading strategies in upper secondary school. How and to what extent are reading strategies taught and used in Norwegian upper secondary schools?

Emma Karoline Norman Johansen

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

IV

# Sammendrag

Denne kvalitative oppgaven undersøker bruken av lesestrategier i det obligatoriske engelskfaget på norske videregående skoler. Gjennom fenomenologisk forskningsdesign undersøker den til hvilken grad lesestrategier blir undervist av lærere og brukt av elever.

Bruken av lesestrategier er viktig for elevers forståelse av tekster, og for at elevene skal kunne få kunnskap fra tekstene. Tidligere forskning har vist at det er lite fokus på, og kunnskap om lesestrategier blant lærere og elever. Denne oppgaven foreslår at dette ikke lenger er tilfelle.

Den teoretiske delen inkluderer teorier og tidligere forskning om lesestrategier, som vil være nyttig for elevene å ha kunnskap om, og å kunne bruke.

Dataene består av opptak av semistrukturerte intervjuer med elever og skoleledere, og skriftlige observasjoner fra forsker og lærere fra timer hvor lesing var hovedfokus. I tillegg har tidligere eksamensoppgaver og to tekster med oppgaver fra tre ulike lærebøker blitt analysert for å se hvordan lesestrategier er presentert og brukt der. Selv om dataene har blitt innhentet fra bare to skoler, impliserer trianguleringen at videre konklusjoner kan bli trukket.

Funnene viser at det er stort fokus på, og kunnskap om lesestrategier, både blant lærere og elever. Dette gjelder spesielt elever ved yrkesfaglige linjer. Skolelederne i denne oppgaven deltar ikke i undervisningsplanlegging, men sier uansett at elevene må lese mer for å bli bedre lesere. Denne masteroppgaven har oppdaget en ny trend, hvor lesestrategier er mer og mer viktig i engelskundervisningen i den videregående skole. Flere temaer for videre forskning blir også foreslått.

# Abstract

This qualitative study examines the use of reading strategies on the compulsory English course in Norwegian upper secondary schools. Through phenomenological research design it explores the extent to which reading strategies are taught by teachers and employed by pupils.

The use of reading strategies is essential for the understanding of texts and for acquiring knowledge from texts, but previous research has shown that there is little focus on and knowledge of reading strategies among teachers and pupils. This thesis suggests that this is no longer the case.

The theoretical background includes theories and previous research about reading and reading strategies, which will be beneficial for the pupils to know and to use.

The data consists of recordings from semi-structured interviews with pupils and school leaders, and written observations from the researcher and teachers from lessons where reading was the main focus. In addition, previous end-of-year examinations and two texts and tasks to the texts from three different textbooks have been analyzed to see how reading strategies are presented and used there. While the data have been gathered from only two schools, its triangulation implies that wider conclusions can be drawn.

The findings show that there is a lot of focus on, and knowledge of reading strategies, both among teachers and pupils, especially among the vocational studies pupils. The school leaders in this thesis do not participate in lesson planning, but nevertheless say that pupils must read more in order to become better readers. This master's thesis has discovered a new trend, where reading strategies are more and more important in teaching in upper secondary school. Several topics for further research are also suggested.

# Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Philip Grey, PhD, for all the support and advice throughout the research process. I am truly grateful for all the feedback you have given me on my work.

I would also like to thank Lisbeth M. Brevik for letting me use her data for my thesis. You saved me days and days of work, and I am therefore very grateful. I would also like to thank you for giving me invaluable support and advice in the beginning of the research process.

I would like to give a special thanks to all of you who have had to listen to me talk about my thesis for a very long time. You have all been very understanding and patient, and this is something I will never forget.

The past year has been very difficult for me, with many unforeseen obstacles. I would therefore like to give my wonderful friends and family big thanks for being there whenever I need you. You have supported me when I thought my whole world would collapse. Thanks for always believing in me, and for always standing by my side no matter what happens. You have helped me more than any of you can possibly understand. All of you hold a special place in my heart.

Oslo, May 2013

Karoline Norman Johansen





# Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Previous research about reading strategies .....	1
1.2	My research statement .....	2
1.3	An outline of the thesis .....	4
1.4	Definitions .....	5
2	Reading.....	7
2.1	What is reading? .....	7
2.2	Top-down and bottom-up reading models.....	9
2.3	The working memory .....	11
2.4	Extensive and intensive reading .....	11
2.5	The purpose of reading .....	14
2.6	Different types of texts .....	15
2.7	Difference between reading in L1 and L2 .....	17
2.8	Motivation and reading.....	18
2.8.1	Motivation and teaching.....	18
2.8.2	Integrative and instrumental motivation .....	19
2.8.3	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.....	20
2.8.4	What to do with lack of motivation.....	20
2.9	Important skills when reading .....	22
2.10	Summary of the chapter .....	24
3	Reading strategies .....	25
3.1	What are reading strategies?.....	25
3.2	Different strategies .....	26
3.3	Reading aloud .....	27
3.4	Cognitive reading strategies .....	29
3.4.1	Memorization strategies .....	30
3.4.2	Elaboration strategies .....	31
3.4.3	Organization strategies .....	31
3.4.4	Control strategies.....	32
3.5	Pre-, during-, and post-reading activities.....	33
3.5.1	Pre-reading: BISON .....	34

3.5.2	Pre-/post-reading: KWL-table.....	36
3.6	Socio-cultural aspects of reading.....	37
3.7	Why teach reading strategies? .....	38
3.8	Reading in LK 06 .....	40
3.9	Summary of the chapter.....	41
4	Methodology .....	42
4.1	Introduction .....	42
4.1.1	Selecting a problem – the original idea.....	43
4.1.2	Reviewing the literature on the problem .....	44
4.1.3	Designing the research .....	44
4.1.4	Collecting the data.....	45
4.1.5	Analyzing the data.....	46
4.1.6	Interpreting the findings and stating conclusions.....	47
4.1.7	Reporting results .....	47
4.2	Data triangulation .....	47
4.3	The classes.....	49
4.4	Credibility.....	49
4.5	Dependability.....	50
4.5.1	Documentation .....	50
4.5.2	Consistent findings.....	51
4.5.3	Coding agreement .....	51
4.5.4	Corroboration .....	51
4.6	Transferability .....	51
4.7	Confirmability .....	52
4.8	Summary of the chapter.....	53
5	Collected data.....	54
5.1	The exams.....	54
5.2	The textbooks .....	55
5.2.1	Nasjonal Digital Læringsarena.....	55
5.2.2	“A Day’s Wait” .....	56
5.3	The pupils .....	58
5.3.1	Class A .....	58
5.3.2	Class B.....	60

5.3.3	Two girls from class B .....	61
5.4	The school leaders .....	62
5.4.1	School A.....	62
5.4.2	School B .....	64
5.5	The researcher’s view .....	66
5.5.1	Class A .....	66
5.5.2	Class B.....	67
5.6	The teachers’ view.....	67
5.6.1	Class A .....	67
5.6.2	Class B.....	68
5.7	Summary of the chapter.....	69
6	Analysis of the data .....	70
6.1	Analysis of the exams.....	70
6.2	Analysis of the textbooks .....	71
6.2.1	Nasjonal Digital Læringsarena.....	71
6.2.2	“A Day’s Wait” .....	72
6.3	Analysis of the two classes .....	73
6.3.1	Class A .....	73
6.3.2	Class B.....	75
6.3.3	Two girls from class B .....	75
6.3.4	Differences between the classes .....	77
6.4	Analysis, school leaders .....	80
6.4.1	School leader, school A.....	80
6.4.2	School leader, school B .....	80
6.4.3	Comparison, school leaders.....	81
6.5	Analysis of the researcher’s view .....	82
6.6	Analysis of the teachers’ view .....	83
6.7	Analysis of all the data combined.....	83
6.8	Summary of the chapter.....	85
7	Conclusions .....	86
7.1	The teaching of reading strategies .....	86
7.2	The use of reading strategies .....	87
7.3	The teaching and use of reading strategies .....	88

7.4	Suggestions for further research .....	90
7.4.1	A comparative analysis .....	90
7.4.2	A longitudinal study .....	91
7.4.3	A study at lower levels .....	91
7.4.4	A broader study of the phenomenon .....	92
7.4.5	A longitudinal textbook study .....	92
Literature	.....	93

# 1 Introduction

*“Reading a book is like re-writing it for yourself. You bring to a novel, anything you read, all your experience of the world. You bring your history and you read it in your own terms.”*

*- Angela Carter*

Reading is for me the essence of life and learning. I started reading when I was four years old, and have read ever since. Reading opened a whole new world to me, where I could fly away to new locations simply by flipping a page. Book after book was finished after a few days, and I was always on the lookout for new and interesting literature to read. When reading all these novels, I simply read. I never saw the need for reading strategies myself, I “just read” no matter the circumstances. While in school, none of my teachers ever mentioned reading strategies, so I just kept on reading like I always had. This proved to be a strategy that worked almost to the extent that I wanted it to work, but not quite. I seldom remembered what I had read for longer periods of time, and the fantastic worlds I had entered for a brief moment of time became just that; brief memories of what I had just read. When I first attended the University of Oslo, I realized that “just reading” was not good enough, and I started to look into the use of reading strategies. This made me realize that I could have saved a lot of time when studying while at school. Where I previously had read a text multiple times when studying for a test, I could have read the same text once or twice with the added use of reading strategies. Furthermore, I might have remembered even more of the text, and done even better at the test or exam. When I later studied pedagogy and education, my interest in reading strategies increased. I saw how much simpler studying for tests and exams could be when one uses reading strategies.

## 1.1 Previous research about reading strategies

Margrethe Harestad Bakke (2010), Filomena Castillo Merchan (2010) and Linn Hovd Faye-Schjøll (2009) have all written master’s theses about the use of reading strategies in both lower and upper secondary school. The consensus is that teachers do not know enough about reading strategies, even though they are supposed to teach them to their pupils. Merchan’s thesis, in particular, shows that the pupils need to be taught a larger repertoire of reading strategies in order for them to master the curriculum.

My observations and experiences during my own education are somewhat similar to Glenn Ole Hellekjær's (2005) findings; students are not prepared for the sheer amount of reading when they enter higher education. They need better strategies for tackling the reading lists and for preparing for the exams. I believe that these strategies must be taught to the pupils at the lower education levels (be it lower or upper secondary school), so that they are better prepared for the reading material they will meet when entering higher education.

Several researchers claim that the pupils must read more in order to master the reading in their second language (see Hellekjær 2007, Day and Bramford 2002). In order to become proficient when reading, speaking, listening or writing in a second language, you must practise reading, speaking, listening or writing in that second language. When it comes to reading, this is a way for second language learners and readers to improve their vocabulary, and to get a grip on the idiomatic language they should strive to master. With the limited amount of time at hand in each lesson, more reading might simply not be possible to implement in the English subject. The question to be asked then is how the pupils will become good readers if they cannot read the amount of texts in class that the researchers wish and suggest that they read.

## **1.2 My research statement**

In my thesis, I wish to look at both the teaching and use of reading strategies among teachers and pupils in upper secondary school. My thesis seeks to add to previous research by having four different perspectives on the matter. The three master's theses I have mentioned in the previous section are all from three to four years old. There has been much more focus on reading strategies in school the past years, and with my thesis I would like to find out if the situation has changed since these theses were written. The results from the recent PISA-surveys have shown a change in the pupils' reading skills, and this can be a result of more focus on reading and reading strategies. In addition, the Norwegian national curriculum LK06 emphasizes reading strategies more than previous curricula have done. All the master's theses mentioned above have been written after LK06, but I assume that teachers need time to adapt to the new curricula and it will therefore take some time before one can see any results. Furthermore, the pupils in this thesis have for most of their time in school been a part of LK06 and not the previous curriculum. They will therefore mainly be influenced by LK06,

and the increased focus on reading strategies that is included in this curriculum. The change in focus on reading strategies is very important, and will be further discussed later in this thesis.

Based on my assumptions on the situation today, and my own previous research, I argue that there has been a change in the teaching of reading strategies, which my findings will reveal. In addition, I have attempted to establish if the pupils actually do use reading strategies, and whether or not they are aware of their own use of reading strategies. On the course EDID 4010, I wrote a paper on the use of reading strategies in upper secondary school (Johansen 2012). My findings indicated that the pupils were not conscious of using reading strategies, and thought or read in the same way whatever the text or task. When I asked questions about how they read, I did uncover that they do use reading strategies, but the pupils were not able to see this themselves. In order for the pupils to benefit the most from reading strategies, they should be aware of how, when and why they use the different reading strategies. This is where the teacher enters the process. The teacher's role is to show the pupils how, when and why to use reading strategies, in order for the pupils to succeed with their reading.

Based on the previous research and my views that the situation is currently in a process of change, my research statement is: *How and to what extent are reading strategies taught and used in Norwegian upper secondary schools?* My research statement is very open. I wish to look at the whys, hows, whens and whats of reading strategies, both from the teachers' view, the pupils' view, the school leaders' view and the researchers' view. With this research statement I hope to be able to show how the teachers implement the teaching of reading strategies in their teaching, and how the pupils hopefully use reading strategies when they are reading, without being explicitly told to do so by their teacher. I also wish to show the relation between school leader, teacher and pupil, and see if what they say they do is actually what they actually do in the classroom. Day and Bramford (2002) suggest more reading in order for the pupils to become good readers, and I also wish to see if this is actually something the teachers and school leaders agree with.

English is a compulsory subject in upper secondary schools in Norway, both for general studies and vocational studies pupils. The former study English five hours a week over one school year while the latter follow exactly the same syllabus over two years. In order to explore the research problem thoroughly, I have chosen to look at both programmes for general studies and vocational studies in this thesis. VG 1 is the last year of compulsory

English in the Norwegian school system, and I have therefore chosen to only look at VG 1, and not the elective English in VG 2 and VG 3. What is important to mention is that the syllabus is exactly the same on both programmes. Therefore, one should assume that the teaching of reading strategies is the same. However, my own teaching experience tells me otherwise, and this is why I have chosen to look at both programmes. I assume that the pupils on programmes for general studies will have had more training in the use of reading strategies than the vocational studies pupils, and with this thesis I wish to see whether my assumptions are correct or not.

### **1.3 An outline of the thesis**

So far I have presented my motivation and reasons for choosing my topic and my research statement, and in addition what I hope to discover with this research statement and this thesis. I have shown what some other research has shown about reading strategies, and how I view their research in relation to my own thesis. The last part of this chapter will be where I explain the terms and abbreviations I have used in my thesis.

In chapter 2, I will present and describe what reading is, and how recent research describes reading and the reading process. I will focus on different reading models and different ways of reading, and how these can be beneficial for the pupils when they are reading on their own or in class.

Chapter 3 is where I explain and describe what reading strategies are, why pupils should use them and teachers teach them, and in addition how this can be done. I include several cognitive reading strategies, and some reading activities where reading strategies are used that can be implemented in teaching. I also include a section about reading aloud in class as a reading strategy.

Chapter 4 will be a description and explanation of the methods I have used when I have conducted this research. This chapter is also where I explain in depth the whole research process from beginning to end. I have been given data from a researcher, Lisbeth Brevik, and in chapter 4 I will discuss the implications of not conducting my own interviews for this thesis.



In chapter 5 I present all the data material I have used in the thesis, and in chapter 6 I will analyze the data material and look at it in the light of the theoretical framework from chapters 2 and 3 to try to answer my research statement.

The last chapter will be where I sum up this thesis and my findings. I will attempt to form some conclusions based on my research statement, the theoretical framework used, and the data material. I will also make a few suggestions for further research.

## 1.4 Definitions

In this sub-chapter I will give a definition of some of the terms and abbreviations I use in this thesis:

- **L1:** A person's first language, or mother tongue. It is possible to have more than one mother tongue. For this thesis, L1 will be Norwegian, unless stated otherwise.
- **L2:** A person's second language, learned after their mother tongue. All languages learned after the mother tongue(s) are called second language, no matter how many languages a person speaks. For this thesis, L2 will be English, unless otherwise stated.
- **LK 06:** The Knowledge Promotion. This is the Norwegian national curriculum which includes the English syllabus.
- **EFL/ ESL:** English as a foreign language/ English as a second language. It can be discussed whether English is seen as EFL or ESL in Norway. In recent years, the situation has changed from English purely being a foreign language and some will claim that it is almost a second language in Norway today. In this thesis I will use ESL, as I see this to be the most accurate description of the situation in Norway at the moment. When we talk about foreign language in Norway, we refer to for example Spanish or French.
- **PUPILS/STUDENTS:** Pupil and student can be used interchangeably. In my thesis, I use pupil for those attending primary school, and lower and upper secondary school. Student is used for those attending higher education. When citing other sources, I will use the term the source itself has used, even though they sometimes do not use the

same term as I use. When citing a source using the term student where I would use pupil, the meaning will be pupil unless otherwise stated.

- **SCHOOL LEADER:** School leader is the same as principal, rector or headmaster/headmistress. It corresponds to the Norwegian *rektor*.
- **PISA:** PISA is short for Program for International Student Assessment. PISA tests the pupils' reading skills, skills in mathematics and skills in science, every third year. In this thesis I will only describe and/or discuss PISA and reading skills, mainly from 2000 and 2009, as these two tests had reading skills as their main focus.

## 2 Reading

*“If you can read this, thank a teacher.”*

*- Anonymous teacher*

In this chapter I will define what reading is, how pupils learn to read, and read to learn, and show how recent research looks at reading in a second language. I will also show some different reading models that can be useful when reading and using reading strategies.

### 2.1 What is reading?

What does it mean to be able to read? Most people know what reading is and know how to read, but the definition of reading is not always as easy to sum up in few words. In this sub-chapter I will try to give a definition of what reading is and the most important aspects of reading, and what is important when learning how to read for the first time in your L1 and later in your L2.

To learn to read and to be able to read have a great deal to do with the ability to *decode*. Roe (2011) writes that “Decoding is about being able to identify the letters (graphemes) as representatives for sounds in oral language and being able to put these together into words, which again forms sentences expressing a meaning” (Roe 2011: 25. My translation). Hellekjær (2007) agrees, and says that “reading comprises decoding the written text on the one hand, and efficiently processing the information gained on the other hand” (Hellekjær 2007: 2). Decoding is something young children learn when they first start to learn to read in their L1. When we say that young children have learned how to read, we often mean that they have learned how to decode written text, and are able to recognize the written words and eventually whole sentences (Roe 2011). In addition to decoding, previous knowledge is important: “[...] Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known” (Koda 2004: 4). The reader must therefore first decode the letters in the words, and then use their knowledge about how words sound orally to combine the letters and sounds into words. This is how learning to read is done in an L1, and to a large extent, this can also be converted to learning to read in an L2.

After a child has learned how to read in their L1, they will have to develop the ability of fluent reading. Fluency when reading has to do with how the reader comprehends what he or she is reading: “Fluent reading requires rapid and effortless access to word meanings” (Koda 2004: 32). This ability has to do with connecting the letters into words (to be able to read), and at the same time understanding what the words mean without having to stop every time a new word appears. In a child's L1, this ability comes more naturally, but when learning to read in a new language, the learner will not have the same vocabulary as in the L1. This often forces the reader to stop, and spend a lot of time trying to understand the meaning of the word, or to decode the unfamiliar vocabulary. In the reader's L1, reading aloud or listening to a fluent reader read can improve the word recognition skills and reading fluency, since they often have the oral word in their vocabulary already.

Hellekjær (2007) explains that the short term memory can only remember a few words at a time, and when we stop in order to translate a word, check a dictionary for meaning or spell our way through a word, we forget what we actually were reading about in the first place. This is mainly an issue when it comes to reading in the L2, and not as much in the L1, since the reader naturally has a larger vocabulary in the L1. “Thus, pupils need to learn to guess meaning from context, or to ignore any unfamiliar words as much as possible and focus on the overall meaning in order to let the reading process continue without interruption” (Hellekjær 2007:7). This is something Simensen (2007) also agrees with, and she says that

*A prerequisite for optimal processing is the ability to tolerate a certain amount of uncertainty or ambiguity in comprehension [...]. Among other things, this implies a willingness on the part of the [...] reader to make rough guesses about the meanings of many new and unfamiliar words.*

(Simensen 2007: 150)

When guessing word meaning and understanding the meaning of the words from context, the main concern is that the text must not be on a too difficult level for the pupil. If there are too many difficult words and phrases in the text, many pupils will give up and stop reading. The text must be on an appropriate level for the pupils, with only a few unfamiliar words (Simensen 2007:150).

A lot of pupils can master fluent reading in their L1, but readers will not automatically read fluently in L2 when they can read fluently in their L1. In a pupil's L2, the lack of a sufficiently wide vocabulary is most often what stops the reader from reading fluently. In addition, the word recognition-skills can be too poor, even though the vocabulary is there (see Grabe 2009). When the pupil knows the word, but lacks word recognition-skills, he or she will spend too much time decoding the word in order to understand it, or simply decode the word as a different word instead. This leads to a lack of comprehending words, sentences and deeper meaning. The pupil will end up reading something other than what he or she actually is reading, and will understand the sentence and text differently, or even not at all.

When the ability to read fluently is in place, the practice of the use of reading strategies can start. At least, this is how it ideally should be. What we often see is that the pupils' and/or teacher's main focus is on the reading process itself, not on the ability to read in a more strategic manner. In the L2 classroom, we often see that there is a main focus on teaching the pupils to read, and to pronounce a word correctly. For the lower levels, this is an ideal situation, but this will not do for the pupils in lower and upper secondary schools, who should already have these abilities.

## **2.2 Top-down and bottom-up reading models**

As the name suggests, the bottom-up reading model starts at the bottom, with decoding of the letters and words (Simensen 2007: 86). This model can be compared to "just reading", mainly because the pupils start at the decoding-level without them having any idea of what they are reading or why they are reading the text. The top down reading model, on the other hand, presupposes that the reader already has an idea of what the text is about, a schema: "The schema is derived from prior experience or previously obtained knowledge. [...] It constitutes a knowledge structure, and is used in an active or *constructive* way in both perceiving and interpreting the text on the page" (Simensen 2007: 87). The top down reading model is used quite often in the classroom. When the teacher uses pre-reading activities, he or she activates the pupils' knowledge about one topic and by that starts the top down reading process. The activation of the top-down schema is very important in L2 reading, since the schema an L1 learner has is not the same as the schema an L2 learner will have (Simensen 2007: 86-90). Nevertheless, the L2 reader must be able to use the bottom-up reading, since he or she will need some time decoding the words as well as understanding the deeper meaning of the text.

For the L2-learners at higher levels, where they already have a decent vocabulary at hand, the top-down reading model will most likely be more efficient when reading and also when processing what they have just read.

As previously mentioned, both bottom-up and top-down processes are important when it comes to reading and learning:

*Without sensory input (bottom-up) we could neither perceive, nor comprehend, nor think. However, perception, comprehension, and thought would be equally impossible without a memory or knowledge component (top-down). It makes no sense to ask whether one is more important than the other: Nothing happens without both. So the question for the theorist is not top-down or bottom-up, but how do these processes interact to produce fluent comprehension?*

(Kintsch 2005:2)

What we see here, and what I mentioned in the previous paragraph, is that the pupils must learn to use a combination of top-down and bottom-up reading models, in order for them to read and comprehend a text in the best way possible. The pupils should also be taught how and when to choose the appropriate reading model, as they sometimes do not have to use both at the same time. The pupils might not be able to see when the different models could be appropriate to use, and the teacher's guidance and modeling should be of great importance for the pupils' success when it comes to the uses of the different reading models.

If the main goal of the reading activity is for the pupils to gain a lexical meaning of the text, a bottom-down model will be appropriate. If, on the other hand, a deeper meaning and an analysis of the text is the goal, a top-down model will be better for the pupils to use. In many cases, the pupils will benefit from reading the text several times, using the two models separately. When the pupil's main focus changes, the pupil's perception of the text will also change.

## 2.3 The working memory

The working memory is also very important in the reading process, and Koda (2004) explains that it actually is crucial in every single process that has to do with reading.<sup>1</sup> The working memory is only able to store a limited amount of information for about 30 seconds:

*In fact, speed is essential for fluent reading because of the limitations of our working memory where information is retained for about 25 to 30 seconds only. In addition, the amount of information that can be stored is also limited, commonly somewhere between seven to nine “chunks” of information.*

(Hellekjær 2007:2)

Since the working memory can only retain information for such short periods of time, it is very important that the pupils are taught other strategies in order to be able to read to learn without forgetting what they have read after a few seconds. Lyster (2001) in Roe (2011) says that “if the reader has difficulties keeping certain elements in the memory long enough to be able to connect them together into a coherent unit, comprehension will also fail” (Roe 2011:28. My translation). Hellekjær (2007) points out that the pupils need to learn how to comprehend words from context, as this strategy will enhance the flow of reading and will not force the pupil to have to stop and consequently forget what they were reading in the first place.

In chapter 3 I will describe several reading strategies that can be used instead of only memorizing what you have read. Reading strategies will help the L2 reader to more easily understand and remember what they have read, and to remember new vocabulary.

## 2.4 Extensive and intensive reading

Simensen (2007) separates extensive and intensive reading, and this should be seen in relation to the three reading strategies skimming, scanning and careful reading for detail/close reading.

---

<sup>1</sup> The two terms working memory and short term memory are by some distinguished and contrasted. Both Hellekjær (2007), Grabe (2009) and Koda (2004) use them interchangeably, sometimes using short term memory and sometimes working memory when describing the same concept. I will mainly use the term working memory, but will use short term memory where other researchers have done so.

She says that “‘Extensive reading’ usually means silent reading and reading for pleasure and enjoyment. A global understanding of the text, i.e. without grasping every part of it, is normally aimed at in extensive reading. Thus to some extent ‘extensive reading’ is a concept comparable to ‘skimming’” (Simensen 2007: 149). This probably is how someone would read when they read a novel in their free time, and some, me included, call this “just reading”. They read quickly without stopping at words or phrases that are unknown, as long as they understand the main message of the novel. This type of reading is fast and somewhat efficient, but will seldom lead to a deeper understanding of what the text is about. Very often when reading extensively, the deeper meaning of the text, like understanding the plot and themes, are lost to the reader. A lot of L1 and L2 readers use extensive reading to a large extent, but when it comes to the reading level one should expect from pupils in upper secondary school, extensive reading will not be enough. Intensive reading, on the other hand, is more similar to the careful reading for detail that I have mentioned earlier in this thesis:

*‘Intensive reading’, however, means studying a text in detail, so as to distinguish between main ideas and supporting ideas, discover ‘between-the-lines’ information, and identify style, including type of language used, etc. Its purpose has been described as ‘to arrive at an understanding, not only of what the text means, but how the meaning is produced’*

(Simensen 2007:149)

As we can see here, intensive reading is more like the reading we should hope to find in the classroom, where analysis of the text is one of the main focuses. The pupils must know how and when to read a text intensively or not, as intensive reading is a good tool for understanding between-the-lines information and the deeper meaning in the texts they are presented with.

One of the main issues with the teaching of intensive reading in classroom-situations is that the pupils tend to transfer this way of reading to all other reading situations (Hellekjær 2007). This is an extremely time-consuming way of reading, similar to careful reading for details. Hellekjær (2007) goes on to say that when the pupils read every text intensively, they will not read enough texts and this can lead to poor vocabulary and deficiencies in the pupils' reading proficiency. Extensive reading, on the other hand, can, if the text is at an appropriate level for the pupil, enhance both the pupil's vocabulary and reading proficiency. The



appropriate level for the pupil is where there are only a few words per page the pupil does not understand. If there are too many unfamiliar words, the task will be too difficult for the pupil. The task of finding appropriate reading material for every pupil can be troublesome for the teacher, but the schools with libraries will have a huge advantage here. Hopefully, there is a choice between authentic texts and graded readers. The trouble for the young L2-reader is that literature in English aimed at L1-readers might be too advanced for them, and the L1-literature on an appropriate level (when it comes to language in particular), might be aimed at younger readers. That is when a graded reader might come in handy. Simensen (2008) lists three different types of graded readers:

1. Authentic readers *contain texts not written for pedagogic purposes. The texts are selected because they are rated as appropriate for particular language levels. They are published in their original form. Books written for native speaker children or adolescents are common in this type.*
2. Pedagogic readers *contain text specially written for L2 students at specific language levels. Biographies and books about sports, travel, etc. are common in this type.*
3. Adapted readers *contain texts which are adapted on the basis of authentic texts to suit specific L2 levels.*

(Simensen 2008:171)

As mentioned, authentic text may come with the disadvantage of being too difficult for the pupils, or being too “childish”. Many textbooks often contain both authentic readers and adapted (or simplified) texts for the strong and the weak reader, so that the weak readers will be able to read the same text as the rest of the class. They will not be “forced” to read texts for younger readers (which many pupils can see as embarrassing).

Word-recognition skills can be seen in relation to the pupils' reading comprehension in their L2: “Learners need to become effective recognizers of a large number of words. Not only does this objective imply a large recognition vocabulary, it also implies that learners will need continual practice at word recognition. Such practice comes through extended reading [...]” (Grabe 2009: 36). When the pupils read few texts, they will not have the same amount of input of vocabulary. They will know fewer words, and might find it more difficult to understand the text when they are reading intensively. Roe (2011) agrees, and says the following about the amount of reading done by the pupils:

*Those who read a lot will automatically have a larger vocabulary than those who read a little. They will often encounter new words and phrases and every time they see the new words or phrases again, the chance that these words will become a part of the active vocabulary will increase.*

(Roe 2011: 105. My translation)

The vocabulary the pupil is able to acquire from each text depends of course on the pupil, the teacher, and the instruction the pupil has been given before reading. If the pupil has been told to read intensively looking mainly at vocabulary, this will be a tool to help improve vocabulary. If the pupil is told to read only looking for deeper meaning, some knowledge about language and vocabulary might go unnoticed.

One main disadvantage with extensive reading is that it takes more time than the time that is actually available to the teacher. Extensive reading can be used as a tool for the pupils' reading in their own time, not mainly as a tool for how classroom activities should be accomplished. Nevertheless, extensive reading can also be used as some schools use it; by having a few minutes every day spent on reading. When spending ten to fifteen minutes every day at school reading silently, the majority of the pupils will also continue to read at home. Furthermore, for the pupils who do not read on their own, they will have a good opportunity to actually read something. This is a very good way of enhancing the pupils' vocabulary, idiomatic language skills and a general understanding of the language.

I must add here that the pupils should be instructed by their teacher on when and how to read extensively and intensively. They should know and be able to use both ways of reading, and must be made aware of when it is appropriate to use one or the other. The teacher must therefore spend time teaching the pupils the different ways of reading, and most importantly; teaching them how to make the choice between which way they should use at what time depending on the reading material and the reading activity.

## **2.5 The purpose of reading**

As teachers, it is important to always give the pupils a reason for why they are reading a text, or else they will often skim or scan the text without being able to remember or learn a lot from it (Simensen 2007). They will also in most cases have trouble choosing whether to read

extensively or intensively. The pupils must know the purpose for, or the goal with, the reading activity, and by knowing this many will automatically adjust their reading strategy. The reason for doing so is that when the pupils have learned how to read different texts in different ways, they will find it a lot easier to read all the various texts required in the classroom. The purpose of the reading activity is important for the pupils to know, as a different purpose can change the reader's view of the text:

*A reader's interaction with a text derives from the purpose for reading. In extensive reading, the learner's goal is sufficient understanding to fulfill a particular reading purpose, for example, the obtaining of information, the enjoyment of a story, or the passing of time.*

(Day and Bamford 2002:2)

When pupils read novels in their spare time, they do not necessarily use reading strategies. Reading a novel for pleasure is similar to extensive reading, while studying a novel is what the pupil will do when intensive reading is the goal. Reading for pleasure or enjoyment does not require as much "work" as studying a novel where the purpose is literary analysis or careful reading for detail: "[...] when reading literature a reader may choose between simply relaxing with a book for enjoyment, or reading for literary appreciation. The latter might involve fairly complex information processing" (Hellekjær 2007:3). This is one of many reasons why the pupils need a purpose for why they are reading. As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, pupils tend to use intensive reading more often than extensive reading, something that is unnecessary when reading for pleasure. On the other hand, reading extensively when studying a novel where the purpose is literary analysis is not the best way to approach a text either. When the pupils have been given a clear and precise purpose with the reading activity, the strong reader will be able to choose when to read in the different ways the teacher (should) have taught them. The weak reader might unfortunately keep on reading in the one way he or she knows how to read, be it extensive or intensive reading.

## **2.6 Different types of texts**

When it comes to the texts read at school, the two study programmes read quite different types of texts. As mentioned earlier, the syllabus for programmes for general studies and

vocational studies is the same. The exam is the same as well, but with different questions that are clearly aimed at pupils on different study programmes. However, the textbooks are different, and since the textbooks often form the content of the lessons, the types of texts read are different as well. General studies will often have more focus on fictional texts, while vocational studies read more factual texts. This leads to different needs when it comes to reading strategies. When reading factual texts, the main focus is on the facts:

*When we read factual texts, we often have to concentrate more on the detailed facts than when we read fictional texts. [...] Factual texts that are written to inform, guide or enlighten the reader are initially written to be unambiguous and basically be interpreted literally*

(Roe 2011: 55. My translation)

A factual text seldom leaves room for any personal interpretations, and there should be little doubt of the meaning when reading this type of text. They are rarely read for pleasure or for the purpose of entertainment. A fictional text, on the other hand, is often read for pleasure and entertainment, and in most cases does leave room for personal interpretations. The teacher often encourages interpretations and reflections based on the text. “Fictional texts often appeal more to feelings and fantasy than factual texts do, and the interpretation is to a larger extent left to the reader when it comes to reading ‘between the lines’ or to fill in the text’s ‘empty places’” (Roe 2011: 62-63. My translation).

Pupils on programmes for general studies will, as mentioned, read more fictional texts than vocational studies pupils. Pupils on vocational studies will, on the other hand, read more factual texts than pupils at general studies. The two groups of pupils will therefore need different skills when reading. For example, when reading a factual text, the pupil needs a proficient vocabulary in that particular field, since the factual texts often hold more specific information than a fictional text (Roe 2011). When reading a fictional text, the pupils will need to be able to reflect, interpret and read “between the lines” (Roe 2011). Both types of texts can be demanding and difficult for the reader. Factual texts often require that the pupil remembers a lot of details about a particular topic, and this is where reading strategies can be a good help for them.

If we look at the top-down and bottom-up reading models from chapter 2.2 in comparison with the two different text types, we will see that the pupils in many cases will have to read factual and fictional texts differently. I have previously mentioned that vocabulary plays an important part when the pupils read factual texts. This means that the pupils must be able to decode, and by that read the text bottom-up first. For a fictional text, depending on the purpose of the reading activity, the deeper meaning might be more important than the meaning of the words themselves. The top-down reading model will then be most important. Of course, the pupil must be able to decode the words as well, so they should have both reading models in mind when reading. Several study guides actually suggest that the pupils read the text at least twice, with a different purpose and a different reading model.

## 2.7 Difference between reading in L1 and L2

Reading in L1 and L2 has many similarities, but there are also several differences between reading in your L1 and an L2. A good L1-reader does not necessarily have to be a good L2-reader, and a poor L1-reader does not necessarily have to be a poor L2-reader. The L2-reader's vocabulary and language comprehension are what distinguish L1-reading from L2-reading: “In any discussion of comparisons between first- and second-language reading, vocabulary and comprehension are the areas of reading that make the distinction between L1 and L2 perhaps most vivid” (Bernhard 2011: 14). In L2-reading, the language learner will have to interpret the meaning of every single word, before comprehending or understanding what is written. L1-reading has more to do with the ability to decode the written words, as they most likely will have heard the word already. In L2, the reader will in most cases not have heard the word and will not have the same advantage as when one is reading in the mother tongue. The L2 reader will quite often have no knowledge of the meaning of the word they read, and will have to find a strategy for how to understand unknown words (Bernhard 2011). In their L1, they will most likely have some underlying knowledge of the word based on what they have heard or observed from before, or simply by guessing from the context. In the L2, guessing a word's meaning from context can also be a good way of understanding the meaning of a word.

One of my pupils commented on her own reading abilities in her L2, namely English. She is an adult, trying to master English. She said to me that “*when I read in English, I have*

*such difficulties just decoding every single word, and I am not able to see the sentence as a whole”* (my translation). Her reading in English is therefore slow and not fluent, with incorrect intonation and pronunciation. She seldom has trouble understanding the word when she has decoded it, and is able to both translate and explain the meaning of the word. She does not have this word recognition ability which Grabe (2009) describes, and does not have fluency in the L2. She often simply guesses the meaning of the word by looking at the first letters, and often ends up with the incorrect word. She says that she is a fluent reader in her L1, but that she is not able to transfer this into the L2. Her reading abilities, or lack of them, is an excellent example of how proper L1 reading abilities do not necessarily mean good L2 reading abilities.

## **2.8 Motivation and reading**

There are several different theories about motivation in teaching. As motivation is also a very big part of the reading process, I will in this sub-chapter describe how and why this is so important for pupils when reading and using reading strategies. I will use a lot of research about motivation in learning, not reading, in the next sub-chapter, as I see it as learning and reading to go hand in hand when it comes to motivation.

### **2.8.1 Motivation and teaching**

Why is motivation so important when teaching reading and reading strategies? Grabe (2009) describes a few reasons why:

*Motivation for reading is essential so that students choose to develop their reading skills and persist and make strong efforts to overcome any limitations. Students only become skilled readers when they read a lot, and motivation for reading is critical for addressing this challenge.*

(Grabe 2009:192)

Without motivation for reading, the pupil will most likely not spend enough time reading texts, and will skip reading more often than not. The pupil might also only “just read” or skim texts, never being motivated to read for deeper meaning. This leads to a poor understanding of texts, and in many cases also to a poor vocabulary.

When reading in class, pupils will benefit from being motivated before the reading activity starts. Roe (2011) says that “motivation is also an important starting point for a reading activity. To motivate the pupils, the teacher must first and foremost explain why it is important and/or useful for them to read the present text” (Roe 2011: 90. My translation).

In Grabe (2009) we find a table where he describes factors that support reading motivation. These factors are:

1. *Opportunities for learning success and gains in conceptual knowledge*
2. *Real-world interactions (demonstrations, data collection, observations, etc.)*
3. *Autonomy support, student self-direction*
4. *Interesting texts for instruction*
5. *Opportunities for extended reading*
6. *Strategy instruction*
7. *Social collaboration and relationship building for academic tasks*
8. *Evaluation and feedback that support learning*

(Grabe 2009: 191)

All these factors can motivate the pupils when reading, and also help the unmotivated pupil to read. The teacher's main task is to provide interesting texts, and support the pupils by teaching them reading strategies and by giving them constructive feedback on what they do in and outside the classroom.

### **2.8.2 Integrative and instrumental motivation**

There are two main kinds of motivation in language learning: integrative and instrumental (Cook 2008). Cook (2008) says that in L2- learning, the difference between the two is that integrative motivation is “learning the language in order to take part in the culture of its people” and instrumental motivation is “learning the language for a career goal or other practical reasons” (Cook 2008:136). For people moving to another country, their integrative motivation might be the main reason for them to learn a new language, and it will most likely motivate them into learning the language a lot faster.

The main issue in teaching is that some pupils do not have integrative or instrumental motivation, mainly because they do not have the ability to see how they will benefit in the future from learning the language (Cook 2008). The interesting thing in Norway today is that pupils use English to a large extent outside school when reading blogs, using Facebook, and

so forth, and should therefore more than ever before see the need to master English. Surprisingly, several pupils I have talked to actually answer that they never use English outside school. My question then is whether this is the truth, or whether the pupils are simply not able to see how much they actually use English, especially on the Internet. Learning English with the goal of being able to communicate with people from other cultures on the Internet will mainly require instrumental motivation. Roe (2011) reports something similar; the pupils she has talked to during her research are not able to see that they actually read when they are using the Internet. As teachers, we should show the pupils how this is reading as well, and a very authentic type of reading. The grammar and spelling might not always be the best, but the content and message is on the pupils' own level of interest. This might lead to the pupils displaying more instrumental motivation, where being a better L2 reader will lead to a better understanding of the blogs they read and sites they visit on the Internet.

### **2.8.3 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation**

Both integrative and instrumental motivation can be linked to what is called intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be described as “the desire to do things for their own sake” (Grabe 2009:179) and extrinsic motivation as being “driven by externally generated motivations to achieve” (Grabe 2009:179). Some pupils might have extrinsic motivation when they are driven to learn by the goal of getting a good grade on a test and by the hope of getting positive feedback from parents or other pupils. Others will have intrinsic motivation in the same situation, simply because they like the learning in itself. The teacher can help build the pupils’ extrinsic motivation, which can lead to intrinsic motivation: “There are midpoints where initial extrinsic motivation contexts can lead individuals to develop more intrinsic motivation” (Ryan & Deci 2000 as cited in Grabe 2009: 179). When it comes to reading and the motivation for reading, it “draws on concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. In particular, intrinsic motivation is seen as the major concept underlying engaged reading and positive motivations for reading and learning” (Grabe 2009:182).

### **2.8.4 What to do with lack of motivation**

A lack of motivation can also be why some pupils find it more difficult to use reading strategies than others. They might not see the purpose of using reading strategies because they feel that what they are already doing is working for them. Here, the teacher must find a way to



motivate the pupils and show them that by using reading strategies, they will find the acquiring of knowledge from a text to be easier than when they are not using reading strategies. In Roe (2011) we can see that Guthrie has said that “teachers must put as much emphasis on motivating the pupils as teaching them good reading strategies” (Roe 2011: 134. My translation). This shows how important motivation is when reading and when learning to read to learn. When pupils have intrinsic motivation for reading a text, they will find that it requires less effort to read a text than when they lack motivation. One way of helping the pupils to develop intrinsic reading motivation is to build their curiosity for reading the text (see Grabe 2009). When the pupils are curious to know what happens, they will read on with the purpose of finding out what happens. This applies to all texts, but the pupils themselves might be more interested and curious when reading fictional texts. A factual text may not be so much fun for the pupils to read, but nevertheless can be motivating for the pupils who are interested in that particular topic. For the unmotivated and uninterested pupil, on the other hand, the situation is a little different. Everyone can put themselves in the situation of having to read a novel they find to be extremely uninteresting but they have to read it because someone has forced them to. To find literature that appeals to the pupils’ interests is very important for motivation, especially for intrinsic motivation.

So what positive effects can we find in our pupils when they are motivated? I have already mentioned a few positive effects above, first and foremost that they will find it to be a lot easier to acquire knowledge. In addition, it is said that “Motivated pupils link new knowledge to what they already know, and instead of giving up when the tasks are too difficult they increase their efforts and try new problem solving methods. They like what they are doing, or strive to achieve recognition or reward” (Manger et al 2009: 279. My translation). What we can read from this is that the unmotivated pupils will not increase their efforts when something is too difficult, and will in most cases get upset and give up. When the pupils are motivated, they will use reading strategies (linking new knowledge to what they already know – elaboration strategy) and by that become better readers. The teachers must therefore find new ways of motivating their pupils when reading. Not every task we give our pupils is what they see as “fun” and “exciting”, which means that some pupils will be bored and unmotivated when performing these tasks. The teacher must then find other ways of motivating the pupils, when “fun” and “exciting” is not a part of the task itself.

Many pupils have little or no insight into how they read and how they acquire knowledge, and the teacher should spend time motivating the pupils and helping them to see how the use of reading strategies will help them in the long run: “A substantial part of working with learning strategies is to help the pupils gain a higher insight into their own learning habits. This also includes teaching the pupils to see the connection between motivation and their own efforts” (Hopfenbeck 2008: 57. My translation). A highly motivated pupil will in most cases do better and achieve higher grades than an unmotivated pupil. This might not be evident to the pupils themselves. As mentioned in Hopfenbeck (2007), this is something that teachers should help the pupils to see more clearly. Even when the pupil is able to see the connection, motivation will not arise by itself. All of the above applies to motivation when reading as well, since a motivated pupil can easier see how the use of the reading strategies he or she has been taught will help them develop good reading habits.

## 2.9 Important skills when reading

Norwegian pupils' reading abilities have not been at their best during the past years. The PISA- survey from 2006 shows that: “[...] Norwegian pupils have had a more considerable and thereby significant regression in reading during the last six years” (PISA 2006: 139. My translation). This regression in reading proficiency was considered quite problematic, and it was obvious that something had to be done about it. Perhaps the teaching of reading strategies is one solution. At the very least, the pupils need to be made aware of what is important to focus on when reading a text, so that they do not “just read” without paying too much attention to the details or the specific purpose of why they are reading. So, what is important to focus on when reading? Simensen (2007) lists some key factors:

- *an understanding of the surface meanings of the text, in other words the plain or factual sense of the text*
- *an understanding of implications and “between-the-lines” meaning, and*
- *an understanding that makes it possible to evaluate the text on the basis of personal knowledge and experience*

(Simensen 2007: 150)

These three categories can be divided into decoding, interpretation and reflection respectively. The three points from Simensen can be seen as different scales, where level one is

presupposed when talking about level two. This means that if the pupil does not have the ability to understand the surface meaning, he or she will not be able to evaluate the text on the basis of personal knowledge and experience. A good reader will have all these three abilities, and will know when it is appropriate to use one or the other. If we take a look at the PISA-survey from 2006, we will see several aspects of what is important when the pupils are reading a text. The scales previously mentioned from Simensen correlate closely with what we can find as important for reading from PISA, where interpreting, reflection and analysis of the text is the main focus. To “just read” will not be good enough when it comes to tests like the PISA-survey, or similar tests. In the PISA-survey from 2006, the pupils should have been able to:

- *Retrieve information*
- *Show a general understanding of the text*
- *Interpret the text*
- *Reflect and analyze on the content of the text*
- *Reflect and analyze on the shape of the text*

(PISA 2006: 130-131. My translation)

As we can see here, reading is not just about the ability to understand what the combination of letters means. To be able to read, combined with fluent reading, and to read to learn, are two different things. The pupils, when reading in both their L1 and their L2, must have all of these abilities in order to succeed in school, and in higher education as well. This requires a lot of practice by the pupils themselves, and for the teacher to keep encouraging his or her pupils to read in other ways than to “just read”.

If we compare what the PISA- survey sees as important with the theory and research I have discussed thus far in this chapter, we see that PISA includes several aspects of recent research. The requirements from the PISA-survey can, for example, be compared to what I previously have discussed about top-down and bottom-up reading models. The first point, *retrieve information*, is to a large extent a bottom-up strategy, while the other points are top-down strategies (Simensen 2007). In addition, the competence aims from LK06 are reflected

in these requirements. The competence aims from LK06 that includes reading strategies are that the pupils should be able to:

- *exploit and assess various situations, working methods and strategies for learning English,*
- *select and use appropriate reading and listening strategies to locate information in oral and written texts,*
- *read texts from different genres and with different objectives*
- *select and use content from different sources independently, critically and responsibly*

(LK 06)

These competence aims and the requirements from the PISA-survey are almost identical, with several of the same goals. The PISA-survey focuses more in depth on reading and a deeper understanding of the text, while the competence aims tend to focus more on a general understanding of the text, and to locate specific information.

## **2.10 Summary of the chapter**

In this chapter I have described and discussed what reading is and how recent research views reading. I have also shown how various inner and outer aspects can affect reading, and how motivation is crucial for how pupils read and interpret a text. The distinction between reading a factual text and fiction is a significant aspect I will focus on in the next chapters.

The most important concepts from this chapter will be used several times throughout the thesis. I will therefore briefly summarize them here. When it comes to being able to read, the pupil must learn to decode the meaning of the words, and then they must learn to become fluent readers. The bottom-up reading model can be used when the proficient reader wants to read with the main focus on decoding the words. When the L2-reader lacks vocabulary, the reading will be a struggle. If the reader has to decode every word, and lacks the ability of fluent reading, the working memory will not be able to keep the information from the text for longer periods of time. Then the top-down reading model can be better to use, and the pupils can look mainly at the deeper meaning and decode the words from the context. Extensive and intensive reading will also be very important in the next chapters.

# 3 Reading strategies

*When you sell a man a book you don't sell him just 12 ounces of paper and ink and glue - you sell him a whole new life."*

- Christopher Morley

What are reading strategies and why are they so important in language teaching and language learning? In this chapter I will give an explanation of reading strategies in general, and I will describe some of the main types of reading strategies. I will also discuss why reading strategies are so important and useful when reading and studying.

## 3.1 What are reading strategies?

The use of reading strategies is an important part of learning, and of reading in order to learn. When teachers are asked to define reading strategies, most of them will not be able to do so. So what are reading strategies? Reading strategies can be explained as “procedures that will help the pupils improve their reading comprehension – when the strategies are being used knowingly, structurally and systematically” (Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012: 50. My translation). Elstad and Turmo (2008) describe them as “how pupils in an active, flexible and effective way can approach different types of learning situations and different types of learning material” (Elstad and Turmo 2008: 16. My translation). Roe (2011) claims that “the goal of teaching the pupils reading strategies is that they should incorporate a good repertoire of useful strategies that they can use in a flexible and effective way, and that the reading strategies should be an integrated part of the reading literacy” (Roe 2011: 89. My translation).

Why should we as teachers teach reading strategies to our pupils? Paris et al. (1991) list six reasons:

1. *Strategies allow readers to elaborate, organize, and evaluate information derived from the text*
2. *The acquisition of reading strategies coincides and overlaps with the development of multiple cognitive strategies to enhance attention, memory, communication, and learning*
3. *Strategies are personal cognitive tools that can be used selectively and flexibly*
4. *Strategic reading reflects metacognition and motivation because readers need to have both the knowledge and disposition to use strategies*
5. *Strategies that foster reading and thinking can be taught directly by teachers*

## 6. *Strategic reading can enhance learning throughout the curriculum*

(Paris et al. (1991) as cited in Koda 2004: 206)

What I find to be most important is the last reason: “strategic reading can enhance learning throughout the curriculum”. This reason gives us the main purpose of teaching, learning and using reading strategies: because reading strategies will make learning and acquiring knowledge easier. The use of reading strategies is a wonderful tool for pupils when reading, mainly because it will simplify the entire reading process, and not just the reading itself. They will remember what they have read for longer periods of time than when they simply “just read”, which will make studying for tests and exams much easier for them. In most cases, they will not have to read the text several times in order to remember the content, and analysis of texts will require less effort.

### **3.2 Different strategies**

There are several different types of reading strategies that the pupils can be taught. In Hellekjær (2007) we find that “the most common ways of reading are skimming, scanning, or careful reading for detail, and an experienced reader will automatically adjust his or her way of reading according to reading purpose”(Hellekjær 2007: 2). It seems to me that these strategies are what most teachers and pupils have knowledge about when they are asked about what reading strategies are. Skimming, scanning and careful reading for detail are important strategies when retrieving information from a text, and will be very helpful for the pupils.

Skimming, scanning and careful reading for detail are good strategies when the purpose of reading is to get an overview of the text, find some specific information or answers to comprehension questions, or when you are reading in order to find some details in the text. These three strategies can also be called reading for overview (skimming), reading for specific information (scanning), and reading for detail (careful reading for detail). Very often it is unnecessary and time-consuming to read every word in a text in detail, and the pupils should have been given every tool available to know when and how to skim or scan a text instead of reading for detail:

*Knowledge about and choice of adjusted strategies are considered as one of the most important competencies pupils can have, not least because they in the long run should be able to become independent of the teacher, and that they are able to manage on their own later in life.*

(Artelt et al 2001, as cited in Hopfenbeck and Roe 2010: 119. My translation)

These strategies have to do with how to read the text but nothing to do with what you do with the text after you are done reading it. In the next sub-chapters I will present a few strategies that will help the pupils in the long run, and not just at the exact moment they are reading the text.

### **3.3 Reading aloud**

To read texts aloud in the classroom is an activity often used by teachers in both L1 and L2 classrooms. Teachers often justify this activity by saying that several of their pupils do not read the texts given as homework on their own. By having the pupils reading aloud in the classroom, the teacher makes sure that every pupil becomes familiar with the text before working in depth with it. In addition, it can be an advantage for those pupils who have read the text on their own to hear and read the text one more time. Bernhardt (2011) says that “in traditional second-language pedagogy, learners are often asked to read passages aloud – ostensibly to improve their reading comprehension, but in reality to improve their pronunciation” (Bernhardt 2011:14). She goes on to explain that reading aloud actually “impedes their ability to comprehend.” (Bernhardt 2011:14). Simensen (2007) agrees, and writes:

*The inevitable and necessary focus on form, such as that of pronunciation, intonation, grammar, and vocabulary [...] may interfere with the development of quick and efficient reading habits and appropriate reading strategies. Reading aloud may, for example, counteract the development of quick and efficient reading habits. Because of the attention students must devote to pronunciation, etc., even at intermediate levels, reading aloud does not function as a comprehension strategy at all.*

(Simensen 2007: 162)

Why teachers keep insisting on reading aloud as an activity in the classroom should be questioned. Yes, pronunciation is important in language learning, but at the upper secondary levels, one should assume that the pupils already have a proper control of their pronunciation. Activities that are made to improve comprehension rather than pronunciation should be the main focus of the lessons in the upper secondary classroom. Roe (2011) does not discredit reading aloud as a classroom activity as much as Simensen and Bernhard seem to do. Roe writes:

*reading aloud can show oral decoding, reading speed, fluency and the ability to convey the text's content. [...] It is also important to be aware of what can and cannot be measured through reading aloud. The quality of the reading is not necessarily a reliable measure of how well the pupil understands the content of the text.*

(Roe 2011: 156. My translation)

All three agree that reading aloud can be used as an activity in the classroom, but not as a comprehension activity alone. This is important for the teacher to keep in mind when reading is the focus of the lesson. What could work as a reading aloud-activity is for the teacher to read the text to the pupils, or have the pupils listen to a recording of the text as read by native speakers of English. This will be a good way for the pupils to not only read authentic texts, but also to listen to authentic speech. If the only English the pupils hear is the English read by their classmates, they will have more difficulties learning proper pronunciation than when they get to listen to native speakers reading English (Simensen 2007:157). Fortunately, the Norwegian pupils learning English today are surrounded by English almost everywhere. They watch TV, listen to music, and use the Internet, and listen to and read authentic texts almost every day.

An alternative strategy to reading aloud is having the pupils listen to native speakers reading a text while the pupils read the text silently. Doing this can give many pupils an “aha”-moment, when they read and listen to a word they do not know how to pronounce or did not know how to write. The pupils' word recognition skills can, with this strategy, be improved. Hearing at the same time as seeing a word can make important connections for Norwegian pupils learning English, since they hear English all the time. They may have learned more words by hearing them on TV, not knowing what the words look like. Many textbooks come with a CD with recordings of the written texts, and will provide the pupils



with authentic pronunciation of difficult words. However, listening to a native speaker reading a text aloud may not help the pupils' comprehension of the text if they do not read along while listening. If the pupils just listen to the recording, it will not work as a comprehension strategy. If, on the other hand, they do read the text silently while listening, they can more easily comprehend what they are reading. Many pupils do, however, read faster or slower than the recording, and can have some trouble keeping the same reading speed as the recording. The fast readers will often read the end of the text several times, while the slow readers will have problems finishing the text. Native speakers of English often speak and read quite fast, so the publishers of the textbook and CD must therefore make sure that the recordings are not reading too fast for the slow readers to follow and not too slow for the fast readers so that they do not finish reading too soon.

### **3.4 Cognitive reading strategies**

In addition to skimming, scanning and careful reading for detail, there are some other strategies that are even more important when reading in order to acquire knowledge that will last in the long run. These strategies are called cognitive reading strategies and are (among others) memorization strategies, elaboration strategies, organization strategies and control strategies (see Roe 2011, Koda 2004, Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012, Elstad and Turmo 2008). Cognitive reading strategies consider how we categorize the strategies on the basis of how we think, and it is a conscious process where the reader must be aware of the reading process itself (Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012). This is something several researchers agree with, Grabe (2009) for instance says that "Reading strategies require conscious attention when they are applied to text comprehension difficulties or problems with learning from texts" (Grabe 2009: 67).

There are several different cognitive reading strategies available for the pupils to use. In this thesis I will concentrate on only a few of them, mainly due to the issue of space. Roe (2011) talks of three cognitive reading strategies (memorization, elaboration and control strategies), while in Brevik and Gunnulfsen (2012) we find four cognitive reading strategies: *Elaboration, memorization, organization and control*. These four are the reading strategies I find that many researchers use, and I will follow their example mainly because I find these four to be more significant than some of the others. I also believe that these four cognitive reading strategies are the ones that are most beneficial for the pupils, and the ones that can

most easily be taught to them. Roe (2011) says that there are many reading strategies to use, and that “it is not very fruitful to try to agree on how many reading strategies there are, most likely it is not possible to establish how many there are” (Roe 2011: 87). This means that even though I will describe and discuss several reading strategies throughout this chapter, there are more available strategies than those I have chosen to include in this thesis<sup>2</sup>.

### 3.4.1 Memorization strategies

Memorization strategies are used when the pupil tries to memorize the text so as to be able to remember everything, and seldom leads to lasting knowledge for the learner (Roe, 2011, Brevik and Gunnulfsen, 2012). A lot of pupils will read a text several times so as to remember what they have read, and by doing so use a memorization strategy. This strategy is by many used when studying for a test, often the day before the actual test is being held and can be useful for remembering facts and details. Unfortunately, a lot of what they have read will soon be forgotten, and the pupils will know little else or even nothing about other things than the facts they have memorized. Brevik and Gunnulfsen (2012) go on to say that “memorization strategies give a so-called “superficial” understanding, and should therefore be combined with other strategies in order for the pupils to have a deeper understanding of what they read” (Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012: 66. My translation). In the L2 classroom in Norway today, factual knowledge will not be enough for the pupils to pass the end of year exam, where they will have to know *how* to apply these facts to an analysis or interpretation of what they have read.

The difference between the long-term memory and short-term/working memory is an important part of memorization strategies. What I have discussed above about memorization strategies consider mainly the working memory. Brevik and Gunnulfsen (2012) mainly talk about memorization as part of the working memory as well. The question to be asked is whether the memorization strategies can be applied to the long-term memory and not just to the working memory. In most cases, the pupils will have to use memorization strategies combined with other reading strategies to be able to use the long-term memory instead of the working memory.

---

<sup>2</sup> As mentioned, Roe (2011) mentions several other reading strategies. These include finding connections, drawing conclusions, visualization, assessment, and so on (Roe 2011:88. My translation). Several of the strategies Roe mentions are part of the four main strategies I include in this thesis, and I therefore think it is somewhat unnecessary to discuss them here.

### **3.4.2 Elaboration strategies**

When learners use elaboration strategies, they “use their previously acquired knowledge in order to understand the new material” (Roe 2011: 83. My translation). Elaboration strategies can be used in all the different stages of the reading and comprehension process: with pre-reading activities, while reading activities and in addition with post-reading activities where the pupil goes more in depth in the text. “The pupils elaborate what they already know (familiar material) with what they read in a text (new and unfamiliar material)” (Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012: 67. My translation). When relating the new knowledge to something they already know they will create new links between the old and new knowledge when they actively involve elaboration strategies and new thought processes. This will make it easier to remember and later use the knowledge they have acquired. An example of using an elaboration strategy before reading a text can be seen when using a KWL-table, which I will describe in detail later.

### **3.4.3 Organization strategies**

Organization strategies are used when the reader wants to structure and organize the text (Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012). These strategies can be used both when the reader wants to organize the text itself when reading, or when the reader takes notes, makes mind-maps or time-lines and so on (Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012). This strategy is very helpful for organizing new knowledge, and will also make it a lot easier for the pupils when they are to study before tests and exams. If they have made a good mind-map or written good notes when reading a text the first time, they will not have to read the entire text before the test. When using organization strategies, the reader will have more control of the knowledge he or she is acquiring. What they have read will be categorized, and the knowledge will be easily accessible when needed.

Organization strategies can also be mental, in that a mental mind-map can be used instead of a written one by using visual images (Elstad and Turmo 2008). Roe (2011) agrees and says that “being able to close their eyes and see the content of the text in their minds will improve the textual understanding, especially when the text portrays people or events” (Roe 2011: 97. My translation).

### 3.4.4 Control strategies

Control strategies are strategies that can be used in order for the pupils to control, check and test that they have learned something when reading a text (Roe, 2011, Brevik and Gunnulfsen, 2012).

*Strong readers use control strategies to check whether they understand what they are reading, and might stop to evaluate if there are any concepts they do not understand, or something they need to figure out in order to understand the text as a whole. The strong readers have, in other words, an eye on their own reading process and make sure that the reading strategies they use are appropriate for the tasks they are trying to solve*

(Brevik and Gunnulfsen 2012: 65. My translation)

A control strategy is a metacognitive strategy, because it involves a control done by the pupils of the pupils' own thought process. The pupils should stop themselves in their reading to see whether they understand and remember what they have read, so as not to "just read" without understanding, remembering and interpreting the text.

Control strategies should be used by the pupils in all parts of the reading process, especially when they are reading and after they have finished reading. They should be able to use control strategies to better check their own understanding of the text and to see that the main concepts of the text have not been overlooked. In Roe (2011) we find this to be the most important part of the pupils' use of control strategies:

- *Start by finding out exactly what I need to learn*
- *Force myself to check that I remember what I have learned*
- *Try to find out which concepts I still have not understood properly*
- *Make sure that I remember the most important things*
- *If there is anything I do not understand, I try to find additional information that can clarify*

(Roe 2011: 83. My translation)

We see here that when the pupils are using control strategies, they must be very conscious of what and how they are reading. They should stop after having read a paragraph or two, and see if they remember the important aspects of the paragraph(s). A problem that might arise here is that some pupils may not know what is important and what is less important. To some of the weaker pupils, this might not be clear. This is an assessment each and every pupil must do when reading a text, unless the teacher already has made it clear to them. An important aspect is in my opinion therefore missing in Roe's explanation of the pupils' use of control strategies: *identifying the important aspects in the text*.

It is important to remember that none of these reading strategies is considered "the best". The strategies should preferably be used in combination with each other, and when and why to use the different ones should be an integrated part of teaching the pupils how to use reading strategies. The pupils should be able to use all of the strategies, but should also be able to see when it is appropriate to use one or the other. This is something some researchers also emphasize: "strategies are personal cognitive tools that can be used selectively and flexibly" (Paris et al. (1991) as cited in Koda 2004: 206). The main goal with teaching reading strategies should be to make the pupils capable enough in their use of reading strategies so that they are able to know which strategies to employ and when and how to use them.

### **3.5 Pre-, during-, and post-reading activities**

Most of the reading strategies can be divided into pre-, during- and post- reading strategies. Koda (2004) says that:

*Pre-reading strategies mainly assist in the activation of prior knowledge relevant to the text to be read; during reading strategies primarily aid main-idea detection through inferences and cross-referencing; and post-reading strategies comprise activities for reviewing and pondering text content.*

(Koda 2004: 207)

From this explanation it is easy to categorize the other strategies into pre-, during- and post-reading strategies; control strategies are for example post-reading strategies. In this chapter I will give an explanation of some of these different strategies. The integration of these

strategies in teaching will help the pupils achieve a better learning outcome and a better understanding of what they read (Roe 2011: 90).

Roe (2011) lists several reading activities that can be used pre-, during- and post-reading. She emphasizes the importance of pre-reading activities as a way of introducing the text and the topic to the pupils, and as a way of activating prior knowledge about the topic. This will also help the pupils' motivation when reading.

As a very important during-reading activity, Roe (2011) says that monitoring of the reading is one of the most important reading strategies overall. Monitoring means that you should check that you understand what you have read all through the reading process. Roe goes on to say that "It is closely connected to the concept metacognition and works as a quality check of all the other strategies – and thereby of the entire reading process" (Roe 2011: 92. My translation). Monitoring goes hand in hand with the control strategy, as both control and check what you just have read.

I will in the two next sub-chapters present two reading activities that are commonly used in a lot of classrooms, as good representations for pre- and post-reading activities. There are of course a lot of other reading activities that can be used, but due to limited time and space, I have chosen to include only these two. For further descriptions of reading strategies see Roe (2011).

### **3.5.1 Pre-reading: BISON**

In the lower secondary classroom where I teach adult learners of English in the evenings, I found a poster of something called BISON<sup>3</sup>. As this picture was taken in a lower secondary classroom, I must assume that the pupils in upper secondary have some knowledge of BISON. Having never heard about this before, I was intrigued and had to take a picture of the poster:

---

<sup>3</sup> I have unfortunately not been able to locate the original source for BISON, but one main source can be found at Utdanningsdirektoratet's web page (in Norwegian): <http://www.udir.no/Lareplaner/Veiledninger-til-LK06/Samfunnsfag/Veiledning-til-lareplan-i-samfunnsfag/Samfunnsfag-NY/1--4-arstrinn/Samfunnskunnskap/BISON-blikk/>



The pre-reading activities found in BISON are:

1. *B: Pictures and text belonging to them are studied*
2. *I: The introduction is skimmed*
3. *S: The last paragraph is skimmed*
4. *O: Headings are read*
5. *N: NB! Look at words that stand out: Words written in italics, written in bold, written in capital letters or are underlined*

There are several pre-reading activities here that are very helpful to include when teaching reading and reading strategies. When using pre-reading activities, the pupils will activate some prior knowledge about the text, and will gain a main idea of what the text is about. By activating prior knowledge about a topic before reading the text in itself, the pupils might obtain a better view of what the text is about than if they had just read the whole text from beginning to end without activating any prior knowledge about the topic at all.

### 3.5.2 Pre-/post-reading: KWL-table

A KWL-table, known as a “VØL-skjema<sup>4</sup>” in Norwegian, is used as a tool for what a pupil already knows about a topic before reading or learning about it. In a KWL- table, the pupils are to fill in what they know about a topic and what they wish to learn about a topic before reading, and after the reading is done they fill in what they have actually learned. This can be a very helpful tool for the pupils, mainly because it helps them activate prior knowledge about a topic before the reading activity, and lets them organize their new knowledge after the reading activity.

Here, I have an example of what a KWL-table might look like:

KWL Chart

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

*kwl*

(<http://my-ecoach.com/online/resources/5755/kwl.gif>)

As one can see in the chart, the K stands for the word *know*, the W stands for *want (to know)*, and the L stands for *learned*. A KWL-table can be a very helpful tool for the pupils when learning about something new and/or unfamiliar. When filling in the *know*-part of the table, they activate their prior knowledge on the topic they are to learn about. In addition, they organize their thought process, and by this use an organization strategy. The pupils also use

---

<sup>4</sup> I have not found an original source for KWL-tables, but one main source can be found at Utdanningsdirektoratet’s web page (in Norwegian): <http://www.udir.no/Lareplaner/Veiledninger-til-LK06/Samfunnsfag/Veiledning-til-lareplan-i-samfunnsfag/Samfunnsfag-NY/Test/Idebank-DEMO/VOL-skjema/>



elaboration strategies in both the pre- and post-reading processes. They also use a control strategy when filling in what they have learned. This means that when using a KWL-table, the pupils use three out of four of the cognitive reading strategies I described earlier in this thesis. As a researcher, I cannot see how a KWL-table could be anything but a very helpful tool when it comes to reading strategies.

### **3.6 Socio-cultural aspects of reading**

Having listed some cognitive aspects of reading, it is important not to forget the socio-cultural aspects of reading. Some researchers separate cognitive and socio-cultural aspects, and will not discuss them together. I, on the other hand, will not talk about the one without talking about the other. So what are socio-cultural perspectives? In an article by Andreas Lund, we find this description:

*In essence, SCP seeks to understand and explain the relationship between the human mind and our cultural context. This means that thinking and mental development are not just recognised as something that happens in the individual mind but are inextricably linked to our social organisation, institutional settings, and use of cultural tools or artefacts. The implication for studying thinking is that we have to look beyond mental activity and examine how humans act in the world, including how they talk, respond to and transform their immediate contexts, and exploit and produce artefacts.*

(Lund 2011:16)

The main difference between cognitive and sociocultural strategies then, is that the cognitive strategies will focus on what goes on in our minds, while the socio-cultural strategies will focus on social contexts instead (Simensen 2007: 79-86). I will argue that both of these theories are very important when talking about reading and reading strategies. Grabe (2009) explains that especially when we learn to read, several of the situations and processes are socio-cultural. Children seldom learn to read without the help of their parents or other adults. The cognitive processes active when learning to read must of course not be forgotten, but as we can see neither can the socio-cultural processes.

In the Norwegian classroom, a lot of the learning activities focus upon cooperative learning and the use of groups or partners when doing different tasks and activities, the assumption being that this will enhance the pupils' learning. We live in a world where we

have the possibility to interact with other people from all over the globe, and this should be included in the teaching as a way of improving the pupils' use of the English language, be it reading, writing, speaking or listening.

In every classroom, there are many different individuals with different knowledge, who will benefit from what other pupils already know about a topic. By using other pupils' knowledge or lack of knowledge, they will enhance their own possibilities of learning. To divide the class into groups is a good way to have the pupils use the other pupils' knowledge when learning. The ability of making good groups is something every teacher must learn how to do, in order for the pupils to learn in the best way possible. Variation of who is in the different groups is very important. Sometimes, each group should have both good and weak readers, sometimes only good readers, and sometimes only weak readers, depending on what the teacher wishes the learning outcome of the lesson to be.

### **3.7 Why teach reading strategies?**

Thus far I have described what reading strategies are, and how they work. In this sub-chapter I will sum up, and explain why reading strategies should be an important part of teaching.

Reading strategies are tools which can help the pupils when reading a text and a good repertoire of reading strategies will make acquiring and remembering new knowledge a lot easier. A good reader might know how and when to use the different strategies, while a weak reader will most likely read every text in the same way. Roe (2011) explains that

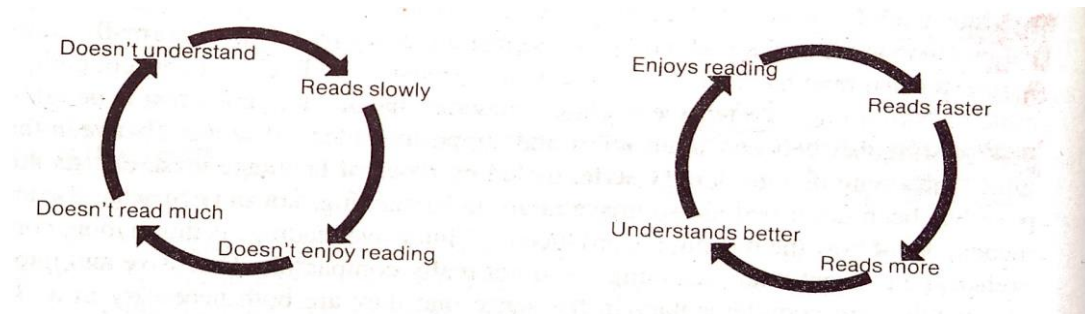
*good readers are strategic and active participants in the reading process. Weak readers, on the other hand, have a tendency to just read on without understanding what went wrong, or why it went wrong, and they will have problems giving an account of why they did not understand what they read. They lack a plan for their reading, they read in a passive way without reflecting much over what they read.*

(Roe 2011: 45. My translation.)

This means that the weak readers will fall behind, since the good readers will acquire more knowledge in a shorter amount of time. If the teacher spends time making the weak reader see how and why he or she is a weak reader, this will simplify the reading process for them. If the weak reader is not able to see that he or she is indeed a weak reader, nothing will happen with

their reading skills. When they can identify where they fail during the reading process and what they lack in reading skills, they will be able to improve their skills.

In Simensen (2007) we find what she calls “The vicious circle of the weak reader and the virtuous circle of the good reader”:



(Simensen 2007:150)

This model suggests that teachers should encourage reading and teach reading strategies to their pupils; because it is extremely important to break the vicious circle of the weak reader and make them good readers instead. Teaching reading strategies would seem to offer a way to do this. Reading is a key to acquiring knowledge in today's education system and reading strategies is an important part of this.

When it comes to the use of reading strategies in the upper secondary ESL- classroom, one of the main arguments for teaching them is that when these pupils enter higher education, their achievements can depend on how they are able to use reading strategies (see Hellekjær and Hopfenbeck 2012). A mere memorization strategy will seldom lead to success in higher education, and as mentioned earlier, the strategies must be used together in order for the pupils to achieve the best learning outcome. This should be a way of providing the pupils with integrative motivation to learn reading strategies, but mainly for the pupils who are planning on going on with further studies after finishing upper secondary school. For the pupils who do not wish to attend higher education, on the other hand, this can lead to a lack in motivation for learning reading strategies.

### 3.8 Reading in LK 06

One of the main problems when it comes to reading strategies is the fact that the pupils do not know how to use the strategies properly. When we look at the curriculum (LK06), it is clear that the pupils in theory should know how to use several different reading strategies in several different situations. It is stated in the curriculum for the compulsory English course at upper secondary level that the pupils should be able to:

- *exploit and assess various situations, working methods and strategies for learning English,*
- *select and use appropriate reading and listening strategies to locate information in oral and written texts,*
- *read texts from different genres and with different objectives*
- *select and use content from different sources independently, critically and responsibly*

(LK 06)

Since several of the competency aims in the curriculum state that the pupils should know how and when to use reading strategies, it must be assumed that the pupils will be taught how to do so. It should be mentioned that the pupils' use of reading strategies "cannot be accomplished without the readers' desire and intent to read more efficiently" (Koda 2004: 217). Readers must see for themselves that the reading- and learning process will be simplified when they use reading strategies. Without the readers' own desire to read more efficiently, they will not benefit from using reading strategies.

The teacher has a responsibility to show the pupils how much easier the reading can be when they use reading strategies. Both strong and weak readers will benefit from using reading strategies, mainly because the use of reading strategies will shorten the amount of time the pupils spend reading, learning, and acquiring knowledge. The pupils who consider themselves to be strong readers might not see the purpose of using reading strategies as clearly as the weak readers do, and it is therefore crucial that the teacher early on clarifies why the use of reading strategies is such an important part of the reading process.

## **3.9 Summary of the chapter**

In this chapter I have given an account of what reading strategies are, and how they can be used in teaching. I have shown a variety of strategies that can be taught to the pupils. In addition I have explained a few classroom-activities that will enhance the pupils' use of reading strategies and that will be beneficial for their reading habits. I have also shown the importance of teaching reading strategies to the pupils, and how teaching reading strategies will help the pupils improve their reading and simplify how they acquire knowledge.

One other main focus from this chapter is explained in section 3.3. Reading aloud in class is often used as a reading activity, but I explain that it perhaps is not sufficient as a comprehension strategy on its own. In chapters 5 and 6, I will compare my view on this to what the data reveals.

# 4 Methodology

*“No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance.”*

*- Confucius*

In this chapter I will describe and explain the methods I have used in my pursuit of trying to establish the extent to which reading strategies are taught to and used by pupils in programmes for general studies and vocational studies on the compulsory upper secondary English course.

## 4.1 Introduction

For my master’s thesis I have used data collected by Lisbeth Brevik for her doctoral thesis. She has kindly let me use recordings of two interviews with two different classes conducted after a lesson where reading was the main focus, two interviews with two different school leaders and an interview with two pupils from one of the classes. In addition, I received a written observation made during a class where reading was the main focus from both the teacher and the researcher, from each of the two classes. I have also looked at previous examinations in order to see whether they required any use of reading strategies for the pupils to pass. I also looked at the Internet resource [www.ndla.no](http://www.ndla.no). This web-site can be used as an online textbook. I have chosen to look at one text at this site, and the tasks and questions available for the pupils when working with this text. In addition, I have looked at the text one of the classes used in their lesson, Ernest Hemingway’s short story “A Day’s Wait”, and looked at how this text is presented in two textbooks for pupils on different study programmes. These data are what I have used as the basis for my thesis.

In this chapter I will describe the different methods and procedures used in this thesis, and explain why I chose to use these methods. I have not gathered the data myself, and I must ensure that dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability are in order when analyzing the material I have been given. I will describe the research process by following the steps Ary et al (2010) call *the typical stages in research*. These stages are:

1. *Selecting a problem*

2. *Reviewing the literature on the problem*
3. *Designing the research*
4. *Collecting the data*
5. *Analyzing the data*
6. *Interpreting the findings and stating conclusions*
7. *Reporting results*

(Ary et al 2010:31-33)

Before I start explaining my process during each of *the typical stages in research*, I must mention that I seldom followed these steps to the point all the time. I have gone back and forth sometimes, trying to find the most effective way to carry out the research. Ary et al (2010) agree with my observation and say that it is normal for every researcher to actually move back and forth between the different steps. Nevertheless, all these steps have been used in my research and writing processes, and I will therefore explain all of them in the following sections.

#### **4.1.1 Selecting a problem – the original idea**

Before starting the research process, I had decided to do qualitative research where I interviewed pupils and teachers from different schools. In addition I wanted to include a quantitative survey where the pupils answered about their views on and use of reading strategies. My main concern with doing this survey was that it would be extremely time consuming and it might be troublesome to find participants who were able to answer my survey truthfully. In addition it would demand a lot of me to do a mixed method study. With only a limited amount of time at my disposal, I decided that this would be too much work to do a mixed method study for a master's thesis. My problem was then that I felt that interviews alone would not give me enough data. My next thought was to observe some classes while having a session about reading. This would also be a lot of work, as I had to find participants who wanted to be both interviewed and observed. When I was given the opportunity to use Brevik's material, I was relieved. Not only would this save me a lot of time, it would give me data gathered by an experienced researcher who knew better than me how to conduct

interviews and how to get the proper answers out of the interview objects. This has provided me with a lot of useful material for the thesis, but also a lot of material I have had to leave out due to lack of relevance.

### **4.1.2 Reviewing the literature on the problem**

During the entire research process I have read and re-read a multitude of relevant literature about reading and reading strategies. I have kept an open, but critical mind to what I have read, always willing to include new literature where applicable. I spent a few weeks in the beginning of the research process studying relevant literature, so as to have a main theoretical background for the thesis. By doing this before I started to process the collected data, I made a solid frame for my thesis. The literature I have based most of chapter 2 and 3 are Koda, Grabe, Simensen, Hellekjær and Roe (see the bibliography for exact references).

After having written the main content of chapter 2 and 3, I started working with the collected data. If parts of the data uncovered something I had not included in these chapters, I tried to review the literature again to see if I could find some more relevant literature than what I already had. Most of the times I did this, I was able to find new and relevant literature. I then spent time trying to include the new literature into what I already had written.

### **4.1.3 Designing the research**

I have chosen a phenomenological research design for my thesis. Phenomenological research is “designed to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it” (Ary et al 2010: 471). The situation here is a classroom-situation, as observed by a researcher, a group of pupils and the teacher. In addition there is the overhanging view of the school leader on the situation in general. A phenomenological research design allows me as researcher to analyze not only what I have noticed in a situation, but what the participants themselves have noticed and experienced in the situation. This will lead to a much deeper understanding of how something actually works in practice.

Ary et al (2010) emphasize what separates a phenomenological research design from other research design, and this is an aspect that will give the reader a better view of why I chose it for my thesis: “[...] the element that distinguishes phenomenology from other



qualitative approaches is that the subjective experience is at the center of the inquiry.” (Ary et al 2010: 471-472). The subjective experience of the interview objects is of the utmost importance in this thesis, and is something I will emphasize throughout.

Before starting this research project, I did a pilot study when participating in the course EDID 4010. The pilot study helped me find out what worked and what did not work when doing a more extensive project like this thesis. I was able to see more clearly how I could design the research, make the thesis proposal, and start the research process itself. The pilot study also provided me with helpful background knowledge about the teaching and use of reading strategies in upper secondary school.

#### **4.1.4 Collecting the data**

As mentioned in chapter 4.1.1, the data have been collected by Lisbeth Brevik. I was given the recordings of the interviews, and I have transcribed them myself. I had the possibility to receive recordings from more interviews, but chose not to do so because I felt I had enough data without it.

The textbooks have been chosen mainly on the basis of availability. I have chosen to look at one online resource: [www.ndla.no](http://www.ndla.no). When I had my teacher training at an upper secondary school in Akershus in 2011, we used NDLA as the main “textbook”. In addition, I read an article recently in *Aftenposten* (29.01.2013), where NDLA was said to be the “next big thing” in teaching. Several teachers have decided to include NDLA in their teaching, and some even use NDLA instead of a normal printed textbook. This is not the time or place to discuss online resources versus printed textbooks, but I will mention that I prefer a combination of both. This is something there seems to be a consensus about. Nevertheless, the online resources have the advantage of having a large variety of tasks and can always send you to new sites with new tasks. Roe (2011) says that “the reading process is in principal the same regardless of whether the reading is on a screen or on paper, therefore, good reading strategies will work as well on digital texts as on paper based texts” (Roe 2011: 130. My translation).

The main concern when it comes to texts on the internet is that the source of the data sometimes is not given. The pupils must learn to be critical of what they are reading at all times. In addition they should be taught to always provide and cite the resources they have

used (Roe 2011). Some might see as a disadvantage that I have included NDLA. I have chosen the “textbook” based on my own experiences from teaching, and I have seen that the pupils enjoy using the Internet-site in class instead of the old fashioned textbook. An article I read on [www.forskning.no](http://www.forskning.no) in March 2013 shows that the weak pupils read poorly when they read articles and text on a screen, and better when they read the printed versions instead. This is something one should keep in mind when choosing what kind of textbook to use in class (see <http://www.forskning.no/artikler/2013/januar/346856>).

In addition to [www.ndla.no](http://www.ndla.no) , I have looked at the text “A Day’s Wait” by Ernest Hemingway from the textbook *Passage* from Cappelen Damm, which is the text one of the two classes uses in the lesson. This is a book for programmes for general studies. Unfortunately, I do not have access to the information about which text the other class has used, and I have therefore chosen to look at Cappelen Damm’s textbook for programmes for vocational studies, *Tracks*, where “A Day’s Wait” is included as well. Since “A Day’s Wait” is used in both these books, I have been able to compare and contrast the tasks that go with the texts to see how reading strategies are being presented to the pupils on the different study programmes.

#### **4.1.5 Analyzing the data**

Many researchers use some sort of coding when analyzing the data. I have chosen to look at each separate type of data material as one, and analyzed them separately. I have also compared and contrasted all the data material. I could have chosen to use coding in a more systematic manner, but I have to admit that I found my way of analyzing the material perfectly adequate.

I have analyzed the data in several stages throughout the research process. One cannot possibly understand the complexity of the material by simply glancing at it once or twice. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, I did not conduct the interviews myself. Nevertheless, I received the recordings from the interviews, and had to transcribe them myself. This gave me the opportunity to listen to the interviews several times, and in addition it provided me with a thorough insight into the main content of the interviews. After having transcribed the recorded interviews, I printed them so that I could read and underline the most important aspects of the interviews.

### **4.1.6 Interpreting the findings and stating conclusions**

This part of the research process is of great importance, and is perhaps the most important one of the entire research process. After having reviewed the literature, and deciding what to include in chapters two and three, I had to interpret all the data material I have in the thesis. Furthermore, this stage involves determining what my findings are, and what my data tell me about the teaching of and use of reading strategies.

To better see which data to include in the thesis, I have printed a version of every interview. I then used colors to mark the passages from the interviews I found to be most significant for my thesis. The colored passages have then been included in chapter 5 without any interpretations yet. The conclusions have been drawn in a separate chapter, where I sum up my findings in addition to making some concluding points.

### **4.1.7 Reporting results**

This stage of the research process “involves clearly and concisely presenting the steps in the study in sufficient detail so that another person can replicate it” (Ary et al 2010: 33). I have reported the results first by writing about each type of data material separately in chapter 5. Then I have analyzed each of the data types, and then written about what the results combined mean in the next chapter. I have chosen not to include every little detail from the data, as there simply is not enough space in the thesis for everything. Furthermore, since I have not collected the data myself I have a lot of data which is irrelevant to my thesis, and it is therefore unnecessary to include that data here.

## **4.2 Data triangulation**

In this thesis, two classroom situations have been observed by a researcher, the teacher and two groups of pupils. In addition I have an overview of the situation in general from the school leader. This means that I have four different angles from each school: researcher’s, pupils’, teacher’s, and school leader’s view. This is something Ary et al (2010) call data triangulation. With data triangulation, I am able to let the different data confirm or disprove the findings from the other data, which again will result in better evidence (Ary et al 2010: 498-499). This means that even though I only have data from two schools, these data are so well corroborated by the various types of data that I can confidently draw conclusions from

them. Data triangulation in research can ensure both the credibility and the dependability of the research (Ary et al 2010: 498-503).

To sum up, there follows a list of the different types of data I have used as the basis for my thesis:

1. Written observation of a session in the English subject about reading from school A and B by the researcher
2. Written observation of a session in the English subject about reading from school A and B by the two teachers
3. Interviews with pupils from one class from each school, conducted after a session in the English subject about reading
4. Interview with two girls from school B, conducted after a session about reading and after the group interview with the class
5. Interviews with the school leaders from school A and B
6. Previous end of year-examinations for VG 1 in the English subjects
7. The online resource Norsk Digital Læringsarena, which is used as an online textbook. This can be accessed at [www.ndla.no](http://www.ndla.no)
8. The text and tasks to Ernest Hemingway's short story "A Day's Wait" from the textbook *Passage* for programmes for general studies
9. The text and tasks to Ernest Hemingway's short story "A Day's Wait" from the textbook *Tracks* for programmes for vocational studies

In the chapters where I present and analyze the data, the data types will be presented separately, and then discussed in connection with each other. I have chosen this way of presenting and analyzing the data as I find it to be the most structured way, and the easiest to comprehend and follow for the reader.

## 4.3 The classes

In this sub-chapter I will present the two different schools and classes briefly. I will also describe how the interviews have been conducted, and comment upon the method used during the interviews. For the presentations of the classes, teachers and school-leaders, see chapter 5 for a more detailed description of each.

Both schools in this study are from the northern part of Norway. Class A is a general studies class with 9 pupils, while class B is a vocational studies class with 20 pupils. The interviews of the pupils have been recorded by the researcher. What is important to mention is that the researcher has asked questions to the pupils, and then repeated their answers on the tape. This means that there are no recordings of the pupils' answers other than what the researcher says on the tape. For the sake of validity, this might be an issue that should be discussed. When the researcher repeats the answers, she has already given me an analysis of the answers since it is almost impossible to repeat the exact answer without giving your own interpretation of it. All these data have therefore been analyzed twice. The question to be asked is whether this is an advantage or a disadvantage. Because I do not have access to the raw material, I will end up giving an analysis of previously analyzed material. One should see the interviewer or researcher as neutral when conducting interviews, without any preconceived ideas on what the interview objects' answers should be: "[...] a good interviewer must remain on diligent guard to eliminate any personal biases that could threaten the accuracy of the data collected" (Ary et al 2010: 439). With this in mind, I will analyze the recordings trusting that the interviewer has repeated what the pupils have actually said, not her own thoughts on the subject. When considering the fact that the data have been gathered by a more experienced researcher than me, it would seem fair to assume that the data have been reported correctly.

## 4.4 Credibility

When it comes to validity in qualitative research, credibility is one of the most important aspects that need to be discussed. "Credibility in qualitative research concerns the truthfulness of the inquiry's findings. Credibility or truth value involves how well the researcher has established confidence in the findings based on research design, participants, and context" (Ary et al 2010: 498). The main concern when it comes to credibility in my thesis is that I

have not gathered the data myself, and do not have access to the primary sources of the information. All the data I have are recordings or written documentation of a situation, not something I have been first hand witness to. On the other hand, the fact that the data have been recorded digitally makes it difficult not to trust the credibility of the material. In addition, there is data triangulation of the material, which also ensures the credibility of the data.

## 4.5 Dependability

Ary et al (2010) describe dependability in qualitative research as this: “[..] qualitative studies expect variability because the context of studies changes. Thus, consistency is viewed as the extent to which variation can be tracked or explained. This is referred to as *dependability* or **trustworthiness**” (Ary et al 2010: 502). Ary et al (2010) go on to describe four steps that a qualitative research should include in order to ensure the dependability of the research. The four are *documentation*, *consistent findings*, *coding agreement* and *corroboration* (Ary et al 2010: 502-503). I will describe how I have included these four steps in my research in the next sub-chapters.

### 4.5.1 Documentation

A step that should be included in order to ensure dependability in qualitative research is documentation. “One of the best ways to ensure dependability is to use an audit trail” (Ary et al 2010:502). This means that others should be able to look at my data and my research and “determine how decisions were made and the uniqueness of the situation” (ibid). There should be no vagueness in what has been done in all parts of the research process. I have made sure that all the stages of my research have been thoroughly documented and reported in this thesis so as to ensure the dependability of my research. Most of the stages of the research process can be viewed in chapter 4, and in addition in chapter 5 where I describe the findings of the research. In the present chapter I also discuss how and why I chose to do the research the way I have done.

## 4.5.2 Consistent findings

Consistency in the findings can be ensured by conducting the research in several locations. In my thesis, the interviews and observations have been conducted at two different schools, and if the data from one school confirms the data from the other school, I will have consistent findings. This again will lead to dependability in my research (see Ary et al 2010: 503).

## 4.5.3 Coding agreement

I have decided not to code the data in any specific manner, and this stage is therefore not applicable to my thesis.

## 4.5.4 Corroboration

I have previously explained how I have triangulation of the data in my research (see chapter 4.2). To sum up, I will say that data triangulation is when the research consists of different types of data, hopefully backing up the other data or else disproving it. Data triangulation is a way to ensure that the research is dependable, and I will argue that with all the different types of data that I have, I have provided enough proof that there is corroboration in my thesis and consequently dependability as well.

## 4.6 Transferability

One important aspect of qualitative research is to see whether the findings can be transferrable to other similar schools, and by that ensuring transferability. Ary et al (2010) say that “**Transferability** is the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or to other groups” (Ary et al 2010: 501). In a small scale study like the present one, where only two schools are included, transferability of the findings often is an issue that needs to be discussed. It can be argued that the results from my master’s thesis cannot be applicable for other pupils or schools in the rest of the country, as the two schools are from the same county in the northern part of Norway. I will argue that as the data have been collected at two different schools, with two different teachers, the results might be transferrable to other pupils as well. One of the classes is small with only nine pupils, which is typical of several small schools in smaller counties in Norway. The other class has around twenty pupils, and has therefore a size typical of the average to large school.

In spring 2012 I carried out a pilot study while taking the course EDID 4010 – The Fundamental Concepts of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, where my topic was reading strategies in upper secondary school. I conducted two semi-structured interviews with two pupils, where the answers from one of the pupils are similar to what some of the informants in this study have answered. The interviews for my pilot study were conducted at a school in Akershus, a county in the eastern part of Norway. When the answers are so similar in both these two studies, I must argue that the results from this study are transferable to other schools in other parts of Norway as well.

One way of ensuring transferability in research is to make sure that every part of the research process is documented in detail, which is called “descriptive adequacy” (Ary et al 2010:501). Throughout the thesis, I have made sure that I include all relevant and important findings from the data. In the present chapter I also describe the research process in detail, so that the reader can follow every single step of the research process. One important aspect that needs to be discussed is that I have not included every single detail from the data. This has mainly to do with the fact that I am not responsible for the interviews, and have not conducted them myself. Large parts of the interviews, particularly the interviews with the school leaders, are about things that are irrelevant to my thesis, and I have therefore decided that it is unnecessary and time consuming to include every detail from the interviews. This is a selection process I have found to be necessary based on the relevance of the material for my thesis. It may be that other researchers would have included other aspects of the interviews than what I have done. Nevertheless, I am confident that the most important data is included and discussed in this thesis.

## 4.7 Confirmability

As researchers and as interviewers, it is extremely important to ensure that we are neutral to both the data and the interview objects, and free from bias. This has to do with the issue of confirmability: “Confirmability [...] deal(s) with the idea of **neutrality** or the extent to which the research is free of bias in the procedures and the interpretation of results. [...] qualitative researchers are concerned with whether the data they collect and the conclusions they draw would be confirmed by others investigating the same situation” (Ary et al 2010: 504). As researchers, it is almost impossible to do any research without a preconceived idea of what the material will tell you. This is first and foremost a problem in qualitative research, where the



researcher often talks to people and analyzes speech. The data used in this thesis has as mentioned not been collected by me, and I must therefore be extra aware of keeping myself free from bias when analyzing the data. I have no guarantee that the researcher was free of bias when conducting the interviews, and since I only have the researcher's voice on the tape this could be a problem.

## **4.8 Summary of the chapter**

In this chapter I have described each stage of the research process, from beginning to end. I have discussed the various aspects concerning validity and reliability of this thesis at length, as I have not gathered the data myself. As I have shown in this chapter, my thesis should be considered to be both valid and reliable. This is mainly because I see it to be an advantage that the data have been looked at through new eyes by me after being collected by the researcher. I have not been biased by knowing who the informants are, and can therefore be more neutral to the data than any researcher analyzing material he or she has collected themselves. On the other hand, it can be seen as a disadvantage that I have received recordings of interviews instead of conducting the interviews myself, mainly because I have had to choose what data to include and exclude. Some relevant data may have been left out of the thesis because of this. Furthermore, I have not been first hand witness to the classroom situations, which may be where the credibility and dependability in my research could be questioned.

During this research process, I have had to go through a selection process where I have chosen what material was relevant and not. Researchers who conduct their own interviews can to a larger extent structure the interviews so that they mostly get relevant data, while I could not do this. Nevertheless, I could choose among a large variety of data and find what suited my thesis best. However, this was a time-consuming process, where I had to look at all the data material and analyze most of the data before selecting what was relevant or not.

## 5 Collected data

*“People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading.”*

*- Logan Pearsall Smith*

In this chapter I will present the findings and results from the various data material. I have chosen to only present the findings objectively in the present chapter, and comment upon and analyze these findings separately in chapter 6. I have a lot of different data from each school, and since I have almost the same kind of data material from both schools, I have decided to compare the same type of data separately.

The interview of class A and the document from the researcher about class A is in English, the rest is in Norwegian. All citations from the rest of the material have been translated into English by me before writing about them in this thesis. I have not corrected grammatical and idiomatic mistakes made by the informants in either language.

### 5.1 The exams

One of the main motivations for many pupils in all subjects is to pass, and hopefully get good grades at the end of the year exams. Therefore, one may conclude that there would be motivation for using reading strategies, if they were necessary to pass the exam. I have therefore looked at the last exams in the English subject to see if I could find any obvious need for reading strategies in them. However, I did not manage to find many tasks in the exams where the pupils had to skim, scan or carefully read for detail in order to pass the exam.

The exam from spring 2010<sup>5</sup> had one part where the pupils were asked to explain explicitly what kinds of reading strategies they had used when learning English. Here, the pupils should reflect on their own abilities when learning English. I have heard from several teachers afterwards, that this task was considered to be too advanced for the pupils, as they were not able to put words on their own strategic learning. Other than this, I did not find any tasks where the pupils needed reading strategies. When it comes to cognitive reading strategies, on the other hand, the situation is different. Obviously, the exams do not tell the

---

<sup>5</sup> The previous exams are available at [www.udir.no](http://www.udir.no), but as they are password protected I cannot provide the full references here.

pupils to use a memorization strategy or an elaboration strategy, but while they are preparing for the exam, the cognitive reading strategies will help them to sort and remember the material. When they sit the exam, they will in most cases find it easier to use the knowledge they acquired when studying for the test.

## 5.2 The textbooks

In this subchapter I will describe how reading strategies are presented to the pupils in one fictional text, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas”, from [www.ndla.no](http://www.ndla.no), and the fictional text, “A Day’s Wait”, which one of the classes used in a lesson about reading.

### 5.2.1 Nasjonal Digital Læringsarena

[www.ndla.no](http://www.ndla.no) is a Norwegian online resource that can be used as an online textbook.

According to *Aftenposten* (29.01.2013), a large amount of schools use NDLA, either as the main resource or in addition to the regular textbook. I have used NDLA several times in my own teaching as well.

When looking at the resources available for the novel and film “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas”, accessed at <http://ndla.no/en/node/107303>, reading strategies form a large part of the tasks available for the pupils. Here, I will present the different strategies NDLA suggests that the pupils use when working with this novel and/or film:

#### 1. Pre-reading

- Discussing the title
- Associations by looking at a picture from the era
- A list of words from the novel are shown
- Discussion about what the pupils think the novel is about
- A link to the trailer of the movie, and a suggestion that the pupils should discuss the words in relation to the trailer

- Using the words listed to write a dialogue between the two boys shown in the trailer

## 2. Reading comprehension/during reading

- Read the first two paragraphs of the novel, and then discuss various aspects of how they presume the rest of the novel will be like

## 3. Post-reading

- Multiple choice questions after reading the whole novel/excerpts
- “Literary analysis” where the pupils are to put the words from the word list into appropriate categories
- Making a photographic presentation of the movie by searching the web for pictures the pupils find suitable for characters, setting, plot and so on
- Acting out one scene of the movie
- Listening to an interview with a Holocaust victim, and questions to ponder on afterwards

### 5.2.2 “A Day’s Wait”

The text “A Day’s Wait” is the text used by class A in the lesson about reading. I have looked at the text in two different textbooks, namely *Passage* for programmes for general studies, and *Tracks* for programmes for vocational studies. I will in the next section describe the different tasks the pupils can do in relation to reading this text.

#### 1. Pre-reading

- Both books include a section in the beginning called “*Starting off*”. The questions to be answered are as follows: *Can you remember any episodes from your childhood in which you tried to act grown up? What happened? Sit in groups and tell each other about your experiences.*
- A very short info about the author and the text is given in both textbooks.

- In *Passage* the pupils are presented with a picture of Ernest Hemingway
- In *Tracks* the pupils are presented with a picture of a young boy

## 2. Reading comprehension/during reading

- Both textbooks contain word lists with difficult words included on each page, with the proper Norwegian translation. Some words also have phonemic transcription, so that the pupils can more easily pronounce the word correctly.
- In *Tracks*: Several reading comprehension-activities are included as part of the post reading. A section called “*Understanding the story*” has “why”- and “how”-questions for the pupils to discuss in groups post reading.

## 3. Post reading

- In *Tracks*: A section called “*Talking*” has “why”- and “what”-questions for the pupils to answer
- In both textbooks: The pupils should write a diary from the main character’s day
- In *Tracks*: In the section called “*Vocabulary*” the pupils should describe the difference between two similar words in word pairs.
- In *Passage*: A section called “*Talk about it*” has interpretation questions, where the pupils are to find deeper meaning in the text they have read.
- Both textbooks have several sections where improvement of vocabulary is in focus. In *Passage* there is also a section called “*Improve your language*” where the main focus is on punctuation, adjectives and adverbs, and on describing word meaning.

- Both textbooks have tasks about conversions. “*Working with numbers*” (*Tracks*) and “*Mathematical brain teasers*” (*Passage*) include conversions between Celsius and Fahrenheit.

## 5.3 The pupils

Here I will describe the findings from the interviews with the pupils from both schools.

### 5.3.1 Class A

This class is fairly small, consisting of only nine pupils with four boys and five girls. The class is a general studies-class. The text used in this lesson is the short story “A Day's Wait” by Ernest Hemingway.

The pupils in this class define reading strategies as *a way of understanding the text, how you read and how you plan your reading*. They name *skimming, getting an overview of the text and scanning*. If they read on their own at home, and nobody has told them what to do, they “just read” the text. Some of the pupils say that they often read the heading first and then the first word of the text, in order to get an overview of the text before reading the text itself. If there are pictures in the text, the pupils will look at them first as well. One pupil says that he does not like to use this method of looking at headings, skimming and getting an overview when reading short stories, because he *wants to be surprised*. One pupil says that before reading a short text, she flips through all the pages and then starts reading. When reading longer texts, like a novel, she just starts to read the first sentence.

When asked about what they do when reading, one pupil answers:

*When I read the heading, and perhaps some of the first words of the paragraphs. And if I think like, I have heard that before. And I kinda sum up all the things I know about it. And then it's much more easy to read. Just.. Add it to what I know.*

He goes on to say that he thinks about what he knows from before, gets an overview and then starts reading the text.

The researcher also asked about the purpose of reading, and whether the pupils knew why they were reading or not. The pupils answer that they were going to get some tasks about the text after reading and that the text probably was a part of the curriculum. After a little while it turns out that the teacher told the pupils about the purpose of reading the day before, and that the purpose of reading was to learn about an American writer.

One of the pupils in this class said that he, before reading the text, compared Hemingway to Hamsun (having recently read Hamsun in his Norwegian class) and tried to find similarities between the two. After reading the text, he looked back at this and reflected on what he had just read. One of the other pupils did the same when she read a novel on her spare time, and tried to compare and contrast the novel she read to a novel she had read before. She also said that she tried to find out what the novel reminded her about. Several pupils say that when they know they will get tasks about the text after reading, they will read the text more carefully. Some will write notes in order to remember the text better. When it comes to comparing what they have just read with what they know from before, using an elaboration strategy, one pupil says that he will think about what he knows about the topic if he finds the text to be interesting.

The teacher showed the pupils a word cloud before giving them the short story. In this word cloud, facts about the author are stated without giving the name of the author himself. About the use of word clouds, one pupil says that when he looks at them, he *activates a reverse brain storm*, and this he calls a *brain cyclone*. The researcher repeats the pupil's answer and explains it by saying: *So what you usually would get is one word and then brain storm many things from that one word. And the reverse is that you've got many words about one writer and you are trying to sort of to reduce it in a way to end up with one name*. The pupils say that they felt they learned about the author from the word cloud, and that it was a good thing that the teacher included it in the lesson.

During the interview, the researcher asks the informants whether they use reading strategies by themselves if they are not told by their teacher to use one or several specific reading strategies. In this class, the pupils answer that they seldom use reading strategies on their own, unless they are studying and/or preparing for a test. They also say that it depends on what they have to use the text for, and that *by knowing why* [they read] *they would read differently*. The researcher also asked the pupils about whether they plan how to read before

they start reading. The answers show that they do not plan how to read before reading, but while they read they consciously choose to use some strategies.

Group work was also a part of this lesson. This included reading the text out loud within each group. One group used this exercise to help each other with pronunciation. One pupil laughed when he pronounced a word incorrectly, and said *that wasn't right*. The others in this group then helped him pronounce the word correctly. In one of the other groups, one pupil had to read the text to himself after reading it out loud. He said that this was a reading strategy for him. The consensus in the class is that *it helps being in a group*, but most of the class would rather read silently to themselves than out loud. The pupils say that reading aloud is more a practice of fluency and pronunciation than understanding the text, and that it would have been helpful to practise by reading silently first.

### **5.3.2 Class B**

Class B is a vocational studies-class, consisting of seven boys and thirteen girls, a total of twenty pupils. The text used in this lesson is a factual text about work.

The first question from the researcher to this class is about the purpose of reading, and if the pupils ever think about why they are reading or if they just read because their teacher tells them to. The answers are quite varied: *both*, *sometimes* and *because our teacher tells us to do so*. The pupils have various answers when asked about the purpose of the lesson they just finished:

1. *learning to speak*
2. *learning to write*
3. *learning about how to get a job*
4. *understanding the content of a text*

Several of the pupils agree that the teachers expect the pupils to read the entire text, even when they are to answer only a few tasks about that text. They say that the teachers always ask them about small details from the text, and that the tasks they answered on their own are to be handed in. The pupils say that a teacher at their lower secondary school explicitly told them that this is what teachers expect of them.



The pupils in class B define reading strategies as *the way you read the text*, and as *procedures of reading*. They go on to define different reading strategies: *close reading*, *skimming*, *scanning*, *listening to the text*, *BISON* and *KWL-tables*. Two pupils have used KWL-tables previously. When asked about what they think about the use of a KWL-table, they answer that they do not feel they learn anything from using it. One of the two says she likes to use BISON instead.

During the lesson the researcher observed, the teacher talked about *reading for detail*, *reading for specific information* and *reading for overview*. The pupils again say *scanning for details* and *skimming for detail* when asked which of the three strategies above they use.

One pupil reads the whole text, and then makes a list of keywords of what she has read. Then she repeats the keywords, and not the text itself. One other pupil reads the text, and then makes himself a summary of the text. Then he reads the summary of the text for repetition. One pupil makes mind maps, one reads the text itself several times, one sings to herself, and one reads the text and then asks questions to the text to herself or to other pupils. She asks questions about what she finds to be important in the text. One pupil reads the questions or tasks to the text first, and then reads the texts looking for that specific information.

Towards the end of this interview, the researcher asks the informants whether they use reading strategies by themselves if they are not told by their teacher to use one or several specific reading strategies. In this class, 17 out of 20 pupils answer that they use reading strategies voluntarily, but that their choice of reading strategies depends on the text and the tasks they are to do. This choice is often done automatically, which can be seen when the researcher repeats one of the pupils' answers: *So if you get a task where you are to find a year, you scan until you find it. And you do that automatically even when the teacher has not told you to do so.*

### **5.3.3 Two girls from class B**

Two girls from this class were interviewed separately. They were asked about their use of reading strategies more in depth than the interview with the rest of the class. About their previous experiences of reading strategies they say: *we learned to use strategies in the eighth*

*grade, but we were not able to understand what he meant for us to do. The teacher was not good enough. [...] He did not show us, he just told us what to do.*

One of these girls says that she usually checks how long the text is, so that she knows how much longer she has to read at all times. The other girl answers: *I don't do that, that will make me lose my motivation completely. I just read and then "wow, it's finished now. Fine"*.

One of the two girls lets the interviewer know that she has dyslexia, and that this is the reason why she is so aware of her own use of reading strategies. In order for her to succeed in school, she says herself that she has to be more aware of how she reads than other pupils. She says that she does not necessarily benefit from the use of reading strategies, but the researcher is able to have her describe several situations where she actually will use reading strategies.

## **5.4 The school leaders**

In this sub-chapter, I will describe the findings from the interviews with the school leaders from both schools.

### **5.4.1 School A**

The school leader at school A says this about her own reading and writing skills: *I am not the best in Norwegian. Well, I am Norwegian, but I am, I struggle a little with Norwegian. I have spent time learning how to write properly.* She says that she does not influence her teachers to work with improving the pupils' reading skills.

The school leader at school A focuses on how reading skills affect the pupils' skills in other subjects, and especially in the vocational studies classes. She says that there is *a clear connection* between reading skills and skills in the other subjects. She goes on to say: *if a weak reader, reads slowly, does not understand/catch the content. He will need extra supervision in some of the subjects of the study programme in order to catch the content of the subject.*

*Yes, we have not worked with improving reading, I have not worked much with that. But I have worked with having more oral presentations and group work so that they do not have to write everything.*

*In Norwegian, the teacher works with reading, but I. We are not that focused on them improving in reading [in Norwegian]. [...] In English we make an effort [in reading].*

*We only have first year pupils on programmes for vocational studies. They have one oral, they do not have a written exam in the programme subjects anymore. [...] The second year pupils [...] we help the weak readers by commenting orally on their written exam.*

The researcher tries to find out what the school leader does with those pupils who need extra supervision in English: *Yes, that is both reading and writing. You have to ask \*teacher\* more about that. And he has extra lessons for some. But what he does, English is not my subject. [...] This is mainly for the weak pupils. And he takes them out [of class], those who struggle with reading he takes out one by one I know. Makes them read alone and not in class. Because listening to bad English being read is not good for the rest of them either. It is the same is if they read poorly in Norwegian, we take them out and read alone.* The school leader goes on to say that since the school is very small, with only a limited amount of teachers, they do not have the possibility to have one extra teacher in the English lessons, as they would do in mathematics. The school leader is asked about her influence on these extra lessons, and she has to answer that she has very little influence on them: *that is the teacher's responsibility. We discuss a little, but it is the teacher's responsibility.*

On what the school leader finds to be important about reading and these extra lessons, she answers: *Well, on the issue of how much you read I see that to be important. That they are used to reading, get used to reading the books. And as a teacher in the programme subjects, I did force them to read a few pages. This concerns all the pupils, but they have homework where they are to read and answer tasks. And not just find the answer in the margins. Some textbooks have keywords in the margins. And this lets the weak readers, or the weak pupils are ok. But it makes the strong pupils not read the text, I have found out. So these textbooks with keywords in the margins are dangerous.*

The interviewer asks the school leader to talk about the school's teaching of reading strategies: *The Norwegian teacher has mentioned it. I have not encountered it. The Norwegian teacher tackles some reading strategies, yes.*

When it comes to the amount of reading, this is the school leader's answer:

*It is the amount they read, they are not used to reading, to perceive and concentrate to understand the facts. But they know the words, there are no problems with reading based on words, but they are not able to concentrate. It is concentration that they lack. [...] My thought is that they catch the content, but are not good enough when it comes to writing.*

### **5.4.2 School B**

The school leader at school B says that he is a former Norwegian teacher, and that he has *all the pedagogical responsibility at the school*. He goes on to say that his school's task is *that each pupil must be a better reader*. The reason for this, he says, is *because I believe that reading is the foundation for so many other subjects. In relation to understanding other subjects, reading is of great importance. [...] [We must] make sure that the pupils master reading at a better level*. He goes on to state that *if you are to be a good reader, you must read. The youth read too poorly*.

On how the teaching of reading strategies happens at his school, he says: *Today it has to do with my expectations of my teachers that they are capable of following up [if the pupils do not read well enough]*. Later in the interview he says: *It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure the teaching in the classroom is as good as possible in relation to the challenges there are. Then I, being responsible for the subject, discuss with the teacher what kind of strategies they use, how they plan their teaching, and what way they can improve the learning outcome. Through reading, for example, if that is a problem. How you organize it, how you plan, how you accomplish it. I would like that. And then I would like to take part in a lesson*.

The school leader admits that the situation at his school is a little out of the ordinary, since he used to teach Norwegian: *let us say I was a science man, then it would be difficult for me to enter an academic discussion with the teacher about reading strategies. Then I would leave the responsibility to them or the teacher who has the professional responsibility in the classroom. But my task is to make sure that it is being done. But I have to, they are hired as academic staff, so I have to trust that they are doing their job, but my task is to make sure that they do it*.

When it comes to reading, the school leader is very interested in reading speed: *Yes, first of all, if you increase reading speed, you can read more and you get more knowledge, but most of all you will be more confident in your work and more focused on what you are to do and you learn more. I remember when I went to school. The first years before I entered upper secondary school, I did not read to learn, but read perhaps just to read. And that is my main starting point today. The pupils must read to learn not read to read. And that is why it is so important that they plan in what way they are going to read. For example the thing with repetition I find to be extremely important. Make notes and repeat after having read a text. First of all I think it is very important to look at a text. What kind of structure does the text have, what kind of content, what should we have as a purpose when reading the text? And then you should have a strategy for how to accomplish it.*

The researcher asks the school leader about reading strategies. *Yes, to make, to plan how you are to read. [...] They have to be made aware of it. As mentioned, I think that when you are to read a text, then it is important that the teacher clarifies what the purpose is, what the goal is by reading this text. And that they agree about it. And the second is that the pupil looks at the text, both to see what kind of text it is and what structure it has and how, are there many pictures, is the text dense and so on. So that they have a conscious relationship to the text before reading. [...] But I think the most important thing is to encourage reading. If you do not want to, and so you read just when you have to. But nevertheless it is important to read to learn. To read just to have read is uninteresting; you could just not have read in many cases.*

*I mean that he, the teacher, knows the pupils so well that he adapts the teaching to every pupil. To different degrees. But reading must be adapted to every pupil, because there is such variety among the pupils and you cannot expect that every pupil reads the text at the same speed. And then, that means that the teacher beforehand must think through what is it we, what is the intention with the lesson, what are we trying to achieve with the lesson, what can we expect from each single pupil in relation to reading? Then you must differentiate it; give more text to one pupil than another. Because they have different speeds when reading.*

About the use of groups in teaching, the school leader says this: *we try to vary the groups in the classes. Because there are of course some who need bigger challenges, and together with them, the weak can learn from the strong. And sometimes the groups are across and sometimes at the same level. We have to vary.*

The last comment from the school leader in the interview is this: *Anyway, I believe that reading, it is perhaps the foundation in school today, that the pupils must learn to read, that they are to become good readers. But it is all about having a conscious relationship about it.*

## 5.5 The researcher's view

In this sub-chapter I will describe the observations made by the researcher during a class where reading was the main focus.

### 5.5.1 Class A

The researcher has observed that the reading strategies used in this lesson are *word clouds*, *skim reading* and *close reading*. The teacher does not inform the pupils about the learning aims for this lesson before starting the activities. This class uses group work, and the researcher has noted that the pupils in the different groups helped each other with the different reading activities. Each group did the reading activity a little bit differently from the next group, depending on who the pupils in the group were. One group has a pupil who does not speak Norwegian: *the students read one word in English and the others give the Norwegian equivalent. The foreign student is asked to do it the other way around; reading the Norwegian word and the others suggest the English equivalent [...] the students explain the chunk by using synonyms, even though the teacher asked them to only give the translation.*

In one of the groups, the pupils discuss among themselves how they best understand the text: *I do not understand when you read aloud. I have to read them silently myself.* The researcher then comments: *Interesting, considering that they have read the short story aloud and have not had any time to read it silently before answering the questions.* This group answers the questions by memory, while the two other groups have to look back into the text several times before answering.

The didactic reflection made by the researcher after this lesson is: *The teacher does not correct the students when they speak Norwegian. He gives only positive comments to the students, plus explanations.* There is no further description of the pupils' and the teacher's use of reading strategies in this lesson

## 5.5.2 Class B

In class B, the researcher has written that the teacher informs the pupils about how they are to use different reading strategies, namely *reading for overview*, *reading for specific information*, *reading for detail*. The teacher later informs them of how they use these different strategies when reading the text in class. The teacher informs the pupils of the aims of the lesson orally before starting. The aims include *listening and reading a text, using various reading strategies* and *reflecting on the use of reading strategies*. The researcher has observed that the reading strategies used during this lesson are *discussion with other pupils*, *scanning* and *careful reading for detail*.

The teacher instructs the pupils and says: “We are going to look at some texts. We will continue with one of the tasks for today. Turn to page 32. You are going to read for overview. That is what we do when we read to search for some information.”

The researcher includes a didactic reflection in the written document from the observations. Here, she says that:

*The teacher used the concepts clearly, for example by defining “reading strategies” to them. Every time she told them to read, she confirmed which way of reading/reading strategy they should use and explained what that meant. The teacher says that she usually follows the book carefully.*

## 5.6 The teachers’ view

In this sub-chapter I will describe how the English teachers of the two classes themselves evaluate and describe their own lessons about reading.

### 5.6.1 Class A

The teacher writes that the learning aims for this lesson are:

- *To learn about the short story*
- *To learn a little about Hemingway*
- *To learn new words and practice reading aloud*
- *To learn about the difference between Fahrenheit and Celsius*

- *To become more confident when speaking English with each other*

The activities used during this lesson are:

- *Word clouds*
- *Vocabulary cards*
- *Translation “game”*
- *Reading aloud*
- *Questions to the text they had read*

The didactic reflection by the teacher after the lesson is as follows:

*None of the groups were able to guess the correct writer by looking at the word cloud, but the most important thing here was that they worked with words connected to Hemingway, and when they later get to know the name, many will unconsciously connect several of the words to his name. The vocabulary cards worked well and created activity and security within the group before reading aloud. I find this to be important, since it is early in the school year and the class has not “set” yet. Lack of time made me skip the last element of the pre-reading and go straight to reading. The pupils divided the text nicely amongst themselves and helped each other while reading aloud. The vocabulary cards also helped them find the correct pronunciation for many of the new words and made the text easier to understand for the weakest pupils. We did not have much time to go through the questions about interpretation at the end, so the short story will require more work next English lesson. But the pupils showed good understanding of the basics of the short story.*

The teacher also comments that when he made the word cloud, the class knew they were to find out which British/American male writer the words described.

### **5.6.2 Class B**

The teacher of class B writes that the purpose or goal with this lesson was for the pupils to *become aware of the connection between purpose and method/strategy when they are reading a text or looking for information.*

The activities used in this class were:



- *Answer a survey about having a job*
- *Listen to a text and then answer a question (reading for overview)*
- *Read the text one more time and answer more specific questions (reading for specific information)*
- *Read another text and answer true/false questions (reading for detail)*

The didactic reflection done by the teacher after the lesson is this:

*Given that we did not repeat the different learning strategies in advance, I thought the pupils were good both at assessing the different reading strategies they had used and at naming them (in English!). One of the pupils used the concept scanning by himself without me using it before this lesson. The session lasted a little longer than I had planned, so towards the end of the lesson I was tempted to skip the questions and answers-round about what strategies they had used, but fortunately I did not as these reflections actually were very useful. The pupils turned out to be very aware of their own use of the strategies.*

## **5.7 Summary of the chapter**

In this chapter I have described the data and the findings. I have left out parts from the interviews that I find to be unimportant for my thesis, as I see it to be quite unnecessary to include it with the limited amount of space that I have. I have tried not to discuss or analyze the data yet, as I will do this in the following chapter. In this chapter several reading strategies used by the pupils and their teachers have been observed, and in the next chapter I will discuss them more in depth in relation to the theoretical framework from chapters 2 and 3.

## 6 Analysis of the data

*“The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read.”*

*- Mark Twain*

In this chapter I will use the data I have collected and previously described, and analyze the results. I will analyze each type of data material separately, and then compare the data material of that kind from each school. In addition, I will towards the end give an analysis of the whole picture, and discuss the implications of these findings. Most importantly I will look at the data material through the theoretical framework I have presented in chapters 2 and 3, to see how the data and theory collaborate. I will look at the findings and analyze them in accordance with my research question, which is: *How and to what extent are reading strategies taught and used in Norwegian upper secondary schools?*

### 6.1 Analysis of the exams

The main issue I find with the examinations is that, with the exception of the exam from spring 2010, there is little or no need for the pupils to use reading strategies in order to pass the exam. Unfortunately, the consequence of this is that a lot of pupils do not see the need to learn and to use reading strategies, and lack extrinsic motivation to learn reading strategies. The teachers, due to lack of time, might choose to exclude the teaching of reading strategies if the pupils do not need them in order to pass the exam, and rather spend time teaching topics they see as more relevant for the exams. If the pupils needed to use reading strategies like skimming or scanning during the exam, they might be extrinsically motivated to use the reading strategies by that fact alone, and spend more time learning how to use the reading strategies they are taught during the year (Grabe 2009:179).

What would be an advantage for the pupils, on the other hand, is that cognitive reading strategies will help them when studying for the exam. I have previously argued that cognitive reading strategies will lead to knowledge that will last, and if the pupils keep using these strategies throughout the year they will find it a lot easier to study for the exam because they will remember more from what they have done the past year. The preparations for the exam

will then require less reading and more re-reading and repetition of what they already know and hopefully remember.

The pupils have one preparation day before the exam, where they are to find information on a certain topic. Here, the use of reading strategies will be an advantage, as they will not have the time to read every text in detail. The pupils should therefore know that they must scan texts for information, and when they find the specific information they are seeking, they should read that particular information carefully for detail. The use of cognitive reading strategies on the preparation day is also very important for the pupils. Firstly, if they have used cognitive reading strategies throughout the school year, they will most likely remember a lot from the curriculum. Secondly, if they have used organization strategies persistently the whole year, they should have mind-maps and notes at hand on most of the topics they have gone through during the year. This will make studying for the exam, when there is only a limited amount of time available, much easier for the pupils.

One particular element with the exams is crucial for the teaching of reading strategies; the pupils do not need to know anything about reading strategies in order for them to pass the exam. A direct consequence of this is that the teacher only gives the pupils the tools they must have in order to pass the exam, and skips spending time on “unnecessary” elements. Reading strategies might then be left out of teaching, since the end of year exam does not require the pupils to know anything about the strategies. I have argued all through this thesis that preparing for tests and exams will be much easier for the pupils when they have tools like reading strategies, so I find the teaching of reading strategies to be very important for the pupils’ success even though they will not be tested on the exam that they know how to use the strategies.

## **6.2 Analysis of the textbooks**

In this sub-chapter I will analyze two texts from two different textbooks.

### **6.2.1 Nasjonal Digital Læringsarena**

As I have shown in the previous chapter, NDLA uses several reading strategies when working with the novel and/or film “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas”. Both BISON and KWL-table are used implicitly, as pre-reading activities. The pre-reading tasks connected to this text are

designed to activate the pupils' prior knowledge of the text, and start their thought processes before they read the text. There are few strategies to be used during reading. For many pupils, pre-reading activities will increase their curiosity, and this can lead to intrinsic motivation for reading the text itself (Grabe 2009).

When it comes to post-reading activities, several different tasks are presented. All of them are designed in a way that checks the pupils' understanding of the text. The post-reading activities include several of the cognitive reading strategies. One example of this is the post-reading activity where the pupils are to find pictures on the Internet and make a photographic presentation of the movie. Here, the pupils use an organization strategy by organizing their view of the movie with suitable images. This activity can be adapted to fit into other topics and types of texts. Here, the activity is used for a movie which is watched after reading extracts from a novel, but the activity could by all means have been done if the class had only read the extracts or the whole novel as well. It is a new and creative way for the pupils to organize what they have read and learned, if it is used properly, and may lead to intrinsic motivation for using similar reading strategies later on (Grabe 2009).

### **6.2.2 “A Day’s Wait”**

In this section I will analyze the tasks to the text from the two textbooks first separately and then compare them.

In *Tracks*, the tasks the pupils should do pre-, during and post reading when reading “A Day’s Wait” include reading-, writing-, speaking- and listening-activities, even though reading of course is the main focus. In addition, the basic skill of numeracy (LK 06) is a part of the tasks. This means that there is a wide variety of tasks for the pupils to do. Most of the tasks will make the pupils reflect on what they just read, in order for them to check their knowledge. When they do this, they will use a control strategy. Furthermore, in section 2, “*Talking*”, the pupils must use an elaboration strategy in order for them to answer the tasks.

In *Passage*, several of the tasks are similar to the tasks in *Tracks*. There is a pre-reading activity where the pupils are to reflect on their childhood memories. This will activate some prior knowledge about the topic they are going to read about. Several of the other tasks, the post-reading tasks in particular, focus on comprehension and on finding the deeper meaning of the text and interpreting what they have read. The main focus here seems to be on

language and writing, and this is where instrumental motivation for learning English could be useful for the pupils (Grabe 2009). The basic skill of numeracy (LK 06) is also a large part of the tasks.

The main difference between the two textbooks is the variation in the amount of tasks the pupils is given. In *Tracks*, the textbook for vocational studies, there is one page with tasks. In *Passage*, on the other hand, there are three pages with tasks. The pre-reading task is the same for both programmes. Neither of the textbooks explicitly tells the pupils to use reading strategies, but they are nevertheless present. This is particularly clear in the post-reading comprehension tasks where elaboration and control strategies should be used by the pupils, explicitly or implicitly, when answering the tasks.

## **6.3 Analysis of the two classes**

In this sub-chapter, I will analyze the results from the interviews with the two different classes, and the interview of the two girls from class B. I will also compare the results from the two classes to see if I can find any similarities or differences.

### **6.3.1 Class A**

It seems to me as if the pupils in class A have a clear view on what reading strategies are, but when they are asked if they ever use them, the answer is no. The question that needs to be asked here is why they choose not to use reading strategies when they clearly know how to use them. Some of the pupils use reading strategies without being aware of it, which is a start. What needs to be done in this class is to raise the pupils' awareness of the use of reading strategies so that it will be easier for them to consciously choose the appropriate strategies where needed.

One of the pupils said that he would use reading strategies if he thought the text was interesting. This can be an intrinsic motivation for the pupil to use reading strategies (Grabe 2009). Research has shown that the pupils should be given texts to read that they find interesting, and here we meet a challenge as teachers. When a class consists of thirty pupils, how can the teacher find texts that interest and motivate all the pupils at once? If the pupils think every text is “boring” they will eventually end up lacking intrinsic motivation when reading. The solution is to use various texts which might interest different types of pupils, and

change the text type used often. The problem is when some pupils have very specific wishes, sometimes difficult to fulfill. Simensen (2007) shows that the pupils should be asked what types of texts they like before the teacher decides what they should read. This applies especially to novels, but also to other types of texts. When given a choice, some might find it easier to be intrinsically motivated when reading, as they have decided for themselves what to read. The teacher does not necessarily have to give all the pupils the same text (novel), and can certainly give the pupils different novels. For the boys in a class, this can be particularly important. Simensen (2007) also suggests a class library, where all the pupils can choose what they would like to read. If the teacher wishes to include explicit reading models in his or her teaching, a class library will be a very smart move. From my own time as a pupil in upper secondary school, I can remember my teacher telling us that we could choose a novel of our own liking, as long as she had read it before. As this was a teacher who was getting very close to retiring, we could choose from a large amount of books, and most of us were happy with our choices and were more motivated, both intrinsically and extrinsically, during the entire reading process.

This class was supposed to read a short story out loud in groups, but one of the groups had to read the text silently as well before being able to answer the questions. They said that they were unable to understand the meaning of the text when only listening to others reading the text. The text they read is available on a CD that comes with the textbook, and it would have been better to use this CD when listening to the text rather than the pupils reading it aloud themselves. Simensen (2007) and others claim that the pupils will benefit more from listening to native speakers' authentic reading, than reading aloud themselves. In addition, reading aloud is not an activity sufficient for the pupils' comprehension of a text (Bernhardt 2011). The pupils in this group clearly show how this works in practice. They feel that they are not able to answer the post-reading questions if they only have read the text aloud. They had to read it silently instead. What is very interesting about this is that the researcher has noted that this group was the only group who was able to answer the questions without looking back into the text for answers. The rest of the groups only read aloud, and all of them had to look into the text before answering the post-reading questions.

What can be seen in this class is how several of the pupils use elaboration strategies unknowingly. They compare what they have read from before to the new text they read in order to understand the new text. During the interview the pupils let the researcher know that

they compare *the new things [they] read or watch to what [they] know from before*. If the new text does not fit with what they know from before, they get irritated.

### **6.3.2 Class B**

The pupils themselves say that they use BISON and KWL-tables before reading a text. Both of these strategies are used to activate prior knowledge of a topic before reading. The purpose of this is that when the pupils have activated prior knowledge before starting to read a text, they will find it a lot easier to acquire new knowledge (see Roe 2011, Simensen 2007). When asked whether they think using a KWL-table before reading helps them, the answer is *not really*. They feel that BISON is a lot better, even though I have argued that KWL-tables are a better way of activating what is already known. A KWL-table is also a very helpful tool when it comes to using the cognitive reading strategies. I have previously described how the KWL-table can be said to include three out of four cognitive strategies, and I can understand why the teachers will choose to include them in their teaching. My first thought is that the teachers most likely have not described and explained the KWL-table in depth to the pupils. They do not know *why* they should use it, only that they *should*. This is not a good reason for using the KWL-table, and will most likely not lead to more motivation to use reading strategies. There is even a possibility that the pupils do not know that they are using reading strategies when using the KWL-table.

In this class, 17 of 20 answer that they will use reading strategies even though the teacher has not asked them to do so. This is a very strong number, showing that this class is very conscious of their own reading and use of reading strategies. Several of these pupils answer that they use skimming and scanning as reading strategies, but there are also answers showing that they use cognitive reading strategies. They seem to know how to use the strategies, and their teacher confirms this as well.

### **6.3.3 Two girls from class B**

It is very interesting how one of the two girls interviewed separately answers when asked how their teacher in lower secondary school taught her reading strategies. She says that *we learned to use reading strategies in the eighth grade but we weren't able to understand what she wanted us to do. The teacher wasn't good. [...]The teacher only told us what to do but didn't show us how to do it*. As teachers, we are role models for our pupils, and many pupils will

benefit from our modeling when we are teaching them something new and unfamiliar (Roe 2011). It seems as if it took these two girls some years before they were able to use the reading strategies they had been taught, even though they should have been able to use them as early as in the eighth grade. When a teacher shows or models to his or her pupils, they will in many cases find it easier to use what the teacher has tried to teach them than when a teacher just tells them how to do something. Roe (2011) says that

*The teacher has to show how a reading strategy actually is used by explaining and modeling it to the pupils, preferably by thinking aloud. [...] The best method is that the teacher models how the strategy can be used by taking on the role as reader and actually doing what the pupils are learning to do*

(Roe 2011: 80. My translation)

The two pupils interviewed here are a good example of how a teacher who does not model the strategy to the pupils ends up confusing his or her pupils instead of making them better readers. The pupils say so themselves: they did not understand how they were supposed to use the reading strategies the teacher had “taught” them.

These two girls are asked about their use of all four cognitive reading strategies during the interview. Here, I will sum up their answers:

### **1. Organization strategies**

- Both write notes and key words or key sentences to the text they have read in order to organize their own understanding of the text
- One girl must organize and write her notes downwards in a special way (otherwise she does not understand and *sits there without knowing anything*)
- Organizes difficult words by grouping them together

### **2. Memorization strategies**

- Both girls write notes in order to remember the text better (if the text is important)

### **3. Control strategies**



- One girl spends time after each lesson and tries to remember what she learned and what she was able to do during that lesson. If she finds out that she is missing something, she will ask fellow pupils or look it up in the textbook. Re-reads until she is able to understand.

#### **4. Elaboration strategies**

- One girl uses elaboration strategies in mathematics.
- None of them use elaboration strategies in English

Both girls are strong pupils, with grades above average in English and Norwegian. To see how conscious they are of their own reading is very interesting. Furthermore, they seem to know how beneficial reading strategies are to their acquisition of knowledge. Even though these two girls have made it very clear that their teacher at lower secondary school did not teach them reading strategies effectively, they have been able to learn how to properly use reading strategies later on.

#### **6.3.4 Differences between the classes**

A very important question asked to both classes is the question of whether the pupils actually use reading strategies when not told to do so by their teacher. The answers differ quite considerably. In class A, most of the pupils answer that they do not use reading strategies, while almost all the pupils in class B report that they do. The main question to be asked here is why they answer so differently. Class A is a general studies-class while class B is a vocational studies class and a very important question that needs to be asked is whether this has something to do with how they answer this question. One reason for the differences in use of reading strategies might be that the teachers choose to include reading strategies to a larger extent in the vocational studies class, since many, both teachers and school leaders, have a preconceived idea that these pupils are weaker at languages than the pupils in a general studies class. Some teachers will therefore provide the pupils in the vocational studies class with reading strategies in order for them to more easily comprehend the texts on the syllabus. Another reason might be found in the syllabus itself. Pupils in a vocational studies class will read more factual texts than pupils in a general studies class, and will therefore need reading

strategies to a larger extent in order for them to understand what the text actually means. On the other hand, pupils in a general studies class should also need reading strategies when analyzing texts and looking for deeper meaning in fictional texts. My findings show that pupils in programmes for vocational studies will need and use reading strategies to a larger extent than pupils in general studies, and are more aware of their own use of reading strategies.

In class B, both KWL-tables and BISON are mentioned by the pupils as good reading strategies. In class A, none of these are mentioned. Why are there so clear differences in what strategies the pupils know? I would assume that class A, being a general studies class, would know and use these strategies, and the pupils in a vocational studies class (class B) would not know and use them. In class A, several of the pupils use some aspects of BISON, seemingly unaware of it. They know that it can be a good strategy to read the heading of the text before they start reading the text. The pupils also agree that they skim the text before reading, by looking only at headings and pictures and so on. These are part of BISON as well, even though the pupils seemingly do not know the name of it. What is important to mention here is that as long as the pupils know how to use these strategies, what they call them is not of great importance. The only exception to this is when they, as mentioned earlier, get exam questions where they are to comment on their own use of reading strategies. Then they should be able to name the reading strategies. As the results from previous exams show, the pupils are not able to do this, and will do poorly when asked to do so.

Some of the pupils in class A say that they do not want to look at the picture in the text before reading the short story, the reason being that they want to be surprised when reading. This means that these pupils prefer reading for pleasure before reading for detail. Here we can see that the pupils themselves have made a choice when it comes to which reading strategies they should use when reading this text. As mentioned, it is written in the curriculum that the pupils should be able to select and use appropriate reading and listening strategies to locate information in oral and written texts (LK 06), and the pupils have here shown that they are able to do so.

Class A seems to be using socio-cultural strategies more than class B. This includes working in groups, and how the different pupils at different levels in one group use cooperative learning and by doing so helping each other with understanding more of the text than what they would have done on their own.

I think the main reason for why there are so many differences in the knowledge and use of reading strategies, mainly has to do with different practices among the teachers. They obviously have different views on what is important to teach their pupils, which is reflected in the level of knowledge among the two classes. The differing levels of use of reading strategies might also be related to the two different study programmes. Can it be that one of the programmes needs reading strategies more than the other? I have previously mentioned that vocational studies pupils read more factual texts, and in order to remember all the details from these texts, reading strategies will be very useful. This might be one reason for why the pupils in the vocational studies class seem to have better knowledge of reading strategies, and in addition use them more often than the pupils in the general studies class.

I have previously described how some researchers show that reading aloud is not sufficient as a reading comprehension activity, but nevertheless is used by teachers (see Simensen 2007, Bernhard 2012 and Roe 2011). This coincides with what the informants told the researcher during one of the interviews; they said that they had to read the given text silently to themselves after reading it aloud in class, because they did not understand the meaning of the text itself. Other pupils again said that they thought that reading aloud had more to do with pronunciation and fluency than understanding the text, and that they would rather read the text silently to themselves before reading out loud to the group. Why, then, is reading aloud used as a strategy when the pupils themselves do not feel that they benefit from this activity, and research shows that reading aloud in class is not useful as a comprehension strategy?

It seems as if one important aspect for the pupils is that the text is interesting to them, which again can be linked to extrinsic motivation, and that they must find the reason for why they are reading to be important to them. They need texts that are interesting to them. As a class consists of many different pupils, to find texts that everyone finds interesting can be problematic. Every text cannot have the same appeal to every pupil, but the teacher nevertheless needs to vary what kind of texts the class reads, so that every pupil can have a text they find to be interesting every once in a while. This will increase the pupils' motivation when they are reading, and hopefully it will also lead to an increase in the pupils' use of reading strategies.

## **6.4 Analysis, school leaders**

In this sub-chapter I will examine what the school leaders answer about reading strategies. I will first look at the school leaders separately, and then I will compare and contrast the two school leaders' answers with each other.

### **6.4.1 School leader, school A**

The school leader at school A used to teach subjects on the health and social care programme, and says that she is not particularly good at Norwegian and English. She has spent a lot of time in order to learn how to write Norwegian properly. This again reflects her answers, where she focuses a lot on words and how to write. She puts the responsibility of teaching reading strategies on the Norwegian and English teachers, and does not know whether they actually teach reading strategies at all. She seems to know very little about reading strategies herself, if anything at all. The school leader emphasizes that the pupils pursuing vocational studies need good reading skills in order to succeed in every subject, but that this school has not worked with improving the pupils' reading skills.

### **6.4.2 School leader, school B**

The school leader at school B is a former Norwegian teacher, and consequently he is interested in and aware of the use of reading strategies in teaching. He is able to describe reading strategies, and has a lot of views on how they should be taught. Therefore, it is surprising when he puts the full responsibility of the teaching of reading strategies on the teachers themselves. He says that he trusts them to do what is best for the pupils even though he also says that he has the pedagogical responsibility at the school. Why does he not give his teachers more precise instructions on how to teach the strategies when he obviously knows how important reading strategies are to the pupils' success at school?

Extensive reading is something the school leader finds to be important. This can be seen when he describes the importance of reading speed. He puts emphasis on several elements that I have mentioned previously. When the pupils read faster, the school leader believes that the pupils will read more, they will have more knowledge, they will feel more secure, they will be more focused, and they will learn more. What is important to mention here is that these elements do not necessarily have to do with the reading speed itself, but can

for example be the effect of lack of decoding skills or word-recognition skills (see Koda 2004, Hellekjær 2007 and Grabe 2009). It does not matter if the pupils read fast if they do not understand what is written. It seems as if this school leader confuses reading speed with fluency, and he should perhaps be made aware of the distinction.

BISON is also an activity the school leader sees as beneficial for the pupils. He never mentions the name, but nevertheless states several of the characteristics of BISON. The school leader claims that this is crucial for the pupils' reading, but he does not tell his teachers to teach these methods or strategies to their pupils. It seems to me that the school leader has a lot of views on how things should be done, but does not participate or involve himself in the teaching. For a school leader with such strong views on the teaching of reading strategies, I cannot see why he should choose not to take part in lesson planning.

The school leader emphasizes lesson planning several times during the interview. The teachers know their pupils, and know what is best for their learning. Teaching should be tailored to the specific needs of the pupils, according to the school leader, and this can also be seen as an important aspect in the Norwegian national curriculum (LK06).

### **6.4.3 Comparison, school leaders**

With both school leaders, we meet the attitude that they are aware of what is best for the pupils, but the responsibility of teaching the pupils lies with the teachers. As school leaders, they do not want to decide what and how the teachers teach something unless the teachers themselves ask for guidance. This might lead to different practices from one school to another, and from one classroom to another.

These two school leaders have different backgrounds and will therefore have very different angles and views when helping their teachers. In addition, one school is bigger than the other, with more pupils and teachers. One school has faculties in every subject, where the teachers can discuss how to teach different parts of the curriculum. The school leader at this school has a background as a Norwegian teacher, with strong views on the teaching of reading strategies. The other school has only one English teacher, and consequently, he is all by himself with a school leader who does not know anything about reading strategies.

Even though the school leaders have such different backgrounds, they have similar views when it comes to the teaching of reading strategies. They both agree that the responsibility of what happens in the classroom is ultimately theirs, and that they are responsible for what the teachers do. Still, they admit that they leave the responsibility of what actually happens in the classrooms to the teachers. Thus what the school leaders say contradicts with what they do. One must suspect that this can lead to confusion for the teachers, who do not know what to expect from their school leader. This again can reflect on the teaching the pupils receive, which possibly could differ from school to school, and classroom to classroom. The one major measure that needs to be taken is to make sure the pupils receive the teaching that they are required to have. Every pupil at every school in the country should receive the same quality of teaching. Unfortunately, this seems not to be the case when it comes to the teaching of reading strategies, at least from the school leaders' point of view.

Both school leaders agree that the pupils need to read more in order to become better readers. I have previously argued that extensive reading is a good tool to improve the pupils' reading abilities, and it seems that the school leaders both agree with me on this point. More reading is beneficial for the pupils, in both their L1 and their L2. If the school leaders think extensive reading is the key to learning, why do they not implement extensive reading in teaching? They have, as has been pointed out, the main pedagogical responsibility at their schools, and have the power to decide what the teachers should or should not include in their teaching. Several schools have already included reading as a basic skill (LK 06) in every subject, mainly to improve reading skills and the general skill in every subject. When an increased focus on reading is included in every subject, the reading skills will be improved over time, something that will be reflected when the pupils more easily acquire knowledge in every subject. Reading is essential to understanding, and the teaching of reading strategies will simplify understanding and acquisition of knowledge for the pupils. The school leaders have the main responsibility to make sure that the teaching of reading strategies is a part of the lessons in English, and in every language subject in particular as well.

## **6.5 Analysis of the researcher's view**

The researcher has noted that in both classes, they use skimming or scanning, and close reading. It seems as if skimming, scanning and careful reading for detail (close reading) are

what most teachers and pupils know of, and this is most likely the case for both of these teachers as well. This is reflected in the pupils' knowledge about reading strategies. The pupils all answer one of these when they are asked about whether they use reading strategies or not.

I cannot help but wonder whether the teachers use reading strategies more consciously in these lessons mainly because the researcher is there to observe and discuss reading and reading strategies. I do not know what kind of information the researcher has given the teachers before agreeing to observe the lessons, and therefore I cannot form any conclusions on this matter. I must assume that the researcher has observed a typical lesson with the typical focus on reading strategies.

## **6.6 Analysis of the teachers' view**

What I find very interesting about the teachers' reflections after the lessons is how the teacher of class B says that her pupils are very conscious of their own use of reading strategies and that she is actually quite surprised by this. As their teacher, one would assume that she knows what her pupils are capable of. It does not seem as if any of the teachers teach the cognitive reading strategies to their pupils. Their main focus is on skimming, scanning and careful reading for detail, and on different reading activities. This is unfortunate, as the cognitive reading strategies often are more beneficial to the pupils than the other strategies when it comes to long lasting knowledge.

## **6.7 Analysis of all the data combined**

In this sub-chapter I will analyze all the data combined, looking at every part of the collected data together. This means that I will be looking at the big picture, and not just at every little part of the data. I will first summarize what the analysis of the data has shown so far, and then I will analyze it all together.

What I have seen so far in this thesis is that there is indeed a lot of focus on both the teaching of and the use of reading strategies. The pupils know a lot about reading strategies, but unfortunately, they sometimes choose not to use them, and this is especially true of one of the classes I have data from in this thesis. The school leaders have differing knowledge about reading strategies, depending on their background. They seem to know how their teachers

should plan and execute their teaching, but do little or nothing to influence what actually happens in the classrooms. Some school leaders have the policy of visiting the classrooms, to see what is happening there. This only happens at these two schools if the teachers have told the school leader about a problem. A good way of preventing any issues or difficulties in the classroom could be unexpected classroom visits from the school leaders. This can lead to the teachers always being at their best, since they will never know when the school leader is going to show up in their classroom. On the other hand, this can lead to extra pressure and stress for the inexperienced teachers. Nevertheless, the teachers should ideally always be at their best, giving their pupils the best teaching possible, and it should therefore not be a problem having the school leader coming by on unexpected visits. The school leader will of course have to observe a variety of classroom activities from the curriculum, and not just the teaching of reading strategies.

Some of the main issues when it comes to the teaching of reading strategies are that the pupils do not see the point of using the strategies, or that they do not understand or know how and when to use them. I have several times in this thesis described and argued that the pupils need to be instructed on how to use the strategies, and on when to use them. This is something the teachers should always do when they are teaching reading strategies. The pupils who have no prior knowledge about reading strategies will not understand which strategy to use with the different types of reading activities and tasks, if the teacher has not given clear and precise instructions before the reading activity. When the pupils have been given precise instructions and in addition know the reason for why they are reading, they will find it a lot easier to apply the reading strategies and the different ways of reading to the text they are reading (see Day and Bramford 2002, Hellekjær 2007 and Simensen 2007). Without precise instructions, the pupils might end up “just reading”, no matter what and why they are reading. When reading for pleasure, this will not be a problem, but for the reading done in upper secondary school, “just reading” will not help the pupils achieve the results they should be able to achieve when they are using the appropriate reading strategies.

Some pupils might get by without using reading strategies, but the main concern about the pupils not using reading strategies is that without reading strategies, the knowledge they have acquired by “just reading” will not last for a very long period of time. The use of reading strategies will help the pupils remember what they have learned for longer periods of time. They will not forget the knowledge they have acquired as fast as without the use of reading



strategies. The teacher should therefore always include reading strategies in their teaching no matter what the circumstances are. Lack of time can be one of the reasons why the teachers choose to exclude reading strategies from their teaching. The end of year examinations do not require the pupils to actually know how to use reading strategies, and teachers might therefore choose not to teach the strategies and rather focus on the things they know the pupils must have knowledge of in order to pass the examination. In addition, some teachers have not been taught reading strategies themselves, and will not know enough about them to teach the strategies to their pupils.

In order for the pupils to get proper instructions on how to use reading strategies, the teacher needs to model how to use the strategies, and show the pupils how and when to use the strategies. The two girls from school B describe this very well, as they had been taught about the use of reading strategies, but without the teacher modeling how to use them properly, they were not able to apply the use of reading strategies to their own reading.

## **6.8 Summary of the chapter**

In this chapter I have analyzed all the data, both separately and combined. I have looked at the findings and analyzed them through the theoretical framework I presented in chapters 2 and 3. What I see is that the pupils are very aware of their own use of reading strategies. The teachers and the school leaders have some focus on reading strategies, but there needs to be more focus on it in order for the pupils to receive the best teaching they can. Several of the pupils know a lot about reading strategies, and I must suspect that this has been taught to them at lower levels since one of the teachers is actually quite surprised at how much her pupils know about reading strategies. Of course, one possibility is that the pupils have been taught how to use reading strategies in another subject, for example in Norwegian. The English teacher will most likely not have been informed about this, and this could be one of the reasons why the teacher is surprised about the pupils' knowledge about reading strategies.

# 7 Conclusions

*“Reading is a basic tool in the living of a good life.”*

*- Mortimer Adler*

In this master’s thesis I have looked at reading strategies in upper secondary school, and analyzed how teachers, school leaders and pupils teach, acquire and use reading strategies. In this chapter I will sum up all my findings and form some conclusions on the matter. As my research question covers both the teaching of reading strategies and the use of reading strategies, I will divide this chapter into three parts: the teaching of reading strategies, and the use of reading strategies, and lastly I will then make some conclusions looking at the whole picture.

## 7.1 The teaching of reading strategies

It seems there are different practices at the different schools, depending on both teachers and school leaders. In Norway we have a principle called “*enhetskolen*”, which in short means that the teaching and the teaching material should be alike wherever you are in the country. This is not the case in reality, and my thesis proves this. From my data I draw the conclusion that teachers and school leaders at every school in Norway, not just the two schools in my thesis, do as they see appropriate for their pupils. This leads to varying practices throughout the country, and even in the same county. All this comes down to what the school leaders and teachers see as most important for the pupils to know. In addition, the teachers’ background, knowledge and interests play a major part in what happens in the classroom. Of course, the curriculum does decide what the teachers teach, but in a subject with a curriculum that is as open and free as in the English subject, the differences in what is being taught are particularly evident.

At both schools in my thesis, the teachers themselves control what happens in the classroom, while the school leaders have the overall responsibility for the teaching. The school leaders have strong views on what they see to be important for the pupils, but leave the responsibility of what actually is being taught to the teachers. However, if the teachers ask for help or guidance, the school leaders will give advice on what the teachers should do. As mentioned above, this leads to varying practices at the schools. I must assume that this is the

case throughout the country. The question that needs to be addressed is if this is the best solution for the pupils, seeing as the teachers give their pupils such varying teaching. Most of all, the variety in teaching is dependent on the teachers' interests, education and beliefs. The curriculum leaves it to the teacher to choose his or her own methods of teaching, and it should be questioned whether this is the best way of doing it or not. However, more and more schools have networking activities with other schools, so that the teachers can share their experiences and thoughts on teaching various topics. Even though it might seem at first glance as if variety in teaching from school to school is not beneficial, it must be mentioned that teachers are individuals as well. The teachers will always have different ways of teaching, no matter how their education tries to shape them. Several years of practice will shape the teacher more than the few years their education takes. In addition, the pupils differ from class to class, and from year to year. The experienced teacher must choose the teaching they find to be appropriate for the pupils they have at that point. This will also lead to varying practices, but with the wide variety of pupils, this is how it must be. Essentially, should it not be that as long as the content of the lessons throughout the year is the same from classroom to classroom, we should be pleased?

Many teachers teach what the pupils need to know in order for them to pass the end of year-examinations. When the pupils do not need reading strategies to pass the examinations, the teaching of the strategies is left out. The teachers will instead focus on other things they think will be more beneficial for the pupils to have knowledge about at the end of year-examination. Furthermore, the textbooks do not explicitly tell the pupils to use reading strategies, and if the teachers do not know enough about reading strategies, they might not know that their pupils should use reading strategies when working with the textbooks. What many teachers might forget when they leave reading strategies out of their teaching is that the reading strategies will help the pupils in the preparation for their examinations. The pupils might not explicitly need them at the examination itself, but if they have been taught how to use reading strategies when studying, they will have an advantage when preparing for the examination.

## **7.2 The use of reading strategies**

One of the most important aspects of the pupils' use of reading strategies considers how the pupils themselves report that they will use specific reading strategies when they find the text

interesting. This means that they actually know how to use reading strategies and choose when and when not to use them. I have previously claimed that good and experienced readers know when to use the different strategies, which is supported by research on the subject (see, for example, Hellekjær 2007). It is understandable why the pupils want interesting texts to read in detail, and use appropriate reading strategies on. One question which remains is what the pupils will do when entering higher education. As students in higher education, they will not have the same influence on the reading material as they have when they are in upper secondary school. As a consequence, they might end up not knowing how to use reading strategies when studying difficult texts, and might end up failing the course.

My findings show that reading strategies will, to a large extent, be used by the pupils, consciously or subconsciously. The textbooks will not explicitly tell the pupils to use reading strategies, but the strategies will in many cases be used by the pupils anyway. In many cases, the pupils will benefit from knowing that they should use reading strategies, as this may let them use the strategies in a better and more constructive way. If the pupils are presented with why they are reading before the reading activity starts, they will in most cases find it easier to use reading strategies when reading because they will know the purpose of the reading.

### **7.3 The teaching and use of reading strategies**

I have in the two previous sub-chapters described how the teachers teach reading strategies to their pupils, and how the pupils use the reading strategies. In this sub-chapter I will try to look at the extent to which this happens.

In the introduction of this thesis, I mentioned that previous master's theses had shown that there is too little focus on reading strategies in lower and upper secondary school. After working with my thesis for the past year, it seems as if I have identified a new and growing trend. There is quite a lot of focus on reading strategies among teachers and pupils in particular. Almost all of my informants have proved to be quite aware of what reading strategies are, and the pupils in particular proved to know a lot of them and also knew how to use them. The main thing missing is that the pupils do not seem to be aware of how important the use of reading strategies is for their learning. Here, the teachers probably have forgotten one essential thing in teaching and in didactics: why. The pupils must know why they are being taught what they are taught, and the teacher's answer cannot be "because the syllabus

tells me to teach it to you”. So why should the teacher spend time teaching reading strategies? The answer is quite simple: because the pupils will find it a lot easier to acquire new knowledge, and studying and preparing for tests will not take as much time as before. They will remember much more of what they have read, and they will not forget the new knowledge as fast as before they started using reading strategies.

My research question is not an easy question to answer with few words, but I will nevertheless try in these last paragraphs. The situation in Norwegian schools today is in constant change, and it seems to me as if the teachers are trying to adapt to this change. The teaching of reading and reading strategies has during the past years been given more and more focus, mainly due to the poor results from the PISA-test in 2000. Several schools have put a lot of effort into the teaching of the basic skills where reading is included (LK 06), which could be seen in the improved PISA-results in 2009. This can be seen with my informants as well, who do know how to use reading strategies to a much larger extent than what previous research has shown. One conclusion we can draw from this is that the increased efforts when it comes to reading and the teaching of reading strategies definitely are working. Hopefully, these efforts will continue even when the results have improved. Nevertheless, my thesis shows that there is more focus than before on the teaching of reading strategies by the teachers, and the use of reading strategies by the pupils.

When we look at the textbooks and the exams, they are what form teachers’ and pupils’ use of reading strategies. The newer textbooks I have looked at include reading strategies to a large extent, which means that the pupils using these textbooks will use reading strategies knowingly or unknowingly. Neither the textbooks nor the previous examinations explicitly tell the pupils to use reading strategies, and this might lead to several of the pupils not being aware of when to use them.

What I find to be one of the most interesting discoveries with my thesis is that it seems as if pupils on programmes for vocational studies use reading strategies more often than the pupils on programmes for general studies. Both groups of pupils have approximately the same knowledge of reading strategies, but the pupils in the vocational studies class seem to use them more than the pupils in the general studies class. Other researchers clearly state that the strong pupils in language subjects are more aware of their own use of reading strategies, and I am therefore quite surprised by my findings. I would have assumed that the pupils in the general studies class are stronger pupils at languages than the pupils in the other class, and

would also by that have made conclusions that they would use cognitive reading strategies more often. This is not the case with these two classes in my thesis, and I can only speculate on why my findings do not show the opposite results. One answer might be that teachers teaching vocational studies assume that the vocational studies pupils need more help than the pupils on programmes for general studies. A consequence of this is that they teach reading strategies explicitly to the pupils in vocational studies in order for them to more easily pass the exams.

Even though I have suggested several reading strategies for the pupils to use throughout this thesis, I do not believe that everyone will find all of the strategies to be appropriate for themselves and their needs. I have a firm belief that every pupil must find his or her own way of reading and using reading strategies. We all learn and acquire new knowledge in different ways, and this is something the teacher must keep in mind when teaching how to use reading strategies to his or her pupils. The teacher must spend some time teaching the pupils how and when to use different strategies to the pupils, but in the end it will be up to the pupils themselves to use the reading strategies where appropriate. Nevertheless, the pupils should use reading strategies more often than not, but it is ultimately their choice when and how to use them. If the teacher has done a sufficient job of teaching them reading strategies, the pupils will have little troubles with knowingly choosing the appropriate reading strategies at all times.

## **7.4 Suggestions for further research**

As my thesis is of a fairly small scale, it will be appropriate for me to suggest some further research on the matter. With my limited time and resources, I cannot cover every aspect of how reading strategies are taught and used. Therefore, in this chapter I will present a few suggestions for further research that I see to be beneficial to the subject of reading strategies and teaching.

### **7.4.1 A comparative analysis**

One suggestion for further research is a comparative analysis of pupils where some are using reading strategies and where some are not using reading strategies, as a control group. I have argued throughout this thesis that pupils will benefit from using reading strategies, but it can

nevertheless be interesting to see whether this is actually true or not. A comparative analysis of the phenomenon can show how the pupils' use (or lack of use) of reading strategies affects the results in a variety of tests. My thesis backs up my argument that pupils should use reading strategies, but I have not seen a study where test results actually confirm my findings.

### **7.4.2 A longitudinal study**

In addition to the comparative research mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, a longitudinal study can also be appropriate and fruitful. A longitudinal study is used when the researcher wants to find out if any changes occur over a longer period of time (Ary et al 2010: 376). The main questions worth asking here might be whether the teaching of reading strategies helps the pupils in the long run, and whether the pupils who have learned to use reading strategies at one point still use them after a year or two. My thesis only shows how the pupils use reading strategies at one specific point in time, and it would be interesting to see how these pupils use reading strategies after a few years. When the pupils know how and when to use reading strategies, one would hope to see that they actually use them. My thesis has shown that the pupils use reading strategies. A longitudinal study of the same pupils, where the researcher interviews the same pupils in two years' time, will show if these pupils continue to use the reading strategies.

### **7.4.3 A study at lower levels**

I would also like to suggest a study of the teaching and use of reading strategies at both primary and lower secondary schools. My findings show that the pupils know about reading strategies before entering upper secondary school. It would be very interesting to see how the teachers teach reading strategies to their pupils at the lower levels, when the pupils have no previous knowledge of reading strategies.

My findings also imply that the pupils actually did not feel that they had any benefits from being taught the use of reading strategies at lower secondary school. Therefore, it would be very interesting to conduct a study at some lower secondary schools, with approximately the same research question as I have had in my thesis, and with the same types of informants as in my thesis. What that research should look at is how the lower secondary teachers teach reading strategies to their pupils, and how the pupils use the reading strategies in their own reading.

#### **7.4.4 A broader study of the phenomenon**

My thesis only covers two schools from the same county in Norway. It could perhaps be interesting to include more schools from a larger part of the country. Lisbeth Brevik is currently doing a doctoral research project which covers larger parts of Norway than my thesis has covered. She is not looking at the exact same issues as I have, but reading strategies is a part of it. Her thesis might prove or disprove my findings.

#### **7.4.5 A longitudinal textbook study**

The last study I would like to suggest is a longitudinal study of the textbooks. In my thesis I have discovered a new trend, where reading strategies has a greater focus than before. One way of backing up my findings is to study textbooks used before the Knowledge Promotion was put into action in 2006, and compare them to newer textbooks published after 2006. In my thesis I show how the newer textbooks include reading strategies, but I have no material from before LK06. It would therefore be very interesting to look at older textbooks to see if they have the same amount of reading strategies as the new ones. If my findings in this thesis are correct, my initial assumption is that the old textbooks will have fewer reading strategies included than the newer textbooks have.



# Literature

Anvik, Trond Chr., Burgess, R., Fuhre, P., Sørhus, T.B.. *Tracks 1. Fellesbok – engelsk for yrkesfag Vg1*. 2009. Oslo: Cappelen Damm.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C. & Sorensen, C. . *Introduction to research in education*. 2009. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

Bakke, Margrethe H. *Teaching reading in EFL-instruction* (Master's thesis). 2010. Oslo: University of Oslo

Bernhardt, Elizabeth: *Understanding Advanced Second-Language Reading*. 2011. Routledge

Brevik, Lisbeth M & Gunnulfsen A. E.: *Les midre – forstå mer! Strategier for lesing av fagtekster 8.-13. trinn*. 2012. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk

Burgess, Richard and Theresa Bowles Sørhus. *Passage*. 2009. Oslo: Cappelen Damm

Cook, Vivian: *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*, 2001. Arnold

Day, Richard and Julian Bramford: "Top Ten Principles for Teaching Extensive Reading" in *Reading in a Foreign Language*. Volume 14, Number 2, October 2002. Accessed 10. December 2012 at: <http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/RFL/October2002/day/day.html>

Elstad, Eyvind and Turmo, Are (eds). *Læringsstrategier. Søkelys på lærernes praksis*. 2008. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Faye-Schjøll, Linn H.. *Reading in upper secondary* (Master's thesis). 2009. Oslo: University of Oslo

Grabe, William: *Reading in a Second Language. Moving from Theory to Practice*. 2009. Cambridge

Halsan, Alexandra: "Svake elever sliter mest med lesing på skjerm". Accessed 20. March 2013 at <http://www.forskning.no/artikler/2013/januar/346856>

Hellekjær, Glenn Ole: "The acid test: does upper secondary EFL instruction effectively prepare Norwegian students for the reading of English textbooks at colleges and universities?" 2005. Oslo: University of Oslo

Hellekjær, Glenn Ole: "Reading: From a forgotten to a basic skill" in *Språk og Språkundervisning* 2, 2007

Hopfenbeck, Therese Nerheim: "What did you learn in school today? En praktisk tilnærming for å fremme elevenes bruk av læringsstrategier" in Elstad, Eyvind and Turmo, Are (eds) *Læringsstrategier. Søkelys på lærernes praksis*. 2008. Universitetsforlaget

Hopfenbeck, Therese Nerheim & Roe, Astrid: "Lese- og læringsstrategier", In Marit Kjærnsli & Astrid Roe (eds.), *På rett spor - Norske elevers kompetanse i lesing, matematikk og naturfag i PISA 2009*. 2010. Universitetsforlaget

Johansen, Emma K. N.: "To what extent are reading strategies taught to and used by pupils in upper secondary school?" Exam paper in EDID 4010 – The Fundamental Concepts of Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Spring 2012, University of Oslo.

Kintsch, Walter: "An Overview of Top-Down and Bottom-Up Effects in Comprehension: The CI Perspective, Discourse Processes". 2005. Accessed 9. January 2013 at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2005.9651676>

Koda, Keiko: *Insights into Second Language Reading. A Cross-Linguistic Approach*. 2004. Cambridge

Lund, Andreas: "What's VOLL got to do with it? Sociocultural perspectives on ICT in language learning", In Anthony Fitzpatrick & Robert O'Dowd (eds.), *E-VOLLution: Exploring cutting edge applications of networked technologies in Vocationally Oriented Language Learning*. 2011. Council of Europe Publishing.

Manger, T., Lillejord, S., Nordahl, T. og Helland, T: *Livet i skolen 1. Grunnbok i pedagogikk og elevkunnskap*. 2009. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Merchan, Filomena C.: *Reading strategies in English Vg1* (Master's thesis). 2010. Oslo: University of Oslo

Roe, Astrid: *Lesedidaktikk - Etter den første leseopplæringen*. 2011. Universitetsforlaget

Simensen, Aud Marit: *Teaching a Foreign Language. Principles and Procedures*, 2007.  
Fagbokforlaget

**Curricula:**

Ministry of Education and Research: *The Knowledge Promotion Reform*. 2006. Curriculum in English: Primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training

**Online resources:**

Nasjonal Digital Læringsarena. Accessed multiple times between 15. August 2012 to 30. March 2013 at [www.ndla.no](http://www.ndla.no) and <http://ndla.no/en/node/107303>

KWL-table. Accessed 05. January 2013 at <http://my-ecoach.com/online/resources/5755/kwl.gif>