# Universitetet i Stavanger

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND EDUCATION**

# MASTER'S THESIS

| | |
|---|---|
| Programme of study: Master in Literacy Studies | Spring semester, 2010 Open |
| Author: Anne-Marie Nygaard | …………………………………………… (Author's signature) |
| Supervisor: Ion Drew | |
| Thesis title: *An investigation of accuracy in the written English of upper secondary vocational school students* | |
| Keywords: Second language writing Accuracy Vocational education Correction and feedback | No. of pages: 100 + appendices/other: 16 Stavanger, May 18, 2010 |

**Abstract**

This quantitative and qualitative study investigates the accuracy in students' written English at the second level of upper secondary vocational education. The research is based on an analysis of 190 creative texts written by 95 students in one upper secondary school during the autumn and spring semesters of one school year. The texts were timed and written on computers at school. The distribution and frequency of mistakes in nine different mistake categories were measured: spelling, concord, wrong word, wrong verb tense, missing words, wrong word order, wrong form, punctuation, and upper or lower case letter mistakes. The texts were divided into three corpora based on different correction strategies used by the teachers of students in different vocational areas of specialisation. The analysis also aimed to examine to what extent the students made any progress in the accuracy of their written English from the autumn to the spring and which correction method was the most favourable. Three teachers were interviewed about, for example, their attitudes to students' mistakes and the correction strategies they used.

The background chapters present different approaches to learning a second language, views and research on conscious and subconscious learning, attitudes and research on grammar instruction, an overview of English curricula in Norwegian schools, the role of the textbook in English language teaching, the effects of computers on written accuracy and teacher qualifications. One chapter deals with learner language, mistakes and errors, correction and feedback and a review of studies of accuracy.

The findings showed that all three groups made progress in accuracy from the autumn to the spring with an average of 25 per cent fewer mistakes in the spring. The group with the greatest reduction of mistakes (31%) used a correction method which was a combination of direct correction and underlining. The analysis also showed that spelling and wrong word mistakes were the most frequent in the autumn, whereas there were fewest mistakes in the word order category. The spelling category was still the largest in two of the groups in the spring, whereas word order was the largest in the third group. Otherwise there was some movement in the other categories compared to the autumn.

In the discussion, the results were linked to the effects of correction and feedback and to the effects of using computers in order to promote accuracy. They were also seen in relation to different issues concerning English as a foreign language in Norwegian schools, such as previous attention to mistakes at the primary and lower secondary levels, extensive reading, students' motivation for learning English, teacher qualifications, the national

curricula and exposure to the target language. Considering the low level of accuracy in general in written English when students enter upper secondary vocational education, recommendations for changes in English language teaching in primary and lower secondary school were discussed.

**Acknowledgements**

I would above all like to thank my supervisor, Førsteamanuensis Ion Drew, for his immense patience, interest, encouragement, suggestions and invaluable comments in this project.

My gratitude also goes to Professor Merja Stenroos for great support and interesting lectures in the Master in Literacy Studies Programme.

# Table of contents

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The present thesis is a study of the level of accuracy in English foreign language texts written by students in different areas of vocational study at the 2nd level of upper secondary school. Furthermore, it is an investigation of these students' progress or lack of such with accuracy during one school year. The study compares the written accuracy of three different groups of vocational students with different areas of specialisation and who used three different correction strategies.

It is necessary to master the English language in order to succeed in a world were English is employed nearly everywhere for international communication. According to the present national curriculum, *The Knowledge Promotion* (2006), this means to develop a rich vocabulary and skills for using the systems of the English language, such as grammar and text structures with the aim of making pupils become proficient in English, both orally and in writing. Edge (1989:20) claims that students' incorrectness in their use of English cannot be ignored "because successful communication depends on a certain level of accuracy". Whether accuracy has been important enough in Norwegian compulsory schools may be questioned. A study by Lehmann (1999) showed that upper secondary Norwegian students' language achievements were unexpectedly low and that the students themselves were not even aware of how poorly they wrote. Lehmann blamed this poor level on the focus on oral communication at the expense of grammar work and writing. It is the experience of this present writer as a teacher of English in upper secondary school that there are many students who make numerous mistakes in their writing, which could indicate that accuracy may have been neglected during their previous school years. Written accuracy is therefore the focus of this study.

Second language learners pass through sequences of development and their level of skills is continually reshaped as the learners receive more input. The language the learner produces at any time towards proficiency was named 'interlanguage by Selinker (1972). According to Harmer (2001:100) errors are parts of students' 'interlanguage' and the teachers' feedback to errors provide a contribution to the reshaping of the learners' interlanguage in order to obtain accuracy. According to Hammerly (1991:122), it is important to focus on accuracy from the very start and then fluency will come eventually and through a long-term goal.

Language learning is affected by many factors. Among these are the personal

uniqueness of the learner, the structure of the native and target languages, opportunities for relations with speakers of the target language and the learners' motivation. Another factor is the attention to accuracy, correction and form-focused instruction, which are important issues in this thesis. There has been an ongoing debate whether various kinds of corrections of mistakes are efficient or not in the attainment of accuracy. According to Truscott (1996, 1999) there are studies that did not find error feedback by the teacher to be more effective or helpful in any interesting sense for developing accuracy in students' second language writing than no comments or reactions. Truscott even goes as far as to propose that grammar correction in second language writing classes should be abandoned. On the other hand, there are also studies demonstrating the usefulness of such feedback. Lightbown and Spada (1999:144-149) refer to several studies supporting the assumption that form-focused instruction and corrective feedback can improve learners' use of specific grammatical elements. The decision about which method to use, will ultimately be made by the individual teacher.

## 1.2 Aims and expectations

The material for the study was collected at an upper secondary school in the county of Rogaland during the school year of 2007/2008. Between 12 and 15 students in 12 classes were involved in the study when it was started in the autumn of 2007. The aim was to measure the distribution and frequency of mistakes in different error categories in two corpora of computer written texts during the school year, one in the autumn and one in the spring. A longitudinal study made it possible to find out if the students improved their English accuracy from the autumn to the spring according to the different kinds of feedback they received from their teachers. In addition, the aim was to compare different groups of pupils at the school, including those from programmes for Electricity and Electronics, Restaurant and Food Processing and Health and Social Care. After the second corpus of texts was handed in and corrected, the teachers were interviewed about their correction methods.

Some of the students left school before Christmas and many did not participate in both the autumn and spring assignment, consequently the final number of students involved was 95. The motivation for learning English among the students varied. Many students in vocational upper secondary school choose this direction often because they are tired of theoretical subjects and hope for some more practical tasks. Among the 95 students there were a few who had ambitions to continue studying and aimed to finish general subjects as well. Naturally, these students would be more inspired to do well in the English subject than the less motivated students whose only aims are to receive their craft certificate. For some

students not even that is important which could be one reason for so many leaving vocational school, before they are graduated. Therefore the expectations that many students would improve their accuracy during the school year were low.

The present writer's experience as an upper secondary school English teacher has given the impression that students generally make the same mistakes over and over again, for which there could be a number of reasons. One possibility could be that they are not conscious enough about the mistakes they make. Scholars disagree on the role of conscious and unconscious processes in second language learning. In some views (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1985; Celce-Murcia, 1992) conscious understanding is necessary to produce correct form and errors are considered the result of not knowing the rules or not paying attention. Another possibility could be that learners' errors have fossilized. Fossilization is by Gass and Selinker (1994:11) described as becoming "permanently established in the interlanguage of a second language learner in a form that is deviant from the target-language norm and that continues to appear in performance regardless of further exposure to the target language". Thirdly, many mistakes are the result of the students' carelessness, which is often closely related to lack of motivation (Norrish, 1983:21). Interference of the first language is yet another cause for making repeated mistakes.

One of the reasons for undertaking the research was that it was the present author's impression that the correction method that had previously been used did not have any major effect on students' accuracy. The method mainly consisted of correcting grammatical and lexical errors by underlining all of them. To almost all of the highlighted mistakes a description was given, either in the margin or above the error, of what type of mistake had been made and often the correct form would be added. For the study, a different correction method was introduced to one of the groups of students, which involved both written corrections by the use of a marking code and providing oral comments. Students' self-correction was an important part of this feedback method. This group was then compared with the other groups using other correction methods.

It was expected that as spelling mistakes will often be corrected automatically by the word correcting program, there would be fewer of these mistakes. It was also presumed that word mixture, such as *where/were* and *too/to,* would still be a problem. In addition, one assumed there would be a number of grammatical errors (such as concord and word order), so it was of great interest to find out if some errors were more frequent than others and which. It was a further aim to find out to what extent feedback or correction improved the pupils' accuracy in English writing and which correction method would have the best outcome.

Consequently the main research questions were:

- What were the distribution and frequency of the different categories of mistakes made by the students?
- To what extent did the students reduce the number of mistakes from the autumn to the spring?
- What were the differences between the three groups using the three different correction strategies?

## 1.3 Methods

The thesis is based primarily on an analysis of two corpora of timed-written texts. During the autumn students from different areas of study at the school of this investigation wrote a creative text on a computer. The same procedure was performed in the spring. 190 texts have been analysed, 95 in each of the semesters. The students were asked to write at least a page and they had five assignments to choose from. The texts form a corpus that have been analysed quantitatively by classifying and measuring different types of grammatical errors, such as concord, word order, verb tense, as well as punctuation and spelling. The students were allowed to use a dictionary, but not the Internet. The students were then divided in three groups according to the feedback method used by the different teachers. Finally, three of the teachers involved in the study were interviewed about their correction strategies.

According to the examination regulations of *The Knowledge Promotion* (2005) all kinds of aids are allowed during the exam. This means that all second year students at upper secondary level are permitted to write the English exam on a word processor, which they were trained to do from the very beginning of the school year. Being able to use digital tools in English is also one of the basic skills students at this level are supposed to master, which is why the students wrote their texts on a computer. Having all the students handing in computer written texts was a new experience. Previously, the aspect of writing on a computer or not was fairly voluntary, except for major written tests at school, such as term tests in the autumn and in the spring which had to be handwritten.

## 1.4 Outline of thesis

The present thesis comprises eight chapters. Chapter 2, Approaches to Learning Second Languages, provides an historical outline of different approaches to learning foreign languages, which have been utilized in the last century. In addition there is a section on the topic of conscious and subconscious learning with relevant theory and research in the field. The first section in Chapter 3, English in Norwegian Schools, presents how the English

subject has been focused on in the Norwegian curricula since English was first introduced as a compulsory subject in 1959. Special attention is paid to the latest curriculum, *The Knowledge Promotion* (2005), in the next section with a particular focus on learning outcomes regarding accuracy. The third section focuses on English in upper secondary education and the final two sections on the role of textbooks in English teaching and the use of computers when writing. Chapter 4, The Language of Second Language Learners, presents theory and research on first language interference, interlanguage, fossilization and types of errors. Special attention is paid to correction and feedback, a topic central to this thesis. Chapter 5, Materials and Methods, presents how the research was conducted. Chapter 6 presents the findings of the analysis of the texts and it also provides a summary of each of the three interviews conducted with the teachers involved in the study. Pseudonyms were used in all three cases to preserve their identity.  Chapter 7 discusses the findings, the effects of correction and the effects of writing on computers. Further sections are devoted to the students' motivation and to possible reasons for making mistakes. The final section of the chapter presents limitations of the study and further recommendations. Chapter 8 is the conclusion.

# 2 Approaches to Learning Second Languages

## 2.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter provides an historical outline of different approaches that have been the most dominant in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. These are the grammar-translation approach, the Direct Method, the audio-lingual approach, communicative approaches and the eclectic approach. The second part deals with the debate between conscious and subconscious learning, including views on the importance of extensive reading for acquiring a second language and views on the issue of grammar teaching.

## 2.2 Approaches to foreign language teaching

In the teaching of foreign languages many different approaches have been tried out. Scholars and teachers are constantly searching for the best way of teaching pupils a foreign language. However no approach has proved to be the most favourable. Successful language learning has taken place for centuries, no matter which approach the individual language learner was exposed to.

### 2.2.1 The grammar-translation approach

The grammar-translation method, which according to Howatt (1984:131) was developed for use in secondary schools in the middle of the nineteenth century, was used up until as recently as the 1960s. The method has influenced foreign language teaching until recently, which is also the case for Norway (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:19). This mode implies, in short, learning grammatical rules and reading texts in the target language and then translating them from the second to the native language. Little focus was put on oral language, for example listening and pronunciation, and teaching was taught in the mother tongue. The first grammar-translation course books were based on practical exercises, containing tasks of various kinds where translation into and out of the foreign language was typical (Howatt, 1984:132).

The approach arose in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and it expanded quickly through the beginning of the nineteenth century. This was a time when foreign languages were gradually integrated into the secondary school curriculum as additional options to the classical languages, Latin and Greek. As classical languages were no longer used for oral communication, the purpose of studying grammar and using dictionaries for translation was first and foremost to be able to interpret literature. These were self-studying methods that did not suit well for class teaching. To meet the new requirements of schools the

basic framework of grammar and translation was adapted in order to make language learning easier (Howatt, 1984:131).

Howatt (1984:133) indicates that educational and social changes are one reason for the development of the grammar-translation method during the nineteenth century. A new system of public examinations was established in the 1850s with the purpose of setting academic standards. Accuracy was stressed and spoken language neglected because the ambition, according to Lightbown and Spada (1999:92), was to pass an examination and not use the language for everyday communication.

The focal point of the grammar-translation approach was to develop accuracy and not fluency. Foster and Skehan (1996), cited in Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998:33), define accuracy as "freedom from error". The grammar translation approach is according to Lightbown and Spada (1999:149) the world's most utilized method and many people master a second language perfectly based on this method of teaching. Some foreign language learners will succeed no matter what methods they have been exposed to. At the same time, according to Lightbown and Spada's own experience and research, the language learners of this method can sometimes feel frustration because they do not get the chance to practise their knowledge in meaningful situations, which may make them unable to communicate in ordinary discussions.

**2.2.2 The Direct Method**
The Reform Movement in the late nineteenth century, according to Howatt (1984:169), was unique in language teaching history. For a twenty-year long period, phoneticians and teachers collaborated in order to reach a mutual educational goal, internationally and interdisciplinary. The Direct Method was developed as a reaction against the grammar-translation method. Wilheim Viëtor, a 'Dozent' at University College Liverpool, argued that languages had to be learnt by practical use (Howatt, 1984:333).

The Direct Method or Natural Method was also a result of Europeans emigrating to the United States. It was introduced into language schools by Lambert Sauveur and Miximilian Berlitz, two European immigrants with teaching backgrounds. They understood that immigrants needed to learn a language very quickly. Practical knowledge of English was necessary both for the immigrants and for the people left behind in Europe who wanted to keep in touch with families and friends in the USA. The Direct Method would make it easier for the immigrants to communicate with the native people. The focus was on oral language, and the mother tongue was not used.

With the Direct Method, which refers to the principle of creating a direct connection between second language words and phrases and the ideas and activities referred to, the use of the second language dominated as a communication means in the classroom (Simensen, 2007:28). The focus was on developing skills in listening and speaking and the practice of good pronunciation was important and, according to Simensen (2007:29), accuracy was essential in all aspect of the students' performance of the second language. Questions and explanations were presented in the target language and translation was not allowed (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:19). Speech was, and still is, regarded as more important than writing.

The new ideas were adopted by Danish and Norwegian linguists in the beginning of the 19th Century, but it took a long time before this teaching approach was used in the classroom. Whereas the Direct Method was largely dependent on the teacher's oral language skills, most Norwegian teachers before the 1970s had never visited an English-speaking country (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:20). Norwegian teachers of English before that time received their knowledge primarily from schools and universities, where communicative proficiency was less important than reading and writing and they therefore lacked fluency.

### 2.2.3 The audio-lingual approach

In the 1960s the audio-lingual method was introduced (Drew & Sørheim, 2004:20). This approach, which is based on behaviourist ideology, implies listening to the language and then trying to speak it through imitation and repeating. In audio-lingualism there is no specific grammar instruction; what is heard is supposed to be memorized so that the students can utilize it spontaneously.

Behaviourism, which was dominant in the 1940s and 1950s (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:9), has a strong focus on classical conditioning. This is a type of learning where an individual is trained to connect one stimulus with another and it is the result of a three-stage procedure: stimulus, response and reinforcement (Harmer, 2001:68).

This kind of acquisition was applied to various methods of teaching, including language teaching. Behaviourists believed that the processes of imitation, practice, positive feedback and the creation of habits would result in language learning (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:9). In the audio-lingual approach the basic principle was to listen to the language, then imitate the sounds and receive positive reinforcement, thus forming good habits of correct language use and accurate pronunciation. In order to form these habits audio-lingualism was solidly dependent on the use of language drills. According to Howatt (1984:225) this aural-oral drill work often consisted of constructed, unimportant texts, for example short dialogues. A central aspect in many audio-lingual courses was the language laboratory.

Harmer (2001:80) claims that this sort of patterned drilling has its drawbacks. Firstly, as the habit-forming drills are taken out of context, they do not have any communicative effect. Secondly, many theorists believe that making errors and learning from them is essential in foreign language acquisition. In Harmer's view audio-lingual methodology obstructs the students from sorting out new information by making mistakes. After all, it was discovered that errors were often an indication of language development.

Lightbown and Spada (1999:149) are convinced that both grammar translation and audio-lingual classes have produced highly competent second language learners. Still, according to their own studies, they claim that these methods "leave many learners frustrated and unable to participate in ordinary conversations" (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:150).

### 2.2.4 Communicative approaches

The communicative method was introduced in the 1960s as a substitute to the former structural methods. This new approach was inspired by the innatist theory of language acquisition, which was proposed by the linguist Noam Chomsky as a reaction to the behaviourist theory (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:15). Chomsky argues that children are biologically programmed for language as they are to the ability to walk and that they learn from imitating from the environment. Chomsky (1959)[1] sees that "reinforcement, casual observation, and natural inquisitiveness (coupled with a strong tendency to imitate)" are important factors as far as acquisition of language is concerned.

According to Harmer (2001:85) the communicative approach is closely associated to the notion that "language learning will take care of itself" by plentiful practice. The communicative method emphasizes interaction as both technique and purpose of learning a language. It is more important to produce language and communicate effectively than to be correct.

One scholar who has criticized this method is Lehmann (1999), who argues that the focus on communication and the pursuit of fluency in recent decades may have led to a neglect of accuracy. In her doctoral study of 182 tertiary Norwegian students Lehmann found that these students did not have a good enough command of the English language needed in higher education and working life even though they may imagine so themselves. One of the main reasons for this, Lehmann claims, is that English teaching in Norwegian schools has emphasized oral communication, leaving the students with little knowledge about literary devices and not focussing enough on their mistakes. Lehmann suggests that the diversity of

---

[1] 1 http://cogprints.org/1148/0/chomsky.htm, fifth paragraph under the section "V".

the pupils' development should be reflected in the future curriculum[2]. Although Lehmann is not in favour of going back to the old behaviouristic approach, she points at recent research, which has brought "conscious learning, based on form and accuracy back on the educational arena" (Lehmann, 1999:213). Lehmann believes that this approach used by competent teachers may lead to a development of the learners' own potential.

Still, Harmer (2001:86) states that the communicative approach is impossible to remove as communicative activities have taken root in classrooms all over the world.

### 2.2.5 The eclectic approach

The growing interest for classroom research in recent years has made it possible to evaluate teachers' behaviour. Studies have shown that teachers apply a variety of teaching techniques. This balanced approach, which has elements of all the approaches mentioned so far, has often been referred to as the 'eclectic approach' (Wagner, 1990:289). An approach which includes understanding language, practising it and producing it is now, according to Drew and Sørheim (2004:22), recognised by many teachers as the best one. Because of the differences in the characteristics of the learners, "the challenge is to find the balance between meaning-based and form-focused activities (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:151).

The texts that have been studied in this thesis were written by students who are most likely to have been exposed to one or several of the different methods. However, it is likely that the majority will have been exposed to an eclectic approach.

### 2.3 Conscious and subconscious learning

The conscious/subconscious learning debate was sparked off by Stephen Krashen, an influential but controversial scholar of second language acquisition. In his Monitor Theory, which was an effort to provide a logical theory of second language acquisition, Krashen (1982:10) distinguishes between two separate processes, namely *learning* and *acquisition* in the development of learners' competence in a second language. The first process, learning, refers to the *conscious* study and knowledge of grammar rules. Acquisition is a *subconscious* process, the latter being considered by Krashen the most central for the development of language. Krashen (1982:83) claims that learned language cannot become acquired. He considers second language acquisition as a process quite similar to the way children learn their first language. Krashen argues that people acquire language in only one way and that is by being exposed to *comprehensible input*. Both comprehension and acquisition will occur if the input contains forms and structures just beyond the learner's current level of competence.

---

[2]  At the time of her study it was the *L97* that was valid.

Krashen (1982:21) believes that we "use context, our knowledge of the world, our extra-linguistic information to help us understand language directed at us".

Grammatical rules have in Krashen's view, only a monitoring, or editorial function, especially of writing. He agrees that grammatical accuracy is an important goal; the question is how to obtain it. Krashen (2003:5) claims that the best way of improving grammatical accuracy is through comprehensible input. Krashen does not think it is possible to master one rule and then go on to the next and he is of the opinion that little time should be spent on teaching grammar, which is a term he uses as a synonym for conscious learning (Krashen, 1982:89).

Many scholars disagree with Krashen. For example, Gregg (1984) argues there is no reason why learning cannot become acquisition and claims that there is no evidence that the presentation of rules and explanations cannot facilitate the acquisition of a second language. Gregg refers to his own experience when learning the rules for the past tense of Japanese verbs. Gregg memorized the conjugation chart in the textbook and within a few days he was error-free. For that reason he concludes that he has not only *learned* the rules, but also *acquired* them.

Schmidt (1990) argues that all the knowledge humans acquire about languages was first *noticed* consciously. By *noticing* Schmidt (1990:132) refers to "the level at which stimuli are subjectively experienced". Consequently, when the learner becomes aware of something in the input, it automatically becomes intake. Schmidt concludes that subconscious language learning is impossible and that conscious awareness at the level of *noticing* is necessary for converting input to intake.

Even though many scholars are critical to Krashen's claims, they generally acknowledge the significance of being exposed to the language through listening and reading. In Krashen's (1984:23) opinion extensive reading is the most important tool to gain second language acquisition. By free, voluntary reading the second language learner will acquire the language subconsciously. There is a distinction between *extensive* and *intensive* reading. Whereas the former refers to quantitative reading for pleasure and meaning, the latter is connected to careful reading of more difficult texts to develop specific skills. Most frequently extensive reading is performed by the individual learner, while intensive reading is performed with the aid or interference of the teacher (Harmer, 2001:204). Krashen's view on extensive reading is supported by several studies that have shown beneficial results of extensive reading programs (e.g. Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Elley 1991; Gradman and Hanania, 1991; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989).

Another supporter of extensive reading is Hellekjær (2005). In his doctoral study Hellekjær found from tests of reading skills that two thirds of the senior upper secondary school respondents and over a third of the university students experienced great difficulties in reading scientific and technical literature. Hellekjær concludes that the English subject in upper secondary school in Norway has to be changed to make the students better equipped for reading texts and textbooks in Higher Education.

Hellekjær's study also reveals that those students who read more extensively performed better in the tests and Hellekjær therefore suggests emphasising to a higher degree the pleasure of reading and qualitative reading practice of longer texts in schools in Norway. He found that students who were lectured in English in other subjects as well, for instance history, read better than those who did not. The vocabulary of the good skilled reader was broader, they used reading strategies and they were able to understand the meaning of new words through context without being forced to look them up in the dictionary.

Hellekjær (2005) points out that since English has developed from a foreign language to a second language in Norway, the English subject will be a failure for young people, Higher Education and working life if higher requirements are not set for language skills, and if curricula, exams and education are not adapted to the new reality.

### 2.3.1 Studies of the teaching of grammar

Research in second language acquisition indicates that only young learners with good access to native speaking people can learn a second language with innate expertise and accuracy without formal grammar instruction. Having looked at several such studies Celce-Murcia (1992) concludes that there are situations where formal grammar instruction is necessary. One such circumstance is found when the learner needs to be proficient and accurate for academic or professional reasons. Grammatical accuracy indicates the students' competence, which could be an opening to academic, social and economic areas.

In an investigation performed by Green and Hecht (1992), 300 German learners of English and 50 native English pupils were asked to explain the rules and correct twelve errors that had occurred in two earlier communicative tasks. The purpose was to see whether the students were able to apply explicit grammar rules they had been taught. The German students had had from three to twelve years of exposure to formal teaching of English. Green and Hecht found that as long as the students had stated the rule correctly, they were almost always able to get the correction right. Although over a half of the German learners were unable to establish the exact rule, they were still to a great extent able to produce the expected corrections. Green and Hecht were not impressed by the students' knowledge about

grammatical rules, and concluded that a balance must be found between time spent on the learning of explicit rules, preferably easier rules, and communicative use of language. They also assume that the students who knew their grammar rules corrected largely by implicit rules or by feeling. The explicit rules only came to the surface when they were called for and in some cases they were the wrong rules.

Hinkel and Fotos (2002:48) claim that we need a better understanding of the kinds of structures of the target language which are most agreeable to grammar instruction and which are not. In their opinion things can be "worked out implicitly whereas others may benefit from explicit instruction". They suggest that learning how to use the past tense properly may involve different sorts of difficulties compared to coping with the article system. They claim that the assumption that grammar instruction should be connected to a communicative task and not an isolated activity requires further study, as it will depend on which stage the acquisition progression is directed. Hinkel and Fotos (2002:48) expect that issues such as the significance of linguistic form in second language communication and the focus that has been given to the role of form-focused instruction, will retain the front position of functional linguistic theory and research in the future.

In his search to find the answer to the question "Can syntax be taught?", Ellis (1984) investigated the effects of instruction on the acquisition of questions forms by thirteen children aged between 11 and 15 years. The children were second language learners living in England for an average of one year. They were particularly taught to ask *wh*-questions that were semantically appropriate and that displayed subject-verb inversion. The learners received only three hours of instruction. In the first hour the pupils were asked to respond to the teacher's *wh*-questions while referring to a wall frieze. In the second one-hour lesson the pupils posed questions and were corrected by the teacher whenever they made a mistake. In the third hour the teacher fired away *who, where, what* and *when* questions about the wall poster.

After the instruction the children made up *wh*-questions about a picture of a classroom scene with the help of cue cards with *wh*-words on them. For the group as a whole there was no significant development in the pupils' ability to use appropriate and grammatically well-informed *wh*-questions, although there was a marked improvement among individual learners. Lightbown and Spada (1999:139) question whether three hours instruction is enough to cause changes in learners' interlanguage system. They further point at the possibility that the nature of training in this study was not form-focused enough.

However, Ellis (1985) has looked into several studies of the relative utility of formal instruction, which have produced mixed results – some studies show that instruction helps and exposure does not, and some studies the opposite. Ellis (1985:229) found, however, that the studies in general support the hypothesis that instruction aids the success of second language acquisition and promotes a more rapid development, but he also questions whether other factors, such as motivation, could be involved.

## 2.4 Summary

The first part of this chapter has presented approaches to learning second languages from the beginning of the 19th century concluding that the eclectic approach, which implies using a variety of teaching techniques, today is recognized by many teachers as the best. The second part presents views on conscious versus subconscious learning including studies about extensive reading which support the positive impact of extensive reading for second language learning. The different views on whether formal grammar instruction promotes accuracy which are presented in the final section of this chapter, should indicate that this subject will continue to have a central role in future research.

# 3. English in Norwegian schools

## 3.1 Introduction

Since English was first introduced in Norwegian schools in the end of the 1950s the acquisition of English language skills has been considered an important issue for the purpose of communication with the global world. The first part of this chapter gives a general outline of the structure of English as a subject in Norwegian schools during four curricula periods. Special attention is paid to the *L97* curriculum since the participants of this study have been taught according to *L97* during their compulsory education in grades 1 to 10, and the latest educational reform, *The Knowledge Promotion* (*Kunnskapsløftet*, 2005), which the participants in this study were subject to during upper secondary school. The third section is devoted to English in upper secondary education. There is also a section about the former reform of upper secondary school, The Reform of 1994. The final sections deal with the role of the textbook, the use of computers in writing, and teacher qualifications.

## 3.2 Norwegian school curricula

English was first introduced as a compulsory subject in Norway in 1959. Up until then it had been specified in the *Normalplan* of 1939 that English could be on the curriculum, with the result that it was taught mainly in cities and large towns. Ten years later, 9-year compulsory schooling became law with the new Education Act. This act stated that all pupils had to learn English before entering lower secondary school. The intention was to "provide pupils with practical skills in English" (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:23). Since there was a lack of teachers who had the competence to speak English actively in class, the emphasis was put on writing.

### *M74*

Since English was first introduced into Norwegian schools, the national curriculum, which is a public guideline on subject content, has undergone four changes. The 1974-curriculum (*M 74*) stated that English should be taught from the fourth grade, with the option of starting in the third. Even though the curriculum was based on the audio-lingual approach, as it emphasized the importance of teaching the pupils to understand and speak English, the focus was still on writing with grammar-translation as a dominant method (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:23). The textbooks were based on the guidelines in the *M74* curriculum, which contained a vocabulary list and a list of grammatical items to be taught at the different levels. The texts were therefore unnatural and constructed and did not motivate creative language

use. In addition, some teachers' oral language skills were not sufficient and they therefore returned "to the safety of vocabulary tests, reading aloud and translation" (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:24).

## *M87*

Also in the next curriculum, the 1987 Curriculum for Primary and Lower Secondary Education (*Mønsterplan for grunnskolen av 1987*, also known as the *M87* curriculum), English was to start in the fourth grade. The *M87* curriculum emphasized the importance of communication; oral activities such as role-play, drama and games were especially introduced to promote communication. Reading, particularly of authentic texts, was encouraged. Influenced by Krashen (1981, 1982) the pupils were to be trained to read continuous texts independently and for pleasure, in order to understand, find information and broaden their vocabulary. According to Drew and Sørheim (2009:29) new and inspiring textbooks with attractive layouts were designed along with local teaching materials and creativity and talking about familiar things were encouraged. The list of grammar points to be learnt was specific, although not as detailed as its predecessor, *M74*. Which grammar items to choose at a certain time was dependent on the text that was read.

Making mistakes was considered a natural part of the learning process and therefore one aim was to help the pupils to develop a constructive attitude to linguistic mistakes and make them understand that errors were part of language learning. Learning to use a dictionary to check meaning, orthography and conjugation forms was emphasized and in the lower secondary level in particular, the work with orthography, conjugation and punctuation was stressed. However, the curriculum added that pupils could learn to use some correct English without knowing all the grammar rules and that effective communication was not necessarily dependent on formal, correct language.

## *L97*

The *L 97* curriculum was implemented ten years later. This curriculum stressed the importance of having good knowledge of English to be able to communicate with the global world. To reach this goal it was necessary to start at an early age, so English was introduced in the earliest grades. One of the primary aims of the curriculum was to develop the pupils' ability to use English both orally and in writing (*L97*:162). Other important aims were to understand the use of the language and to develop the pupils' perspective of both their own culture and the foreign one. The curriculum also emphasised the significance of using

authentic texts and recommended the communication in class mainly to be performed in English. For the first time the use of digital tools was mentioned in a curriculum.

Words like precision, fluency and accuracy were not mentioned in the specific objectives in the previous curriculum and this was also the case for *L97*, which was the curriculum the pupils in this study were subjected to during their compulsory education. It was implemented in 1997 when compulsory school was expanded by a tenth year, including 6-year-olds, and English was put on the agenda from the first grade. The *L97* curriculum focused on the pupils' ability to use oral and written English and the ability to communicate with people in English-speaking and other cultures. The *L97* curriculum emphasized the importance of exposing the pupils to authentic texts in varied genres, from nursery rhymes, picture books and fairy tales in the first four grades, short excerpts from children's' books and excerpts from books like "Robinson Crusoe" and "Huckleberry Finn" in the $5^{th}$ to $7^{th}$ grades to poems, short stories, biographies and excerpts from novels by authors such as Charlotte Brontë, Lewis Carroll, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie in the $8^{th}$ to $10^{th}$ grades.

Although words such as precision, accuracy and fluency were not a part of the vocabulary of the *L97* curriculum, words like structure, vocabulary and words belonging to grammar terminology (noun, verb and adjective) were introduced from the $5^{th}$ grade. The use of dictionaries was also introduced here. In the $7^{th}$ grade the pupils are expected to obtain a gradual overview over rules of the language, know about the most common conjugation forms and work with orthography, pronunciation and intonation.

In the $8^{th}$ and $9^{th}$ grade the pupil was expected to explore the system and rules of the language and work with vocabulary. In the $10^{th}$ grade terms such as syntax, elements of structure and word classes including their conjugation and function were mentioned.

***The Knowledge Promotion***

A new reform was introduced into schools in Norway in the autumn of 2006. It was called *The Knowledge Promotion* and it includes both 10-year compulsory school and upper secondary education and training. In this reform language skills are central, and the necessity of being able to communicate in English is emphasized in the second paragraph of the English curriculum: "To succeed in a world where English is used for international interpersonal communication, it is necessary to master the English language" (*Kunnskapsløftet*, 2005).

According to a Government press release in 2005, the intention behind the new curriculum was to provide a more distinct curriculum with fewer details and clearer goals for learning in the different subjects and on the different levels. The change of curriculum was

also due to the fact that both national and international research had shown that there were weaknesses in Norwegian schools, for example a lack of skills in central subjects. The evaluation of *Reform 94* and *L97* showed that the ideal of providing education suited to each pupil's needs had not succeeded. The level of competence in upper secondary education was considered to be weak (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006)[3].

Approximately 200 schools started up with the whole new curriculum, or parts of it, in 2005. During the 2006-2007 school year *The Knowledge Promotion* curriculum was introduced to pupils in the 10-year compulsory school and for pupils in the first grade of upper secondary education and training. New subject curricula and a new distribution of teaching hours in the different subjects were introduced. In the English subject the teaching hours increased from two to three teaching lessons in the first year of upper secondary school.

New subject curricula for the second stage of upper secondary were put into effect in the 2007-2008 school year. The last stage of *The Knowledge Promotion* came into effect in the 2008-2009 school year. The Minister of Education at the time the curriculum was produced, Kristin Clemet, stated that more attention was given in the new curriculum to what pupils were actually going to learn.[4]

One of the new aspects of the subject curriculum is to prioritize the cultivation of basic skills in all subjects. These skills are reading, writing, mathematics, oral abilities and digital competence. For the English subject this implies being able to express oneself in writing and orally, which is vital for the development of English language capabilities in varied and demanding contexts. Being able to both speak and listen are included in oral skills. Being able to read in English implies being able to read and understand and also reflect upon challenging texts to gain knowledge about other cultures and subject areas.

For the first time mention of mathematics is included in the English curriculum. One of the objectives in the 2006 curriculum is the requirement of being able to use necessary mathematical expressions as a supplement to the mathematical proficiency in one's mother tongue. The curriculum states that it is important to understand texts in English utilizing graphs and statistics (*Kunnskapsløftet,* 2005:91). This is also taken into consideration in the new textbooks. In *Tracks 2* (Fuhre et al., 2007), the textbook used by the students involved in this study, there is a small selection of activities particularly designed to cover this target, for

---

[3] http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/20032004/stmeld-nr-030-2003-2004-/1.html?id=404434, accessed September 2009.
[4] http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-II/ufd/Nyheter-og-pressemeldinger/2005/ny-lareplan-med-klare-mal.html?id=422564, accessed 10 May 2008.

example Activity 5 on page 42. In this group task the students are presented to a survey performed by researchers in the USA about teenagers' lives and how much time they use on television, movies and computers. The task then asks the students to pretend to be researchers, to look at seven points in the statistics and construct questions to each of the statements in the statistics. The students are asked to take the list of questions and let everyone in the group answer them. They are to "sum up the results in a table" which is to be shown to the rest of the class. Then the students are asked to compare the results with the information about the American teenagers and to reflect about the answers they get.

Finally, using digital equipment in English opens up for supplementary learning arenas. In most cases knowledge about the English language is vital in order to be skilled in using digital tools. On the other hand the use of such tools may lead to a development of English linguistic competence. Being able to use sources critically and having knowledge about copyright and personal protection is also specified in the English subject curriculum.

The organisation of the English subject curriculum of *The Knowledge Promotion* differs from the former curriculum. It is divided into six main elements. The first section states the objectives of the subject. This part emphasizes the importance of learning English to be able to communicate with the international world about personal, social, literary and interdisciplinary topics. To be able to listen, speak, read and write, it is necessary to develop the vocabulary and the systems used in the English language, such as its phonology, grammar and text structuring. This first part also points to the significance of distinguishing between spoken and written and informal and formal styles. The ability to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration and the awareness of strategies to learn a foreign language are also paid attention to.

The second section covers the main subject areas, which supplement each other. For primary, lower and upper secondary school the competence aims are divided into three sections: Language Learning, Communication and Culture, Society and Literature. In the area entitled "Language Learning" the pupils are expected to be conscious about their own learning strategies and be able to assess their own progress, they are expected to be able to see differences between English and other languages, use digital tools and use the correct terminology to describe forms and structures of English.

The Communication section emphasizes the ability to express oneself in both written and spoken form. The pupils are, for example, expected to read and write texts in different genres, start and keep a conversation going and use sources "independently, critically and responsibly". The area of Culture, Society and Literature covers social conditions and values in various cultures in English-

speaking countries. The pupils are expected to analyze films and literary texts, discuss international news and discuss texts written in different periods from the 1500s and up to the present.

The third part concerns the teaching hours. For the vocational education programmes the first year (Vg1, formerly called the foundation course) the number of teaching hours is 84. The second year (Vg2, formerly called VK1, advanced level) the number of teaching hours is 56. This implies three English lessons (135 minutes) a week during the first year and two lessons (90 minutes) a week during the second. The total number of English lessons during two years of vocational education equals the number of teaching hours in the first year of general subjects, and represents a difference compared to the former curriculum (*R94*) when there were two English lessons the first year and two the second respectively.

The fourth part focuses on the basic skills, reading, writing, speaking, being able to calculate in English and the ability to use digital tools. The fifth part deals with the competence aims which are differentiated after the second, fourth, seventh and tenth years in primary and lower secondary school and after the first year in the programmes for general studies (Vg1) or after the second year of vocational education programmes (Vg2).

The sixth section deals with subject assessment on the different levels. No formal assessment with grades is given the first seven years. After the tenth grade the pupil is given one grade for written achievement and one for the oral performance. In addition the pupils may be selected for a written examination, which is prepared and graded centrally and an oral examination, which is prepared and graded locally. For pupils in upper secondary education, both in general studies and vocational education programmes the pupils have one overall achievement grade. The examination part is the same as for the 10th graders.

What is also completely new in the 2005 curriculum for upper secondary school is the focus on other English speaking countries than the USA and Great Britain within the third category, Culture, Society and Literature. Among other things, pupils are to discuss values and social conditions in different cultures, and analyse and discuss literature and movies from English speaking countries. The USA and Great Britain are now focused on in lower secondary school.

When it comes to accuracy of the English language in upper secondary school there is no clear statement about how accurate the students are expected to be. The curriculum declares that by the end of 10th grade the pupil is expected to "express himself/herself in writing and orally with some precision, fluency and coherence" (*Kunnskapsløftet,* 2005:94). By the end of the advanced course in the second year of upper secondary vocational education, the students are expected to " master a wide vocabulary", they are supposed to be

able to utilize forms and structures in written work and oral presentations, and oral and written expressions are expected to be performed with "subtleness, proper register, fluency, precision and coherence" (*Kunnskapsløftet,* 2005:95). In addition, the need for developing vocabulary and skills in using the English language's "phonology, grammar and text structuring" in order to listen, speak, read and write is mentioned in the introduction of the curriculum.

In a consultation memorandum[5] from The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training dated 6 April 2010, several changes in the objectives in the present English curriculum are proposed. In the main subject area of Language Learning there are only slight changes in the wording in two of the objectives. In the main subject area of Communication there are changes in nine of the thirteen objectives. In four of them the changes are made to adjust to the students' own programme area. So instead of being able only to "master a wide vocabulary" (*Kunnskapsløftet,* 2005:95) the students are supposed to understand and use a wide vocabulary in general and in addition a professional vocabulary connected to the student's own programme area, provided the proposed changes are implemented. In connection with the objectives about understanding and producing oral and written work the same addition about the student's "own area programme" is made. Otherwise there are only minor changes in the wording.

Within the main subject area Culture, Society and Literature, one of the objectives is proposed to be removed and the two objectives about analysing and discussing film and literature are merged into one. Otherwise there are only minor modifications in wording.

### 3.3 English in upper secondary education

### 3.3.1 The structure of upper secondary education
According to Norwegian law everyone between the age of 16 and 19 who has finished 10 years of primary and lower secondary school has, on application, the right to three years of upper secondary education. This law came into force in 1994, intending this education to qualify either towards entrance into universities and higher education or to achieve a craft certificate.

Everybody has the right to be accepted into one of the foundations courses. There are three alternative directions to choose from, either three years of general subjects, which lead

---

[5]

http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/Sokeresultat/?quicksearchquery=H%C3%B8ringsnotat+%E2%80%93+l%C3%A6replan+i+engelsk+som+fellesfag+i+videreg%C3%A5ende++oppl%C3%A6ring, dated 4 May 2010.

to general study competence[6], four years of vocational training, including theory and productive work, or two years of vocational education and a Supplementary Course of one year which leads to general study competence. Pupils with special needs could be given two years extra time, if necessary.

Although the curriculum for the English subject in *The Knowledge Promotion* (2005) is the same for both pupils taking general subjects and vocational education, this was not the case for the two previous curricula. The emphasis in this chapter will be on vocational education since the participants in this study are vocational students. Vocational education implies two years of tuition at school and then two years of practical training, the first year as an apprentice and the second year in productive work at the same workplace. This will eventually lead to a craft certificate.

From the autumn of 2006 pupils were able to apply for 12 different courses with the following basic programme structure:

General Studies:

- Programme for Specialisation in General Studies
- Programme for Sports and Physical Education
- Programme for Music, Dance and Drama

Vocational Education Programmes:

- Programme for Building and Construction
- Programme for Design, Arts and Crafts
- Programme for Electricity and Electronics
- Programme for Health and Social Care
- Programme for Media and Communication
- Programme for Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry
- Programme for Restaurant and Food Processing
- Programme for Service and Transport
- Programme for Technical and Industrial Production

### 3.3.2 The reform of 1994

The Norwegian school system has been subjected to several major changes in the last two decades. Increasingly more pupils than before receive an education and the number of pupils

---

[6] General study competence means qualifying for higher education such as colleges and universities.

taking further education is increasing. In 1977-78 the number of pupils in upper secondary education was about 135,000. In the school year 2006/2007 about 180,000 pupils attended state upper secondary schools while about 10,000 pupils went to private schools. In addition there were about 32,000 apprentices.[7] In the autumn of 2008 the total number was approximately 186,800.[8]

The reform of 94 (*R94*) represented a complete change of structure of the Norwegian upper secondary school level, particularly of the vocational programme. According to the Ministry of Education and Research there were around 500 different courses, about 190 of which were subjected to the law of vocational education in the school year 1990/91.[9] In the Reform of 94 these were compressed into 13 one-year foundation courses followed by a second school year of several specialisation courses. There are, for example, within Health and Social Care six different directions to choose from in the second year, such as Pedicure and Orthopaedics Care, Health Care Worker, Child and Youth Care, Ambulance Driver, Skin Care and Health Service.  After completion of these courses two years of apprenticeship follows.

In *R94* academic subjects were emphasized at the expense of vocational subjects to make it possible for students to qualify for Higher Education by taking a one-year supplementary course of general subjects. This could be done directly, after completion of the apprenticeship or after having worked for a while.

The *R94* English subject curriculum[10] was common both for vocational and general studies, but with a modification to the vocational part with topics related to the pupils' area of study (as specified by Target 6, see below). In addition, the distribution of teaching hours differed. Students in general subjects, music and drama, and sports and physical education

---

[7] This is specified in 'Education in Norway: From Kindergarten to Adult Education', published by the Ministry of Education and Research, retrieved 7 March 2010, from the Ministery web site:
http://www.udir.no/Brosjyrer/_english/Education-in-Norway-From-Kindergarten-to-Adult-Education/

[8] This is specified in 'Fagvalg i videregående opplæring etter Kunnskapsløfte't by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. 7 March 2010.
http://www.udir.no/Artikler/_Statistikk/Fagvalg-i-videregaende-opplaring-etter-Kunnskapsloftet-/

[9] 12 March 12, 2010: http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/nouer/2003/nou-2003-16/14/5.html?id=370735
[10] (*Læreplan for videregående opplæring, Engelsk, Felles allment fag for alle studieretninger*, 1993)

were obliged to have 187 hours of English a year, which is an average of five school lessons a week. This is a minimum to qualify for further education. Students in the vocational courses had two lessons of English the first year and two the next, a total of 150 hours. To receive general study competence the difference of 37 hours, which constitutes an average of one lesson a week, was required in the Supplementary Course of general subjects.

The 94 English subject curriculum was outlined in six objectives in the chapter on "Targets and Focal Points", under which different learning targets and details were added:

- Comprehension of spoken English
- Comprehension of written English
- Use of spoken English
- Use of written English
- The English-speaking world (general knowledge of the English-speaking world, but with a focus on historical, geographical and social conditions in the USA during the first year of upper secondary school and on Great Britain during the second)
- English in relation to the respective areas of study

In these six objectives there was no mention of grammar, accuracy and fluency. However, as an introduction to the objectives, the curriculum states that the student, through his or her work with the English subject, is expected to acquire enough knowledge about the language as a system to be able to understand grammatical explanations and be able to correct mistakes.

The chapter about assessment states the general goal that the students are to achieve a high degree of communicative proficiency, which implies understanding every kind of authentic English communication and being able to use correct and idiomatic English in all kinds of situations. However, the curriculum does not presuppose that such an optimal level of competence can be achieved by a Norwegian student, and therefore it is the degree of communicative competence that is to be assessed[11].

## 3.4 The role of textbooks in English teaching

Through the different curricula the role of the textbooks has been central in deciding the content of English instruction in Norwegian schools. Normally there is a book designed for each grade both in compulsory and upper secondary school. A survey of 65 Norwegian lower secondary English teachers

---

[11] (*Læreplan for videregående opplæring, Engelsk, Felles allment fag for alle studieretninger,* 1993, point 3.4).

made by Ibsen and Hellekjær (2003), cited in Hellekjær (2005), showed that 98 per cent of the teachers heavily relied on textbooks as a source of ideas for course structure, practice activities and language models. This implies, Hellekjær suggests, that it is the author's understanding of the syllabus that is exercised, and not the teacher's.

Harmer (2001:304) lists several benefits of the coursebook. It is usually constructed to fit the syllabus and is supplied with extra resource materials, such as CDs, teacher guides and useful web links. Harmer states that the students also value their textbooks because they give a sense of progress and can always be used for revision. In addition, modern textbooks are often attractively presented with illustrations and colourful design and layout. For novice teachers textbooks can be of great support and provide confidence as they are in general constructed according to the curriculum (Hyland, 2003:95).

However, Hyland (2003:95) is of the opinion that textbooks have to be treated with some caution. Textbooks could fail in caring for individual needs, restrict the teachers' creativity and the content may be irrelevant and culturally inappropriate. Textbooks often contain inauthentic texts, which prevents learners from being exposed to real language. Moreover, textbooks could be a financial burden for the buyer, whether it is the school or the student.

Drew and Sørheim (2004:26) argue that the textbook is only one of many resources used in a second language learning process. They claim that the danger of using only a textbook is that "it may be considered as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end" (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:26). They list a number of resources, which can support the pupils in achieving the aims of the curriculum, such as the teachers' self-made materials, teenage literature and easy readers, computer programmes and the Internet, dictionaries, relevant films and TV programmes, listening materials, brochures, magazines and newspapers. Harmer (2001:305) indicates that such a mixture may lead to the students ending up with an "incoherent collection of bit and pieces of material". However, if teaching is properly planned such an approach is exceptionally attractive as it offers students a dynamic and varied course, which is responsive to their needs.

With the coming of *The Knowledge Promotion* (2005) it was decided that all upper secondary schools in Rogaland were to offer free teaching material, such as textbooks, to the students. With the introduction of *The Knowledge Promotion* different textbooks were considered and the school the pupils of this study attend chose "Tracks 1" for the foundation course and "Tracks 2" for the second advanced level and the series offers books for the different vocational areas.

## 3.5 The use of computers in foreign language writing

Since 2007 it has become obligatory in Rogaland for all students in upper secondary school to have their own portable computer. Instead of having to buy expensive textbooks, which since the autumn of 2007 were provided free of charge, the students would have to buy their own computer for their first year in upper secondary school if they did not already have one. Rogaland County has negotiated a general agreement with local computer dealers and for the school year 2009/2010 it is estimated that 5000 students would make use of this offer[12].

Since the introduction of *The Knowledge Promotion* it also became optional to use a computer with spelling and grammar checkers as standard tools for the English subject exam. All Norwegian upper secondary schools are instructed to do their utmost to make it possible for students to use their computers for the exam. However, it is still possible for students to write by hand, if that is their inclination. The use of a computer also implies that the student has the opportunity to use the machine's correction program and dictionary programs, which have to be downloaded before the exam. However, any communication with the Internet is forbidden during the exam.

Scholars have questioned whether using a computer in second language writing is only beneficial. Harmer (2001:261) gives several good reasons for using computers for writing:

- A word-processing package removes the problem of poor handwriting that some students suffer from.
- A word-processing package allows the competent user to edit his or her material at great speed and with great facility.
- Spellcheckers can ease the task of achieving correct spelling.
- If students are working in groups, a computer screen can sometimes be far more visible to the whole group than a piece of paper might be.

In addition Harmer (2001:261) recommends teachers to encourage their students to write e-mails in English to others around the world as he considers this "extremely motivating" and more exciting than other forms of letter writing. On the other hand, e-mail writing is immediate and a more informal way of communicating, and there is a danger that this will lead to not taking accuracy too seriously. However, as Harmer (2001:261) points out it, is possible to "encourage students to 'sit back' and consider the results of their efforts before clicking on the 'send' icon".

Other scholars argue that writing on a computer is not only beneficial. Beatty (2003:53) states that most word-processing programs are designed for business environments

---

[12] http://www.rogfk.no/modules/module_123/proxy.asp?D=2&C=9&I=7913, dated 18 April 2010.

and not for school use as the programs offer spelling correction without providing any definition. Beatty claims that when learners frequently misspell a word they choose the first suggested correction without questioning other alternatives. Beatty also criticizes the lack of recording of misspellings in word-processing programs providing no feedback for learners who are interested in having another look at their errors. What Beatty considers even worse is that it is possible for the learner to add misspelt new words to standard dictionaries in the corrections programs.

Beatty (2003:53) also questions the worth of grammar support in word-processing programs. One reason for this is that the grammar checker in, for example Microsoft Word, is not in favour of the passive voice even where it is appropriate.

Comparing writing with a pen on a piece of paper, writing on a computer implies getting familiar with writing on a keyboard, using a mouse, text viewing software and operating systems in the writing process. According to Kern (2000:24), this makes reading and writing on computers even more complex in an already complex process. However, electronic texts are dynamic and flexible as spacing and typefaces are easily adjustable and the possibility to cut and paste words or paragraphs from one place to another, erasing or adding words and sentences, makes the editing job more comfortable.

Whether all the positive features of word processing programs produce better writers is questioned by researchers. According to Kern (2000:26) studies have been indecisive in concluding that the use of word processing software improves the quality of the students' writing. However, this kind of software could have positive influences, such as the students' attitude toward writing and the decrease of surface errors.

On the other hand, certain aspects of the writing process may have negative affects from the use of computers. Selfe (1989), cited in Kern (2000:226), refers to several studies that show that it is more difficult for people to get an overview of the text on the computer screen and people read more slowly and less accurately, which have important consequences for writing. Kern (2000:226) also refers to a study by Haas (1989) where students expressed the need to print their writing because they felt that they were not really seeing their text otherwise. Although computers make editing changes easy, such as moving paragraphs and reorganizing the text, Haas' study also showed that the students found it difficult to get an overall structure and meaning when viewing the text on the screen.

Kern (2000:226) concludes that "there are significant limitations to using computers for writing that we are only beginning to understand, and that have not yet been incorporated

into theories of writing". Kern argues that the key area of difference between writing with pen and paper and writing with computers is procedural knowledge.

## 3.6 Teacher qualifications

According to Lehmann (1999:89) "the qualification needed for English teachers in Norway is rather lax". The only qualification needed to teach English through ten years obligatory primary school is a general degree from a teacher's training college where English is only an elective subject. To teach in upper secondary school a 60 study points qualification, which is equivalent to one year of study beyond upper secondary level, is required in Norway. This is in contrast to the development in other Scandinavian countries. According to information Lehmann (1999) obtained in 1998 from the 7th NAES Conference in Åbo, 80 credits (which equals 240 study points in today's system) are required in Swedish upper secondary schools, while in Finish and Danish upper secondary schools only a Masters Degree is accepted. Lehmann refers to Rugesæter's study (1992), which shows a lack of "phonemic distinctive competence" in first-year students in a teacher's training college. Lehmann (1992) also found a corresponding lack of competence in grammar and vocabulary in her own business students.

## 3.7 Summing up

To sum up, there is a stronger emphasis on grammar, rules, accuracy and precision in the present curriculum, *The Knowledge Promotion,* than in the previous *L97* and *R94* curricula. The *R94* curriculum even stated that it did not presuppose that Norwegian students could reach the optimal level using correct and idiomatic English in every type of situation. Whereas terms such as grammar, syntax, structure, vocabulary and word classes were used in the *L97*, words such as rules, forms, structure, precise terminology, proper register, fluency, precision and coherence have been introduced into the *The Knowledge Promotion* curriculum. Writing on computers is now the standard procedure in upper secondary education.

# 4 The language of second language learners

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter includes some of the relevant theory and literature related to the learner's language itself. Different views on first language interference, interlanguage and fossilization are presented. A great deal of attention is paid to theories and relevant studies on mistakes and errors and correction and feedback, as these issues are related to the topic of this thesis. This is also the case for the last section of this chapter, which is concerned with accuracy measures and related studies.

## 4.2 Learner language

Learner language refers to the language system that the language learner constructs out of the continuous linguistic input which he or she has been exposed to during the learning process. Thus learner language could be described as the temporary grammar that foreign language learners develop during the learning process in their endeavour towards achieving proficiency. According to Phillipson et al. (1991) learner language is viewed differently from the researchers' perspective, on the one hand, and the teachers' and learners' perspective on the other hand. Phillipson et al. (1991:61) claim that teachers are mainly interested in how accurate their students are according to the norm, and how closely their language matches the target language, whereas researchers view learner language as "an independent social or psychological phenomenon" and should not be seen as a defective version of the first language.

### 4.2.1 First language interference

Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, most people considered second language learners' errors to be the result chiefly of transfer from their first language, termed 'interference'. Lado (1957), cited in Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:52), stated that "Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture". The study of the structural differences and similarities of two languages was called the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and one of the main predictions of the hypothesis was that errors were bi-directional. This term indicates that two learners with two different mother tongues "would make errors on parallel linguistic features" (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:73). Lado (1957), cited in Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:53), also claimed that the elements in the foreign language that are similar to the ones

in the native language would be simpler to master and those that are different would be difficult.

In her study involving the acquisition of English relative clauses by 50 each of Persian, Arabic, Chinese and Japanese learners, Schachter (1974) disputed the claim that the only acceptable version of contrastive analysis, the technique of describing what elements in the target language that are more complicated to learn than others, is an *aposteriori* approach and not *apriori*. The two terms are also referred to as 'error analysis' (*aposteriori*), which is used to find out why certain errors occur repeatedly, and 'contrastive analysis' (*apriori*), the prediction that similarities between first and second language are easier to learn and differences more difficult.

Schachter found that two of the language groups, the Japanese and Chinese, who were expected to have the greatest problems with the relative clauses considering the dissimilarities of this feature in the two languages, made fewest mistakes. Schachter believes that these two language groups made fewer relative clause mistakes just by trying to avoid relative constructions, and that they only produced them when they were fairly certain they would turn out correctly. Thus, Schachter (1974:212) concludes that this study solidly supports the apriori approach and that error analysis is not able to explain the avoidance phenomenon. Schachter even goes as far as to suggest that the contrastive analysis aposteriori hypothesis is impossible and that it should be abandoned.

In his study of Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking learners of English in bilingual Finland, Ringbom (1986) also experienced a reluctance to attempt to transfer over too great a distance. While Swedish-speaking Finns have good communicative competence in Finnish, Finnish-speaking Finns do not have the same Swedish language skills. One reason for this could be that Finns start learning Swedish much later. According to Ringbom Finns start learning English at the age of 9 and Swedish at the age of 13. On the other hand, Swedes are introduced to Finnish at the age of 9 and English normally at the age of 11.

Ringbom found that the errors of 'interference' made in English by both the bilingual language groups were most traceable to Swedish and not Finnish. One example of such interference could be borrowing lexical items, which is particularly frequent between related languages. These examples were found in Ringbom's study:

*At the time he works in a <u>fabric</u>.* (English: factory)

*If we can't <u>lose</u> the problem.* (English: solve)

*I don't like that Finland develops tourist industry and <u>lockes</u> more an more tourists here.* (English: attract)

The fact that Swedish and English are closely related as they both belong to the Germanic language family, may have led the learners to think that a word or sentence structure that functioned in Swedish would also work fine in English. On the other hand, there are hardly any similarities between English and Finnish and the consequence of this knowledge made the learners, whether their own first language was Swedish or Finish, avoid using Finnish as a source of possible transfer.

Interference errors are also produced by Norwegian learners of English as the two languages are also close in many ways (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:15). If the learner thinks that vocabulary and syntax can be transferred directly because of the similarity between the two languages', this could result in so-called 'Norwegianisms', which is a Norwegian way of expressing something in English. Prepositions are problematic particularly when one preposition in the first language can be translated to different ones in the target language. In her study, Olsen (1999) found the Norwegian expression: "Det er gjort på en, to, tre" translated in this way; *It's done on one, two, three* and *... and you don't have to sit on the school evry day* ("og du trenger ikke sitte på skolen hver dag").

Another problem for a Norwegian learning English is the so-called false friend, where the learner produces an English word which is quite similar to the Norwegian, but which is semantically different (Olsen 1999:24).

> *... all kinds of weather from snow to steaking sunshine* (stekende solskinn)
>
> *... I go in a dark gate* (Norwegian "gate" means "street")
>
> *... I could try for times* (Norwegian "time" means "hour").

For Norwegian learners modal auxiliaries could also cause problems in English because of their similarity in spelling and sound - *skal/shall*, *vil/will*, *kan/can*. The Norwegian modals have, as do also German and Dutch modals, the same roots as the English modals, as they belong to the Germanic language family, but they are not direct translations of each other. Norwegian modals can stand alone as full verbs, which is not the case for English ones. The English phrase 'Can you speak English?' could be translated into Norwegian as: 'Kan du engelsk?' A Norwegian learning English might translate this to 'Can you English?'

Some mistakes may be explained by first language interference, but according to Lightbown and Spada (1999:72) several studies demonstrate that many errors are produced in the learners' attempt to discover the structure of the target language rather than transferring models of their first language. Some of these mistakes are quite similar to the ones young learners of their first language produce. One such example is the regular past tense *ed*-ending in English, where foreign and first language learners tend to conjugate the irregular verb in

the same pattern, for example as in Olsen (1999:22): *When I had catched my fish and eatn it,*
*some other birds, my friends, came.* On the other hand Ringbom (1986) claims that the
learning of another language is heavily dependent on the similarities between the first and
second language, particularly in the earliest stages of learning. The automatized Norwegian
words such as *arm, hand* and *finger* can easily be transmitted to English. Ringbom (1986:151)
thus claims that "the more similarities the learner perceives between L1 and L2, the more he
will profit from his mother-tongue in learning to understand the language".

Silva (1993:669) is of the opinion that second language writing is "strategically,
rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from first language writing". He
therefore claims that it is necessary that researchers of second language writing look further
than first language writing hypotheses to find out more about the uniqueness of second
language writing.

### 4.2.2 Interlanguage
Larry Selinker gave the name 'interlanguage' to learners' developing second language
knowledge. Interlanguage is the version of the language which a learner has at any stage in
the development of acquiring the target language. These stages are continually in change as
the learner gains skills and aims towards full mastery of the language. Selinker (1972:211)
assumes that there is a *psychological structure* "latent in the brain" and this is activated in the
attempt to produce sentences in a second language.

Studies show, according to Lightbown and Spada (1999:74), that a learner's
interlanguage is influenced both by the learner's previously acquired language(s) and the
second language. In addition there are some characteristics that seem to be general and tend to
occur in all or most interlanguage systems. Interlanguage is systematic in the sense that the
errors the second language learner makes are rule-governed and not random mistakes.
Interlanguage is dynamic in the sense that the learner gradually receives more input and
comprehension of the second language.

However, White (2003:56) reviewed several experiments in which a variety of
different methods were used in trying to clarify the nature of the interlanguage grammar. This
experimental evidence suggests that learners of a variety of second languages in addition to
English, such as Spanish, Japanese, French and Chinese, show unconscious knowledge of
subtle and abstract distinctions whose source could not be the first language grammar nor the
second language input and instruction. White then concludes that interlanguage
representations are constrained by principles of universal grammar, the theory that all
languages have a common structural basis. White (2003:56) suggests that analyses adopted by

the second language learners "may in fact be true of natural language, even if they happen not to be appropriate for the L1 or L2 or the learners in question."

### 4.2.3 Fossilization

Another mechanism that is assumed to exist in the latent psychological structure is fossilization (Selinker, 1972). According to Selinker (1972:216) fossilization is the "reappearance or reemergence of an interlanguage productive performance of linguistic structures which were thought to be eradicated". In spite of extended exposure to or instruction in the target language the learner's interlanguage patterns seem not to change. The *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1987:755) defines fossilization as: "to become permanently established in the interlanguage of a second language learner in a form that is deviant from the target-language norm and that continues to appear in performance regardless of further exposure to the target language" (cited in Gass and Selinker, 1994:11). Fossilization results when new, correct input fails to have an impact on the learner's grammar. That is, the correct input is not apperceived or is not comprehended (Gass and Selinker, 1994:303).

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:60) thus conclude that continued exposure to the target language does not necessarily mean that the learner will grow steadily in the mastery of the language. They suggest that one reason for this could be that the learners lose their motivation once they are satisfied with their ability to communicate sufficiently. They produce errors, but are capable of making themselves understandable.

Such a state is called 'functional fossilization', which is one of five varieties of fossilization to which Leaver and Shekhtman (2002:249) refer. The others are instruction-fostered, domain restriction, affective fossilization, and arrested strategic development. According to Leaver and Shekhtman the teachers ignoring the learners' errors cause instruction-fostered fossilization. Another form of linguistic fossilization is the domain fossilization, which is the result of a too narrow language use. A repeated use of stereotyped language "is likely to result in withdrawal of the attention to differences that leads to continued linguistic development" (Leaver and Shekhtman, 2002:250). A fourth type, affective fossilization, could influence very goal-oriented learners who minimize the risk of being corrected to avoid criticism and thereby try to uphold their self-esteem. Finally, strategic fossilization may appear when students use the same strategic techniques at higher levels that might work well at lower proficiency levels. Consequently, some students may lose attention. Using the same strategic choices at higher levels can in some cases lead to the loss of attention to important distinctions between language form, meaning and context at higher

levels (Leaver and Shekhtman, 2002:250). According to Lightbown and Spada (1991:119) researchers and educators argue that the communicative language approach is to blame for early fossilization of errors because learners have been given too much freedom without correction and explicit instruction.

In her seven papers of her doctoral study of Norwegian students' written performance, Lehmann (1999) found indications of interference from oral to written language. Lehmann explains fossilization to be the result of this intervention. Lehmann claims that fossilization errors are caused by oral interference because in speech these errors do not exist, or they pass as unimportant. Further Lehmann (1999:168) argues that if internalised native features "are of little importance for transmitting meaning in a spoken situation, they will probably become fossilized elements in the foreign language". This state is also suggested by Skehan (1998), cited in Hinkel and Fotos (2002:5), who argues that communicative-focused syllabuses tend to produce fossilization and a poorer level of accuracy because of their neglect of grammar instruction.

Furthermore Lehmann (1991) suggests that because meaning has been accentuated as the ultimate factor in foreign language learning in Norwegian education students consider correct spelling and grammar to be unimportant. Lehmann believes that many students are unaware of the dissimilarity between writing and speech as they consider their errors to be just slips of the pen. However, Lehmann regards these errors as important and unacceptable.

Hammerly (1991:38) also suggests that fossilization may be the result of "insufficient or poor-quality instruction", but could also be the result of "insufficient aptitude or application on the part of learners" no matter how good a foreign language program is. Hammerly (1991:44) regards error free communication to be the most effective; otherwise the attention of the listener could be drawn away from the message to linguistic errors. According to Hammerly (1991:44) "proficiency without linguistic control is not proficiency but just communicative survival skills".

## 4.3 Mistakes and errors
In current theories of second language acquisition errors are recognized as both natural and inevitable consequences in the development of achieving language proficiency (Hinkel and Fotos, 2002:22). Corder (1967), cited in Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:59), distinguishes between 'mistakes' and 'errors'. While mistakes could be performed randomly because of tiredness or other feelings that may cause a slip of mind and thus could easily be self-

corrected, errors are performed by the second language learner who does not yet master the target language rules. In this present thesis both terms are used without any distinction.

### 4.3.1 Error types

A large number of error types are common to learners of English as a second language. Lightbown and Spada (1999:74) examined two texts written by one French-speaking secondary school student and the other by a Chinese-speaking adult learner. Both made errors of subject-verb agreement like 'a cowboy go' and 'they plays'. Lightbown and Spada (1999:75) state that this type of error is not a result of first language interference, but rather a result of the students being aware of the fact that there is a rule, which they simply did not get right. These errors are referred to as 'developmental errors', which children learning English as their first language also could have made.

Developmental errors are referred to by Gass and Selinker (1994:68) as 'intralingual' errors, which are mistakes due to a language being learned, independent of the mother tongue. The intralingual error category is one of two main types of errors in their view. The second important category is the 'interlingual' category, which are errors that are influenced by the learner's first language.

Sometimes developmental errors turn into the phenomenon of 'overgeneralization', which could be described as errors caused by learning a rule and not yet mastering the limitations of the rule. One such example could be if a child suddenly starts to use the past tense of regular verbs on irregular ones, for example "they comed".

When elements of a sentence or word, such as a plural marker are left out, these errors are sometimes described as simplification (Lighbown and Spada, 1999:75). Such an omission has also been termed 'redundancy reduction' (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991:59).

It is sometimes difficult to state in which category one specific error belongs to, as error analysis cannot always explain why the learners do what they do. Also the avoidance phenomenon discovered by Schachter (1974), which led to the absence of certain errors, may cover up how learners develop linguistically.

## 4.4 Correction and feedback

Error correction is a central issue in second language teaching. Many scholars have disagreed on its effect and there is still great controversy as to whether error correction and feedback help second language writers improve their accuracy.

According to Harmer (2001:106) correction is usually made up of two separate stages. First the teacher shows the student that a mistake is made and then helps him or her do

something about it. Harmer makes a distinction between giving feedback on workbook exercises and the feedback that should be given to creative and communicative writing.

According to Edge (1989:18) the most important decision the teacher continuously has to face is whether to correct or not and judge what mistakes to correct. Edge (1989:18) is of the opinion that not all mistakes should be corrected, at least not those produced during a conversation. Sometimes fluency should be encouraged and that is no time for corrections, unless they interfere with the message. However, successful communication depends on a certain level of accuracy. The fact that many examinations are also based on the accuracy in students' writing is also important.

In Edge's (1989:20) opinion the teacher should always keep in mind that correcting is performed to help learners become more accurate and to persist towards complete perfection of standard English. He also claims that making the learners conscious about correctness helps them become more accurate.

An opponent to this view is Krashen. In referring to evidence for child language acquisition Krashen (1982:11) believes that "error correction does not influence acquisition to any great extent" In his opinion error correction has little or no effect on subconscious acquisition but he agrees that error correction might have an effect on becoming conscious about a rule. However, in general Krashen (1982:74) considers error corrections as a serious mistake, because they affect students in a negative way. Krashen believes that error corrections could result in students avoiding difficult constructions and trying to focus more on form than on content.

Many pupils expect and want their teacher to give them feedback on their assignments. The teachers' intention, on the other hand, is not only the wish to give an assessment of the students' work, but to help them improve their writing and prevent them from making the same mistakes in future writing assignments. According to Hyland (2003:178) teachers' written responses continue to retain a central position in second language education. Hyland (2003:179) notes that it is also often in the learners' interest to get their work error-free because many students will go on to be evaluated academically in areas where accuracy may be important.

Handwritten responses are most commonly expressed on the students' paper either in the margin or as end comments. With the increased use of digital equipment in schools, electronic feedback could be performed either by submitting an email or by using the comment function. Hyland (2003:183) notes that this practice gives the teachers better

flexibility in performing their responses. In the end it is the method that is most convenient that is likely to be used.

Harmer (2001:110-111) suggests responding, coding and focusing as written feedback techniques. He lists a number of devices to help pupils write more accurately in their next piece of writing and suggests using a marking code to make the corrections much neater. The codes could be placed either in the text itself or in the margin. Symbols that are used quite frequently refer to errors such as *S* for *spelling*, *W.O.* for *word order*, *C* for *concord* and *T* for *verb tense*. The place where the mistakes have been made is marked and added with a symbol, which should help the pupil to correct his or her own mistake. Harmer suggests having a "two-stage approach" with easier and more complicated codes at the different levels of the students' ability.

Another feedback-suggestion Harmer (2001:112) makes is the issue of focusing to avoid what he calls 'over-corrections' of scripts. This helps the students to focus on one or few problems at the time. That over-corrections could have a negative effect is what Ferris has also experienced from two of her studies, where she looked at the effect of using a marking code (Ferris, 2000 and Ferris and Roberts, 2001). In the study from 2000 Ferris used 15 error categories, which she found to be "too cumbersome for both teachers and students" (Roberts, 1999, cited in Ferris and Roberts, 2001:66).

There exists a great controversy as to whether error feedback helps second language students improve the accuracy and the quality of their writing in general. According to Ferris and Roberts (2001) most studies on error correction show that students who are exposed to such feedback "improve in accuracy in time". In their study 72 university second language learners of English were given a 50-minute diagnostic essay in class. The students were divided into three groups receiving different kinds of feedback. In one group the mistakes were underlined and coded in five different categories. They were verb errors, noun ending errors, article errors, wrong word and sentence structure. In the essays in the second group the mistakes in the same five categories were underlined with no further comments. The third group received no feedback at all. When handed back their essays the students were given 20 minutes to self-edit their text. Ferris and Roberts found that the two first groups outperformed the no-feedback group.

Hyland (2003:181) also refers to research that suggests that specifying the location and category of error is more effective and less threatening than a good deal of red ink. Hyland believes that this method will motivate the students to respond and also build up self-editing tactics. However Hyland (2003:181) points at a drawback with this method as it is not always

that easy to categorize a problem unambiguously, which is why many teachers choose to broaden the categories to get a few limited areas to avoid confusion.

Another even more minimal marking technique is to skip underlining and codes and just leave a cross or several in the margin leaving the student to identify the mistake(s) on their own. Hyland believes that this approach allows more time for making more essential comments and engages students and motivates students to collaborate in peer discussions about correction.

Chandler (2003) admits that there are studies that did not discover error feedback to be particularly more effective for increased accuracy in the writing of second language students, but she also refers to studies that demonstrate the efficacy of error feedback. However, as these studies assessed accuracy on rewrites only, it is still an open question whether error correction will have an effect on the learners' future assignments.

In two different studies performed by Chandler (2003), she questioned whether error correction improves accuracy in student writing and whether one kind of error correction would be more effective than others. In the first study 15 students in the experimental group and 16 students in the control group handed in five written assignments during one semester. Only the experimental group was requested to correct the errors marked by the teacher between the assignments. The aim of the study was to see if the fifth assignment was more accurate than the first one.

Chandler found that there was no significant distinction between the two groups in the first assignment. However, in the fifth assignment nine of the 16 students in the control group made more mistakes than in the first one whereas only two of the 15 students in the experimental group did. Furthermore while there was little error difference between the first and fifth assignment in the control group, the experimental group went from 7.1 to 5.1 errors per 100 words, a reduction of 2.7 errors. In a five-page assignment this made an average reduction of 34 errors. Thus, Chandler (2003) concludes that accuracy improved significantly for students who were required to correct their errors and thereby was more accurate in the subsequent new writing. She also found that the increase in accuracy was not supplemented by a decrease in fluency.

In the second study Chandler (2003) looked at four different kinds of teacher response: Direct correction in the text, underlining with marginal description of type of error, marginal description of type and just underlining. The study was conducted on 20 students who revised all their mistakes in the previous assignment before writing the next. In this study Chandler found that not all categories of error correction had the same effect. However, the fact that

every student did some kind of self-correction led to an improvement both in accuracy and fluency in the following piece of writing. The study demonstrated that direct correction made by the teacher provided the best result of the four methods used both for revision and for subsequent writing. This was also the method that was most popular among the students and Chandler assumes the reason was that it was easier and faster to do the revision. Underlining was only slightly less effective than direct correction. However, the students felt that they learnt more when self-correcting the errors the teacher underlined. Marginal description of error had the most negative effect on accuracy and Chandler suggests that the reason could be that the categorization could be confusing for the students. This method is also time-consuming for the teacher.

As a result of this analysis Chandler suggests forming a combination of the two methods that gave the best result, underlining for the mistakes the students are able to correct and direct correction for those they are not. Both methods resulted in a significantly higher degree of subsequent correct student writing. Most important, Chandler (2003:293) concludes, is having the students do something with the corrections and not only receive them.

In contrast, Truscott (1999) believes that "grammar correction is a bad idea". He opposes the idea that it should be taken for granted that language teachers correct grammar errors, which he considers an orthodox view. Truscott claims that besides being unpleasant for the teachers, grammar corrections leave harmful effects on students' attitudes. He believes that students deliberately shorten and simplify their second language writing to stay clear of making many errors. In this way the opportunity to practise writing is reduced and students are prevented from experimenting with new forms, according to Truscott.

According to Brumfit (1980:9) many teachers spend a lot of time correcting students' work, but there are also some that do not consider this a major element of their teaching. To make the procedure of correction an actual learning process, Brumfit (1980:10) suggests that all written work by the students should be corrected either by themselves, or in groups of different sizes. The comments are to be given as quickly as possible after the written exercise has been terminated. Brumfit (1980:10) lists several arguments supporting the importance of students correcting their own work after having them commented by the teacher or a fellow student or in groups. He argues that commenting others' work is a part of real life labour, and that correction is thus a part of preparing students for their future professions. Correcting should not be done for judgment purposes only. Brumfit also claims that explaining and rephrasing enforce understanding and that students, by expecting criticism, are more prepared as they write. Also the act of looking for other people's mistakes makes them more aware of

their own mistakes. Brumfit also states the importance of giving immediate comments, while the students have their product still fresh in mind. He also claims that for the teachers the process of correcting is a more beneficial activity when the teacher is interacting with the students in class rather than doing a passive evaluation on the paper with no further comments. Finally, Brumfit suggests using a variety or self-correction methods, which should always be determined by discussion or consultation, otherwise this method would be of little educational value in his view.

## 4.5 Overview of studies of accuracy

There has been a great deal of research on written language development over the last decades; many of the investigations deal with accuracy in relation to second language learning. Accuracy is according to the Oxford English Dictionary (7th edition) defined as "the state of being exact or correct; the ability to do sth skilfully without making mistakes", while fluency is "the quality of being able to speak or write a language, especially a foreign language, easily and well". Being accurate means in other words utilizing the language correctly and without errors.

In a technical report by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998:33) the definition of accuracy is the "ability to be free from errors while using language to communicate in either writing or speech". The report reviewed the fluency, complexity and accuracy measures, such as frequency, ratio, and index measures, utilized by researchers investigating second language writing. Their aim was to determine which developmental measures have been most successful. An analysis of accuracy involves counting errors in some manner and Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998:34-35) describe two of the main approaches.

The first approach focuses on error-free structural units, such as clauses, sentences or T-units. Hunt (1965:49) defines a T-unit as "One main clause plus the subordinate clauses attached to or embedded within it". After having investigated 39 studies Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) concluded that the best measures of accuracy are error-free T-unit ratio and errors per T-unit. This method has been criticized by scholars, among them Larsen-Freeman and Strom (1977) and Larsen-Freeman (1978). In the first study the average number of T-units and the total number of error-free T-units were used as written measures. In the 78-study the average number of words per error-free T-unit was added (cited in Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991:43). Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 43) concluded that the measures worked to a certain degree in distinguishing different developmental levels for groups of learners, but

admitted that the measures "all had some flaws" and that none of them seemed to "work for all individual subjects".

This approach has been criticized Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman (1989), who according to Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998:36) developed a second approach which is concerned with quantities of errors only. This approach is the analysis of the number of errors in relation to different measures, such as the number of words, clauses or T-units. In this approach the nature of the errors is more focused. All types of errors in different quantities of categories can be measured. This present thesis is concerned with quantities of particular errors compared to the number of words to make it possible to investigate each category of errors thoroughly.

## 4.6 Summing up
This chapter has presented an overview of relevant theory, literature and studies related to the language system that the learner builds in the acquisition of a foreign language. Different views on how much the learners' mother tongue may interfere with their obtaining skills of the target language have been focused. Attention has also been paid to the fossilization phenomenon, which scholars such as Lehmann (1999), Leaver and Shekhtman (2002) and Hammerly (1991) have studied. Theories and relevant studies on mistakes and errors and correction and feedback have been given a great deal of attention, as these issues are related to the topic of this thesis. This is also the case for the last section of this chapter, which is concerned with accuracy definitions, accuracy measures and related studies.

# 5 Materials and methods

## 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the formal accuracy in texts written by students at the second level of upper secondary school. It is a longitudinal study comparing texts written in the autumn semester and the following spring semester of an academic year by the same students to see if and to what extent the pupils improved their formal accuracy during the school year. The first section of this chapter accounts for the participants of the study and the assignments they were given in the autumn and in the spring semesters. The second section describes what kinds of mistakes were measured. The following section describes how the mistakes were measured. The third section focuses on the different correction strategies that were performed by the teachers involved in the study. Finally there is a section about how the interviews with the teachers were conducted.

## 5.2 The subjects

The total corpus includes 190 texts written by 95 students in the second year of an upper secondary vocational school in Norway. The students came from different areas in the county of Rogaland, which means that they had attended different primary and lower secondary schools from both rural and urban areas. They had also attended different upper secondary schools in their first year. This would suggest that because of teaching strategies, location and teacher qualifications there would be a great variety in their backgrounds of learning English even though the Norwegian educational system heavily relies on the national curriculum.

Students in 11 different classes from different kinds of vocational studies submitted their texts twice during the school year. The first text was written in the autumn semester and the second text in the spring semester. The assignments were timed school assignments written on a computer. There were three classes from the programme for Restaurant and Food Processing, two classes from the programme of Electricity and Electronics and seven classes from the programme for Health and Social Care. These programmes were chosen because they are the ones offered at this particular school in addition to Building and Construction. The students attending Building and Construction also handed in the autumn text, but since that text was handwritten it had to be eliminated from the study. It was important for the validity of the study that conditions concerning the writing and handing in of the texts were as similar as possible.

There were a total of six corpora, three groups of students writing a text in both semesters of the school year. The three groups were selected according to the teachers' correction and feedback techniques. The first group consisted of 19 students, four of them from Health and Social Care, and the rest from Restaurant and Food Processing. Originally this group consisted of more than 40 students, but only 19 of them were present for both assignments. The second group consisted of 23 students from Electricity and Electronics and the third group consisted of 53 students from Health and Social Care. The original number of students altogether was 128, which means that 26 per cent of the students did not attend either the first or the second assignment. The groups have been named G1A, G2A and G3A for the autumn texts and G1S, G2S and G3S for the spring texts. Each text has been numbered, for example G1A1 for the first student in the first autumn group and G2S2 for the second student in the second spring group.

The original idea was to do a random selection once the texts were collected. However, in order to get a wide sample of texts from an adequate number of participants it was necessary to use all of the texts. To make a comparison of the texts written in the autumn and those written in the spring the students would have to participate in both. The number of submitted texts both in the autumn and in the spring in each class varied a good deal. Consequently, the texts written by a student who only had participated once were removed from the study. This resulted in 190 texts written by 95 students. Texts from students with a foreign language as their mother tongue were also removed since these students were not subjected to the national curriculum to the same degree as the Norwegian students.

## 5.3 The writing task

All the pupils were given the same writing task with the possibility of choosing between five options. It was a creative assignment, so the students did not have the pressure on them to write about their knowledge, or lack of such, about factual issues that they had been exposed to or had acquired during their English lessons. The students were informed that the texts would be used for the writing of a Master thesis at the University of Stavanger.

All the pupils wrote their tasks at school using either their own or one of the school's computers within a time limit of 90 minutes. They were allowed to use dictionaries and the correcting programme on their computer since this tool is highly recommended for the English exam at the second level of upper secondary school.

The following tasks were given in the autumn:

*Choose one of the following tasks and write at least a page*

> *List ten things that annoy you. Then pick <u>one</u> and write about it.*
> *You are checking your sms-messages. You get to the third message and freeze ... Begin from here.*
> *Begin with: "I wish someone had told me ..."*
> *What do you think of when you can't go to sleep? Turn it into a piece of writing.*
> *Write a long, full and believable excuse for not showing up at school yesterday.*

The following tasks were given in the spring:

*Choose one of the following tasks and write at least a page*

> *Describe the day of a window-washer.*
> *Who is your biggest hero? Write about this person.*
> *Write about a habit you find hard to break.*
> *Make a list of 10 things that have happened to you the last month. They can be happy, embarrassing, funny or irritating. Pick one from your list and write about it.*
> *Choose one of the following pictures and use it as a starting-point for your writing.*



## 5.4 The method

### 5.4.1 The accuracy measures

To measure the accuracy of the written language in the assignments, the words in each text were counted. A word count was needed because the number of errors was seen in relation to the total number of words written by each of the three groups of students. Contracted words such as *isn't* were registered as one word, while hyphened words were counted as two.

The following nine different categories of mistakes were measured:

- spelling errors

- concord errors concerning agreement between subject and verb

- the wrong verb tense

- missing words
- the wrong word
- the wrong word order
- the wrong form (for example wrong singular or plural forms)
- any kind of punctuation inaccuracies
- upper or lower case letter mistakes.

Consequently, not every mistake was registered, such as words which are supposed to be hyphened, or superfluous words. The nine categories were chosen because it is this present writer's experience as a teacher of English in upper secondary school that these error categories occur frequently in students' writing at this level.

Homophones such as *to/two/too*, *which/witch*, *hole/whole*, *there/there/they're*, *for/fore/four* were placed in the spelling category because even though they are the wrong word, the student's intended meaning is clear from the context. The wrong usage of the indefinite article *a/an* is also considered a spelling mistake in this study. The wrong word category includes, for example, wrong prepositions, adjectives and adverbs, false friends such as *mening/meaning* and words that could cause problems for Norwegian learners, such as *it/there* and *learn/teach*.

**5.4.2 The method of calculation**
Although the texts were marked holistically by their respective teachers, this thesis does not examine whether there is a correlation between the number of errors and the evaluation of the texts. As one of the purposes of the thesis is to investigate whether the accuracy of the students' writing improved during a school year the measurements in this part of the study are merely quantitative.

However, another important issue was to investigate whether certain strategies for giving feedback would have any impact on reducing the number of errors. To investigate these strategies the thesis includes a qualitative part involving an interview with three of the teachers about how they corrected their students' work.

Measures of accuracy may be a calculation of the frequency of particular grammatical errors and lexical mistakes in a time-limited composition. According to Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998:10), this is a valid legitimate type of computation. The types of measures used in this study were the following:

- The average number of words in a text, i.e. the total number of words in a corpus divided by the number of texts in the corpus;

- The percentage of words in the texts containing errors, i.e. the total number of mistakes in a corpus multiplied by 100 and divided by the total number of words in the corpus;

- The ratio of mistakes in the texts to each other as percentages, i.e. the total number of mistakes in each category multiplied by 100 and divided by the total number of mistakes in the corpus;

- The percentage of words in the texts containing each error type, i.e. the total number of mistakes in each category multiplied by 100 and divided by the total number of words in the corpus.

## 5.5 The correction strategies

The students' texts were corrected by one of four different teachers who each had their own way of correcting and giving feedback. The texts in the first group (G1) were corrected by one of the students' two different teachers, who performed their own, but similar way of correcting. They used a system where mistakes were underlined and sometimes the correct alternative was given to the underlined word(s) and sometimes the students were left to find the mistake out for themselves in order to self-correct. If there were a considerable number of mistakes both teachers would focus on particular problems.

The teacher of the second group (G2), the Electrical and Electronic classes, used a particular form, a language checklist (see Appendix 1) with mistakes that appear most frequently in grammar and spelling, as well as other linguistic problems. The grammar part emphasized eight different features that Norwegian learners of English often struggle with.

In the second part, spelling, homophones such as *they're/their, to/two/too* were central. In the third category, called "miscellaneous", there were pieces of advice on how to write better. The teacher marked where the difficulty was, and then the students would check this difficulty in the next written assignment.

The texts in the third group (G3) were corrected with the use of a marking code implemented by this present writer. The students were instructed about the marking code with a power-point instruction about the nine error categories before the first assignment. The focused errors were underlined and registered with a letter symbol in the corresponding margin. After having written their text in the autumn, the texts in G3 were printed out, corrected with underlining and a marking code and handed back to the students.

The following marking code was used:

1. S for spelling: *Do you have a bad habit that you so truly want to get <u>reed</u> off?* (G1S2)

2. C for concord: *A hero <u>don't</u> need to save my life.* (G1S4)

3. T for tense: *I <u>eat</u> my food and went outside to take my dog for a walk.* (G3A26)

4. ^ for a missing word: *The people that hire us are people ^ are unable to do it themselves.* (G1S1)

5. W for wrong word: *I was in the police station <u>in</u> about nine hours.* (G2A2)

6. O for word order: *… he would shoot me if I <u>not was</u> quick.* (G2A3)

7. F for form: *… and made the team one of the best <u>team</u> in the world …* (G2A5)

8. P for punctuation: *<u>Its</u> over and I never want to see him again.* (G3A30)

9. L for Letter (upper case and lower case letters): *It was on <u>wednesday</u> the <u>easter</u> really began.* (G2A12)

On return of the texts each student was spoken to individually about the marking code and what it represented and what to work with particularly to avoid making the same mistakes in the next written assignment. During this process of talking to the individual students the students were allowed time to figure out their mistakes and try to correct them.

It was important to avoid overcorrection of the scripts as only 90 minutes a week is on the pupils' English subject timetable, which is a time limit that gives little occasion for the students to be thoroughly acquainted with the use of the letter codes. Also, Ferris in her study of 2000 found that the use of 15 error categories was laborious and difficult to handle both for the teacher and the students (cited in Ferris and Roberts, 2001).

The marking code system was a part of an action research or self-research study as it is also called when performed by teachers on their own practice (Gall et al., 2003:579). The purpose was both personal and professional. It was personal in the sense that the focus was on the teacher and the teacher's students, and a professional purpose was that it could involve a form of professional development.

The intention of this small-scale action research project was to see if introducing a marking code could make a difference in a positive way in the accuracy in the English writing of Norwegian upper secondary vocational students. The attempt to engage students in doing self-correction in order to make them conscious about what mistakes they make was an experiment to see if the students made an improvement on accuracy in their writing.

Whether the intended purpose was met with could be determined through the collection, analysis and reflection of the data. This action could then be continued, it could be

modified or a new action could be taken on the basis of the interpretation of the data, which is referred to by Schmuck (1997) as proactive action research (cited in Gall et al., 2003:586).

## 5.6 The interviews

An interview is defined as "a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter" (Anderson, 1998:190). Anderson states that people show more engagement in an interview compared to answering a questionnaire. As the interviewer and interviewees knew each other after having worked together for between two and ten years it was not necessary for this author to do a thorough presentation to establish trust, which Gall et al. (2007:255) consider an important rule for a successful interview. Nor was it necessary to try to motivate the respondents, as they would also be interested in the results of this study. However, as Gall et al. (2003:247) point out, by having established a strong rapport through being acquaintances, there is a danger that the respondents could spend the time talking about irrelevant matters. In this study a time limit was set to avoid this possibility.

The subjects were three teachers of English working at the school of this study. Since they had all agreed to provide texts to include in the corpus of the study they had also been informed that the interviews would be used for writing a Masters thesis at the University of Stavanger in which the accuracy of students at upper secondary vocational school was to be investigated. The teachers were informed that their contribution would be anonymous.

The interviews were semi-structured, which involves asking a series of structured questions with the opportunity to pose additional questions depending on their answers. This method offers a balance between structured and impulsive interactions and has the advantage of "providing reasonably standard data across respondents, but of greater depth than can be obtained from a structured interview" (Gall et al., 2003:240). The specific core questions were determined in advance and were then sent to the teachers in writing so that they could be prepared for the questions at the time of the interviews. This method offers the flexibility to ask additional, spontaneous questions and to follow up questions on the interviewees' remarks in order to clarify. According to Seliger and Shohamy (1989:167) this type of interview is recurrently utilized when homogeneous and explicit information is necessary. The 14 questions asked about the teachers' educational background in English, their experience, students' voluntary reading, the use of the textbook and other resources in class, grammar instruction and correction strategies (see appendix 2).

The interviews were performed face-to-face in the teachers' own departments. The duration of the interviews lasted about approximately 30 minutes and took place at school. The responses were not recorded, but notes were made both in handwriting and by the use of a laptop and the notes were later used to write summaries of the main points.

## 5.7 Presenting the findings

The quantitative data are presented in tables and figures each of them providing a narrower description of the figures comparing both the three groups and how the autumn results relate to the spring results. The first two figures give a picture of the average word-mistake ratio and the average number of mistakes per text. Two tables show the distribution of mistake categories in the two periods. The next nine figures show the average ratio of mistakes in the nine different categories. Each of them is supplemented with several examples from the corpora to illustrate different variations within the categories.

The interviews with the teachers, which represent the qualitative data of this study, are summarised. The real names of the teachers are replaced by a pseudonym. Finally the qualitative and quantitative data are commented in the discussion chapter.

## 5.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the core material of this study, such as the participants and their assignments during two semesters of one school year. It accounts for the different kinds of mistakes that were focused and how they were measured. An important part of the chapter was to describe the different correction methods performed by the four teachers involved in this study. This information was received through the interviews with the teachers described at the end of the chapter.

# 6 Results

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents in tables and figures the analysis of the accuracy measures in the six corpora, which are referred to as:

- G1A (Group 1, autumn text)
- G1S (Group 1, spring text)
- G2A (Group 2, autumn text)
- G2S (Group 2, spring text)
- G3A (Group 3, autumn text)
- G3S (Group 3, spring text)

The data in this chapter are mainly quantitative. However, to add a qualitative element to the quantitative data, a number of examples of different mistake types are also shown. This chapter also includes the results of three interviews conducted with two of the teachers in G1 and the teacher who instructed the pupils in G2. Even though the teachers in G1 tutored two different programmes, Restaurant and Food Processing and Health and Social Care, their pupils' texts were put in one group, as the teachers' correction methods were quite similar compared to the methods performed by the teachers in G2 and G3.

## 6.2 The accuracy measures

Figure 1 presents an overview of the average word length of the texts in the six corpora of the study.
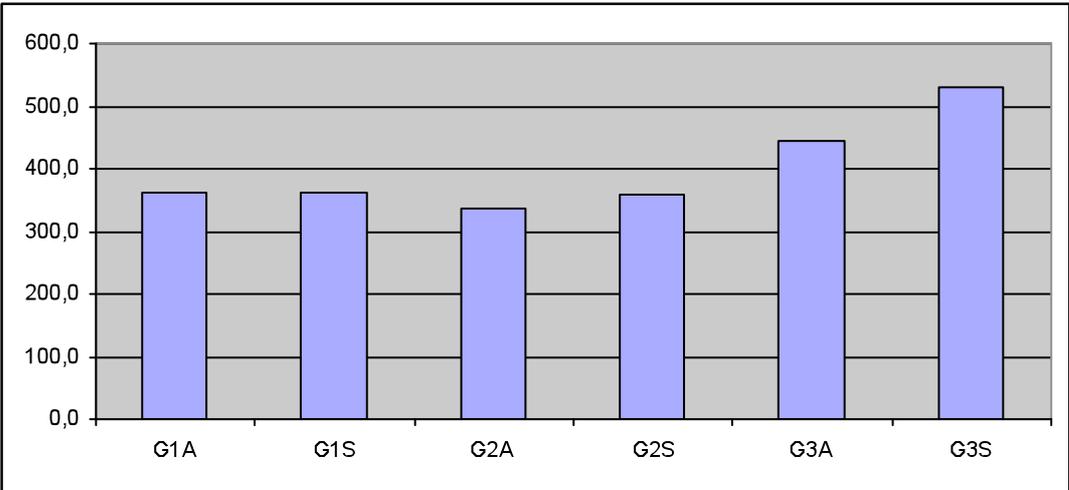


**Figure 1: Average word length of the texts in the six corpora**

Figure 1 shows that the texts varied on average from 335 words in length (G2A) to 530 words (G3S). The students in G3 wrote more than those in the other two groups and wrote considerably more words in the spring compared to the autumn text (530 compared to 444, an increase of 20 per cent). The students in G3 submitted texts ranging in length from 135 to 1018 words in the autumn text and from 181 words to 1225 words in the spring. The average number of words in G1A and G1S was almost identical in both semesters (363 and 362). The equivalent numbers for G2 were 335 (autumn) and 360 (spring), constituting an increase of 25 words in the spring texts. In G1 the number of words ranged from 94 to 1072 words in the spring and 65 to 649 in the spring, whereas the equivalent numbers in G2 were 183 and 641 words (autumn) and 155 and 564 words (spring) (see Appendix 3). Standard deviation was highest in G1A (218) and lowest in G2A (86), meaning that there was greatest variation in text length in G1A and least variation in G2A.

Figure 2 shows the average word-mistake ratio in the six corpora, namely the percentages of the total number of words that contain mistakes.
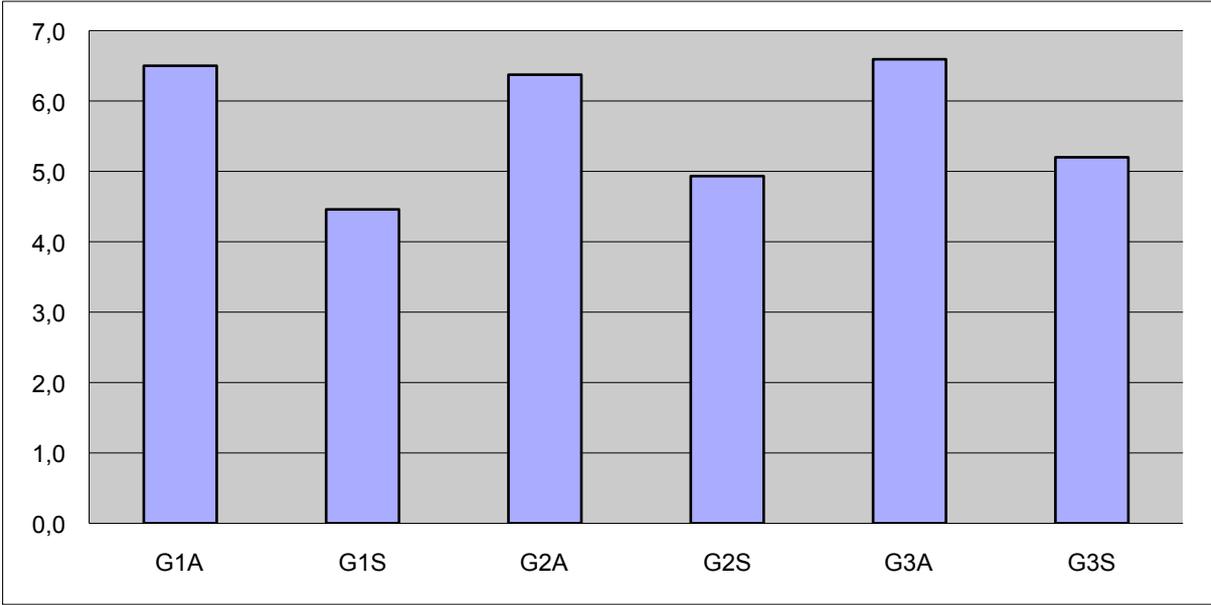


**Figure 2: Average word-mistake ratio in the six corpora**

The word-mistake ratio varied from 4.5 per cent lowest (G1S) to 6.6 per cent highest (G3A). The group with the lowest word-mistake ratio in the autumn was G2A (6.4%), while the ratios for G1A and G3A were very similar (6.5% and 6.6% respectively). There was thus very little difference between all three groups in the autumn.

The pupils in all three groups produced fewer mistakes on average in the spring assignment than in the autumn assignment. In the autumn text G1 made on average 6.5 per cent mistakes per words compared to 4.5 per cent mistakes in the spring assignment, a reduction of 2 per cent, which was the largest reduction of the three groups. G2 and G3 also made considerably fewer mistakes in the spring than in the autumn, a reduction of 1.5 and 1.4 per cent respectively.

Figure 3 shows the average number of mistakes per text in the six corpora.
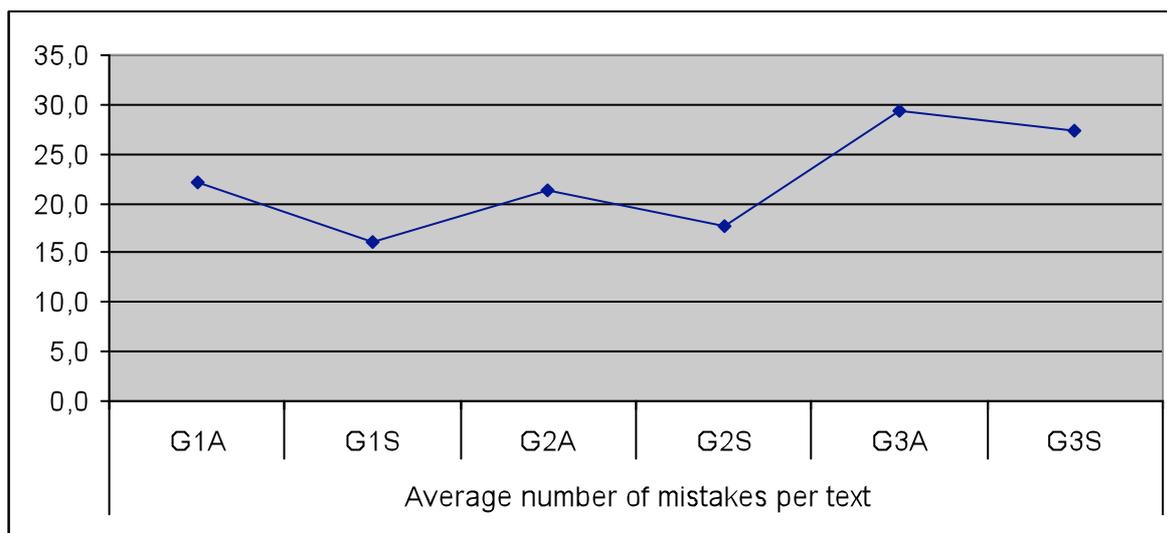


**Figure 3: Average number of mistakes per text in the six corpora**

The average number of mistakes per text varied from 16 (G1S) to 29 (G3A). Each group reduced their number of mistakes from the autumn to the spring in spite of the fact that all the groups wrote more the second semester.

G1 made on average 22 mistakes per text in the autumn and 16 mistakes per text in the spring, a reduction of 6 errors per text. The equivalent numbers for G2 were 21 and 18 respectively, a reduction of 3 errors per text from the autumn to the spring. G3 made most mistakes both in the autumn and in the spring with 29 errors per text in the autumn and 27 in the spring, an average reduction of two mistakes per text. However, these figures should be viewed in relation to the average number of words the three groups wrote. Figure 1 showed that G3 wrote considerably more words both in the autumn and in the spring than the other two groups and the pupils in this group were therefore likely to make more mistakes. Although the pupils in G3 wrote on average 86 words more in the spring, they still managed to reduce the number of mistakes from the autumn to the spring.

Table 1 provides an overview of the distribution of mistake categories in the autumn texts.

**Table 1: Distribution of mistake categories in the autumn corpora (as percentages of the total number of mistakes)**

| Group | W Wrong word | ^ Missing word | S Spelling | C Concord | F Form | L Upper/ lower case letter | T Verb Tense | P Punctuation | O Word order |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| G1A | 12.6% | 5% | 36.8% | 9.3% | 9.3% | 5.9% | 6.2% | 11.2% | 1% |
| G2A | 16.5% | 12.2% | 22.1% | 7.9% | 9.4% | 5.9% | 15.8% | 8.4% | 1.8% |
| G3A | 22.6% | 5.7% | 26.3% | 6.8% | 9.2% | 3.6% | 16.8% | 6.8% | 2.9% |

Table 1 shows that spelling was the highest mistake category in all three groups in the autumn and word order the lowest. G1 made more spelling mistakes in the autumn than other types of mistakes with 36.8 per cent of the total number of mistakes. The second highest percentage of mistakes for G1 was the category of wrong words with 12.6 per cent. Punctuation mistakes constituted 11.2 per cent and the percentage for concord and form mistakes was equal (9.3%). The missing word and the word order category were those where fewest mistakes were made in G1, with 5 per cent missing words and 1 per cent word order mistakes.

As for G1, spelling mistakes were also the most frequent in G2 where the percentage was 22.1 per cent. Wrong word and verb tense mistakes were the second and third most frequent categories with 16.5 per cent and 15.8 per cent respectively. The categories in which there were fewest mistakes were upper/lower case letter (5.9%) and word order (1.8%).

Spelling mistakes were also the most numerous in G3 with 26.3 per cent. As for G1 and G2, wrong word mistakes were the second most frequent category with 22.6 per cent. Verb tense mistakes were the third most frequent in this group, as in G2, with 16.8 per cent. In the categories for upper/lower case letter mistakes and word order mistakes fewer mistakes were made (3.6 % and 2.9 % respectively).

Even though spelling mistakes were the most frequent category in all the groups, G1 made considerably more spelling mistakes than the other two groups, with 10.5 per cent more than G3 and 14.7 per cent more than G2. However, there were considerably fewer verb tense mistakes in G1 than the other two groups, with 6.2 per cent of the total number of mistakes.

G3 made more than 10 per cent more verb tense mistakes (16.8%) than G1, while the percentage for G2 was slightly less than for G3 in this category. G3 also made considerably more wrong word mistakes than the other two groups, constituting 22.6 per cent of the total number of mistakes. G2 made more than twice as many missing words mistakes than the two other groups (12.2 % compared to 5% in G1A and 5.7% in G3A).

Table 2 provides an overview of the distribution of mistake categories in the autumn texts.

**Table 2: Distribution of mistake categories in the spring corpora (as percentages of the total number of mistakes)**

| Group | W<br><br>Wrong<br>word | ^<br><br>Missing<br>word | S<br><br>Spelling | C<br><br>Concord | F<br><br>Form | L<br><br>Upper/lower<br>case letter | T<br><br>Verb<br>tense | P<br><br>Punctuation | O<br><br>Word<br>order |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G1S | 13% | 8.1% | 35.2% | 8.1% | 6.5% | 10.1% | 10.7% | 6.8% | 0.7% |
| G2S | 13.5% | 9.8% | 24.8% | 7.8% | 7.8% | 11.5% | 7.4% | 15.9% | 1.5% |
| G3S | 22.9% | 10.7% | 22.8% | 7.8% | 10.2% | 1.9% | 13.9% | 6.8% | 2.9% |

Table 2 shows that spelling mistakes were also the most frequent category in the spring (except in G3S), and as in the autumn G1 produced proportionately more of these than the other two groups. As in the autumn, word order mistakes were the least frequent category (except in G3S). The proportion of spelling mistakes in G1 was reduced slightly from the autumn to the spring, but it was still considerably higher than the other two groups. However, while G3 reduced the proportion of spelling mistakes from 26.3 per cent to 22.8 per cent, G2 increased the proportion of spelling mistakes from 22.1 per cent to 24.8 per cent. The pattern for wrong word mistakes did not change much from the autumn to the spring in the three groups, except for G2, which reduced its proportion of wrong word mistakes by 3 per cent, whereas G1 and G3 had slight increases. G3 made considerably fewer case letter mistakes in the spring than the two other groups (1.9%), whereas the equivalent for G1 was 10.1 per cent and for G2 11.5 per cent. Both G1 and G2 almost doubled the proportion of case letter mistakes from the autumn to the spring.

The categories with the most similarities between the groups were concord, form and word order mistakes. G1 produced proportionally more concord mistakes both semesters than the other two groups (9.3% in the autumn and 8.1% in the spring), but as this group reduced

the number of mistakes considerably more than the other two groups in this category it ended up approximately on the same level as the other two groups in the spring. Whereas the form mistake category was almost identical for all three groups in the autumn, in the spring G1 and G2 reduced the proportionate number of mistakes in this category from 9.3 per cent to 6.5 per cent respectively, while G3 increased this category by 1 per cent to 10.2 per cent.

Figure 4 shows the average ratio of wrong word mistakes that appeared in the six corpora. It indicates the ratio of wrong word mistakes as percentages of the total number of words.
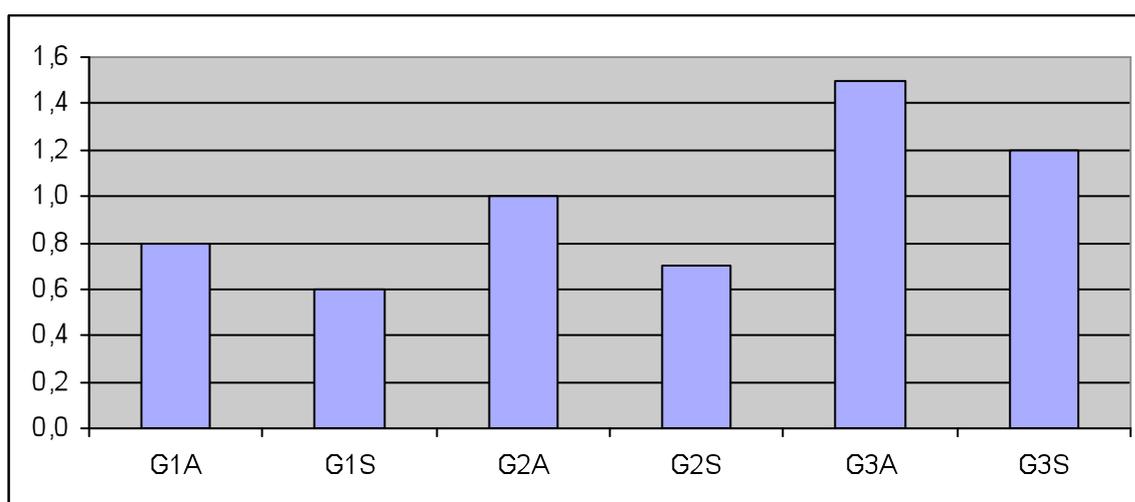


**Figure 4: Average ratio of wrong word mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

Figure 4 shows that all three groups reduced the number of wrong word mistakes in the spring texts compared to the autumn texts. G2 and G3 had the highest reduction. G3 made considerably more wrong word mistakes than the other two groups (a ratio of 1.5 per cent in G3A and 1.2 per cent in G3S, a reduction of 0.3 per cent). G2 made considerably fewer wrong word mistakes than G3 in the autumn text. However, this group experienced the same reduction as G3 (0.3%) from 1.0 per cent in the autumn to 0.7 per cent in the spring. G1 was the group with fewest wrong word mistakes in the autumn (0.8 per cent), which it reduced by 0.2 per cent to 0.6 per cent in the spring. Common wrong word mistakes were wrong prepositions, mixing *which/who* and *it/there*, mixing adjectives and adverbs, and first language interference.

Since wrong prepositions were put in the category of wrong words this study does not present the exact number of preposition errors. There is no doubt, however, that the majority of wrong word mistakes were wrong prepositions. According to Gass and Selinker (1994:22), who collected data about the use of plurals, verb + *-ing* structures, and prepositions from three

adult native speakers of Arabic, prepositions are known to be among the most difficult items to master in a second language. Prepositions are problematic particularly in cases where one preposition in the first language can be translated to different ones in English (Olsen, 1999), like the Norwegian preposition *på* which in English could be translated in many ways: *on, upon, at, in*. A very common mistake is the expression *på skolen*, which often gets the translation *on school* (at school).

The following are more examples of the students using wrong prepositions:

[1] Of course I have been thinking <u>on</u> this before I decided to marry the man. (G2S1)

[2] <u>In</u> to weeks wee have work in a restaurant … (G1A8)

[3] …, each day you to <u>on</u> work you know you will be 60% sleeping <u>in</u> 8 hours while washing windows. (G2S20)

Since G2 and G3 had the highest reduction of wrong word mistakes from the autumn to the spring, one could suggest this is the result of the G2 and G3 teachers' focus on wrong words as one of the error categories. The language checklist in G2 contained focus on *it/there* and *who/which* and wrong word was also one of the categories focused on in G3.

The following are examples of using wrong (relative) pronouns:

[4] My other brother <u>which</u> is home a lot has not many friends. (G1A3)

[5] Who are these humans <u>which</u> are going to boil me alive? (G2S19)

[6] Since it was only the one layer of the glass <u>who</u> was destroyed. (G3S2)

The following are examples of using wrong verbs:

[7] He won't admit that he <u>has</u> wrong. (G1A3)

[8] After that I eat breakfast, a <u>saw</u> on the clock … (G3A7)

[9] The Kolumbus-company should <u>learn</u> their company about good service. (G3A11)

The following are *it/there* mistakes, which were often followed by a concord mistake:

[10] In the passport check, <u>it is</u> long queues and you have to … (G3S20)

[11] We all know that <u>it is </u>many crazy people in this world. (G3A35)

The following are examples of what Olsen (1999) calls code switching, which is the insertion of L1 words into L2 without any change or just a slight change:

[12] I like to drive because it is a fast <u>transportations middle</u> (Norwegian: "transportmiddel", English: "means of transportation"). (G1S7)

[13] … that I needed to buy <u>leverpostei</u> to my mom. (G2S3)

According to Drew and Sørheim (2004:127) it is now generally accepted that the development of a second language really is influenced by the first language. This influence may have both negative and positive effects. The Norwegian and English languages are close in many areas and syntax, such as the structure of relative clauses and it should not be difficult for a Norwegian learner to construct a relative clause. As in English, the Norwegian pronoun 'som' could also, as long as it is not the subject of the sentence, be omitted. This similarity results in what Drew and Sørheim (2004:127) have called a positive transfer. However, problems may occur when the Norwegian learner has to choose between the three alternative English relative pronouns, *who/which/that*.

The following are other examples of first language interference:

[14] It <u>stood</u>: "Self-defense classes for free." (English: "It said") (G1S17)

[15] This is my <u>meaning</u>, … (Norwegian "mening", English "opinion") (G2A11)

[16] I didn't get the answer I was looking <u>after</u>… (Norwegian "se etter", English "looking for") (G3A10)

The following are examples of mixing adjectives and adverbs:

[17] Not roughly all is <u>truly</u>. (G2A2)

[18] It is something you <u>usual</u> check ones in a while. (G3A1)

Finally, the following are examples of incorrect pronouns, which were frequent:

[19] He have a wife, and <u>she's</u> name are Lori A. Depp.

[20] … about how my friends was telling him about <u>me</u> teenage crush on him … (G3S25)

Figure 5 shows the average ratio of missing word mistakes as percentages of the total number of words.
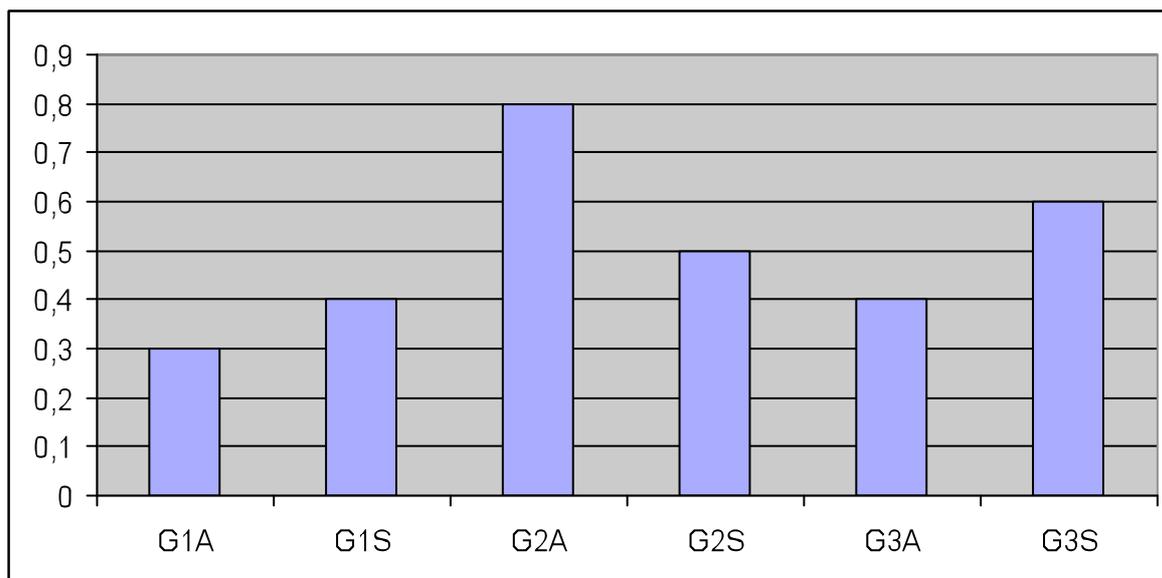
**Figure 5: Average ratio of missing word mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

Figure 5 reveals that G2 was the only group to produce fewer missing word mistakes in the spring compared to the autumn texts. G2 had a ratio of 0.8 per cent missing word mistakes in the autumn compared to 0.5 per cent in the spring, a reduction of 0.3 per cent. This group had the highest ratio of missing word mistakes in the autumn while the equivalent numbers were 0,3 per cent for G1 and 0.4 per cent for G3. G1 increased its ratio of missing word mistakes slightly in the spring from 0.3 per cent to 0.4 per cent. G3 increased its missing words mistake ratio by 0.2 per cent from 0.4 per cent to 0.6 per cent. Consequently G1 and G2 arrived at the same percentage of missing word mistakes in the spring (0.4 %).

While only two students in G2 managed to avoid missing words mistakes in the autumn text four texts in the spring text were free of missing words mistakes. The corresponding numbers for G1, a much smaller group, were 8 and 7 and for G3, 14 and 4.

In the missing word category there were many different variants of what kind of word was missing. The students who made many missing word mistakes omitted among others, definite and indefinite articles, which was a very common mistake. Whereas the definite article in English is put in front of the noun, it is the last part of the noun in Norwegian and other Nordic countries. The definite article in English is not used with country names in the singular. However, it is used in front of plural names such as *the USA, the West Indies*, and also in front of *cinema/pictures/movies*, with 'play' together with a musical instrument (*play the piano*) and in front of newspapers, for example *The Daily Mail*, which is not the case in the Norwegian language. The following are examples of missing definite articles.

[21] He works for the Phoenix foundation in_USA. (G1S10)

[22] To night we are going on_cinema. (G3A49)

[23] George Young was the first of the brothers who learned to play_guitar, … (G1S2)

Some nouns in English could be looked upon as both count and mass nouns, such as in the case of *cake*: *I'd like a cake – I'd like some cake. Experience* is one such noun: have *pleasant experiences – have a great deal of experience* (Quirk et al., 1972:129).

[24] …, it vas_experience for my hole life. (G3A29)

[25] However this is so_long story that I don't know where to start, … (G2A2)

Whereas one can sometimes choose between zero article or the indefinite article in Norwegian in *ta en drosje/ta drosje*, it has to be *take a taxi* in English:

[26] We plane to France and take_taxi to hotel in Nice. (G3S49)

The indefinite article is used in connection with *few* and *little* when they are used in positive, or at least neutral terms (Quirk et al., 1972:144):

[27] …, but I think she believe me_little bit, … (G3A29)

It is likewise with the definite article. Whereas it can be omitted in å ha *det riktige sikkerhetsustyret/riktig sikkerhetsutstyr,* in English the definite article must be included in:

[28] It's very important that we have_right safety equipment. (G3S35)

However, any kind of word, or several words, could be omitted in the students' texts.

[29] What does it say?" that there_some change of plans …(G3A38)

[30] I_rather go back, that to be dead! (G3A40)

[31] And all this years after I've been thinking she didn't love_as much as I thought. (G3S39)

Figure 6 presents the average ratio of spelling mistakes as percentages of the total number of words.
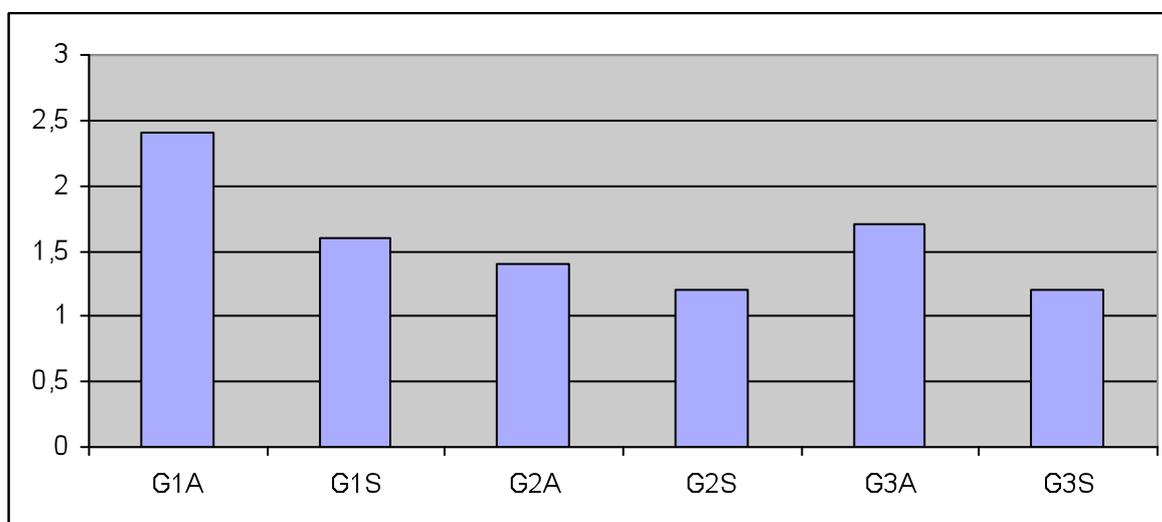


**Figure 6: Average ratio of spelling mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

The most apparent dissimilarity in Figure 6 is the reduction in the spelling mistake ratio in G1 from the autumn to the spring. In G1 the number of spelling mistakes dropped by 0.8 per cent from 2.4 per cent in the autumn to 1.6 per cent in the spring. G3 also made fewer spelling mistakes in the spring, the ratio falling by 0.5 per cent from 1.7 per cent in the autumn to 1.2 per cent in the spring. The ratio in G2 decreased from 1.4 to 1.2 per cent (by 0.2%).

All three groups made fewer spelling mistakes in the spring compared to the autumn. At the start of this study, when the first text was written in the autumn, the students were not very familiar with writing English texts on computers at school, and therefore it could be assumed that they were not very familiar with spelling checks either. However, many of the spelling mistakes that were made were not registered as mistakes as these words exist, but are semantically different, for example *witch* (very often used instead of *which*), mixing *to/two/too, there/their/they're, your/you're, whit/with, whole/hole, most/must, then/than, whether/weather, her/here, true/through, fore/for, ore/or, sow/so, ho* (a very frequent spelling of *who*) and *of/off*, to mention some.

For example, using the spelling check was not much help for student G1A16, who produced as many as 49 spelling mistakes in the autumn (out of a total of 68 mistakes), which were reduced to only 9 spelling mistakes in the spring (no other mistakes were made in the spring). Having a look at this student's texts electronically, the only mistakes that were registered in the autumn text were *stasjon* (Norwegian word for English *station*), which was

underlined with a red line, *a other* and *O clock* (*a* and *clock* with a green underlining). In the spring text none of the 9 spelling mistakes was registered. The only word with a green underlining was *be* in *It vile be a year of sailing, hanging out white friends, and hopefully not to mush time to watch TV*.

However, student G1A11 produced a total of 33 mistakes in the autumn text out of 94 words. If she had used the correction programme on the computer she could have eliminated 13 of the spelling mistakes. The complete text written by G1A11 is presented below with the underlining made by the spelling check.

> *List ten that annoy you.*
> *that's sow annoy me are Marhtä Louise from the king or something, and she boyfriend Ari Bhen.*
> *Marthä come but a engle school for them so vil that.*
> *The king and his family take sow mutch money from us people, and bruke that on they self. And Mette-Marit come in to the king family som was a stipper and everything. So now come the king fameli to my school and WI must lage 7 retts meet to the king , and they teachers say at wi must go to 18.00. I must bruke my time.*

The spelling check made 19 underlinings, 16 red ones and three green ones. The green underlinings, *that's* (upper case letter mistake), *come* (concord mistake) and *king,* (underlined because of the space before the comma, a mistake that is not registered in this study) do not belong to the spelling category according to the definition of a spelling mistake in this study, but if they had been corrected, there would have been two mistakes fewer in this text. Furthermore, if spelling mistakes such as *engle* (angel), *vil* (want), *mutch* (much), *bruke* (Norwegian word for 'use'), *som* (who), *stipper* (stripper), *fameli, WI* (we), *lage* (make), *retts* (course), *wi* (we) and *bruke* had been corrected by the use of the spelling check, there would have been 11 fewer mistakes, a total of 13 mistakes. Correct spelling of the names *Marhtä, Marthä* (correct: Märtha) and *Bhen* (correct: Behn) would not have made a difference as the correct versions are underlined as well. *Mette-Marit* is written correctly, but is still underlined. Consequently if G1A11 had used the spelling check in addition to the dictionary there would have been a total of 20 mistakes instead of 33[13].

Common spelling mistakes were those produced because of generalized previous knowledge of spelling and grammatical rules, i.e. the overgeneralization that English words should contain *wh-* and *th-* , which resulted in examples such as these:

[32] I got so pissed, that I throwed soap <u>wather</u> on them. (G1S9)

---

[13] There is reason to believe that the student probably knew that *lage, retts* and *bruke* are not English words, but that the student did not bother to look them up in the dictionary.

[33] … that their teacher told them that they <u>where</u> to be the bosses … (G1A10)

[34] It was dramatic, <u>thrust</u> me! (G2A21)

[35] I have begun a <u>bather</u> life, I don't want to be bad. (G3S29)

[36] … and know ten years <u>lather</u> I cant remember how it helped me … (G3S41)

Another extremely common mistake was to put the 'h' in the wrong place, as illustrated in the following examples:

[37] The Saturday come and I took a hard goodbye <u>whit</u> Sandy. (G3A50)

[38] … he lookd at me "you still owe me money" he said in a <u>trheatning</u> way. (G2S14)

Figure 7 shows the average ratio of concord mistakes as percentages of the total number of words produced in the six corpora.
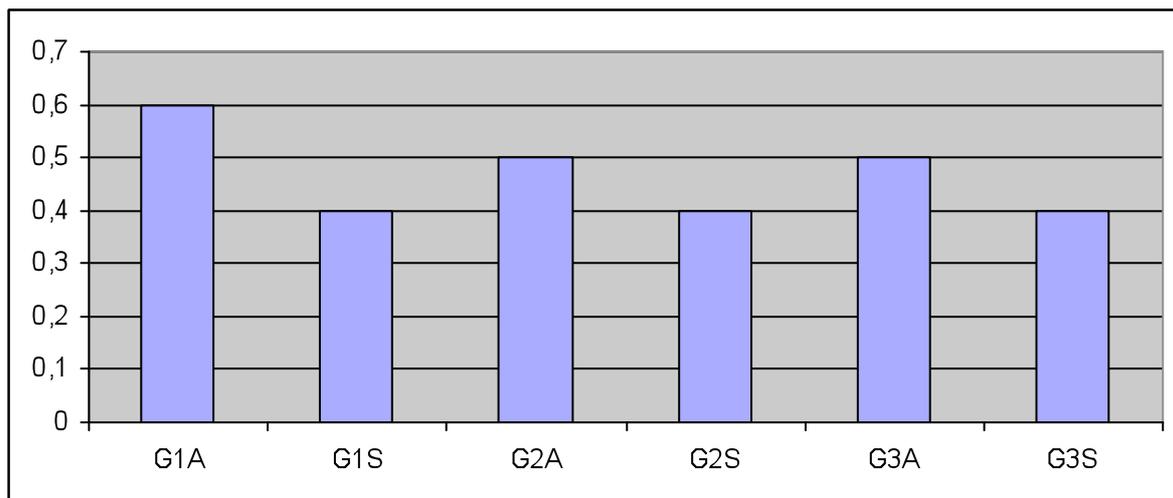


**Figure 7: Average ratio of concord mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

Figure 7 shows that all the three groups reduced their ratio of concord mistakes from the autumn to the spring. In fact they arrived at the same percentage (0.4%) of concord mistakes in the spring text. The ratio of concord mistakes in G1 was 0.6 per cent in the autumn dropping by 0.2 per cent to 0.4 per cent in the spring, making this the largest reduction. The difference in the other two groups from autumn to spring was only 0.1 per cent, with a reduction of their ratio from 0.5 to 0.4 per cent.

The three students who made the most concord mistakes in the autumn G1A6 (5 mistakes), G1A10 (7 mistakes) and G1A16 (7 mistakes) made zero, three and zero mistakes

respectively in the spring text, and the results of these students therefore made an impact on the statistics.

The following are examples of concord mistakes:

[39] Trying hard to be the better soul he <u>don't</u> use guns. (G1S10)

[40] …, but they <u>was</u> way to expensive for me. (G1A16)

[41] … and that is because there <u>are</u> a rule in football that named … (G2A5)

[42] …, I know she <u>miss</u> me. (G3A30)

Figure 8 shows the average ratio of form mistakes as percentages of the total number of words produced in the three groups. Form mistakes refer to mistakes such as the wrong singular and plural forms and also the wrong form of the verb, such as the progressive form instead of the simple form.
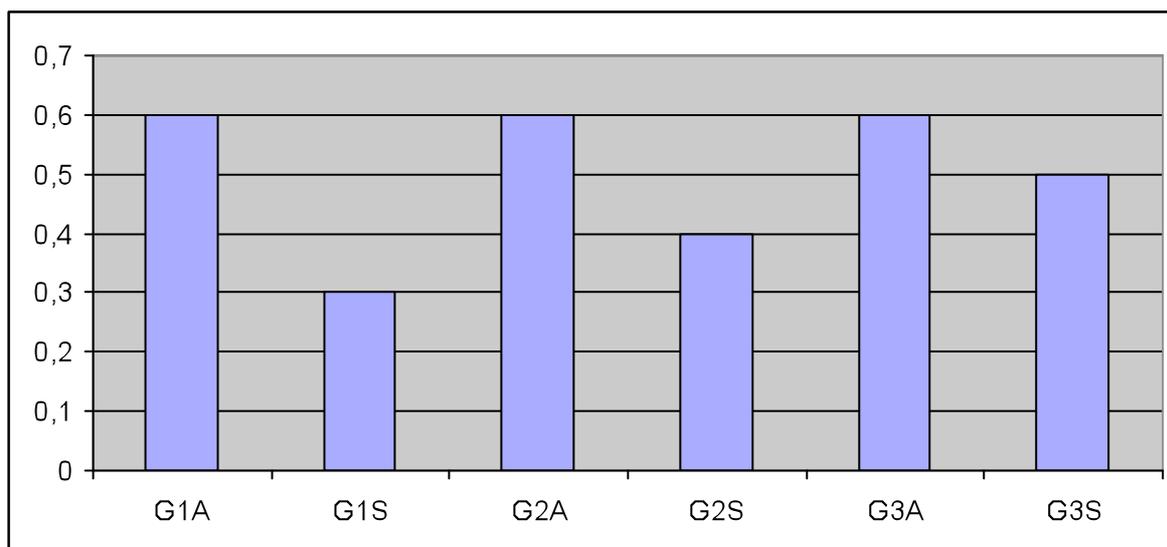


**Figure 8: Average ratio of form mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

All three groups reduced the ratio of form mistakes from the autumn to the spring. The ratio of form mistakes in all three groups was 0.6 per cent in the autumn. However while G1 reduced the ratio of form mistakes by a half from the autumn to the spring (from 0.6 per cent to 0.3 per cent), G2 and G3 made a reduction of 0.2 per cent and 0.1 per cent respectively.

Examples of form mistakes were:

[43] Other <u>band</u> he lucked up to was Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles and Thin Lizzi. (G2S5)

[44] For the <u>peoples</u> that love pc there is many dating sites … (G2S9)

[45] My job is <u>to keeping</u> the windows in on of the biggest skyscrapers clean. (G2S17)

Figure 9 shows the average ratio of upper and lower case letter mistakes (upper/lower case) as percentages of the total number of words in the three groups.
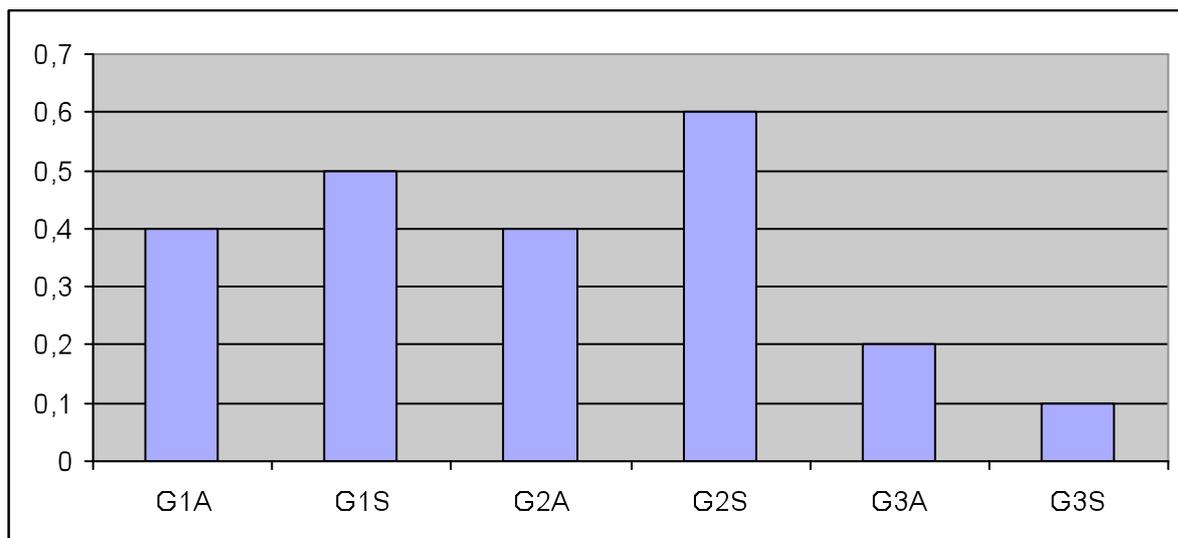


**Figure 9:  Average ratio of letter mistakes (upper/lower case) as percentages of the total number of words**

The most noticeable feature of Figure 9 is the number of upper/lower case letter mistakes made by G3, which was considerably lower in both semesters than the other two groups, with 0.2 per cent in the autumn and 0.1 per cent in the spring, a reduction of 0.1 per cent. Both G1 and G2 produced more upper/lower case letter mistakes in the spring than in the autumn, but whereas G1 increased the ratio of letter mistakes by 0.1 per cent, the increase in G2 was 0.2 per cent.

Examples of upper/lower case letter mistakes were:

[46] At least not in <u>norway</u>. (G2S21)

[47] … that's why I am so <u>Habit</u> of the game. (G2S22)

[48] They aimed a <u>jhonny</u>, knowing that the gang would surrender if only <u>jhonny</u> was cought. (G2S23)

Figure 10 shows the average ratio of verb tense mistakes as percentages of the total number of words in the three groups.
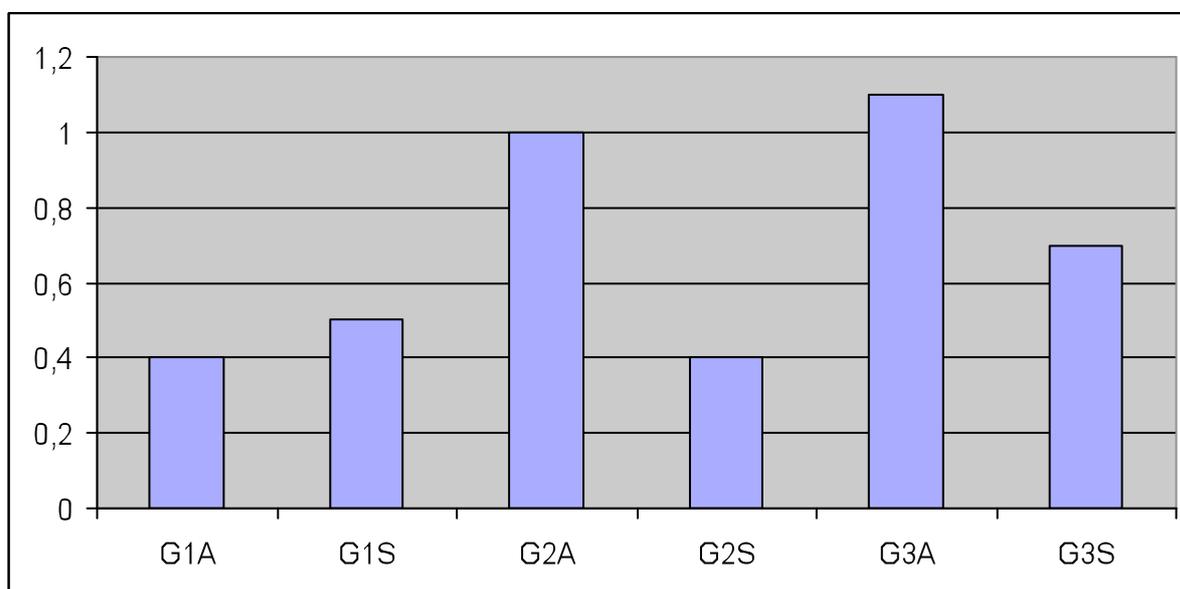


**Figure 10: Average ratio of verb tense mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

Figure 10 shows that G2 and G3 generated considerably more verb tense mistakes in the first semester than G1 with 1.0 per cent in G2A and 1.1 per cent in G3A respectively. However G2 had the largest reduction of verb tense mistakes from the autumn to the spring, dropping from 1.0 per cent to 0.4 per cent, a reduction of 0.6 per cent, or more than half. G2 was also the group who produced the least number of verb tense mistakes in the spring. The number of verb tense mistakes in G3 dropped from 1.1 per cent to 0.7 per cent, a reduction of 0.4 per cent. In contrast, the number of verb tense mistakes in G1 increased in the spring by 0.1 per cent from 0.4 to 0.5 per cent.

Examples of verb tense mistakes were:

[49] He <u>run</u> after me and destroyed the class in our door, which <u>fall</u> over me. (G1A3)

[50] I ran in an alley, and <u>hope</u> to shake him off me. (G2S23)

[51] When my clock <u>ring</u>, I went down to take a shower, and then I packed all my stuff. (G3A7)

Figure 11 shows the average ratio of punctuation mistakes as percentages of the total number of words.
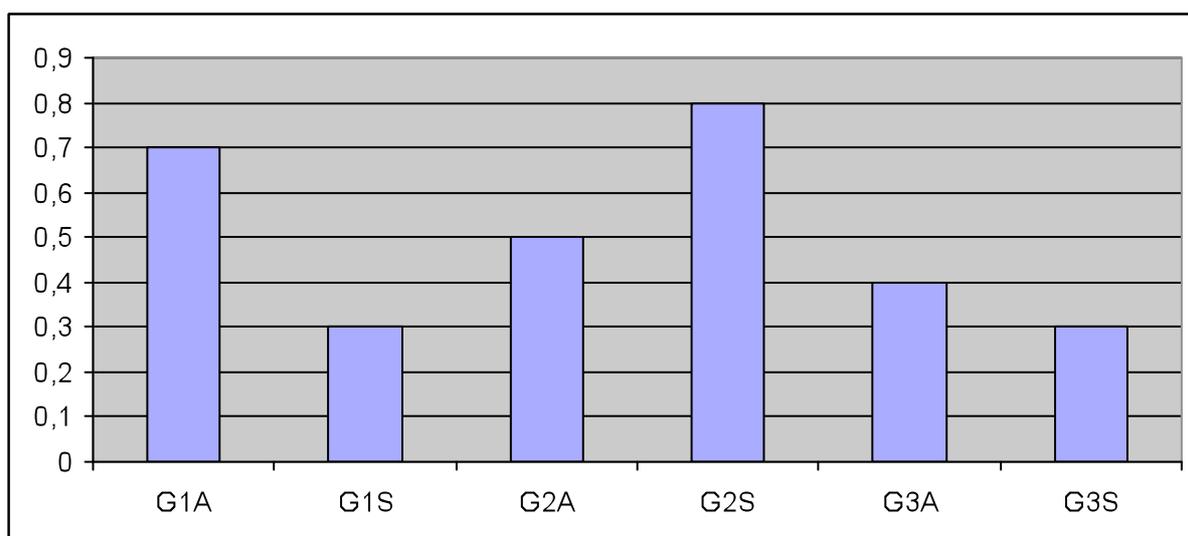
**Figure 11: Average ratio of punctuation mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

The most notable feature of Figure 11 is the reduction of punctuation mistakes in G1 from the autumn to the spring and the increase in G2. The ratio of punctuation mistakes in G1 was reduced from 0.7 per cent to 0.3 per cent, a reduction of more than half and ending on the same percentage as G3. G3 reduced the ratio of mistakes by 0.1 per cent from 0.4 to 0.3 per cent. In contrast G2 increased its ratio of punctuation mistakes by 0.3 per cent, rising from 0.5 per cent in the autumn to 0.8 per cent in the spring.

Punctuation mistakes included comma and final punctuation mistakes, quotation marks, the apostrophe in connection with the genitive 's form, contractions, and in plural forms when it was not supposed to be there.

[52] He puts his hands on my shoulders and trying to kiss med goodbye, Stay a way from me Chriss do you hear me. I push him a way … (G3A44)

[53] Jason last words was I love you … (G3S19)

[54] I dont know if you remember me? (G3A25)

[55] Jakes best man had forgotten the ring in his car. (G3S11)

[56] Authority's annoy me (G3A8)

[57] He got supporter flag, caps', mugs, scarf's and many other supporter things in his room. (G3S15)

Finally, Figure 12 shows the average ratio of word order mistakes as percentages of the total number of words.
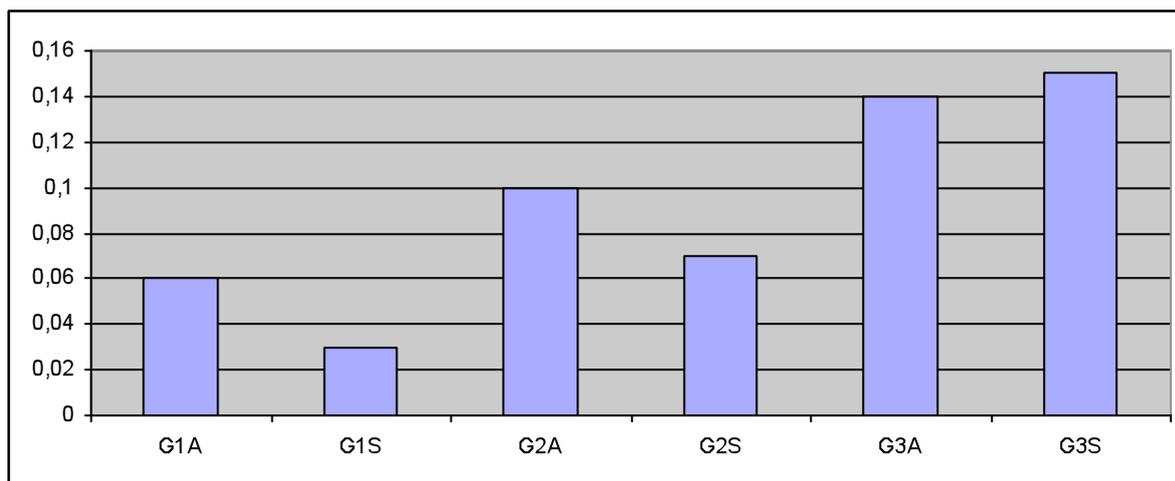
**Figure 12: Average ratio of word order mistakes as percentages of the total number of words**

Figure 12 shows that G1 in general made the fewest number of word order mistakes both in the autumn and in the spring. The ratio of mistakes dropped by 0.03 per cent (from 0.06 per cent to 0.03 per cent). In G2 the ratio of mistakes also dropped by 0.03 per cent (from 0.1 per cent to 0.07 per cent). The equivalent numbers in G3 were a rise by 0.01 per cent from 0.14 per cent in the autumn to 0.15 per cent in the spring, much higher ratios than the other two groups.

Examples of word order mistakes were:

[58] After a while I told him I have to go, but that didn't him like. (G3A49)

[59] Hours later after the "date", <u>came</u> my mum in the door. (G3A25)

[60] …, but it happen something strange. (G3A29)

## 6.3 The teacher interviews

*Elisabeth*

One of the G1 teachers, referred to as Elisabeth, has 20 credits in English, which today is the same as 60 sp and she has 19 years of teaching experience. Her impression is that her students, who were only girls at Health and Social Care, did not read much in their spare time. Elisabeth said that she encouraged her students to read women's magazines in English or gossip magazines just to get reading practice, but she thought that they did not even do that. Free voluntary reading was not a prioritized activity in class either, mostly because of the time limit of 90 minutes of English per week. Another reason was the practical issue. The students

at this particular school did not have their own classrooms with bookshelves, which could make books more easily available. The school had a library, but the selection of English language literature was rather scarce at the time of this study and magazines in the English language were not offered to the students. The students had to keep their books in the their cupboard or bring them home quite often with the result that they forgot to bring them back to school. Elisabeth claimed that this made it difficult to make free, voluntary reading a continuous activity in the classroom.

Elisabeth and her students used the textbook regularly. The teacher thought it was straightforward and easy to relate to and she believed that the students experienced safety and comfort by having their own course book. They read and tried to understand the different texts and do the activities and the grammar exercises that were presented with the texts. Elisabeth believed there was not much time for using other resources and thus reading was not prioritized.

Elisabeth's evaluation of the course book used at the school was that it was "okay". It was acceptable in the sense that there were chapters that fitted her female students; particularly "Love through the ages" with excerpts from "Romeo and Juliet", "David Copperfield" and several love poems. Otherwise Elisabeth had never been completely satisfied with any of the books she had used in her 19 years of experience.

Other sources Elizabeth used were films, video clips, the Internet and particularly the net sites of the course book "Tracks" and BBC Skillswise. Elizabeth's experience was that the students find it more enjoyable to do the activities and exercises on the net, as then they will often be provided with an immediate, correct answer.

At the time of the study there were no regular grammar instructions in class for Elisabeth and her students. It had been Elisabeth's intention to do regular grammar work with about 15 minutes of instruction in recent school years, with digital grammar exercises or handouts, but this had not been the case for every week.

Elisabeth described her students' motivation for learning English as rather low. There were a couple of ambitious learners, but most students were satisfied with an average grade. Elisabeth considered the oral skills of the students as superior to their writing skills. Most students fell into a middle position with only a few with high proficiency and a few with very poor skills.

The students' attitudes to mistakes varied according to the type of student and their goals. There were a few ambitious students who were conscious about their learning process and who would concentrate on becoming aware of their mistakes and try to avoid them in the

next piece of writing. Others could have a look at their mistakes, pretending to be interested, but had forgotten all about them in the next written assignment. Then there were those who did not have any ambitions, and who had no interest in improving; they just put the corrected assignment in the bag.

Elisabeth's attitudes to mistakes were dependent on what was emphasized in the assignment and what was expected to be the result of the text. Sometimes there would also be a focus on particular problems before the task was assigned, and then she would only correct the mistakes that were focused in the beginning. She did not correct every mistake. One reason for that was that sometimes there were way too many mistakes and this would be frustrating for the student.

The mistakes were corrected by underlining the error, writing the correction above the error or in the margin. When the same error occurred repeatedly it would be underlined the second and third time. Sometimes she would also just underline a word, leaving the student to find out what was wrong.

Elisabeth was satisfied with her correction strategies. She said that there were things she probably could have done better. What she did with her student group was to speak to each individual when the term test was handed back, pointing out the mistakes because she believed that face-to-face communication could help the students to understand their mistakes. She had never used a marking code system as she figured this would be too confusing and too much for the students to familiarize themselves with. She believed that such a system would probably be too complicated for students in her class with 3 as an average grade.

*Morten*

The second G1 teacher, called Morten, had 10 years of experience as a teacher and his educational background in English was 20 credits, 80sp in today's equivalent number.

Morten's impression about how much English his students read was that it was extremely little. He figured that some of the girls might read an English pocket book now and then, but he had the notion that the students did not read any literature. His students did not spend time in class on free voluntary reading. The students read the short stories in the text, but no time was set aside so that they could go to the library to choose their own reading. He said that there was too little time to spend on this single activity and that time had to be spent on tasks that were evaluated and given a grade, as well as on grammar. Earlier, in the years before the implementation of *The Knowledge Promotion,* reading a novel during the school

year was one of the objectives. He would then sometimes give the students some time at school to do the reading. However, to be able to finish the whole novel they had to read some at home. He said that he could probably find some time for voluntary reading, but then it would have to be given as a project, but this had not been prioritized.

Morten used the textbook regularly because he thought it was practical and because producing or finding other recourses was time consuming. He built his plan of the year around the textbook. He was not particularly satisfied with the book and described it as below average. He thought that the content of the texts was of low quality and that the activities, of which there were too few, were too random and that the grammar task that was thrown in at the end of the activity sections had no connection with the rest. He also claimed that there was no structure in the book.

Other resources used in class were the Internet, in particular the publisher of the textbook "Tracks" own net sites. In addition he used BBC Skillswise. Among other sources, grammar tasks from other books were used.

Grammar instruction was not necessarily a weekly activity for Morten and his students and was difficult to measure in time. He said grammar work was not a part of the plan of the year, but it was taken up now and then, for instance after a test where one particular problem seemed to be frequent, such as one of the word classes.

Morten described his students' motivation for learning English as very low. His view was that in general the students did not have a positive attitude and that English classes were not something that they looked forward to. He said it heavily depended on the situation, but it was his impression that the students wanted to work with pleasurable activities only, and that it was a big job for him to motivate them for something that they considered boring. So he had to include enjoyable activities, such as crosswords and games.

Morten considered the students' oral skills as superior to their writing abilities. He said that their oral skills were "relatively good" and it was his impression that the majority handled the oral part quite well. As far as the writing skills were concerned, they were in general around the average grade of 3. He said he felt that the students made many mistakes in their writing and very few would receive the grade 5. However, not many would fail either, at least not if they did the task to be evaluated. If students started working on a task that was supposed to be evaluated, but not handed it in, they would receive a 1. Morten said that if one or several of his students did not accomplish their tasks, they would fail because of this and not because of their lack of skills. It was Morten's experience that as long as they handed in their work, students would manage a 2 or higher.

Morten's impression about the students' attitudes to mistakes was that they did not care about them at all. He got this notion because the students never responded to the corrections and never asked questions about them. He said that the students seemed unbelievably uninterested in their mistakes, and were just curious about their grade.

For Morten it was important to find out what mistakes repeated themselves and he would sometimes limit the corrections to some of the mistakes, the ones that repeated themselves. He said it was important to comment at the end on what was good, for example the content. However, he always wished for the students to contact him to clear up misunderstandings or about corrections they did not understand, but they never did.

Morten corrected all the mistakes unless there was an extreme number of them and in some cases when he wanted to focus on particularly frequent mistakes. The mistakes were corrected by writing the correct alternative above the error or in the margin. When the same error occurred repeatedly, it would be underlined the second and third time. Sometimes he would also just underline a word, leaving the student to find out what was wrong.

Morten was satisfied with his correction strategies and had never used any kind of special correction system, such as numbers, colours, schemes or codes. However, he wished that the students were more preoccupied with looking at the mistakes and trying to learn from them when they received their feedback.

*Sissel*

The G2-teacher, called Sissel, had a bachelor degree in English, which means 90 credits. She had 20 years of experience as a teacher. It was Sissel's impression that the students, who were boys only, did not read many books, but they read a good deal on the net and played games that were equipped with information in English. The students were not really interested in literature. They did not spend time on free voluntary reading because there simply was not much time. Sissel was of the opinion that 90 minutes a week was too little time to do all the things she would have wanted to do.

Sissel was not satisfied with the textbook "Tracks" and said it had a malfunction first and foremost because it was not directed to vocational students since it hardly contained any work-related topics. In addition it was Sissel's opinion that the textbook did not cover the objectives of the English curriculum. Sissel also pointed to the inadequate selection of short stories and criticized how excerpts of novels had been prioritized in the textbook. Chapter 4 "Love through the ages" did not interest her male students. For longer periods, for example a month, her students would be working without the textbook. As Sissel also taught social

subjects, some learning assignments would be interdisciplinary and resources such as films and the Internet would be used. Other resources that were used in class were the BBC Skillswise, news and lessons with activities from the CNN and CBS. Short stories were also sometimes used.

Grammar instruction did not necessarily take place every week. Sissel said that grammar instruction sometimes tooks place in connection with hand-ins of assignments. When handing back the students' work the grammar instruction was focused on what seemed to be the problem areas for this particular assignment. This grammar instruction was sometimes performed in class and sometimes to the individual student. When texts in the textbook were used, then the related grammar activities were often utilized.

Sissel described the students' motivation for learning English as rather low. She said that as a whole the students did not see the value in studying general subjects at all, and were not able to see the relevance of studying them in relation to their own reality.

Sissel described the students' oral and written English skills as average. There were a few students with high skills and a few with very weak abilities. She considered her students' oral skills to be better than their written skills.

Sissel's students' attitude to mistakes varied and she assumed that the ambitious students would want to get rid of them while the great majority would not care much. She was of the opinion that it was an advantage to write on a computer, because it made editing simpler by erasing and adding words and sentences and moving chunks of texts around. However, many of the mistakes which often seemed to repeat themselves and may have fossilized, such as homophones, were not corrected by the computer's spelling checks.

Sissel's attitude towards mistakes was that the students should strive for accuracy. Even though she usually did not correct every mistake because of the vast number of errors, she thought it was important to be accurate in writing. She emphasized that it was of particular significance that the errors did not hinder communication in any way. However, she believed that it was acceptable to produce some formal errors as long as there was fluency and good content in the text.

Sissel used a particular form, a language checklist (see Appendix 1) with mistakes that appeared most frequently. The checklist was divided into three columns. The first column consisted of three main parts: grammar, spelling and miscellaneous. The grammar part focused on eight different aspects that often cause difficulties in the English writing of Norwegian students. These features were subject-verb concord, the article *a/an,* the relative pronoun *who/which,* the choice between the words *it/there,* word order, verb tenses,

adjective/adverb and the apostrophe in both genitives and contractions (*It's Paul's car, isn't it?* was used as an example). Seven of the categories were equipped with a short rule written in Norwegian at the bottom of the checklist.

The second part, spelling, also consisted of eight different categories of words which may cause problems for a student who has English as a foreign language. These were spelling in general*,* and word variations such as *which/witch, through/threw, they're/their, to/two/too, I/I, then/than* and the use of capital letters. The last category was commented with a rule at the bottom.

The headline "miscellaneous" contained two pieces of advice on how to produce a better text: "vary your language by using synonyms" and "use transition". For the last piece of advice, yet another explanation was added with "conjunctions create good fluency in the language", written in Norwegian. The two other columns in the checklist were called "Before" and "After", where Sissel wrote a cross in the "Before"-column to make the student conscious about what to be aware of when writing the next text.

Sissel was satisfied with her correction method. This checklist was used in connection with every assignment and was used because she thought that this was a means of helping the students to identify language areas in which they had difficulties. Sissel was convinced that the students would be able to diagnose their own texts and errors and also have the ability to know what to look for. Sissel always tried to express either in writing or face-to-face with the students what was good, and what could be done better. However, she admitted that she would like to digitalize the check list and at the same time introduce colour codes to her check list. However, so far she found this to be too time-consuming.

# 7. Discussion

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter carries the results in the previous chapter from the micro to the macro level starting off with a brief summative analysis of the main findings. Furthermore the chapter discusses the effects of correction and feedback and the effect computers have on the accuracy of students' English writing. As motivation is an important factor for language learning, this is also discussed. In addition, the results are linked to other issues concerning English as a foreign language for Norwegian learners, such as reasons for inaccuracy in students' writing, teachers' qualifications and national curricula. Finally limitations of the study are pointed out and recommendations as to what could be done to improve Norwegian students' English proficiency and accuracy are proposed.

## 7.2 The main findings

All three groups managed to reduce their number of mistakes although they all wrote longer texts on average in the spring texts. It is then tempting to conclude that all the three correction methods have served their purposes even though there was not a reduction in all the categories of mistakes in all three groups. The reduction of mistakes in G1 was noticeably higher than the two other groups with an effective reduction of 31 per cent compared to G2's reduction of 23 per cent and G3's reduction of 21 per cent. This means that the group of students who used a marking code (G3) had the lowest reduction. The average for all three groups was 25 per cent. That all three groups would make such a considerable reduction of mistakes was not expected when this project was started. There are three possible explanations for this improvement. The first tempting one is that language teaching helps, even at a stage when one could believe that errors in the target language have fossilized. The second explanation is that any correction strategy helps, and that some work better than others. Thirdly, computers contribute to students writing more accurately once the students are familiar with word processing.

In all the groups spelling mistakes were the most frequent both in the autumn and spring texts except for the spring text in G3. For the autumn text using the wrong word was the second most frequent mistake category in all the groups. The wrong tense was the third most frequent mistake category in G2A and G3A, whereas punctuation was the third most frequent mistake category in G1A. The word order category was the least frequent category in

all three groups, while the upper/lower case letter category was proportionately low in all three groups. In addition the missing words category of mistakes was low in G1A and G3A.

In the spring text spelling mistakes were the most frequent in G1S and G2S, while the wrong word category was the largest in G3S, who reduced the number of spelling mistakes considerably. The wrong word category was still proportionately high in all groups while word order was still lowest in G1S and G2S, while the upper/lower case letter category was now lowest in G3S. There was some movement in the other categories compared to the autumn.

For the individual categories there was a noticeable reduction of the frequency of wrong words in all the three groups. Furthermore, there was a reduction of spelling mistakes in all three groups, especially noticeable in G1 and G3. There was a reduction of mistakes in both the concord and form categories in all three groups. For G1 it was especially noticeable and for G1 and G2 the reduction of form mistakes was considerable. G1 did not manage to reduce the number of verb tense mistakes, whereas there was a considerable reduction of this category in the two other groups. Whereas G2 increased the number of punctuation mistakes from the autumn to the spring the number of punctuation mistakes dropped in both G3 and G1; in the latter group the reduction constituted more than a half. Word order mistakes were reduced in two groups and more than halved in G1, whereas there was no reduction in G3. Only G2 managed to reduce the number of missing word mistakes. However, the reduction was considerable. There was no reduction of upper/lower case letter in G1 and G2, whereas there was a reduction in G3, in which the number of mistakes was halved.

## 7.3 The effects of correction and feedback
One of the reasons for undertaking this research was to see whether the vocational students would make any progress in their accuracy during their second year of English at upper secondary school. Having worked with vocational students at this level for several years it was the present writer's impression that most students did not learn significantly from their mistakes through the correction method that had been used during those years and that many mistakes had fossilized. However, according to the results of this study the students in all three groups made an improvement from the autumn to the spring with an average of 25 per cent, which would indicate that all the three feedback methods the students received were to some extent effective. In addition the findings show that the correction method using a combination of underlining and correcting proved to be the most efficient one, and that the experiment with the marking code was the least efficient method.

In G3, who used a marking code, it was perhaps too ambitious to introduce as many as nine mistake categories in order to see if this would help the students to recognize their errors. Before undertaking the research it was expected that many students would protest to its use because they would find the letter symbols corresponding to mistakes confusing. Even though they had been instructed about them and seen examples of their use it was expected that many students would have forgotten their meaning after the return of the first assignment using a marking code, which they also did. Even after the second assignment they were not fully accustomed to the codes.

The students in G3 received a marking code for five of their written assignments during the school year. The marking code was introduced before the first written assignment, which was the creative text in the autumn belonging to the corpus of this study. The second assignment was a film analysis, the third the term test before Christmas and then there was a project work in March. Even though a marking code was also used for the second creative text and for the spring term test, these would have no effect on this study because it was the corrections and feedback given before the spring text that were important in order to see whether they would have an effect on the students' accuracy. This implies that the students had experienced this method of correcting only three times before they wrote the spring text. In order to make the students accustomed to the use of the marking code and the letter symbols, the frequency of their use was probably too scarce (see Ferris and Roberts, 2001).

Considering the results of this study, where G3 was the group with the lowest reduction of mistakes, using a marking code did not seem to be as effective as the other two methods used in this study. The method that seemed to be most effective, used by G1, was underlining the mistake and then either giving the correct version either above or in the margin or sometimes leaving the students to find out for themselves what could be wrong with the underlined word(s). This correction method is a mixture of what Chandler (2003:282-283) refers to as "Direct Correction" and "Underlining". To get the best results from feedback Chandler suggests combining correction and underlining (see section 4.4), which gave the best result, as was also the case for this study.

The marking code system used in G3 can be compared with the Underlining and Description method used in Chandler's study, only instead of letter codes such as "P" and "F" the marginal description in Chandler's study was "punc" and "wrong form" for these letter codes. However, whereas the students who received this teacher feedback in Chandler's study did not manage to reduce their errors in their subsequent writing the students of this study did, which could lead to the same conclusion made by Chandler (2003:293), that the most

important thing is to have the students do something about the corrections and not only receive them.

## 7.4 The effects of computers on written accuracy

It was considered a good idea to use a computer for the written assignments to help students become aware of their mistakes and to make them be accustomed to computers if they wanted to use one for their exam. The intention was that the automatic spelling and grammar-checking program would reduce surface errors. Looking at the autumn and spring texts, spelling mistakes were the most numerous in all three groups except for G3S, where wrong word was the largest category. The majority of the mistakes in G1, who made most spelling mistakes, were not discovered by the spelling check, as the words they used exist in the English vocabulary. However, there were many mistakes that a spelling check detects that were not corrected, such as *bu, theirselves, waint, tahat, didden't, drived, runned*, provided that the computer was programmed for the English language. The reason why they were not corrected could be that the students were not aware of the spelling check's existence, forgot to program the language or they just ignored the red or green underlining. In addition some may not have been aware that there was a possibility to right-click to get the correct alternative and did not bother looking the word up in the dictionary. As shown in Chapter 6, there were several examples where the students wrote Norwegian words although it must have been quite obvious that they were aware of that fact.

It was expected that the advantages of using a computer would have a positive outcome on the students' accuracy. However, the language and spelling checks did not have the anticipated degree of effect on the autumn texts, as it transpired that the students in G3, who were observed by the writer of this study, were not properly prepared for writing on a computer. The majority of the students in G3 were girls (only three boys) and it is the impression of both this writer and the other teachers in this study that boys are more familiar with the use of computers than the female pupils. Sissel in G2 also stated that her students, who were predominantly males, read much because of their frequent use of computers. However, all three groups made the kinds of mistakes in the autumn that could indicate that they had neither chosen the English language on the computer nor corrected the red and green underlining. In addition many students neither brought their dictionary nor remembered to download the dictionary program "Clue", which was offered by the school, before they did their autumn text. This confirms that many vocational students are not particularly ambitious when it comes to language learning and are not interested in doing their utmost to write

accurately.

Although most teenagers of today have been familiar with using a computer since they were children, they do not seem to have become accustomed to the word processing abilities the computer offers. Whereas Atwell (1998:102) found that word processors helped her pupils produce more writing and utilize the possibilities to rearrange, add, delete and make corrections and thus have the students create clean, readable documents, it seems as if many vocational students just want to get their writing done with, so that they can receive their grade. According to the interviews with the teachers in G1 and G2, in addition to the present writer's experience, striving for a good grade is not motivation enough for some students, who express that they are satisfied with passing with the grade 2.

The expectation to find a great difference in accuracy between handwritten texts and those written on a computer was not fulfilled. It was not anticipated that so many would pay so little attention to the spelling checks, nor was it expected that so many would ignore downloading dictionary programs in advance. It was assumed that most students would take the opportunity to apply all the help they could get. Therefore it was surprising that spelling mistakes were the most frequent both in the autumn and in the spring texts, even though mixing words such as *where/were, to/two/too, witch/which* and misspellings in *wh*-words, such as *whit* for *with* and *how* for *who*, were still anticipated to be quite frequent.

However, there are strong indications that some students have profited by using their computer in the spring text. In G3 the students used their computers for three more assignments before handing in the spring text, which could have made them more familiar with word processing and using the spelling checks. In addition the teacher of this group emphasized the importance of using the correction program, both individually and in class.

In G3 spelling mistakes were reduced from 408 mistakes to 329, and this was the only group where spelling mistakes were not the most frequent in the spring. Trying to find a reasonable explanation for this, the texts of eight students who reduced their spelling mistakes remarkably were looked closer into electronically to see if the correction program on the computer could have affected the number of spelling mistakes. These eight students made the following reduction: G318: 12 – 1, G323: 19 – 5, G325: 22 – 2, G327: 14 – 5, G332: 15 – 2, G333: 24 – 5, G347: 16 – 2, G350: 16 – 6.

The electronic check on the spring texts of G3S18, G3S25 and G3S27 showed no underlinings, whereas in the autumn text of, for example G3A18, there were five underlinings in these two lines only:

*... cleen it up, after I took Simon out of the <u>appartment</u>. I can't <u>belive</u> what it's right in front of me. I got in, <u>infront</u> of me they where. My boyfriend and my <u>bestfriend ...</u>*

G318 reduced the total number of mistakes from 64 in the autumn to only 12 in the spring, which is a clear indication of G318 making use of the correction program on the computer since there were no electronic underlinings in the spring text.

For G347 there were three underlinings in the spring text, but two of them were on names such as *<u>Alanya</u>* and *<u>Kleopatra</u>* and the third one was the word *<u>babygirl</u>*. However, when checking this student's autumn text 25 red underlinings and 6 green ones were found. From these examples one can conclude that there were students who profited by the use of the spelling check program on the computer.

It was somewhat surprising, though, that there would be more mistakes in the wrong word category than the number of mistakes in the wrong verb tense and concord categories. Norwegian pupils normally make many concord mistakes in the present tense 3$^{rd}$ singular form and with the past form of *to be*, where in Norwegian there is only one form. However, although one would normally expect the students to make many concord mistakes, the autumn text did not contain many errors in this category in any of the groups. In addition all three groups managed to reduce the number of concord mistakes and this could be an indication that the correction program had been utilized in some cases, although it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion about this since the spelling check does not manage to notice them all. For example in G3S29 one finds two different versions of concord mistakes, one with a green underlining and one without any underlining: *My <u>sister have</u> not se who bad this man is...*, and *I know about many thing the man have don.*

The students used their computers for both assignments. However there is reason to believe that some of the students had learnt their lesson from the first assignment to the next and had used the correction program as it was supposed to be used in the second assignment. Also several months had passed between the two assignments, which could have made the students more accustomed to the use of computers when writing. This could indicate that teaching of how to write on a computer and how to make use of the word processor had been insufficient in primary and lower secondary school. There is a general belief that teenagers are more capable of using computer than their teachers, but there is reason to believe that that is not always the case. Teenagers may have been used to computers since they were small children, but may have spent more time playing games than using it for writing. It is therefore important to instruct pupils at an early stage in how to use the computer for writing in order to

become more accurate. This is also emphasized in *The Knowledge Promotion* (2005) as the use of digital tools is now integrated in every subject of the curriculum. In the Norwegian subject curriculum the aim "that the pupil shall be able to use a word processor to create texts" (*The Knowledge Promotion*, 2005:40-41) is brought in as one of the competence aims after the first two years whereas the aim to "use digital tools to find information and create text" is implemented in the English subject curriculum after the fourth year. Teaching pupils how to use a word processor for saving, rearranging, adding, deleting and correcting mistakes at an early stage of their education would be a great advantage for their accuracy.

Although this study shows progress in accuracy, considering the long time the students have undergone English language instruction it is still the impression of this author that the students make too many mistakes. The reason could be that as soon as students get the idea that they are communicating and are able to manage in the target language in spite of errors, the acquisition process will stop and they will probably pay less attention to accuracy. According to Corder (1978:83), cited in Simonsen (1998:92), the learner's "interlanguage grammar will fossilize at the point in its development where his needs are satisfied". The fact that many students in upper secondary vocational school are satisfied with a passing grade is an indication of them not being interested in doing anything about their fossilized errors. For example, when giving oral feedback to the written texts in G3, the present writer was often confronted with expressions such as "I always do that mistake". It was also Morten's clear impression that the students in G1 did not care about their mistakes. One reason for this notion was that the students never contacted him about the mistakes or never asked questions about them. Morten said the students were interested in the grade only.

## 7.5 The motivation of vocational students

Since the law about the right to three years of upper secondary education for everyone between the age of 16 and 19 was introduced in 1994, it has been an unwritten law that everyone *should* apply for and go through upper secondary school. That implies that many teenagers continue with upper secondary education after 10 years of primary and lower secondary school even though they are not motivated for school and are particularly tired of theoretical subjects. Figures from Rogaland County, where statistics about results, grades, students and apprentices are presented (2008)[14], state that in the school year 2007/2008 a total of 608 pupils (3.9 %) quit school between 1 October and the end of the school year, 329 of

---

[14] http://www.rogfk.no/modules/module_123/proxy.asp?D=2&C=274&I=7802 Saksframlegg om karakter-, elev- og lærlingestatistikk 2008, dated 16 April 2010.

them men and 279 women. At the school of this study 64 pupils (7.6 %) quit school, among them students that participated in the autumn text. 43 quitters were male students and 21 were female students. The figures show that the highest number of quitters is found in vocational schools. The majority of the students claim that the reason for leaving school is that they are tired of it. The second most common reason the quitters give for leaving is a personal explanation. The grade average at the start of the school year in Rogaland County in 2007/2008 was 3,48 and 3,43 at the end of the school year[15]. The equivalent figures for the school of this study were 3,38 and 3,35.

Taking this into consideration there is no doubt that many pupils in upper secondary vocational school are unmotivated for school in general and for theoretical subjects in particular, such as Norwegian, Social subjects, Mathematics and English. It is the impression of this present writer as a teacher that many pupils are forced into upper secondary education because it is expected of them or that the parents, or the system, have forced them to do so. They apply for a vocational school because they expect that the practical subjects will make school more interesting to them. Often they are disappointed, discovering that practical subjects contain much theoretical work as well.

With the introduction of *The Knowledge Promotion* curriculum, the English subject curriculum is the same for both general subject students and vocational students, and the exam is the same for both even though there is a general acceptance that the English oral and written skills of the general subject students are higher than those of the vocational students. For many vocational students, whose only aim is to obtain a craft certificate and an occupation within the branch they have chosen, it is difficult to understand the point of reading English literature, such as poetry, short stories, drama and novels from different periods from the 1500s and up until today or "explain the main characteristics of the development of English from an Anglo-Saxon language to an international world language", which are two of the objectives of *The Knowledge Promotion* (2006:95).

Having worked with this group of students for several years, it is the impression of this writer and also of the other teachers of this study that vocational students are not very interested in the English subject in general and in accuracy in particular. There is no doubt that the oral and written English language proficiency of Norwegian vocational students is generally low. The high frequency of errors and lack of lexical richness indicate an interlanguage that diverges quite significantly from Standard English and from the level one

---

[15] 6 is the best result, 2 is a pass and 1 is failure.

would expect after eleven years of English instruction at school, in addition to the English influence through the media. This fact taken into consideration, one would have expected the students to be more accurate in the English language writing than was the case. After all, they are supposed to express themselves in writing with "subtleness, proper register, fluency, precision and coherence" at this stage, according to *The Knowledge Promotion* (2006:95). In the autumn text the students in G1 made on average one mistake for every sixteenth word, and in the most extreme case there was one mistake for every third word.

One might question why some learners do not seem to reach a satisfactory level of accuracy when writing in a foreign language, even after many years of instruction. As Olsen (1999) suggests there could be both internal factors, such as the learner's motivation and aptitude and external factors such as teaching and teaching material. In this case it is tempting to blame the learners' motivation only. However, one might ask, as Skehan (1989), cited in Lightbown and Spada (1999:56) "are learners more highly motivated because they are successful, or are they successful because they are highly motivated?" According to Lightbown and Spada (1999:56) the learner's attitude will be decisive for whether learning a second language will be a source of improvement or aversion. Lightbown and Spada (1999:56) argue that if the learner's "only reason for learning the second language is external pressure, internal motivation may be minimal and general attitudes towards learning may be negative". There is no doubt that the obligation of having English as part of their vocational curriculum is some students' only reason for attending English classes. Many students would gladly omit English on the timetable if they were given the opportunity. Many students also choose to skip English classes and the problem of truancy is vast. As Sissel in G2 said in the interview, many pupils do not see the point of learning English and are not able to relate the objectives of the English curriculum to their own reality. Also Morten said that it was quite a job trying to motivate the students, and that English classes were not something the students looked forward to. At the beginning of the school year the students at the school of this study are interviewed and when they are asked about their favourite subject and the ones they dislike, English is a frequently mentioned subject for the latter. Many also consider their skills as quite poor.

## 7.6 Reasons for mistakes
Norwegian teenagers of today have been massively exposed to the English language since they were born, through American and English television programs, series and movies, through TV- and computer-games with instructions written in English, the Internet, and

through music. In fact, according to a survey of the English proficiency of 16-year-old students performed by Bonnet (2004:146) the pupils believe themselves that as much as 34 per cent of their English knowledge is acquired from the media. In addition, they have had English instruction at school since they were at the age of five or six years. Since 1997 and the introduction of the *L97*-curriculum, they should have learnt to produce texts in different genres and from the 5$^{th}$ grade they should have discovered and learnt the structure of the language. In addition they should have been exposed to authentic texts, novels, short stories and novel excerpts. However, even though the *L97*- curriculum specified that students in the 8$^{th}$ to 10$^{th}$ grades are supposed to read and be able to discuss at least one novel by authors such as John Steinbeck, Charlotte Brontë, Lewis Carrol, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie or an easy reader a year, many students who start their upper second education, claim that they have never read a book.

The vocational students of this study did not spend much time on free, voluntary reading. It was also the impression of the teachers interviewed in this study that the pupils did not read much, if anything at all. Sissel in G2 said that her students read a good deal on their computers, but did not read books. It seemed as if they did not even bother to read magazines, even though they were encouraged to do so by one of the teachers. It was also Morten's impression that the students in G1 did not read any literature.

All the three teachers interviewed said that no time was left for free voluntary reading in class. Morten said that because of the former curriculum (*R94*) in upper secondary school, where reading a novel during the school year was one of the objectives, some time was set aside to read a novel at school, while the rest would have to be read in the students' spare time. However, this was no longer a prioritized activity. All the teachers claimed that 90 minutes of English a week was way too little time to spend on individual, voluntary reading. The aspect of time has also been discussed by Hellekjær (2007), who questioned whether five compulsory English lessons per week (five times 45 minutes) in the first year of general education, (three lessons a week the first year of vocational education, and two the second) is an adequate minimum requirement to go on to higher education. To achieve general study competence Hellekjær primarily suggests increasing the minimum requirement with an additional five-hour course. An alternative suggestion is to make it easier to integrate a language subject in the programmes for social studies and mathematics. A third alternative Hellekjær recommends is a systematic use of bilingual teaching, also known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Brinton et al., 1996, cited in Hellekjær, 2007). CLIL is teaching performed in a foreign language in a non-language subject, for instance history.

Hellekjær (2005) found that pupils in upper secondary school who had had an English CLIL subject, scored significantly higher in a test of reading abilities than pupils who had had two years of in-depth studies in English. According to Hellekjær experiences from Norway and other countries have shown that the close integration between subject and language makes CLIL-teaching well suited for vocational programmes.

In one of his studies Hellekjær (2007:225) also found that most of the upper secondary level respondents in general subjects had read from one to five books, which reflects the Norwegian lower and upper secondary syllabus requirements which should indicate that not much of their spare time is used for pleasure reading. There is a general agreement among researchers that reading is the main foundation for the production of writing. Several studies (e.g. Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Gradman and Hanania, 1991) have endeavoured to document that there is an extremely close link between reading extensively in a second language and second language proficiency. According to Krashen (2003:15) free voluntary reading might be the most powerful tool in language education and has "a strong impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing" and it works because it is a form of comprehensible input. Krashen (2003:5) argues that that if students are provided with enough comprehensible input, the language structure and grammatical forms will be acquired subconsciously and thus focusing on certain points of grammar is unnecessary. For Krashen, as for many English teachers, grammatical accuracy is an important goal. However, to obtain this goal Krashen (2003:5) argues that comprehensible input through extensive reading is a better way of improving the students' grammatical accuracy than direct instruction in grammar.

One might question to what degree the students in this study have been encouraged to read for pleasure in their years of primary and lower secondary school. Having observed vocational students for a decade, it is obvious that many students are not keen on reading even though they are encouraged to use time in class to find an enjoyable book in the library. It seems as if they do not know what to look for, perhaps because they are not used to it, and when they have found something they thought they would take pleasure in reading, they often quickly conclude that it was boring. Some students even have problems concentrating on only short versions of short stories and articles in the textbook. One conclusion might be that these students associate reading with something boring, which might be a result of them never having been able to choose for themselves and not being introduced to understandable and interesting material. According to Krashen (1993a:80) any pleasurable reading material is good. However, he remarks that light reading alone will not result in the highest level of

competence, but believes it would still be of help to the student.

If the students of this study had been encouraged to read Steinbeck, Brontë and Conan Doyle and the other suggested authors in the *L97*-curriculum, many of them would presumably have found the works of these novelists somewhat boring and also difficult to read and as such they would not have provided the pupils with comprehensible input. Indeed these authors were only suggestions, but some teachers might have taken them literally even though the *L97*-curriculum clearly allowed teachers and students to select reading material that suited their own interest and ability.

Moreover, examples from this study have shown that many students use rules and vocabulary from their Norwegian mother tongue, which according to Olsen (1999:25) is a sign of early learning and is not assumed to be common for learners who have studied the language for such a long time. Olsen examined texts written by pupils who had only undergone six years of formal English instruction and found mistakes of overgeneralization*; I have living in new york in 5 years*, language mixing, particularly with preposition; … *you don't have to sit on the school every day*, syntactic structures; *I am not so good in English,* and borrowing words; *You can take tentamen* (term test) *to Christmas*. These kind of mistakes were also found in this study, for example overgeneralization (*My job is to keeping …,*), language mixing, particularly with prepositions (*This is why I wasn't on school yesterday*), syntactic structures (*She had right*) and borrowing words (*Viking can win the Tippeligan ...,*).

Considering the students' use of first language elements, another possible explanation for the students' low proficiency of English, as suggested by Olsen (1999), might also be the lack of exposure to the target language. As the students of this study come from different primary and lower secondary schools in Rogaland or other parts of the country, they have had different kinds of exposure to English during their school years. For language learning to take place, a certain amount of authentic language input from the teacher is necessary. Although the previous syllabus of 1997 emphasized the use of English for communication and exposing the students to a wide variety of authentic texts, this might not have been the case for every student, as they came from different backgrounds with different teachers. When talking English in class, this present writer has often been confronted with protests against being exposed to the English language as the pupils claim they do not understand anything. Harmer (2001:132) views teachers as a principle source for comprehensible input to take place and therefore teachers talking the target language in class has a significant role in language acquisition. Harmer claims that if the teachers are reluctant to speak English the students would see no point in it either, a point also made by Drew and Sørheim (2004:37), who

consider the teachers' use of English at all times in class an important signal for the pupils to do the same.

According to Krashen (1982:59) teacher talk is a means of providing comprehensible input, which means language the students understand the meaning of, but which is slightly above their own production level. Krashen claims that the classroom can be an efficient place to accomplish at least the intermediate stage of proficiency rapidly. He even goes so far as to say that enough comprehensible input in the second language classroom could be as beneficial as going abroad to learn the language in its own country (Krashen, 1982:58). It is questionable whether the students of this study had been exposed to enough comprehensible input during eleven years of English at school.

There does not necessarily have to be a contradiction between accuracy and fluency. Simensen (2007:178) believes it is unfortunate that the two concepts are often described as dichotomies. There is an assumption that the development of accuracy goes hand in hand with an increase in fluency (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998:35). There are several examples in the corpora included in this study that show that students who write longer texts do not necessarily make more mistakes than those who write little. This may indicate that the students who do not write much and make many mistakes are not very keen on writing. Olsen (1999) also suggests that writing less than is expected from students at a certain level is a result of *avoidance*, which means leaving out unknown words or structures. According to Olsen some students avoid writing almost completely and hand in just a couple of sentences when about 250 words are expected. G346, who clearly enjoys writing and also wants to become a journalist, wrote 1018 words the first semester and 1225 the second. The texts contained complex sentences and few mistakes with only three mistakes each semester. Four of them were missing words mistakes, which may simply have been "slips of the pen" as the language was otherwise quite fluent. At the opposite end there is the text, which is presented as a complete text in Chapter 6, where G1A11 produced 94 words and made 33 mistakes.

As suggested by Simensen (2007:179) a larger amount of accuracy training should be performed at lower rather than higher levels, which is also agreed upon by Hammerly (1991:122), who claims that accurate and fluent second language learning is best achieved when it is recognized that "accuracy must be insisted upon from the beginning but fluency is a long-term goal". Whereas supporters of communicative language teaching have argued that it is better to encourage learners to develop fluency before accuracy, their opponents argue that explicit grammar instruction has been neglected in the communicative approach and that

allowing learners too much 'freedom' without correction will lead to early fossilization of errors (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:119).

Considering the significant number of mistakes in some of the students' writing in this study there is a possibility that teachers and pupils have not spent enough time in primary and lower secondary school on conscious attention to accuracy. Since it is the impression of the teachers interviewed in this study, as well as this author's general impression, that many students do not care much about their mistakes, it may be that they have not been thoroughly made aware of them. Getting it right from the start through correction and feedback is probably a good idea. However, there are different methods of how to approach this aim. According to Edge (1989:14) errors should be viewed upon as learning steps and teacher correction and involving learners in judgement about correctness are means of helping the student to become more accurate in their use of language. It might be depressing for a student to receive a piece of written work with a good deal of teacher correction on it. Edge advocates one method to avoid this feeling, which is to leave some of the mistakes uncorrected and at the same time make it clear to the pupils that what is not corrected is not necessarily standard English.

It may be advisable to start using different kinds of corrections strategies from the very start. Making the pupils get used to self-correction, peer correction in pair, groups or class and different methods of teacher feedback at an early stage, may make the pupils more conscious about their mistakes. For example, a marking code could probably have been more effective than demonstrated in this study if it had been introduced earlier and step by step. As Chandler (2003) points out, correction strategies need time to work. Moreover, being able to construct grammatically acceptable sentences and be able to spell correctly is so important for the exam.

## 7.7 Teachers' qualifications

The present curriculum, *The Knowledge Promotion*, and the former curriculum of 1997 (*L97*) express high demands for English at the primary level in the Norwegian schools. However, the same kinds of demands have not been made in the education of English teachers.
In a report written by Oliver (2007) only 4,5 per cent of the 100 students educated at the Faculty of Arts and Education at the University of Stavanger, where English is only optional, have had English in their subject portfolio between 2000 and 2006. Since English is obligatory from the first year of primary school, the majority of the teachers have to expect to teach English, which is a subject they have not been taught themselves since upper secondary

school.

According to Oliver (2007) foreign language education presupposes a high level of the teacher's competence both linguistically and methodologically. However, an investigation made by Statistics Norway (Statistisk sentralbyrå) performed in 1997, showed that the majority of the teachers did not have the necessary qualifications to teach English and that those who did were close to retirement (Lagerstrøm, 2000). A more recent report (Lagerstrøm, 2007)[16] showed that almost seven out of ten English teachers in primary and lower secondary school did not have any study points in the subject, which was worse than 1999.

The classroom is still the centre for systematic input, which will enable the pupil to understand and produce the foreign language orally and in writing. Since much of the input is dependent on what comes from the teacher, it is crucial that the teacher has the required qualifications to provide this input.

## 7.8 Limitations of the study

This thesis limited the analysis of the students' texts to accuracy. However, it could have been interesting to measure the students' fluency, as it is this present author's impression that there is a strong connection between the two. Simensen (2007:178) states that a maximum degree of both accuracy and fluency should be the goal for each individual student.

In addition, as all the students' texts were marked holistically by their respective teachers it would have been of interest to collect that data to see in what degree accuracy, or lack of such, had an effect on the grade the students were awarded.

Furthermore it would have been interesting to ask students about their English reading habits through a questionnaire, although that would have been beyond the scope of this thesis. Information concerning how much or rather how little literature students in upper secondary read is based on the experience and the impressions of the teachers interviewed in this study and this present author's experience and impressions as to how much the students read. Relevant questions could be how many novels they have read either at school or at home, how often they read English magazines and newspapers, how often they read news or other information in English on the Internet, and whether and how often they play computer- or TV-games with English instructions. It would also be interesting to know whether and how often they watch English or American movies, videos or TV-series without Norwegian subtitles. The questionnaire could also have included questions about the students'

---

[16] http://www.ssb.no/emner/04/02/20/rapp_200721/, accessed 1 May 2010.

experiences with and attitudes to correcting mistakes. They could also have been asked about their familiarity with different correction strategies, their preference, and which one they found to be most useful for improving their accuracy. However, this would constitute another study.

## 7.9 Recommendations

The present section presents some suggestions for changes in Norwegian instruction of English as a foreign language. In his survey Bonnet (2004:147) found that Norwegian lower secondary pupils did well compared to their contemporaries in seven other European countries. However, the results showed a "relatively large standard deviation and distribution of results in each classroom was also considerable". In fact, the standard variation was the largest of all countries both on reading performances and written production, which Bonnet suggests indicates a large spread in both reading performances and written production. Considering that the Norwegian compulsory system is based on equality for each individual, this difference may be somewhat alarming and it is therefore not difficult to agree with Bonnet (2004:147), who claims that the data from his survey "reveals a tremendous challenge for Norwegian teachers of English". Also the fact that the pupils believed themselves that they had learnt about half their English knowledge elsewhere than at school is somewhat revealing about what goes on in the English classrooms (Bonnet, 2004:146).

The difference between the pupils described in Bonnet's survey is also mirrored in this study. There is a vast gap between the students with the best and poorest abilities (see Appendix 3). The discrepancy between schools in Bonnet's survey was 13 per cent, which is approximately the same standard deviation in the number of mistakes within the three groups of this study. In the G1 the standard variation varied from 14 per cent in the autumn and 13 per cent in the spring. The equivalent figures in G2 were 14 per cent and 12 per cent and 24 per cent and 23 per cent in G3. Since upper secondary English foreign language teaching is based on the ten years of instruction in previous levels in primary school and lower secondary school, Hellekjær (2005:254) argues that "the results of the European study reveal the need for a critical examination of the content and the progression of Norwegian EFL instruction". In view of the findings of this study there is reason to believe that this is a good suggestion.

To improve the quality of English foreign language instruction and learning more time should be spent on extensive reading (Day and Bamford, 1998; Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Krashen, 1981, 1982, 1993a), which would also have an effect on accuracy. Whereas the home could be looked upon as the most natural place for pleasure reading, Simensen

(2007:173) claims that it is necessary to leave time for the pupils to borrow, read and return books and to share their reading with their classmates during the lesson. Pupils can bring their own reading material from home. However, it is important that the school library is able to provide texts appropriate for the different levels of reading abilities. To ensure reading material for all types of students, Simensen (2007:172) suggests including comics and cartoons in the school or class library. For weak or less motivated readers, audio books could also be helpful.

The teachers should probably also consider exposing the students to more teacher talk. Even if children and teenagers receive English language input through media channels, the classroom is still the "centre of systematic input" (Lehmann, 1999:89) and therefore the teacher is an important provider of input, which will enable pupils to understand and produce written and oral communication. Bonnet's survey (2004:148) demonstrated that 66 per cent of the teachers speak English more than half the time and 30 per cent say that they use English "never/rarely" or "sometimes". Perhaps the objective that "most classroom communication shall be in English" from *L97* (1996:224, my translation), must be incorporated in *The Knowledge Promotion* in the next edition.

It is this author's opinion that more time is needed for English lessons in upper secondary school to secure continuity and progress in the students' work, perhaps not with another 90 minute session a week, but with additional two times 45 minutes to spread the English lessons over the week. Moreover, a 90-minute sitting concentrating on a subject many vocational students are not interested in or motivated for, is probably too much. However, a 90-minute long period is sometimes necessary for writing longer texts, tests and for watching a movie, for example. Moreover, additional time for English lessons would necessarily be at the expense of other subjects, which is of course a difficulty. Hellekjær's (2007) recommendation of a systematic use of bilingual teaching would almost certainly be too difficult for the vocational students, although some students would be qualified for such instruction. In addition, Language Integrated Learning would require that teachers of, for example, history or social studies were competent English teachers as well, which is not always the case. However, it is still advisable to examine closely the content and progression of English instruction in Norwegian primary and lower secondary school, because even if the time used for English instruction is augmented by a 45-minute session in the first level of upper secondary and the double time quantity in the second level, it will be difficult to catch up with what has been lost during primary and lower secondary school. Even though English is an obligatory subject in compulsory school, it is this author's experience that some students

have claimed that they were exempted from English classes in lower secondary school because of their poor skills. Without continuous input of the foreign language, acquisition will not occur. In upper secondary school it is also hard to catch up on lost basic English skills.

The suggested changes in the English curriculum of *The Knowledge Promotion* (see section 3.2) are advisable. The alterations of the objectives proposed by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training in a consultation memorandum[17] dated 6 April 2010 are adapted to vocational students in the sense that they open for a vocational approach to the English subject to a much greater extent, which will make the subject much more suited to the needs of the students. The terminology in the objectives is more direct and more easily understandable for the students, which is a step in the right direction. However, there is no proposal for separate exams for vocational and general subject students, and what remains to be seen is if the changes in the English curriculum, if implemented, are followed up in the national exam.

Statistics from The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training[18] also show that vocational students in Norway receive an overall achievement mark in English of almost a whole grade lower than the students who do general subjects. Whereas the vocational students achieved an average overall achievement grade of 3.3 in the school year 2007/2008 and 3,4 in 2008/2009, the equivalent average grades for the students of general subjects were 4,0 and 4,1. The difference in the results for the exam[19] was even greater; the average result for the vocational students was 2,7 in 2007/2008 and 2,8 in 2008/2009, whereas the result for the students doing general subjects was 3,4 both school years. In the county of Rogaland the results[20] for the vocational students were even worse than the rest of the country with an average grade of 2,4 in 2007/2008 and 2,5 in 2008/2009. The equivalent grade for the general

---

[17] Høringsnotat – læreplan i engelsk som fellesfag i videregående opplæring, http://www.udir.no/Sokeresultat/?quicksearchquery=H%C3%B8ringsnotat+%E2%80%93+l%C3%A6replan+i+engelsk+som+fellesfag+i+videreg%C3%A5ende++oppl%C3%A6ring, accessed 5 May 2010.

[18] http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=6f41c562-f928-4d3a-b2fe-48b2aba13bdc&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

[19] http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=cc88e070-6d4d-4a9a-8f5c-b12049033b47&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

[20] http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=11&underomrade=c22a9bda-2e4d-4122-9835-ca3949b77925&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

subject students was 3,5 and 3,4 respectively. The national exam results from 2008/2009 showed that 3.3[21] per cent of the general subject students failed at the exam and 18.4 per cent received a grade 2. The equivalent figure for the vocational students[22] was as many as 11 per cent failing the exam and 31.1 per cent managing a 2, which indicates that the exam was generally too difficult to handle for the vocational students.

Furthermore, since the English curriculum emphasizes that English is very important for the Norwegian people, this importance should be reflected in teacher education. It is about time to decide on implementing English as a compulsory subject in teacher training. If English is still an elective subject, then teacher students should choose English as one of their optional subjects if they want to teach English. According to the reform[23] of the Norwegian teacher education, which is to be implemented in the autumn of 2010, students will not be considered qualified for English teaching without at least 30 study points of English, which is half of what is needed in upper secondary school.

Finally, it is of great importance that text books, since they are so heavily relied on in Norwegian schools, are interesting with texts that are appealing to young people. Even though two of the teachers interviewed in this study used the textbook both for their own convenience and also as an advantage for the students, they were not satisfied with it. Sissel in G2 used the textbook now and then, but considered some of the texts uninteresting for her boy students and she also criticized it for not paying enough attention to vocational subjects. It is also of great significance to make the tasks and activities in the book sensible and relevant to the texts to which they are connected. However, in this technological world and with the heavy focus on Information and Communication Technologies in Norwegian schools, the textbook may be on its way out. From being confident with using a textbook, future teachers may have

---

[21] http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?rapportid=51286f99-743e-4e72-beb0-7fafed7674b5&enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=c22a9bda-2e4d-4122-9835-ca3949b77925&skoletype=1&trinn=0&periode=2008-2009&orgAggr=A&fordeling=2&artikkelvisning=False&indikator=25e4085f-a58b-48f3-b02a-1b2e4c7afc3e#rapport, accessed 11 May 2010.

[22] http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?rapportid=51286f99-743e-4e72-beb0-7fafed7674b5&enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=c22a9bda-2e4d-4122-9835-ca3949b77925&skoletype=1&trinn=0&periode=2008-2009&orgAggr=A&fordeling=2&artikkelvisning=False&indikator=3d0b3f11-3a76-4072-ae70-8753e7227631#rapport, accessed 11 May 2010.

[23] Rammeplan for ny grunnskolelærerutdanning 2010. http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/rundskriv/2010/Rundskriv-F-05-10-Forskrifter-om-ny-grunnskolelarerutdanning.html?id=598615, accessed 9 May 2010.

to rely on the English resources on the net in order to provide students with authentic communication means.

# 8 Conclusion

This longitudinal study has analyzed the accuracy in written English of vocational students at the second level of a Norwegian upper secondary school. The subject for the thesis was interesting to explore for this author as an English teacher in upper secondary education. Statistics have shown that many vocational students at this level struggle with theoretical subjects in general and with English in particular, which is one reason for so many quitting upper secondary school before they graduate. Statistics from The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training presented in the last chapter also show that vocational students in general do worse in English both during in their continuous assessment grades and in the exam.

One of the initial assumptions was that many students in upper secondary vocational level are not particularly accurate in their writing and do not seem to make much or any progress during one school year. This author has experienced that measures to improve the accuracy in written English of upper secondary school vocational students have not previously been very successful. It therefore became a challenge to actually measure students' mistakes during a school year to establish if this was the case.

The 95 study subjects in three different vocational areas wrote one creative text in the autumn and one in the spring. The texts were timed and written at school on computers. The aims were to measure the distribution and frequency of the nine categories of mistakes, to find out to what extent the students reduced the number of mistakes from the autumn to the spring and to find out what differences there were between the three groups using three different correction strategies. The last aim implied finding out whether one correction strategy was more favourable than the others in the purpose of helping the students to become more accurate. The method applied was to count the words and mistakes in each text and then find the ratio of errors in the nine different categories as percentages of the total number of words. Given the great number of mistakes students usually make, this was an enormous challenge. To find out about the different methods of feedback and correction the three different groups of students received, interviews with the teachers in two of the groups were conducted, which thus added a qualitative aspect to the study.

The results exceeded what was expected beforehand, with the improvement in the average word-mistake ratio of 25 per cent in the three groups from the autumn until the

spring. As suggested in the last chapter this could indicate that error correction helps and it appears that computers are a possible positive means for the students to write more accurately.

A noticeable reduction of mistakes was found for all three groups in four of the error categories (the two largest categories, spelling and wrong word, and in the concord and form category) in spite of the fact that two of the groups wrote longer texts in the spring. Even though it was the initial assumption of this author that students did not noticeably improve their accuracy in English writing during a school year, the results of this study could indicate that error correction, no matter what strategy is used, helps students improve their accuracy, although to various degrees. The marking code used in G3 did not seem to be as effective as the underlining and correction method used in G1, which reduced its word-mistake ratio by 31% from the autumn to the spring. However, it should be taken into consideration that this group was much smaller than G3 (19 students compared to 53).

Another unexpected result was that spelling mistakes were the most frequent in all three groups both in the autumn and in the spring, except for G3, where the students managed to reduce the spelling mistakes considerably. The anticipation that some of the spelling mistakes would be corrected by the computer's spelling check was not fulfilled. However, when comparing some of the texts in G3, where there was a considerable reduction of spelling mistakes between the two semester texts, there is a clear indication of students taking advantage of the computer's spelling correction function. This may lead to the conclusion that the students had become more accustomed to using the computer during the school year. However, one wonders whether today's teenagers really are that familiar with using the word processing programs of the computer. It seems to be important to instruct pupils on the use of word processing as early as possible, as is also emphasized in *The Knowledge Promotion* curriculum. It seems that computers are here to stay and are being and will be used for writing as calculators are being used as an important resource in mathematics, which is why students need to learn about the benefits of using a word processor from their early school years.

It also seems to be important to increase students' exposure to the English language through extensive reading and teachers' English talk in class in order to help them acquire more language subconsciously. Furthermore, it is important that students are not only made conscious about their mistakes from the very start, but that they become comfortable about errors functioning as learning steps and that error correction is a means of helping them to become accurate and not a punishment. Perhaps teachers' tolerance towards errors and the possible lack of error correction in the primary and lower secondary levels in recent years, with a dominance of the communicative approach, have resulted in the poor level of accuracy

of the vocational students. Thornbury (1999:116), cited in Raaen (2009:313), argues that "if the learner does not get concrete feedback on his errors, there is no incentive to learning correctly".

Whether teachers have the necessary qualifications to teach English is another factor that should be taken into account as only half the teachers in grades 5-7 have studied English as part of their general teacher education (Lagerstrøm, 2007).

Motivation is also an important factor in second language acquisition. As many students in vocational areas in upper secondary education are unmotivated for school in general and in general subjects, such as English, in particular, it is of great importance that they are given relevant material to work with, to make them realize that English is an essential subject to cope in the global world. It is frustrating for both the teacher and the student that basic spelling and grammar errors are still a problem even after 11 years of instruction. Perhaps using different kinds of correction strategies could motivate pupils in writing more correctly. Another motivating factor could be to make sure that the student's piece of writing is read by others and not only the teacher. If students are encouraged to publish their writing either by exposing it to their fellow pupils, writing blogs to be issued on the net or through other sources then they would probably be interested in writing more accurately. Knowing that what they have written is read for pleasure and interest by others and not only having their productions read, corrected and evaluated by the teacher, would presumably be more motivating.

The suggested changes in the objectives in *The Knowledge Promotion* (2005) (see section 3.2 and 7.8) are a step in the right direction. Connecting the English language to the area of subject the students have chosen for specialization would most likely make them understand the purpose of mastering the language.

As the present study was restricted in terms of only vocational students' participation further studies on the accuracy of students' writing in general subjects could be carried out. A similar longitudinal study of students' written accuracy would also be interesting among students in primary and lower secondary school. There is no doubt that the English skills of many students who enter upper secondary vocational education are very poor. It is therefore of the utmost importance to find out where these students "fall off". This study shows that there was large variation within the three different groups, which clearly indicates the need to improve the instruction of English lower down in the system. Raaen (2008) also found in her study of 7th graders' that their spelling skills were quite poor, even in basic function words that they have been familiar with since they started with English instruction in the first grade.

A critical examination of the content, instruction and progress of students in primary and lower secondary school would be beneficial. Furthermore, the fact that half the students in Bonnet's study thought that they had learnt English elsewhere than school (Bonnet, 2004:146), gives partly a picture of students having been under-stimulated in the English classroom.

This thesis has hopefully made a contribution to the area of English education in upper secondary vocational school by casting light on the issue of students' written accuracy and discussing ways of improving it.

# Bibliography

Andersen, Gary. 1998. *Fundamentals of Educational Research.* London: Falmer.

Ashwell, Tim. 2000. 'Patterns of teacher response to student writing in a multiple-draft composition classroom: Is content feedback followed by form feedback the best method'. *Journal of Second Language Writing,* Vol. 9, No. 3, 227-257.

Atwell, Nancy. 1998. *In the Middle: New Understanding About Writing, Reading, and Learning* (2nd ed.)*.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen and Theodora Bofman. 1989. 'Attainment of syntactic and morphological accuracy by advanced language learners'. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 11, 17-34.

Beatty, Ken. 2003. *Teaching and Researching Computer-assisted Language Learning.* London: Longman.

Bonnet, Gérard (Ed.). 2004. *The Assessment of Pupil's Skills in English in Eight European countries 2002*. The European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of the Educational Systems.

Brinton, Donna, M., Snow, Marguerite, A. and Marjorie, B. Wesche. 1989. *Content Based Second Language Instruction*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Brumfit, Christopher, J. 1980. *Problems and Principles in English Teaching*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Byram, Michael. 2000. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge.

Byrnes, Heidi (Ed.). 1998. *Learning Foreign and Second Languages. Perspectives in Research and Scholarship.* New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

Celce-Murcia, Marianne. 1992. 'Formal grammar instruction: An educator comments'. *TESOL Quarterly,* 26, 406-409.

Chandler, Jean. 2003. 'The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of L2 student writing'. *Journal of Second Language Writing,* 12, 267-296.

Chomsky, Noam. 1959. 'A review of B.F. Skinner's verbal behavior'. *Language*, 35, No. 1, 26-58.

Corder, Stephen, P. 1967. 'The significance of learner's errors'. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 5, 161-70.

Corder, Stephen, P. 1978. 'Language-learner language'. In J.C. Richards (Ed.), *Understanding Second and Foreign Language Learning: Issues and Approaches.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publisher.

Day, Richard, R. and Julian Bamford. 1998. *Extensive Reading in the Second language Classroom.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

DeMarrais, Kathleen and Stephen D. Lapan. 2004. *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Drew, Ion and Bjørn Sørheim. 2004. *English Teaching Strategies. Methods for English Teachers of 10 to 16-year olds*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.

Drew, Ion and Bjørn Sørheim. 2009. *English Teaching Strategies. Methods for English Teachers of 10 to 16-year olds* (2nd ed.). Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.

Edge, Julian. 1989. *Mistakes and Correction.* New York: Longman.

Elley, Warwick, B. 1991. 'Acquiring literacy in a second language: The effect of book-based programs'. *Language Learning*, 41 (3), 375-411.

Elley, Warwick, B. and Francis Mangubhai. 1983. 'The impact of reading on second language learning'. *Reading Research Quarterly*, X1X/1, 53-67.

Ellis, Rod. 1984. 'Can syntax be taught? A study of the effects of formal instruction on the acquisition of WH questions by children'. *Applied Linguistics,* Vol 5, No. 2, 138-155.

Ellis, Rod. 1985. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, Rod. 1991. *Second Language Acquisition and Language Pedagogy*. Bristol: The Longdunn Press Ltd.

Ferris, Dana, R. 1999. 'The case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes: A response to Truscott (1996)'. *Journal of Second Language Writing,* 8 (1), 1-11.

Ferris, Dana, R and Barrie Roberts. 2001. 'Error feedback in L2 writing classes. How explicit does it need to be?'. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 10, 161-184.

Ferris, Dana, R. 2004. The 'Grammar Correction' debate in L2 writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? (and what do we do in the meantime …?)'. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13, 49-62.

Foster, Pauline and Peter Skehan. 1996. 'The influence of planning and task type on second language performance'. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 18, 299-323.

Gall, Meredith, D., Gall, Joyce, P. and Walter, R. Borg. 2003. *Educational Research. An Introduction.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Gall, Meredith, D., Gall, Joyce, P. and Walter, R. Borg. 2007. *Educational Research. An Introduction,* 8th edition. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Gass, Susan, M. 1997. *Input, Interaction and the Second Language Learner.* Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gass, Susan, M. and Larry Selinker. 1994. *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grabe, William and Robert, B. Kaplan. 1996. *Theory and Practice of Writing.* London and New York: Longman.

Gradman, Harry, L. and Edith Hanania. 1991. 'Language learning background factors and ESL proficiency'. *The Modern Language Journal*, *75,* 39-51.

Gregg, Kevin, R. 1984. 'Krashen's monitor and Occam's razor'. *Applied Linguistics,* 5, 79-100.

Green, Peter, S. and Karl Heinz Hecht. 1992. 'Implicit and explicit grammar: An empirical study'. *Applied Linguistics,* Vol 13, No 2, 168-184.

Haas, Christina. 1989. 'Does the medium make a difference? Two studies of writing with pen and paper and with computers'. *HCI*, 1989, Volume 4, 149-169.

Hafiz, F.M. and Ian Tudor. 1989. 'Extensive reading and the development of language skills'. *ELT Journal,* Volume 43/1, 4-13.

Hammerly, Hector. 1991. *Fluency and Accuracy*. Clevedon, Philadelphia and Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.

Harmer, Jeremy. 2001. *The Practice of English Language Teaching.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Hellekjær, Glenn, O. 2007. 'Fremmedspråk i norsk næringsliv – engelsk er ikke nok!'. *Fokus på Språk*, Nr. 3, 1-80.

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

Hellekjær, Glenn, O. and Marit, R. Westergaard. 2003. 'An exploratory survey of content learning through English at Nordic universities'. In C. van Leeuwen & R. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Multilingual Approaches in University Education* (65-80). Maastricht: Universiteit Maastricht.

Hinkel, Eli and Sandra Fotos. 2002. *New Perspectives on Grammar Teaching in Second Language Classrooms.* Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Howatt, Anthony, P.R 1984. *A History of English Language Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hunt, Kellogg, W. 1965. *Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels.* Urbana, IL: The National Council of Teachers of English.

Hyland, Ken. 2003. *Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kern, Richard. 2000. *Literacy and Language Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Krashen, Stephen, D. 1981. *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. University of California: Pergamon Press.

Krashen, Stephen, D. 1982. *Principles and Practice in second Language Acquisition.* Hempstead: Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.

Krashen, Stephen, D. 1992. 'Another educator comments …'. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26, 406-409.

Krashen, Stephen, D. 1993a. 'The case for free voluntary reading'. *The Canadian Modern Language Review,* 50 (1), 72-82.

Krashen, Stephen, D. 1994. 'The input hypothesis and its rivals'. In Ellis, N. (Ed.) *Implicit ad Explicit Learning of Languages*, 45-77. London: Academic Press.

Krashen, Stephen, D. 2003*Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use: The Taipei Lectures.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

*Kunnskapsløftet*. 2005. Utdannings og Forskningsdepartementet. Midlertidig trykt utgave. Oslo: Interface Media as.

Lado, Robert. 1957. *Linguistics Across Cultures: Applied Linguistics Language Teachers.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Lagerstrøm, Bengt, O. 2000. *Kompetanse i grunnskolen. Hovedresultater 1999/2000.* Oslo: SSB.

Lagerstrøm, Bengt, O. 2007 *Kompetanse i grunnskolen. Hovedresultater 2005/2006.* Oslo: SSB.

Larsen-Freeman, Diane and Virginia Strom. 1977. 'The construction of a second language acquisition index of development'. *Language Learning,* 27, 123-34.

Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 1978. 'An ESL index of development'. *TESOL Quarterly,* 12, 439-448.

Larsen-Freeman, Diane and Michael, H. Long. 1991. *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited*.*

Leaver, Betty, L. and Boris Shekhtman. 2002. *Developing Professional-Level Language Proficiency.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lehmann, Torunn, M. 1992. 'Written English: Lack of competence and motivation among students'. *Språk og språkundervisning*, no 3, 29-35.

Lehmann, Torunn, M. 1999. *Literacy and the Tertiary Student. Why has the Communicative Approach failed?* Unpublished doctorate thesis. University of Bergen.

Lightbown, Patsy, M. 1985. 'Great expectations: Second-language acquisition research and classroom teaching'. *Applied Linguistics,* Vol 6, No. 2, 173-189.

Lightbown, Patsy, M. and Nina Spada. 1999. *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Læreplanverket for den 10-årige grunnskolen*. 1996. Det kongelige kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartement. Oslo: NLS.

Matsuda, Paul, K. and Tony Silva. 2005. *Second Language Writing Research: Perspectives on the Process of Knowledge Construction.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

*Mønsterplan for grunnskolen.* 1987. Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet. Aurskog: Aschehoug.

Norrish, John. 1983. *Language Learners and their Errors.* London: Macmillan Education.

Oliver, Brian. 2007. 'Choosing the path to excellence. Kunnskapsløftet i engelskfaget i Rogaland. Framgang, stagnasjon eller tilbakegang'. Internal report, University of Stavanger.

Olsen, Sonni. 1999. 'How less proficient learners write in English'. *Språk og Språkundervisning, 2,* 21-25.

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 7th edition.* 2005. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, Robert, Kellerman, Eric, Selinker, Larry, Smith, Mike, S. and Merril Swain. 1991. *Foreign/Second Language Pedagogy Research*. Bristol: The Longdunn Press Limited.

Quirk, Randolph, Greenbaum, Sidney, Leech, Geoffrey and Jan Svartvik. 1972. *A Grammar of Contemporary English.* Harlow: Longman House.

*Random House Dictionary of the English Language.* 1987. New York: Random House.

Ringbom, Håkan. 1986. 'Crosslinguistic influence and the foreign language learning process'. In E. Kellerman and M. Sharwood Smith (Eds.), *Crosslinguistic Influence in Second Language Acquisition*. 150-162. New York: Pergamon Press.

Robb, Thomas, Ross, Steven and Ian Shortreed. 1986. 'Salience of feedback on error and its effect on EFL writing quality'. *TESOL Quarterly,* Vol. 20, No. 1, 83-95.

Roberts, Barrie, J. 1999. *Can Error Logs Raise More Than Consciousness? The Effects of Error Logs and Grammar Feedback on ESL Students' Final Drafts.* Unpublished M.A. thesis, Deparment of English, California State University, Sacramento.

Rugesæter, Kåre, N. 1992. 'The mystery of the missing phonemes'. *Språk og språkundervisning*, no. 4, 16-22.

Rutherford, William, E. and Michael Sharwood Smith. 1985. 'Consciousness-raising and Universal Grammar'. *Applied Linguistics,* Vol. 6. No. 3, 274-282.

Raaen, Guri, F. 2009. 'Fluency is for everybody, accuracy for the few, and absolute accuracy for the very, very few'. In Groven, B., Guldal, T.M., Lillemyr, O.F., Naastad, N. and Rønning F. (Eds), 307-314. *FoU i praksis 2008. Rapport fra konferanse om praksisrettet FoU i lærerutdanning.* Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag.

Schachter, Jacquelyn. 1974. 'An error in error analysis'. *Language Learning,* Vol. 24, No.2, 205-214.

Schmidt, Richard, W. 1990. 'The role of consciousness in second language learning'. *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 129-153.

Schmuck, Richard, A. 1997. *Practical action research.* Arlington Heights, IL: IRI Skylight.

Selfe, Cynthia, L. 1989. 'Redefining literacy: The multilayered grammars of computers'. In G. E. Hawisher and C. L. Selfe (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives in Computers and Composition Instruction*, 3-15. New York: Teachers College Press.

Seliger, Herbert, W. and Elana Shohamy. 1989. *Second Language Research Methods.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Selinker, Larry. 1992. *Rediscovering Interlanguage. Applied Linguistic and Language Study.* Addison Wesley Publishing Company.

*Selinker, Larry. 1972.* 'Interlanguage'. *IRAL - International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching,* Volume 10, Issue 1-4, 209–232.

Silva, Tony. 1993. 'Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: The ESL research and its implications'. *TESOL Quarterly,* 27, 657-677.

Simensen, Aud, M. 1998. *Teaching a Foreign Language*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS.

Simensen, Aud, M. 2007. *Teaching a Foreign Language* (2nd ed.). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS.

Skehan, Peter. 1989. *Individual Differences in Second Language Learning.* London: Edward Arnold.

Skehan, Peter. 1998. *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spolsky, Bernard. 1989. *Conditions for Second Language Learning. Introduction to a General Theory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thornbury, Scott. 1999. *How to teach grammar*. London: Longman.

Truscott, John. 1996. 'The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes'. *Language Learning,* 46, 327-369.

Truscott, John. 1999. 'The case for "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes": A response to Ferris'. *Journal of Second Language Writing,* 8(2), 111-122.

Van Dalen, Deobold, B. 1962. *Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Wagner, Johannes. 1991. 'Innovation in foreign language teaching'. In R. Phillipson, E. Kellerman, L. Selinker, M.S. Smith and M. Swain (Eds.), *Foreign/Second Language Pedagogy Research*, 288-306. Bristol: The Longdunn Press Limited.

White, Lydia. 2003. *Second Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wolfe-Quintero, Kate, Shunji Inagaki and Hae-Young Kim. 1998. *Second Language Development in Writing: Measures of Fluency, Accuracy & Complexity*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

# Electronic references:

http://cogprints.org/1148/0/chomsky.htm

http://www.rogfk.no/modules/module_123/proxy.asp?D=2&C=274&I=7802
Saksframlegg om karakter-, elev- og lærlingestatistikk 2008. Arkivsaksnr.:08/10165-1
Løpenr: 41950/08, Reg.dato: 01.12.2008 Arkivnr: A40 &31 Saksbeh: Ståle Wold

http://www.ssb.no/emner/04/02/20/rapp_200721/,
Ministry of Education and Research (2007): 'Knowledge Promotion'.
http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Search.html?id=87060&quicksearch=%22Knowledge+
Promotion%22

http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-II/Utdannings--
og-forskningsdepartementet/233191/234483/Ny-lareplan-med-klare-
mal.html?id=422564

http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/veiledninger_brosjyrer/1996/Vidaregaande-
opplaring-etter-Reform-94.html?id=87404 (1996)

http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/20032004/stmeld-nr-030-2003-
2004-/1.html?id=404434 Stortingsmelding nr. 30 (2003-2004) "Kultur for læring" fra
Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet.

http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsomr
ade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=6f41c562-f928-4d3a-b2fe-
48b2aba13bdc&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsomr
ade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=cc88e070-6d4d-4a9a-8f5c-
b12049033b47&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

Høringsnotat – læreplan i engelsk som fellesfag i videregående
opplæring,
http://www.udir.no/Sokeresultat/?quicksearchquery=H%C3%B8ringsnotat+%E2%80%93+l%
C3%A6replan+i+engelsk+som+fellesfag+i+viidereg%C3%A5ende++oppl%C3%A6ring,
accessed 5 May 2010.

http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsomr
ade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=6f41c562-f928-4d3a-b2fe-
48b2aba13bdc&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

[1]http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsom
rade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=cc88e070-6d4d-4a9a-8f5c-
b12049033b47&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=11&underomrade=
c22a9bda-2e4d-4122-9835-ca3949b77925&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-
b0ceb59b26b1&skoletype=1, accessed 11 May 2010.

http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?rapportid=51286f99-743e-
4e72-beb0-7fafed7674b5&enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-
b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=c22a9bda-2e4d-4122-9835-
ca3949b77925&skoletype=1&trinn=0&periode=2008-
2009&orgAggr=A&fordeling=2&artikkelvisning=False&indikator=25e4085f-a58b-48f3-
b02a-1b2e4c7afc3e#rapport, accessed 11 May 2010.

http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?rapportid=51286f99-743e-
4e72-beb0-7fafed7674b5&enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=88e13531-a5b6-4c33-ad87-
b0ceb59b26b1&underomrade=c22a9bda-2e4d-4122-9835-
ca3949b77925&skoletype=1&trinn=0&periode=2008-
2009&orgAggr=A&fordeling=2&artikkelvisning=False&indikator=3d0b3f11-3a76-4072-
ae70-8753e7227631#rapport, accessed 11 May 2010.

Rammeplan for ny grunnskolelærerutdanning 2010.
http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/rundskriv/2010/Rundskriv-F-05-10-Forskrifter-om-
ny-grunnskolelarerutdanning.html?id=598615, accessed 9 May 2010.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Language check list

**LANGUAGE CHECK LIST**

Name:........................................... Assignment:...................................................

| GRAMMAR | Before | After |
|---|---|---|
| Subject—verb concord[1] | | |
| A / an[2] | | |
| Who / which[3] | | |
| It / there (se grammatikk eller minigrammatikk for regler) | | |
| Word order[4] | | |
| Verb tenses[5] | | |
| Adjective/adverb[6] | | |
| Apostrophe[7] (It's Paul's car, isn't it?) | | |
| **SPELLING:** | | |
| Spelling in general | | |
| Which / witch | | |
| Through / threw | | |
| They're / their | | |
| To / two / too | | |
| I / i | | |
| Then / than | | |
| Capital letter[8] | | |
| **MISCELLANEOUS:** | | |
| Vary your language by using synonyms | | |
| Use transitions[9] | | |

[1] Subjektet bestemmer formen av verbalet: I (S) was (V); Peter and Paul (S) have (V).
[2] Uttalen av ordet etter artikkelen bestemmer hvilken du skal bruke.
[3] "Who" når du omtaler personer, ellers brukes "which".
[4] Hovedregelen er at subjektet kommer foran verbalet, unntak ved spørsmål.
[5] Unngå skifte av verbtid i en tekst.
[6] Adjektiv gir tilleggsoplysninger om substantiv, adverb om adjektiv, verb og setninger.
[7] Apostrof brukes ved genitiv og for å erstatte en bokstav i uformelt språk.
[8] Husk egennavn, ukedager, måneder, nasjonalitet, språk, høytider, titler og forkortelser.
[9] Bindeord skaper god flyt i språket.

**Appendix 2: Questions posed in the teacher interviews**

1.  What is your educational background in English?
2.  How many years of experience do you have?
3.  What is your impression about how much English your students read, apart from what you read at school?
4.  Do your pupils spend time on free voluntary reading in class? Why? Why not?
5.  Do you use the textbook regularly? Why? Why not?
6.  How satisfied are you with it?
7.  What other resources are used in class?
8.  How much time approximately is used for grammar instruction each week?
9.  How would you describe your students' motivation for learning English?
10. How would you describe your students' skills of oral and written English?
11. What are your students' attitudes to mistakes?
12. What are your attitudes to mistakes?
13. How do you perform your corrections?
14. Are you satisfied with your correction strategies? Why? Why not?

# Appendix 3: The six corpora

| G1A | Words | Mistakes | W | ^ | S | C | F | L | T | P | O |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 6895 | 421 | 53 | 21 | 155 | 39 | 39 | 25 | 26 | 47 | 4 |
| Average | 362,9 | 22,2 | 2,8 | 1,1 | 8,2 | 2,1 | 2,1 | 1,3 | 1,4 | 2,5 | 0,2 |
| St. Dev | 218,3 | 14,4 | 3,8 | 1,7 | 11 | 2,4 | 2,3 | 1,7 | 1,5 | 2,5 | 0,4 |
| Min. | 94 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Max. | 1072 | 68 | 13 | 6 | 49 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 1 |

| G1S | Words | Mistakes | W | ^ | S | C | F | L | T | P | O |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 6884 | 307 | 40 | 25 | 108 | 25 | 20 | 31 | 33 | 21 | 2 |
| Average | 362,3 | 16,2 | 2,1 | 1,3 | 5,7 | 1,3 | 1,1 | 1,6 | 1,7 | 1,1 | 0,1 |
| St. Dev | 170,7 | 11,7 | 2,4 | 1,4 | 4,9 | 1,5 | 1,9 | 2,2 | 4,5 | 2,1 | 0,3 |
| Min. | 65 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Max. | 649 | 48 | 7 | 5 | 19 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 20 | 9 | 1 |

| G2A | Words | Mistakes | W | ^ | S | C | F | L | T | P | O |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 7704 | 491 | 81 | 60 | 109 | 39 | 46 | 29 | 77 | 41 | 6 |
| Average | 335 | 21,3 | 3,5 | 2,6 | 4,7 | 1,7 | 2 | 1,3 | 3,3 | 1,8 | 0,3 |
| St. Dev | 86.7 | 13.6 | 3,6 | 2,6 | 4,2 | 2,0 | 1,9 | 1,8 | 5,6 | 2 | 0,5 |
| Min. | 183 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Max. | 641 | 46 | 18 | 12 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 22 | 22 | 1 |

| G2S | Words | Mistakes | W | ^ | S | C | F | L | T | P | O |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 8271 | 408 | 55 | 40 | 101 | 32 | 32 | 47 | 30 | 65 | 6 |
| Average | 360 | 17,7 | 2,4 | 1,7 | 4, | 1,4 | 1,9 | 2 | 1,4 | 2,8 | 0,3 |
| St. Dev | 112,6 | 11,8 | 2,3 | 1,6 | 4,6 | 1,6 | 1,3 | 3,3 | 1,8 | 5,1 | 05 |
| Min. | 155 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Max. | 564 | 37 | 10 | 5 | 16 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 16 | 8 | 2 |

| G3A | Words | Mistakes | W | ^ | S | C | F | L | T | P | O |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 23527 | 1558 | 351 | 89 | 408 | 106 | 142 | 56 | 261 | 105 | 33 |
| Average | 443,9 | 29,4 | 6,6 | 1,7 | 7,7 | 2 | 2,7 | 1,1 | 4,9 | 2 | 0,6 |
| St. Dev | 181,1 | 23,8 | 6,9 | 2,1 | 8,2 | 1,9 | 3,2 | 3,1 | 8,6 | 3,1 | 1 |
| Min. | 135 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Max. | 1018 | 130 | 30 | 10 | 41 | 7 | 16 | 21 | 43 | 18 | 3 |

| G3S | Words | Mistakes | W | ^ | S | C | F | L | T | P | O |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 28120 | 1451 | 331 | 155 | 329 | 113 | 148 | 28 | 201 | 98 | 42 |
| Average | 530,6 | 27,4 | 6,3 | 2,9 | 6,2 | 2,1 | 2,8 | 0,5 | 3,8 | 1,8 | 0,8 |
| St. Dev | 191,5 | 23,3 | 5,8 | 2,6 | 6,6 | 2,9 | 2,2 | 1,3 | 7,6 | 2,1 | 1,1 |
| Min. | 181 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Max. | 1091 | 154 | 34 | 14 | 40 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 50 | 10 | 5 |