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Investigating the Transitional Period between Upper Secondary School and the situation at the University focusing on Expectations, Academic Proficiency, the Role of Literature and Students Reading Habits

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Abstract

The thesis aims to explore the transitional period between upper-secondary school and the university with a focus on two literature classes at the university. Furthermore, the thesis aims to investigate the students own attitudes regarding their situation and experiences with the two courses they attend: British and Irish Literature and American Literature. The investigation includes collecting data that reflects their reading habits and their experience with different literary genres. Also included are questions regarding their stance on literature and if learning about literature has had any effect on their English proficiency and academic abilities.

Previous research is used to place the thesis in a historical context. The important sources that are used to place the thesis into context, is research on the transitional period, extensive reading, language learning and literature learning. The different sources created the foundation from which the thesis developed.

The method used in the data collection process was a questionnaire sent out by email to the students who attend the two literature courses. The questionnaire is a quantitative research method. This method was decided on since it was the most effective and appropriate for the purpose of this thesis. Along with an internet-based software called SuperMoneky the findings were analysed and illustrated using tables and graphs specifically designed for the thesis.

The findings show a vast array of data. The initial findings, presented in the findings chapter is only the starting point for what will become the more extensive analysis that is found in the discussion chapter. This analysis includes splitting the respondents into smaller, significant groups and comparing them with other groups from the study who meet other criteria. By doing this we are able to see trends and as a result map out the different challenges the students face.

The findings gave a clear indication as to what attitudes the students actually had concerning their experience from upper-secondary school and their time at the university. There was a consensus among the students that they do feel prepared, though there is much room for improvement. The investigation also made it clear that the students had improved their

English proficiency and academic abilities throughout the literature course(s). Furthermore, the students reported reading habits that they themselves considered to be acceptable, though not necessarily sufficiently adequate at an academic level. The lack of diverse reading and limited experience with different literary genres may partly explain why they did not meet the expectations set by the researcher. Overall, the students have shown encouraging results. The thesis questions have been answered and the researcher is satisfied that the questionnaire functioned as expected.

1. Introduction

1.1. General summarization of the research aim and the research questions

Investigating the transitional period between upper secondary school and the situation at the university: Focus on English and academic proficiency, the role of Literature and the students' reading habits. The students involved are all attending one or more literature courses at the University¹. A number of the students are also part of the teacher-training programme Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet.

Research questions:

1. Are the students attending literary courses prepared for the rise in difficulty concerning the course load?
2. Has their participation in the literature course(s) strengthened their English and academic proficiency?
3. What are their expectations?
4. What are the reading habits of the students?
5. What part does literature play in the transitional period and at the university?

1.2. Defining the aim and the scope of the project.

There has not been much research done regarding the transitional period between upper secondary school and the university. This thesis concerns itself with the students that are involved in the literature courses: British and Irish Literature and American Literature. The focus of the thesis is the learning and reading of literature and how much of an impact this actually have on students' English proficiency. The aim is to obtain a more realistic evaluation of the situation regarding the students' English proficiency and their relationship with literature. By collecting relevant data it will be possible to find out more about the

¹ The University: Throughout the thesis, I refer to the University of Stavanger as 'the University', or simply 'university'.

students attending these courses, what their background with English is and if they feel they are prepared for the level of English that is expected of them at a university level.

There is important knowledge to be learned from investigating students' preparedness in terms of English as a foreign language (EFL). English proficiency is an issue that spans way beyond the literature classroom; it affects Norwegian students attending all manner of educational programs as many courses today use academic texts written in English and students are expected to be able to read and extract meaning from them. There are obvious limits to the research since the thesis only focus on students attending the two literature courses selected for the study. Nevertheless, lacking the right amount of English proficiency can have crucial consequences in other programs, not just those concerning English literature. The thesis demonstrate that the English language has now become an important tool on the road to a successful university career.

1.3. Research context

Students attending the university have many expectations placed on them prior to enrolling. It is expected that students embarking on a university career should have a certain level of English proficiency when they start.

Studies have shown (Hellekjær 2009) that contrary to expectations, Norwegian EFL² instruction at upper-secondary schools fail to develop academic English reading proficiency needed for higher education. This is troubling information considering the many educational programs that use English texts as part of their curriculum.

Reading has become one of the major concerns in the Norwegian national curriculum, also known as Kunnskapsløftet or LK06. Since Norwegian pupils scored low in the OECD³ PISA⁴ surveys (Hellekjær 2009) the LK06 made reading one of the five basic skills to be incorporated into the 10-year compulsory school and upper-secondary school.

² EFL: English Foreign Language

³ OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

⁴ PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

A doctoral study by Hellekjær (2009) from 2005 which investigates the English reading proficiency of upper-secondary level pupils⁵ and university level students⁶ showed that EFL syllabi requires very little reading and that the pupils read very little on their own. His research showed that pupils and students who took part in extracurricular reading (of English) received higher scores than the pupils and students without such reading habits. This corresponds directly to the findings in this thesis regarding the importance of extracurricular readings of literature as a tool for English proficiency.

1.4. Theoretical orientation

The theoretical orientation incorporated in the thesis is based on the knowledge obtained in studies presented by Hellekjær in his studies on the subject of English proficiency in upper-secondary school and at the university level.

Hellekjær's work has produced a lot of interesting and valuable data. This has been helpful and inspiring when doing my own research.

References to scholars whose work mainly focus on literature and how to teach literature in the classroom are also included. As pointed out by Hellekjær (2009), students who partake in extracurricular reading has a better chance of gaining more understanding when encountering literature at the university. In this connection, it is interesting to refer to the work by Collie and Slater (2008) whose publication consists of practical and motivating ways to teach pupils/students to read diverse literature. They emphasize the importance of reading, and the social and cultural impact it can have on a person, no matter who or where you are.

Other noticeable research included in this thesis are the works of researchers such as Fenner (2005), Drew and Sørheim (2009), Lazar (1993), Krashen (1984), among others.

⁵ Pupils: Throughout the thesis 'pupils' refer to pupils attending upper-secondary school.

⁶ Students: Throughout the thesis 'students' refer to students attending university.

1.5. Methodology

The thesis focuses on two different classes at the University of Stavanger. The two classes in question are British and Irish Literature and American Literature. These classes consist of first-year students, as well as students who have already achieved a degree or are currently working on one. Being able to collect data from a diverse body of students will give a broader and more interesting collection of data regarding the research questions. The process of collecting data was conducted by using a quantitative questionnaire.

The main reason for choosing a quantitative approach is that this form of data-collection suits the purpose of this thesis best. A quantitative questionnaire is an excellent tool when trying to obtain qualified data on a larger scale.

However, dealing with extensive questionnaires, especially when each class consists of approximately 120-150 students represented a challenge. Conducting the survey online, using its learning⁷ as its platform, would perhaps be more effective than presenting the questionnaire in pen and paper form in the classroom. In the end, the thesis was best served with an online questionnaire, as a pen and paper questionnaire would create a vast amount of paperwork as well as being very time consuming. In addition, by choosing an online version, it gave the researcher the opportunity to use internet based mathematical software to calculate all the respondents' data with great accuracy.

The questionnaire was enthusiastically presented by the researcher in the students' classroom, with support from their teacher. This gave the students more incentive to participate and respond to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of questions dealing with the students' background, expectations and relationship with literature. The amount of data is by no means representative in a nation-wide sense, but it do give some information and indication as to the state of things.

⁷ Itslearning.com: An online education platform used by primary, middle, and upper-secondary school and at the university level.

1.6. Relevance

The relevance of the project can be regarded as a “data-collection mission”. It is very important to obtain a more realistic view of the transitional period between upper-secondary school and the university. This is especially true for students attending university and what their expectations regarding their relationship with literature.

Hopefully, the work on students expectations, their background with English from upper-secondary school, their motivations for reading and learning about literature will be helpful in evaluating if English proficiency among the students is indeed a problem or not. The aim of the thesis was to contribute with relevant data and show that there is a lot more research to be done regarding the transitional period between upper-secondary school and the situation at the university.

This thesis did not intend to solve any initial problems, but it did provide relevant and interesting data on the current situation.

2. Context and Theory

2.1. Introduction

The context in which this dissertation fits into can be traced to a growing sense of worry among certain lecturers at the University of Stavanger concerning the English proficiency level of the students attending literature studies. Have the students been properly prepared during upper-secondary school for the level of academic English that is demanded by a university level education or does the issue lie with the universities themselves?

This chapter seeks to place the dissertation in a historical, as well as a contemporary context. It will highlight the transitional period between upper-secondary school and university, while also looking at the English subjects place inside the framework of the Norwegian national curriculums and its connection to teacher training programs.

Furthermore, this chapter will also serve as a theory chapter, meaning certain theory will be specified and highlighted as part of the thesis' theoretical approach. This was found to be the most effective way of including theory as the subject matter this thesis concerns itself with is, to a certain extent, limited.

2.3. The transitional period

There is a limit to what extent there has been done research on the transitional period between upper-secondary school and university level in Norway, but a 2009 study written by Hellekjær echoes the same worries described by the lecturers. In his study, he writes, "contrary to expectations, Norwegian EFL instruction at upper-secondary schools fails to develop the academic English reading proficiency needed for higher education." (Hellekjær 2009:1) This apparent issue, that Hellekjær tries to highlight, can be directly linked to the focus of this dissertation; in which two classes attending the British and Irish literature course and the American literature course has been asked to participate in a quantitative questionnaire that highlights the students reading habits, preparedness and expectations about the course(s). Further, in his study, Hellekjær points out that the Universities have a tendency

to take for granted that the EFL (English as a foreign language) instruction that takes place in Norwegian upper-secondary schools have prepared the students well enough.

In the study, a questionnaire was handed out to students attending the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Social Sciences. The main criteria was that the participants would have to have English texts on their curriculum.

The results of the study showed that 66% of the upper-secondary school respondents did not reach the Band 6 level on the IELTS Academic Reading Module⁸, but the main reason for the study was to see as to what extent the reading difficulties in the upper-secondary level persisted in higher education (Hellekjær 2009:210-211). 33% of the university-level respondents had reading difficulties.

The issues that Hellekjær points out are difficulties with unfamiliar vocabulary, slow reading and word handling strategies (2009:211). Further, on in the study he comments on the, relatively, new LK06 curriculum in Norway where reading has become one of the major focus points. It is agreed that a new focus on reading is part of a much-needed change in the Norwegian school curriculum.

In the Norwegian Core Curriculum under the Upper Secondary Education Act §2 PRINCIPAL AIMS it says that “the purpose of upper secondary education is to develop the skills, understanding and responsibility that prepare pupils for life at work and in society, **to provide a foundation for further education**, and to assist them in their personal development.”⁹

According to Hellekjær's study, the criteria “to provide a foundation for further education” has been to a certain extent neglected in upper-secondary school.

Another point made in the study, is the concern that instructors in EFL studies at upper-secondary school either know too little about reading strategies that would have transferable value to the university level, or that they fail to teach them.

In an ongoing master thesis on the subject of the transitional period, where part of the focus is on the perceptions and use of literature in L2 instruction, the researcher interviewed several teachers who are currently working at different upper-secondary schools in Rogaland and when asked about reading strategies the interviewees gave the impression that teaching

⁸IELTS is the International English Language Testing System which test English proficiency across the globe.

⁹ Udir.no – Læreplaner; English Core Curriculum

reading strategies is not a big priority in the classroom. They all agreed that there should in fact be more focus on reading strategies (Herigstad 2014).

2.3. Danningsfag vs Redskapsfag – Historical Context

There has been an issue throughout the construction of the English curriculum in Norwegian schools ever since the subject was introduced toward the end of the 18. Century (Fenner 2005:87). The discussion on the English subjects place in the school system continued throughout most of the 19. Century. Throughout this period, the English subject was taught as a tool-based subject the same way Latin and Greek were taught; with a strong focus on grammar, reading and writing. The view was that learning different components of a language by heart, the pupils would develop systematic and logical thinking (Fenner 2005:86). This sort of educational approach is what we would refer to as “Latinskolen”, part of an old educational system where the emphasized texts had little to no real-world value. It was the linguistic components of the text that was important. (Fenner 2005:86)

It was not until 1961 that English became a subject to be taught in every school. This meant that changes had to be made. Until now, the subject had been taught only at an upper-secondary level (and beyond), but since the subject were to be introduced to younger pupils, matters concerning contents and methods had to be re-evaluated. Though the real changes did not appear until the introduction of the new curriculum in 1974 (M74) and 1987 (M87), where emphasis were put on basic values. Before this, the English subject had a much more straightforward beneficial perspective than the curriculum has today. The cultural heritage that the English language is part of was not included as a part of the pupils training (Fenner 2005:89).

In M74 and M87 there are “danningsmål” in the general part of the curriculum, but the real change from a “redskapsfag” to a “dannelsesfag” came with the introduction of Reform 97, or L97 as it is called (Fenner 2005:93). Whereas M74 and M87 based itself on the communicative approach, the L97 took a new approach, based in constructivism.

We can define the communicative approach in different ways, but Drew and Sørheim said it clearly, stating, “There are different approaches that serve under the *communicative approach*, but the overall impression is a focus on the interaction as the means and goal of

learning” (2009:26-27). Constructivism, on the other hand, can be defines as a “view of cognitive development as process in which children actively build systems of meaning and understanding of reality through their experiences and interactions” (Slavin 2012:32).

A clear change happened and over the course of producing the L97, language became defined as both communication and culture (Fenner 2005:93).

When discussing the types of text that were to be included in the curriculum, the idea that language and culture are two sides of the same coin and therefore cannot and should not be separated became apparent. This is part of enhancing the pupil’s cultural capital, adding literature part of the literary canon¹⁰. This was to enrich the pupils in a culture through texts that they might not otherwise be exposed to (Fenner 2005:94).

It was not until 2006 that the Norwegian education system developed a curriculum that covers the English subject as an ongoing process throughout the 11 years of schooling. This curriculum extends into upper-secondary school as well (Fenner 2005:99). Literature becomes an even more integrated part of the curriculum. This builds on The Council of Europe’s research regarding language and culture as two sides of the same coin; Through reading and reflecting over different literary texts the pupils are in a unique position to develop their own identity (Fenner 2005:100). Through this Council, experts developed criteria on how learners of any given country should be able to communicate with other countries using the language spoken there and this has given rise to a more practical approach to language learning that we can see in the latest English curriculum in Norway, the LK06 (Drew/Sørheim 2009:32)

2.4. The English Curriculum

2.4.1 The English Curriculum in Norwegian Upper-Secondary School

The newest national curriculum, the Knowledge Promotion curriculum (LK06), has a set of basic skills that has been highlighted as its core values. The framework for these basic skills includes a stronger focus on oral skills, reading, writing, digital competence and numeracy¹¹. Every subject included in the curriculum for upper secondary school is expected to

¹⁰ **Canon:** A rule or a body of rules or principles generally established as valid and fundamental in a field of art.

¹¹ Udir.no: Framework for basic skills

incorporate all these skills. Looking at the English curriculum, it says, about its framework, that these basic skills are to be expressed in different manners and to a varying degree depending on the relevance¹². It must be said that the inclusion of the basic skills and its framework is by all accounts generic and it serves as a reference point when developing learning strategies in the classroom. The LK06 differs from the previous curriculum, L97, by shifting towards a focus on competence aims and subject content (Drew/Sørheim 2009:41). It also became important to make learners more aware of their roles as language learners. This new emphasis on awareness and strategies gave rise to the more competence-oriented way of learning. In the LK06, methods are not included, as it is in L97, only aims are included. The focus is what the students can do with the language, not on the content of the lesson (Drew/Sørheim 2009:41).

The English curriculum in LK06 is divided into three main groups: Communication, Language learning, and Culture, Society and Literature.

Communication consists of a detailed description of how the English subject is used as a tool to acquire the competence to express oneself and communicate through the language. Drew and Sørheim describes *communication* as a learning that takes place in spirals in which pupils meet the same elements of the language (knowledge about vocabulary, syntax, structure, pronunciation, mastery of genres and forms of expression etc.) in increasingly advanced forms (Drew/Sørheim 2009:43). This notion of meeting the same contents again at a more advanced level is the same approach described by psychologist Jerome Bruner with his concept of the spiral curriculum (Bruner 1977:13).

Next on the list is *language learning* and one of its aims is that pupils should become lifelong language learners (Drew/Sørheim 2009:42). This is one aim that is truly in spirit with how the new curriculum is framed, as a personal quest to discover and learn language by developing their own personal strategies that builds on their previous experience with their first language, English and other languages (Drew/Sørheim 2009:42). The learners are expected to gain a bigger understanding, not only language usage but also knowledge about the language. This brings us to the last group; *Society, Culture and Literature*.

¹² Udir.no: English curriculum

This component of the curriculum “emphasises the importance of developing pupils’ knowledge about English as a world language with many areas of use.” (Drew/Sørheim 2009:43). Included in this is the importance of learning about a language by understanding its culture by working with different texts, learning about the every-day lives of people from English speaking countries and immersing oneself in English literature can all contribute to enhance a learners experience with the English language. The English curriculum states that because of these different aspects the subject can be viewed as “both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight”¹³.

As there is a focus on students of literature in this dissertation, it is important to include how literature is presented in the LK06. The LK06 aims to instil a joy of reading in the learners, and English literary texts become a basis for “personal growth, maturity and creativity” (Drew/Sørheim 2009:43), but also enable learners to “find a deeper understanding of others and of oneself”¹⁴.

There is one issue with the LK06 that have caused some teachers to struggle and that is the exclusion of methods and specific texts from the curriculum. This makes it more challenging for English teachers when it involves lesson planning and choosing which texts that suit best for each specific classroom. This combined with the fact that competence aims are not stated for every year, but for several years at a time it can become very perplexing for teachers when they are fashioning a plan for the new school year (Drew/Sørheim 2009:44).

This aspect of the curriculum becomes important in light of the dissertation as many of the students who participated in the questionnaire¹⁵ also attend a teacher-training programme at the University.

The LK06 is very open when it comes to which literature the teachers should use. As mentioned, this is for some a problem but for others it provides a greater freedom to really be able to personalize lessons with literature that they themselves find enjoyable. Seeing as Hellekjør indicated a lack of focus on reading strategies in upper secondary school, it must also be mentioned that he has the impression that EFL instructors read very little themselves, apart from the texts in the provided textbook (2009:212-213). The LK06 offers, though limited in terms of methods, a chance for teachers to use literature they themselves find

¹³ Udir.no: English subject curriculum

¹⁴ Udir.no: English subject curriculum

¹⁵ See Appendix 2

interesting and knowledgeable to enhance the proficiency of the learners. This also includes the use of films, music and other cultural forms of expression¹⁶.

2.4.2. Literacy Studies: Master's Degree Programme - Adjunkt og Lektorprogrammet

The Master in Literacy studies at the University of Stavanger is an independent Masters programme, but it also functions as an integrated part of the 5-year lektorprogram (Adjunkt og Lektorprogrammet), a teacher training programme. The Master in Literacy programme combines students from Norway and international students.

Of the 47 Literature students who participated in the questionnaire¹⁷, 18 people (approximately 34%) said they attended the Adjunkt og Lektorprogram, the remaining 34 people attend different study plans (one year programme, English bachelor degree etc).

The Master degree (in Literacy studies) is practically the same during the last two years for those who attend the Adjunkt og Lektorprogram and those who attend independently. The main difference lies in choosing the modules or courses for the 4th year. Independent students take three taught modules and the lector-students take two, though all modules are available for both groups of students¹⁸. The modules represent three general study directions; literary, linguistic and applied. These three general directions naturally builds upon the courses of previous years.

The programme recognizes the importance of literacy; Writing, studying different texts and reading are highlighted as crucial to social organisations, cultural development, communication technology and as a source of understanding modern societies. The different aspects of literacy, both contemporary and historical, are essential for a full understanding of how society works and how we can most efficiently participate therein¹⁹.

¹⁶ Udir.no: English subject curriculum

¹⁷ See Appendix 2

¹⁸ UiS.no: Literacy studies: Master's Degree Programme

¹⁹ UiS.no: Literacy studies: Master's Degree Programme

2.5. Reading, Writing, and Literature

The questionnaire provided by the researcher asked the students of literature different questions regarding their background and expectations, but it also covered the students' spare time reading habits. It is important to look at the difference between reading literature and studying literature and if the students themselves feel that it is equally beneficial to both read and learn about literature. We see this issue in University, but also in upper-secondary school.

Posing questions regarding reading habits to a literature class is interesting in its own right, but add to the fact that some of the students are to be teachers themselves it becomes even more interesting.

In his book, *Literature and Language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers* (1993), Lazar points out that “there is no right or correct way to teach or use literature” (1993:7). Every classroom and every group of students are different. How to use literature to enhance the pupils' English proficiency is, at the core, the teachers' responsibility. This is especially relevant when we consider the autonomy teachers are provided with in the LK06 and the freedom lecturers hold when assembling the study plan for a new semester at University. A problem that arises, particularly for this thesis, is the difference between the study of literature and the use of literature, and the use of literature to enhance proficiency. In his book, Lazar (1993:18) examines different reasons for using literature. Firstly, literature is used for motivational purposes. Literature, especially texts connected to the canon, is often highly regarded and students may achieve a sense of accomplishment when analysing and working with literary materials. It can also be motivational for students when the texts, carefully chosen by the teachers, are gripping, suspenseful and contains a good narrative that evoke an emotional response in the reader. Lastly, Lazar mentions that it is crucial that the classroom find the materials relevant and meaningful to their own lives (1993:18). Another important aspect that is highlighted is gaining access to cultural backgrounds, though Lazar points out that as long as the literature used are works of fiction one has to assume that the cultural aspects are described from the point of view of the author. This does not necessarily remove any merit literature has, as it encourages students “to become broadly aware of the social, political and historical events which form the background to a particular play or novel” (1993:19). It is about teaching students, be it at secondary level or university level, to treat the material critically as to not make any assumptions. Moreover, Lazar expresses the importance

literature has in encouraging language acquisition (1993:19-20). This is related to the importance of extensive reading, or spare time reading. This is discussed more thoroughly in the Related Studies chapter (see chapter 3.2 Extensive Reading).

There is a strong connection between reading and writing, as Krashen says: “We gain competence in writing the same way we gain competence in oral language; by understanding messages encoded in written language, by reading for meaning.” (Krashen 1984:28). What Krashen refers to here is the importance of extensive reading²⁰. Reading has been referred to as a passive or receptive skill, but it is vital to see reading as an active process. As readers, we comprehend texts as much through knowledge and experience of the world, as through knowledge of language itself. (Drew/Sørheim 2009:75) This links to the way readers learn and understand new vocabulary through a combined understanding of the subject matter and existing knowledge of language. The benefits one get from extensive reading are numerous, but it is also important to acknowledge that proper use of intensive reading, in the classroom especially, can have a positive effect on a reader’s language proficiency. Whereas extensive reading is reading longer texts, novels and such, intensive reading centres on a shorter text where the focus is on detailed components of the text. When these two methods are used in combination at school and at home, it will, in the words of Graves, help readers become ‘lifelong readers, writers and thinkers’ (Drew/Sørheim 2009:76).

Krashen’s view on the importance of extensive reading, or pleasure reading, have been backed by other research that show how reading “improves learners’ vocabulary and syntax, as well as their awareness of the mechanics of writing, such as spelling and punctuation, and of how whole texts are structured” (Drew/Sørheim 2009:76-77). In studies where the focus is on extensive and pleasure reading, the researchers often discuss younger learners, but a case can be made for the importance of extensive reading as one gets older as well, not to mention when studying in a foreign language as most of the participants of the questionnaire are²¹. Relating extensive reading to writing is highlighted in a study executed by Gradman and Hanania in 1991 where they explored language factors associated with ESL²² proficiency and performance on the TOEFL²³. In their study, they tested 101 ESL students on the TOEFL, in addition to 44 additional language-learning factors. The statistic most interesting in

²⁰ Extensive reading: Language learning, including foreign language, through large amounts of reading.

²¹ See Appendix 2

²² ESL: English as a Second Language

²³ TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

accordance with this dissertation is that they found that “extra-curricular reading was the factor that correlated most strongly with TOEFL performance.” (Grabe 2009:318).

There is evidence that reading extensively and consistently over a period of time is beneficial to a students’ reading and writing abilities. Grabe (2009:328) closes the chapter on extensive reading saying “for programs that expect students to develop reasonably advanced academic reading abilities, there is no escaping the simple fact that one learns to read by reading”.

Reading extensively is an important factor in the development of literacy among students of all ages, but there is also the issue of learning about literature. The subjects the students, who participated in the questionnaire, attend are not only about reading (authentic) texts, but also understanding texts from a social and historical point of view. The courses aim to let the students’ gain an understanding of literature (focus on British and American) and its place in a contemporary society while looking back and understanding the circumstances surrounding the time era when the texts were written. The aim of the two courses are similar when considering the general aims and the skills the students are supposed to learn. Worded slightly differently, one of the aims/skills listed are analysing and understanding literature from diverse perspectives, from multiple historical periods and in different literary genres.²⁴ This skill of understanding a subject matter from a historical perspective is a valuable skill that can be incorporated into many different areas. By utilizing knowledge about an author and the historical period in which she lived can provide a greater canvas for interpretation.

When we look at the literature courses in light of the teacher training programme, it can be argued that what and how students learn about literature at the university level gives them a strong foundation when they later will later teach their own English class at upper secondary school (though they have the competence to work from the 5th grade to 3rd year of upper secondary school). Literature, as is recognized throughout the thesis, can be viewed as something that the students attending the Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet can use as a tool to enhance their English and academic abilities. This is further explored in the discussion chapter.

Mentioned earlier the LK06 has given literature a stronger position in the curriculum, as literature can be found among the curriculums main areas and competence aims. The aesthetic value of literature and its place in a historic setting has also been given more presence. Also

²⁴ UiS.no: American Literature and Culture - studieplan

included in the curriculum-aims is the focus on different genres and works by authors from other English speaking countries.

3. Related Studies

In this chapter, the focus will be on studies related to the subject matter this thesis consist of. Much of the research in this section is, to some extent, relevant to the thesis, but it should also be recognized that the related studies highlighted here could be useful when thinking ahead of this thesis toward the challenges that both university and upper-secondary school faces.

The chapter, divided into smaller sub-sections, shows some of the research that has been done that can be related to this study. The subheadings are the Transitional Period, focusing on the period in between upper-secondary school and university and Extensive reading and its importance to language acquisition.

3.1. Transitional Period

The transitional period between upper-secondary school and university in Norway is a field that has seen little study compared to other countries. In Norway, perhaps the most prominent research is done by Hellekjær, especially in his doctoral study from 2001 and his study from 2009, wherein he discusses academic reading proficiency in pupils attending upper-secondary EFL instruction and the academic reading proficiency at the university level. This research indicated that there is a trend among students concerning their lack of English proficiency, especially concerning reading academic texts. This is further explored in the Context chapter.

Research has been conducted in this particular field of study in different countries, but the research that is most interesting to this particular thesis stems from the United States. It is important to clarify that there are differences between the American and the Norwegian school systems, but the research done in the United States is very relatable to this study. Of particular interest is an Issue Brief published in 2008 by the National High School Centre. The National High School Centre is funded by the U.S Department of Education and functions as a centre to “build the capacity of states across the nation to effectively implement the goals of No Child Left Behind relating to high school” (Bangser 2008:2).

Michael Bangser wrote the Brief Issue, Preparing High School Students for Successful Transition to Postsecondary Education and Employment. The study was posted on betterhighschools.org, a site run by the National High School Centre that is based at the

American Institute of Research²⁵. The Brief Issue is a study directed, especially, at policymakers and administrators.

In the study, or issue brief, the major concern of the researcher was how the students' high school experiences fail to prepare them for postsecondary education and for work in an information-based economy (Bangser 2008:4). Much of the research is done with a particular interest in students with certain disabilities, be it physical disabilities or issues regarding minorities and other economic and social issues. Although there are differences between the students in Norwegian upper-secondary school and university, the differences between students in America is bigger due to the simple fact that the country houses a much larger and diverse population than Norway. This does not mean that lessons learned from other countries cannot be applied to Norway; it only means that it is important to consider all the factors.

Furthermore, the study tries to show the importance of intervention. It is highly important to start the intervention at an earlier stage than at the upper-secondary level, because for many students it can already be too late. Being able to engage students as early as possible could help prevent big drop-out rates and encourage students to prepare better for a postsecondary education (Bangser 2008:5). This would mean an increased focus on implementing the right academic tools at an early stage to prepare the students as best as possible, despite their backgrounds and previous experiences. This is a lesson well learned.

The second point of the study is finding a balance between a broad-based approach and a target-based approach. The broad-based approach looks to reach develop school reforms that reach most, if not all, students on a more general area, whereas using the target-based approach that is meant to target specific categories of students. (Bangser 2008:8). Finding a balance between the two approaches would enhance the students' chances of becoming more prepared for a postsecondary education. The other point made here is that policymakers and administrators, even with their limited resources, must find a right combination of approaches and tools to effectively prepare the students for a higher education. It would be in the students interest that schools focus even more on preparing them for a particular career or educational path, by providing them with maximum flexibility to take advantage of a range of options (Bangser 2008:8)

Also stated in the study is the importance of a strong, rigorous, relevant and engaging curriculum to prepare students for successful postsecondary activities, be it in education of in

²⁵ Betterhighschools.org

the work place (Bangser 2008:8). This can be tied directly at teachers and their professional development. The study highlights the importance of providing teachers with a “well-designed, established curricula rather than expecting them to create their own” (Bangser 2008:10), this is also a problem for many teachers in the Norwegian school system who feel that the LK06 is not extensive enough and it demands too much from the teacher. However, it should also be mentioned that not every teacher shares this view, as many find the freedom within the curriculum to be encouraging.

The National High School Centre published another study; it gives a short summary of college and career readiness²⁶. In the study, showing different statistical evidence, the author (Makeda Amelga) argues how “regardless of their chosen career path or academic path after high school, young people must have the capacity to address complex problems in order to maximize their potential for professional and personal success.” (Amelga 2012:1) Some of the statistic highlights included are relevant here, especially when it comes to the preparation for College and Work. The study says that there is a gap between students’ ambitions to attend college and their preparedness for the work that is demanded at the college level. Using numbers acquired from MetLife²⁷ (2011) and Snyder & Dillow (2011), between 1997 and 2010 the percentage of middle and high school students who aspire to attend college increased from 67% to 75%. During that same period of time the percentage of students (age 25 to 29) who complete a bachelor’s degree has only increased from 28% to 32% (Amelga 2012:1-2). These numbers, referring to students in America, are slightly worrying. The transitional period, preparing the students for postsecondary, deserves and should be given more focus.

Another statistic, provided by San Francisco Youth Empowerment Fund (2011), shows that one fourth of seniors surveyed reported that they did not feel at all prepared for college-level work. This feeling of a lack of preparedness echoes in one of the statistics that Hellekjær presented in 2009 regarding the lack of English proficiency, where 66% of the upper-secondary respondents did not reach the Band 6 level on the IELTS (Hellekjær 2009:210-2011). These two studies cover different subjects, but they touch on a similar pattern that seems to be emerging: the difficulty upper-secondary students have with the transition from upper-secondary to university, regardless of country of origin.

²⁶ College and Career Readiness: A Quick Stats Fact Sheet

²⁷ MetLife: Is an insurance company based in the United States. The study Amelga got her statistics from is a survey MetLife conducted in 2010 where the focus was on the American teacher and preparing students for college and careers.

3.2. Extensive Reading

As this thesis concerns itself with the reading habits of the students attending literature courses at the University it is natural to include a section on extensive reading. The questionnaire²⁸ gave insight into the reading habits of the students, especially how and what they read in their spare time and this is directly related to extensive reading as this is the most natural form of reading when reading in your own time (outside of the classroom). Lazar (1993) talks about education the whole person, and by this, he means stimulating students' imagination, helping them to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness (1993:21). Lazar talks especially about classroom teaching, but literature should not be contained to the classroom only. As teachers, it is our job to encourage reading outside the classroom. Reading literature extensively has shown to have a positive effect on the literacy of students. Neil Gaiman, prolific author of the award winning works *The Sandman* and *American Gods*, said in a lecture for the Reading Agency (2013) that "literacy is more important than ever it was, in this world of text and email, a world of written information. We need to read and write, we need global citizens who can read comfortably, comprehend what they are reading, understand nuance, and make themselves understood". For this to happen, encouraging students to read outside the classroom is key.

There is a difference between extensive reading and intensive reading. When learners are given, relatively, short texts that are meant to "exemplify specific aspects of the lexical, syntactic or discoursal system of the L2, or to provide the basis for targeted reading strategy practise" (Hazif/Tudor 1989:2) they are enhancing their proficiency through the intensive approach. The extensive approach, on the other hand, aims to "flood learners with large quantities of L2 input with few or possibly no specific tasks to perform on this material" (Hazif/Tudor 1989:2). Reading for pleasure fits the general approach of extensive reading.

Nation (1990:3)/(Drew/Sørheim 2009:159) argues that there should be far more extensive reading done in relation to vocabulary learning, or the indirect approach as it is called. The difference between indirect and direct approach in terms of vocabulary learning is learning vocabulary by guessing the meaning of new words in context or by consciously drawing attention to the meaning of words in specific vocabulary training activities (Drew/Sørheim 2009:159). The indirect approach is utilized when students read in their spare time and many

²⁸ See Appendix 2

researchers agree that what and how much they read extensively influence the enhancement of language proficiency. Vocabulary enhancement is only a part of language learning, but an important part none the less.

Hafiz and Tudor set up an extensive reading programme using graded readers to investigate whether extensive pleasure reading had any effect on the subjects' linguistic skills. The requisite for finding pedagogical value in extensive reading is "based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 material will, in the long run, produce beneficial effect on learners' command of the L2" (1989:2).

What the researchers found out in their study was that extensive reading over a longer period had a positive effect on learners' proficiency of a second language (L2). In their study, they comment on another study performed over a 2-year period in a primary school in India, conducted by researchers Elley and Mangubhai (1983). The learners showed, after the first year of testing, "substantial improvement in receptive skills (reading and word recognition)" and by the end of the second year the learners' improvement "extended to all aspects of the subjects' L2 abilities, including oral and written production" (Hazif/Tudor 1989:2).

The study, by Hazif and Tudor, is aimed at younger learners and their results, though positive, has to be regarded in light of the age and maturity of the learners'. Some degree of teacher control had to be included to ensure that the learners in fact read the material throughout the 3-month period. This meant allowing feedback on the material to sustain a long-term well-being of the project. The university students who took part in the questionnaire²⁹ are older and more mature, so there is stronger sense of autonomy in choosing to read L2 material in their spare time. Introducing graded readers to literature students aged 19 and upwards would be redundant as the material they are expected to read and understand at university is of a heavier calibre, but including graded readers as part of the preparatory stages in upper-secondary school could possibly yield positive results. The reasoning for this is that the literature pupils read have a tendency to be popular fiction and books based on popular movies, which in themselves are perfect for enhancing motivation to read, but they usually only contain the linguistic elements that tend to be more of an everyday-use type category. (Hazif/Tudor 1989: 8). Graded-readers combined with a strong selection of other popular material could be the combination needed to help enhance the pupils L2 proficiency to a level where the transition to university would not feel so difficult.

²⁹ See Appendix 2

If the teacher is unable to provide graded-readers for her pupils, one example of providing literature that is both exiting and valuable in terms of language acquisition could be to use the model included by Collie and Slater (2008:256-257). In the model they categorize novels by earliest recommended level (i.e. A = advanced, I=intermediate), by language difficulty (i.e. S = simple, M = medium) and length (S = short novel/play, M = medium novel/play, L = long novel/play). The table would look like this:

Author and Title	Level	Language difficulty	Length	Brief description	General comments
John Fowles, <i>The Collector</i>	A	M	M	Solitary young man kidnaps girl and holds her captive.	Suspense and psychological interest.
William Golding, <i>Lord of the Flies</i>	A/I	M	L	A group of boys stranded on a desert island struggle to survive, learning bitter lessons about human nature in the process.	A modern classic – universal themes, simple yet powerful plot.

Using this sort of table could be helpful in motivating students to read novels and texts they otherwise would not, by clearly categorizing them in a simple table. In accordance with the LK06, the teacher is essentially encouraged to create their own ways of motivating their pupils. For some teachers the LK06 provides too much freedom in terms of planning and creating a study plan that is practically required to be educational, thorough, relevant, interesting/exciting and should be created in such a way that each pupil in the classroom is seen and made relevant. All classrooms have different students with different sets of skills, and it is the teachers' obligation to see to it that all the pupils are presented with an arena where they are encouraged and allowed to grow. Using a model such as the one presented above or

even modifying it to suit the teachers' individual classroom, could be beneficial and should absolutely be considered.

5. Methodology

5.1. Introduction

The thesis concerns itself with the transitional period between upper secondary school and the university, with a focus on literature students. This chapter will explain the method that was used in order to obtain the necessary data to answer the research questions.

The first segment concerns itself with the nature of quantitative data collection and the research method used. Further, the chapter also includes sections on making a questionnaire as part of the quantitative research, piloting and extracts from the questionnaire. The chapter also explains how the Likert scale is used and why it is the better choice, for this thesis. Moreover, included in this chapter is a section on methodological concerns that covers validity and ethics.

5.2. Quantitative research

The most frequent method of collection quantitative data is to conduct a survey using a questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2007:95). The reasoning behind choosing this particular format to collect the data necessary for answering the thesis questions regarding literature students and their experiences with their course(s) and their relationship with literature was to maintain the essence of scientific research (Dörnyei, 2007:101). This meant to be able to collect data in a methodical and well-organized manner and by conducting a questionnaire it would allow for a bigger sample to be analyzed quicker and with more accuracy. By using an internet based computer software called Survey Monkey³⁰ as a tool for collecting data, one is able to conserve both time and resources, as opposed to using a pen and paper questionnaire.

The quantitative research method was the appropriate choice considering the fact that there are 106 students attending the British and Irish Literature course and 145 students attending the American Literature course. It is important to note that many of the students attend both

³⁰ SuperMonkey.net

courses. One of the questions raised in the questionnaire is which course they attend or if they attend both.

There are different ways to go about collecting data in a quantitative research project. For this thesis the method used was a *non-probability sample*. There is a clear difference between a probability sample and a non-probability sample. Whereas probability sampling consists of a random selection of people whom represent the population, the non-probability sample does not use random selection. Because a certain set of criteria needed to be met in order for the questionnaire to be valid (e.g Literature students), the use of random selection, or probability sample, was not practical. The focus of this thesis is on the students of two specific literature courses and their experience with the courses. This demanded a lot of answers to many different questions and the best way to acquire these answers was to use a *convenience sample*. A convenience sample is described by Dörnyei thusly: “an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience of the researcher: members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet certain practical criteria” (2007:98-99).

The convenience sample consists of people from the target population (the two literature courses). The way this convenience sample differs from other convenience samples used in other research is that the survey was sent to the entire population, not just a selected few. Dörnyei (2007:100) explains that in order to reach a statistical significance our concern is to sample enough learners. To obtain statistical significance the questionnaire would have to produce a minimum of 45 answered surveys. Knowing the students’ similar age, nationality and background was key components to estimate the acquired number of participants. Though there are individuals with other backgrounds, this made for interesting data and was something that was expected. Having approximately 45 participants would ensure the integrity of the connections and correlation between the answers.

A quantitative research approach would yield answers that would differ from a qualitative research approach. Choosing a questionnaire as the main source of data collection allowed for many different questions to be asked to many students at once and at the same time avoid time consumption and to be conservative with the limited resources at disposal.

The main issue when asking questions to so many people is how to actually go about it. Instead of using open-ended questions, as they are not particularly suited when trying to analyze and find correlation, the obvious choice was using the Likert scale.

5.2.1. The Likert Scale

The Likert scale provides a framework for closed-ended items, where the participants are asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with a statement. Provided is an example of how the Likert scale was used in the questionnaire (the entire questionnaire can be found in the Appendix 1. section):

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer
I have become a better reader after attending this course.						

By dividing the survey into sections that involves different statements concerning different topics (Expectations/Preparedness, Spare time reading, genres etc.) and having the samples indicate if they agree or disagree by marking a scale with response varying from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”.

When using the Likert scale, it is important to calculate a weighted average based on the weight assigned to each answer choice³¹. To calculate the rating average a mathematical formula is put into effect. The software, provided by SuperMonkey, automatically does this for you, but understanding the math behind it is essential when deciding on how many points each answer weighs. Finding the rating average looks like this:

w = the weight of answer choice

x = the response count for answer choice

³¹ SuperMonkey.net – Help pages: What is the Rating Average and how is it calculated

The formula used would look like this:

$$\frac{X_1W_1 + X_2W_2 + X_3W_3 \dots X_nW_n}{\text{Total}}$$

The Likert scale used in the questionnaire included one N/A³² column, called *Prefer not to answer*, and the N/A responses would not be included into the rating average.

The rating scale for this particular questionnaire was a 5-point scale, meaning each answer column was assigned a different weight:

Strongly Agree: 1

Agree: 2

Neutral: 3

Disagree: 4

Strongly Disagree: 5

Prefer not to answer: 0

The 5-point scale was used throughout the entire questionnaire (were the Likert scale was used) to avoid confusion. Using a particular scale throughout also allows for comparisons within and between the sets of data.

After collecting the responses, the results of the questionnaire (using the SuperMonkey software) would look like this:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer	Total	Average Rating
I would say that my English has improved throughout this course(s)	0.00% 0	8.51% 4	19.15% 9	55.32% 26	14.89% 7	2.13% 1	47	3.70

³² N/A = Not Applicable or No Answer

In the above example³³, the average rating of 3.70 indicates that the average sentiment among the respondents is that they agree that their English has improved throughout this course(s). As mentioned previously the software does the calculation automatically, but to be 100% sure of the results it is essential to know how to do the calculation in order to be able to double check the results. Calculating the average rating of the above example would look like this:

$$(0*1) + (4*2) + (9*3) + (26*4) + (7*5)$$

$$47$$

$$174/47 = 3.70$$

After adding together the respondents' answers, the number of responses divides the resulting number. The number of responses also includes the N/A responses, though as mentioned, the N/A responses does not have a weight. The remaining number is the average result of that particular question.

The main reason the Likert scale was the appropriate tool for this thesis instead of, for an example, the semantic differential scale, was that the Likert scale provides better control over the statements produced. The Likert scale method provides the framework for a detailed, yet practical and relatively easy way to obtain precise data. It also provides a chance to include many different statements that can be analyzed for correlation. It also creates a great platform for a whole lot of different comparisons between the samples. It can also be mentioned that the format of the Likert scale is non-threatening to a participant as they are practical, not time consuming and easy to understand.

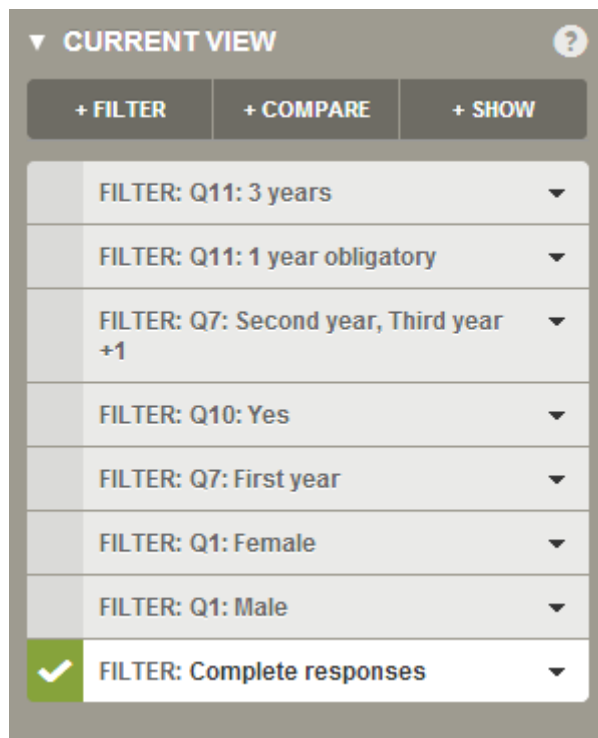
5.3. SuperMonkey software: Adding Filters

Analyzing the statistical results was made easier by using software provided by SuperMonkey.com. After closing the survey, the site provides you with an analytical option

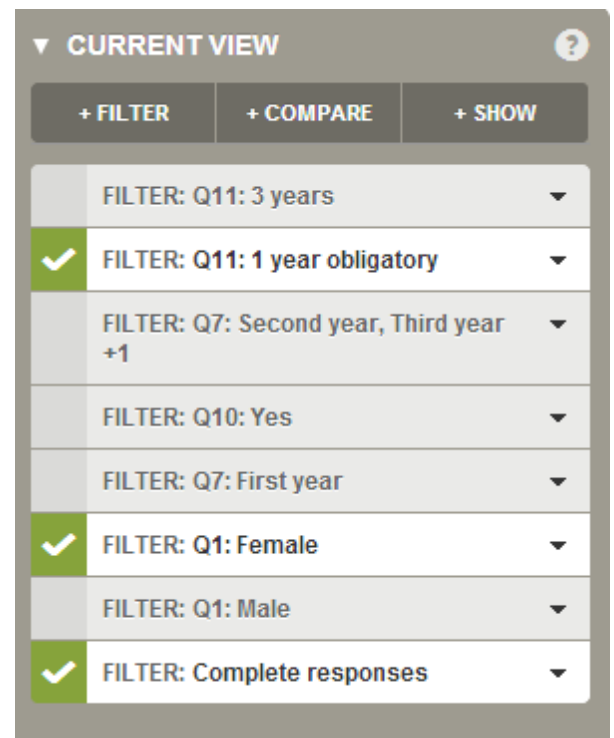
³³ Taken directly from the questionnaire.

on the site where it is possible to analyze your results by adding filters to the results. This means isolating parts of the responses by adding a filter by question and answer. Provided below is an example of how and what kind of filters it is possible to add.

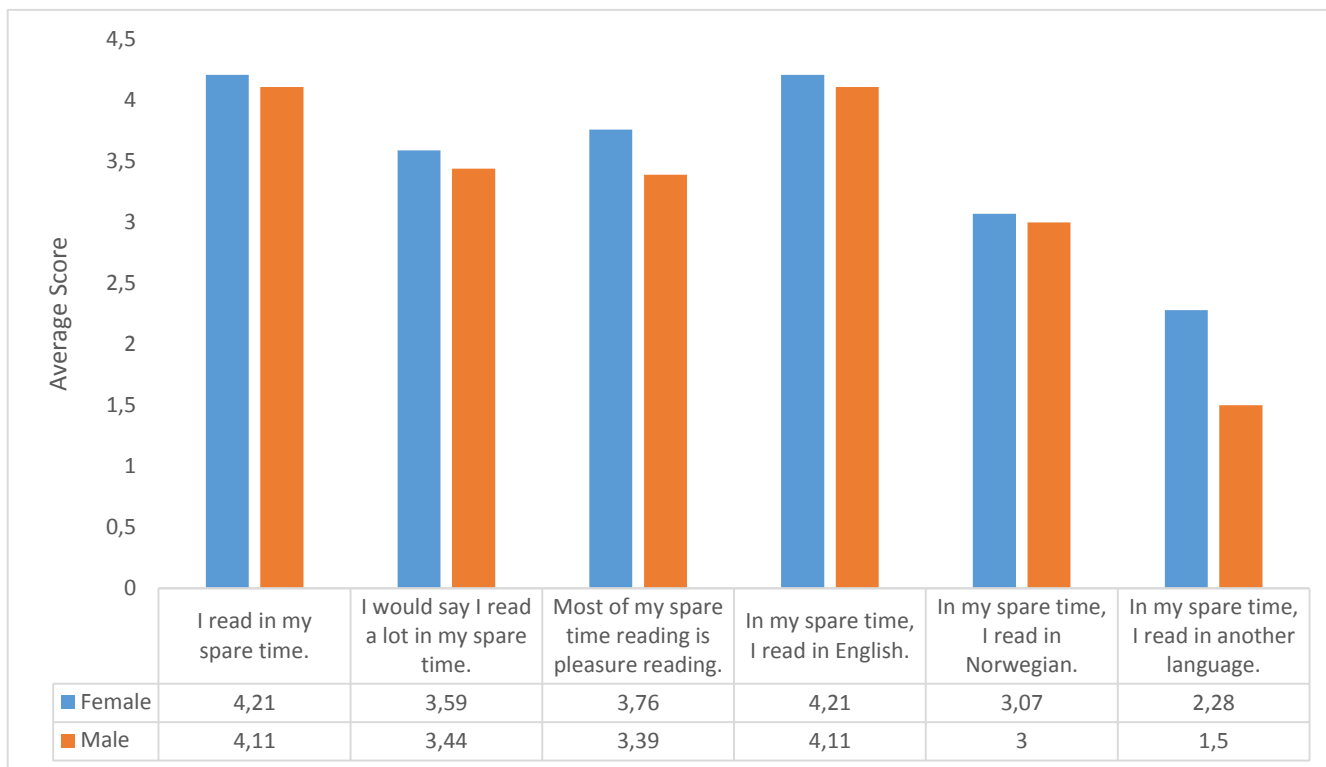
Example 1:



Example 2:



Example 1 and Example 2 show exactly how it looks on the webpage. In the examples, you can see that custom filters has been added. In Example 1 the only filter ticked off is complete responses, this means that if any of the respondents dropped out of the questionnaire halfway (or at any other stage) this tool will exclude it. In example 2 you can see two more filters has been ticked off. Naturally, the software excludes any response that has not checked “1 year obligatory” and “Female”. This tool was extremely practical and removed many time-consuming efforts while analyzing, especially considering the many components of the Likert-scale. This tool was used much during the Discussion chapter as it proved to be extremely helpful in understanding the data in more detail. The data, after adding filters, was portrayed using graphs easily created using Microsoft Word. The graphs used in the discussion chapter of this thesis would look like the one below:



The graph above shows part of the data collected from section 3: Spare time reading, from the questionnaire. The researcher has applied two filters differentiating between the female respondents and the male respondents. The average score can be found underneath the statements and the graph-bars. This particular graph was chosen for easy interpretation. The simplicity of the outlay made it easier to illustrate the data in detail.

5.4. Informants and Piloting

The data collected for this thesis came from students, attending American Literature and British and Irish Literature, who answered a survey they received by email. The teachers of the two courses sent out the emails containing the survey. Itslearning was also used to obtain the contact list of the students.

There was no need for any student to participate in an in-depth interview, as the framework of the Likert scale, combined with piloted statements, provided the necessary data needed to analyze the opinions of the students.

Piloting the questionnaire was always seen as essential for validity, but also to be sure that the standard of quality and relevance that is demanded by a master thesis was maintained. By

employing students in my own class, as well as my supervisor, the response they gave afterwards was highly informative and constructive. They, five master students and the supervisor were given access to a separately made copy of the questionnaire online in the same fashion as the participants (the students in the literature courses) would receive later. Piloting the questionnaire with students participating in the same master course as myself, gave the opportunity to modify the questions to accommodate the demands of the thesis. Minor changes to the structure was made to clarify certain aspects concerning outlay, time consumption and clerical errors. The feedback given was constructive in terms of conveying the statements to avoid ambiguity.

5.5. Validity

One must acknowledge the importance of validity of a project, especially when the entirety of the research is conducted with the use of a quantitative approach. Validity signifies that the research actually measures or describes the phenomena it set out to measure (Basit, 2010: 64). There are different approaches to ensuring validity in quantitative research. The research, as carried out in this thesis, uses quantitative method to produce data from the students attending the two chosen literature courses.

The most important point in dealing with quantitative research is the importance of sampling, development and the statistical analysis (Basit, 2010: 64). Quantitative research concerns itself with external validity, whereas qualitative research focuses on internal validity. External validity signifies the level to which the results that are acquired can be generalized to a wider population. The sample, or population, that was chosen for this thesis consists of students attending two literature courses at the University. Since the sample is, to an extent, narrow in scope, the data collected cannot be generalized to, say, other studies that do not deal with the same subject matter. Assumptions can be made if the data collected is compared to other courses, but the focus lies on the students attending literature courses. With minor changes the questionnaire can be applied to other universities as long as it was directed at literature courses with approximately similar syllabi. The quantitative research is strongly connected to *generalization*. In this particular case a *statistical generalization* can be made of the data collected. This was achieved by considering the participants school background, nationality and age group. By considering these factors, one can say with certainty that the data collected

corresponds with the rest of the population (the students in the two courses). Proper research and piloting of the questionnaire has resulted in great confidence in the validity of the data collected.

5.6. Ethics

It is a researcher's responsibility to ensure that the participants' anonymity is maintained and that the participants have provided informed consent.

The participants of the questionnaire were all informed beforehand of the anonymity of the survey. The students participating in the questionnaire were told at the beginning of the questionnaire³⁴ that they could at any time quit their participation without notice. Before the questionnaire was sent out by email (the teachers of the course(s) provided the list of students), the researcher filled out a form in accordance with NSD³⁵ guidelines as demanded. This was to make sure that anonymity was maintained throughout the research period and also that it was maintained after the thesis was handed in. In this regard, the integrity and privacy of the respondents were sustained.

5.7. Summary

The method used in collecting data for this particular dissertation was a thoroughly constructed and piloted quantitative research method, in the form of a questionnaire. The reasoning behind using quantitative research, compared to a qualitative research, was to achieve a substantial amount of data in as short amount of time as possible. Through thorough piloting, the questionnaire was found to be both valid and reliable, but also relevant to the thesis questions. By utilizing the apparent simplicity of the Likert scale combined with the mathematical and statistical software provided by the internet-based survey company SuperMonkey it was relatively easy for the researcher to analyze the results in a structured and straightforward way. With the addition of the uncomplicated process of applying different filters based on the questionnaire responses, relevant data could easily be extracted from

³⁴ See Appendix 2

³⁵ See Appendix 1.

inside the initial data. This created the opportunity to observe the different trends of different groups of students within the population of respondents.

6.1. Findings

This chapter is divided into sections showing the different results from the data collected from the survey “Questionnaire on being a student of literature”³⁶. The findings chapter aims to show the numerical data collected without going into analysis and will remain objective.

The first section deals with the preliminary questions; age, sex, background. The next section will deal with questions regarding the background of the students. Further, the subheadings will deal with the bulk of the questionnaire; expectations/preparedness, spare time reading, genres, English improvement and motivation, the purpose of literature and, finally, further comments. The data is presented in tables. Included in some of the tables are both the response count and the response percent. To create graphs that are accurate and easier to read, percentages have been included. Some of the tables have comments underneath that elaborate on the numbers or situation surrounding the table.

6.2. Preliminary questions

Firstly, it was necessary to gather general information on the students attending the two literature courses. The three first questions asked in the questionnaire was sex, age, and nationality. The results from the first section can be found in Table 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 1. Sex. (47 respondents)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	38.3%	18
Female	61.7%	29

³⁶ Questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2

Table 2. Age. (47 respondents)

Age	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	32	34	37	39
Response Count	1	4	8	8	6	4	3	5	2	1	1	1	1	1	1

The age of the students ranged from 18 to 39 years old as shown in the Table above. The average age of the students attending the literature courses is 23.3 years old.

Table 3. Nationality. (46 respondents, 1 skipped)

Answers	Response Count
Norwegian	41
Danish	2
Ukrainian	1
American	1
Chinese	1

6.3. Background questions

This section of the chapter deals with background questions relating to the students previous schooling and their current education. Each table comes with a description of the questions asked in the question.

Table 4. Is English your first language? (46 respondents, 1 skipped)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	2.2%	1
No	97.8%	45

Table 5. If English is not your first language, what is? (46 respondents, 1 skipped)

Answers	Response Count
Norwegian	41
Russian	1
Faroese	1
Chinese	1
Ukrainian	1
Other (comment)	1

Comments:

One of the respondents said Norwegian was his/her third language.

Table 6. Have you been through the Norwegian school system? (47 respondents)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	91.5%	43
No	6.4%	3
Other (Comments)	2.1%	1

Comments:

One of the respondents reported that they had attended upper-secondary school as a candidate at a private school.

Table 7. What year are you currently attending? (46 respondents, 2 comments)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
First Year	56.5%	26
Second Year	26.1%	12
Third Year	15.2%	7
Fourth Year	2.2%	1
Fifth Year	0.0%	0
Other (Comments)		2

Table 8. Are you part of the Adjunkt- and Lektorprogrammet? (47 respondents)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	34%	16
No	66%	31

Table 9. Which category does the course(s) you attend fit into? (47 respondents)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Årsstudium (One year programme)	29.8%	14
Engelsk breddefag (English as a secondary course)	17%	8
Engelsk hovedfag (English as main course)	53.2%	25
Enkeltemne (English as a single subject)	0.0%	0

Table 10. When you started this course, did you arrive directly from upper-secondary school (Vgs)? (Not counting military service) (47 respondents)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	29.8%	14
No	70.2%	33

Table 11. What sort of English background do you have from upper-secondary school? (46 respondents, 3 comments)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1 year obligatory	28.3%	13
3 years	71.7%	33
Other (comments)		3

Comments:

One of the respondents, who checked 'other', commented and said he/she had had two years of English in upper-secondary school.

Table 12. Which course(s) do you attend? (47 respondents)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
British and Irish Literature	23.4%	11
American Literature	31.9%	15
Both	44.7%	21

6.5. Main part of the Questionnaire

This section starts the bulk of the questionnaire, the questions answered with the Likert scale. As explained in the methods chapter, the Likert scale gives the respondents a scale in which they can agree or disagree (or not answer) with a particular statement. The questionnaire can be found in its entirety, as it appears online, in the Appendix section. This chapter deals only in the raw data collected, meaning the data from all respondents. Further on, in the discussion chapter, other valuable data will be portrayed using the SuperMonkey-software. The data gathered after applying filters will be presented using graphs.

The tables that include the raw data, the average scores of all respondents, are located on separate pages at the end of the chapter.

The numerical data included in the tables vary from response percentage, response count and the average rating.

6.6. Expectations/Preparedness

The first part of the main part of the questionnaire deals with the students' expectations and preparedness with the subjects. The statements are concerned with background from upper-secondary school, the current reading list at the university, vocabulary etc. The results can be viewed in Table 13.

6.7. Spare Time Reading

The next section focuses on spare time reading. The statements asks how much the students read in their spare time, if they read in English or Norwegian, or if they read in another language. The data from section 14 can be found in Table 14.

6.8. Genres

Next on the questionnaire was a section on genres. It asks the students what genres they read in their spare time. Some of the genres included in the questionnaire are genres that are taught, especially, in the Literature classroom. Plays, gothic novels and short stories are very much relatable to the literature classroom. Science-Fiction, crime novels and adventure/fantasy novels are part of the literary genres most associated with spare time reading. Also included in the questionnaire are texts of non-fiction and internet articles. Not everyone reads fiction in their spare time, so it is important to include works that are found outside of the realm of fiction. The results can be found in Table 15.

6.9. English improvement and motivation

Section number 5 of the questionnaire provided statements that wanted the students to consider their improvement in English and if the course(s) has motivated them to further reading in their spare time. There are also statements concerning English improvement that can be related to extracurricular reading. The results can be found in Table 16.

6.10. The Purpose of Literature

Section 6 of the questionnaire deals with the purpose of literature, specifically what the students themselves feel about literature as a tool for enhancing English proficiency, if learning about literature is motivating for reading more, and if it has had any effect on their academic abilities. This section was important as much of the course load in the two literature classes deal with texts in a historical context. This means that not only do the students read an assortment of literature, but also articles regarding different literary and historical periods in time. Part of the aims of the courses is to be able to analyse and understand literature from diverse perspectives and multiple historical periods and literary genres³⁷. The results can be found in Table 17.

6.11. Further Comments

At the end of the questionnaire, an open space was added for the students to comment on the questionnaire or anything relating to the questions/statements provided in the questionnaire.

The last section: “If you have any further comments regarding one or both of the literary courses, please voice your opinion in the space below. This part is optional.”

Comment no 1:

“There is one thing I would like to point is, namely the fact that the courses have piqued my interest in different literary genres (for example fiction, non-fiction, short stories (...)).

Previously I was chiefly interested in fiction novels.”

Comment no 2:

“They are both good, but it's too much with both British and Irish literature and American Literature in one semester.”

³⁷ UiS.no – American Literature and Culture – studieplan

Comment no 3:

“Some of the texts in my course are so difficult that I don't have any spare energy left to read when I'm done with my homework.”

Table 13. Expectations/Preparedness.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Total	Average Rating
My background as an English learner at upper-secondary school has prepared me well for the literature course(s) I now attend.	6.38% 3	25.53% 12	19.15% 9	34.04% 16	14.89% 7	0.00% 0	47	3.26
I find the reading list relevant.	0.00% 0	4.26% 2	19.15% 9	46.81% 22	29.79% 14	0.00% 0	47	4.02
There are too many texts on the reading list.	4.26% 2	21.28% 10	31.91% 15	29.79% 14	12.77% 6	0.00% 0	47	3.26
The difficulty of the required reading list suits me very well.	0.00% 0	25.53% 12	14.89% 7	38.30% 18	21.28% 10	0.00% 0	47	3.55
I have read every text on the reading list.	2.13% 1	40.43% 19	4.26% 2	25.53% 12	25.53% 12	2.13% 1	47	3.26
I have become a better reader after attending this course.	0.00% 0	8.51% 4	17.02% 8	40.43% 19	31.91% 15	2.13% 1	47	3.89
My vocabulary has improved during the progression of this class.	0.00% 0	4.26% 2	29.79% 14	38.30% 18	27.66% 13	0.00% 0	47	3.89
After attending this course(s) I have become better at analysing texts.	4.26% 2	6.38% 3	23.40% 11	48.94% 23	12.77% 6	4.26% 2	47	3.47
Attending a literature course(s) has had a positive effect on my overall academic abilities.	2.13% 1	8.51% 4	6.38% 3	51.06% 24	29.79% 14	2.13% 1	47	3.91
After my first semester, I feel that the course has lived up to my expectations.	2.13% 1	10.64% 5	23.40% 11	46.81% 22	14.89% 7	2.13% 1	47	3.55

Table 14. Spare Time Reading.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Total	Average Rating
I read in my spare time.	0.00% 0	6.38% 3	4.26% 2	55.32% 26	34.04% 16	0.00% 0	47	4.17
I would say I read a lot in my spare time.	0.00% 0	21.28% 10	23.40% 11	36.17% 17	19.15% 9	0.00% 0	47	3.53
Most of my spare time reading is pleasure reading.	0.00% 0	21.28% 10	12.77% 6	38.30% 18	25.53% 12	2.13% 1	47	3.62
In my spare time, I read in English.	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	17.02% 8	31.91% 15	46.81% 22	2.13% 1	47	4.17
In my spare time, I read in Norwegian.	12.77% 6	25.53% 12	19.15% 9	29.79% 14	12.77% 6	0.00% 0	47	3.04
In my spare time, I read in another language.	65.74% 27	10.64% 5	6.38% 3	17.02% 8	6.38% 3	2.13% 1	47	1.98

Table 15. Genres.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Total	Average Rating
In my spare time, I read non-fiction.	10.64%	19.15%	25.53%	38.30%	6.38%	0.00%		
	5	9	12	18	3	0	47	3.11
In my spare time, I read adventure and/or fantasy novels.	17.02%	14.89%	10.64%	31.91%	25.53%	0.00%		
	8	7	5	15	12	0	47	3.34
In my spare time, I read Gothic novels.	23.40%	31.91%	19.15%	23.40%	2.13%	0.00%		
	11	15	9	11	1	0	47	2.49
In my spare time, I read science fiction novels.	30.43%	28.26%	4.35%	26.09%	10.87%	0.00%		
	14	13	2	12	5	0	47	2.59
In my spare time, I read crime novels.	21.28%	19.15%	12.77%	40.43%	6.38%	0.00%		
	10	9	6	19	3	0	47	2.91
In my spare time, I read plays.	29.79%	27.66%	25.53%	17.02%	0.00%	0.00%		
	14	13	12	8	0	0	47	2.30
In my spare time, I read short stories.	10.64%	21.28%	19.15%	44.68%	4.26%	0.00%		
	5	10	9	21	2	0	47	3.11
In my spare time, I read internet articles.	2.13%	2.13%	6.38%	61.70%	25.53%	2.13%		
	1	1	3	29	12	1	47	4.00

Table 16. English Improvement and Motivation.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Total	Average Rating
I would say that my English has improved throughout this course(s)	0.00% 0	8.51% 4	19.15% 9	55.32% 26	14.89% 7	2.13% 1	47	3.70
This course(s) has motivated me to read more in my spare time.	2.13% 1	14.89% 7	21.28% 10	44.68% 21	17.02% 8	0.00% 0	47	3.60
Pleasure reading in my spare time has had a good effect on my English reading abilities.	0.00% 0	4.26% 2	19.15% 9	38.30% 18	36.17% 17	2.13% 1	47	4.00
Pleasure reading in my spare time has had a good effect on my English speaking abilities.	0.00% 0	4.26% 2	25.53% 12	42.55% 20	25.53% 12	2.13% 1	47	3.83

Table 17. The Purpose of Literature.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Total	Average Rating
I consider literature as a tool for improving my English.	0.00% 0	4.26% 2	8.51% 4	48.94% 23	38.30% 18	0.00% 0	47	4.21
I regard literature as an extracurricular activity (something I do in my spare time)	0.00% 0	10.64% 5	23.40% 11	53.19% 25	12.77% 6	0.00% 0	47	3.68
Learning about Literature can increase my academic abilities.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	17.02% 8	51.06% 24	31.91% 15	0.00% 0	47	4.15
Learning about Literature can help me write better English.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	4.26% 2	40.43% 19	55.32% 26	0.00% 0	47	4.51
Learning about Literature has helped me understand literature in a historical context.	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	10.64% 5	46.81% 22	40.43% 19	0.00% 0	47	4.23
Learning about Literature makes me want to read more in my spare time.	0.00% 0	10.64% 5	14.89% 7	40.43% 19	34.04% 16	0.00% 0	47	3.98

6.12. Summary

In summation, the findings chapter show the numerical data collected in its raw form. The tables were constructed particular for this thesis, though the software provided by SuperMonkey collected the numerical data. The researcher checked all calculations. The Average Rating column included in table 13 through 17 were all double-checked by peer review. This was done to uphold the integrity of the study and its data.

9. Discussion

9.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on the findings of the questionnaire³⁸ in light of the questions stated in the beginning. The thesis aim was to investigate the transitional period between upper-secondary school and the university, using students from the two literature courses: British and Irish Literature and American Literature. The thesis used a questionnaire as the important investigative tool to obtain relevant information about the students' opinions on matters relating to their background as English learners and their experiences with the subjects they studied at the university.

The decision for writing this thesis was motivated by the teachers teaching English literature at the university. The sentiment that the researcher gradually picked up from the teachers was related to the students not being sufficiently prepared for the course work they are expected to do at the university. The importance of an investigation into the students' preparedness was essential. Are they prepared enough for the challenging academic work that awaits them at the university level...or is this notion of worry unfounded? Along with questions on the students' background, it was imperative to find out if their experience with university level literature courses had helped them become better learners, both in English proficiency and academic proficiency. In the questionnaire the researcher asked about the students' reading habits outside of the classroom. The reason for including sections on spare time reading relates to relevant research that suggests that reading outside of the classroom enhances reading proficiency, which, in a literature course, is of vital importance. The questionnaire combined questions regarding their background at upper-secondary school to their experiences with the university course(s). Included questions like did they feel prepared enough, and had their experiences at a university level enhanced their proficiency at all. The remaining issue brought up in this thesis was to find out if studying literature played a role in their lives, and if learning about literature has had any effect on their proficiency.

³⁸ Appendix 2

Was there in fact an issue with the students' English proficiency? The thesis thus started out as an investigatory venture to get a sense of the state of things from the students' point of view and to find out about their experiences before they started attending the university and how they managed their current situation. This would be of vital importance when creating further literature studies as well as in future academic work.

The chapter was divided into sections answering and explaining the research questions as they were stated in the introduction chapter.

9.2. Preliminary Questions: Trends and Comparisons

The questionnaire's first section has been referred to here as the Preliminary Questions. These questions ranged from asking the participants about their background as English learners at upper-secondary school, how long they have attended the university, their age, sex, if they are part of a teacher training programme and nationality.

The majority of the respondents were female, approximately 62%, and the remaining 38% were male. There was a large difference concerning the age of the respondents. In the group of respondents, the youngest was 18 and the oldest was 39. The average age of the respondents was 23.3 years old. Out of the 47 students who answered the questionnaire, nearly 98% reported that English was not their first language. Only one respondent had listed English as their first language. Among the 47, 41 listed Norwegian as their first language, one Faroese, one Russian, one Chinese, one Ukrainian and the last respondent wrote, in the comment section, that Norwegian was his/her third language. These numbers did not deviate from the initial thought of the researcher, though it is interesting to note a difference between male and female respondents concerning nationality and language. In the group of male respondents, all 18 listed Norwegian as their nationality, whereas the female respondents' listed other nationalities and other languages as their first language.

56.5% of the respondents were currently attending their first year of their education, and among those, only six respondents arrived directly (not counting military service) from upper-secondary school.

Another interesting result that became apparent was how large of the group of respondents had 3 years of English subjects in upper-secondary school. 71.7% of the respondents said they

had 3 years of English in upper-secondary school. This data will be referred to later on, when comparing other data.

9.3. Main Findings

This part of the discussion cover the main findings of the quantitative research. Whereas the previous section explained the preliminary data, here the discussion revolves around the main body of the questionnaire. This includes the tables from sections 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10 in the Findings chapter. The discussion chapter was divided into sections explaining data that covers the questions/statements regarding the students` experiences before university, their current situation at the university, reading habits outside of the classroom and the students` own take on literature and its purpose.

As far as the results go, the questionnaire would have it that the students feel prepared to a certain extent. Though it is difficult to understand every students` preparedness, the survey gave insight into what the state of things were.

During the discussion, the researcher used terms such as *positive*, *negative* and *neutral* to explain the average scores extracted from the Likert-scale. Describing something as *positive* in the discussion did not necessarily mean that it was constructive or encouraging, but a way to refer to the average score if it exceeded 3.00, or *neutral*. In the same way *negative* was used to refer to the average score that fell beneath 3.00. To clarify even more, when discussing average scores the three terms are written in *cursive*. If the researcher uses one of the three terms in another context, they are written without cursive.

9.4. Preparedness and Proficiency

The first section of the main findings relates to the first two research questions as stated in the introduction chapter. They are:

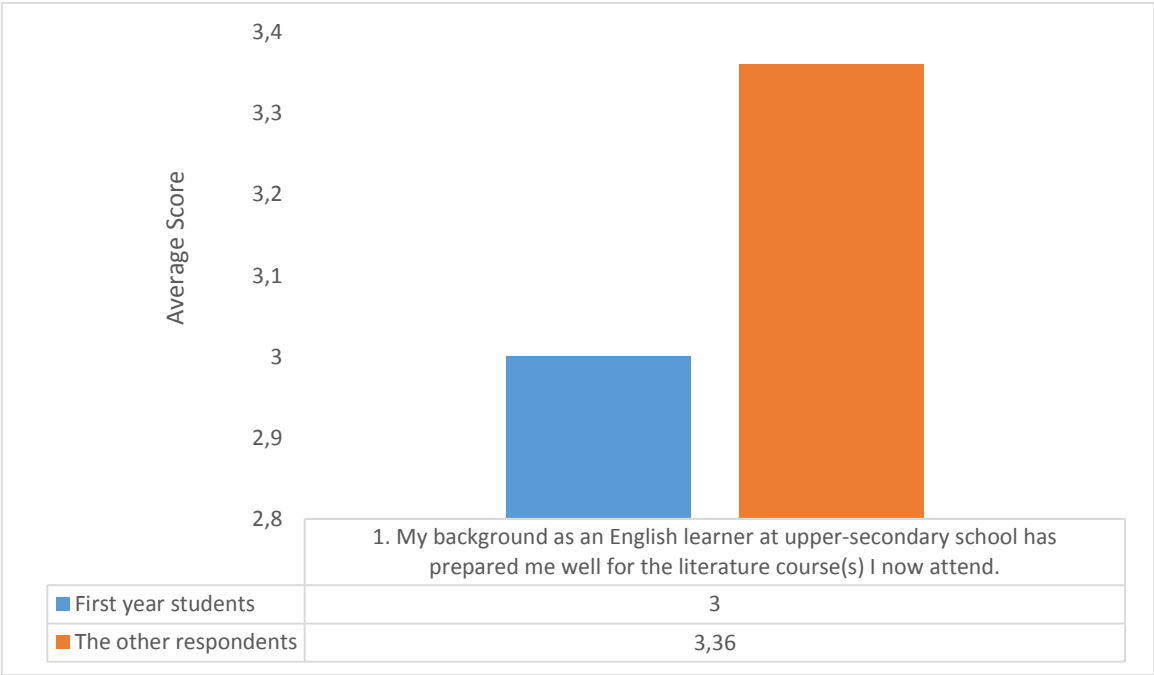
“Are the students attending literary courses prepared or underprepared for the rise in difficulty concerning the course load?”

“Has their participation in the literature course(s) strengthened their English and academic proficiency?”

If we look at Table 13, the statements was produced to get a sense of the students preparedness, but also if the courses themselves had had any implication on their English and academic proficiency. The first statement, found in Table 13, directly states:

“My background as an English learner at upper-secondary school has prepared me well for the literature course(s) I now attend.”

The first noticeable data that the researcher looked for was the average rating of the numerical data. This statement produced a positive average, meaning an average that exceeds the neutral response category. In detail: 6% strongly disagreed with the statement, 26% disagreed, 19% remained neutral, 34% agreed and 15% strongly agreed. The average of the first statement was then 3.26. This indicates that the majority of the population feel that their upper-secondary school training has prepared them well enough for the literature courses. On the other hand, the average score also indicates that there are still those who feel they have not been properly prepared for the amount of work that awaits them at university. The graph below show what the data looks like if we isolate the respondents who came directly from upper-secondary school and are attending their first year at university and compare them with the average score of the students who did not arrive directly from upper-secondary school.



The results first show that the average rating has dropped from 3.26 to 3.00, effectively landing in the “neutral zone”. This is in no way where we would want our students to be, and it is reminiscent of Hellekjær’s research from 2009 where he writes “contrary to expectations, Norwegian EFL instruction at upper-secondary schools fails to develop the academic English reading proficiency needed for higher education.” (Hellekjær 2009:1). Further analysis of the group of respondents who arrived directly from upper-secondary school show that, even though they appear to take a neutral stance on their preparedness, the students agree that their overall academic abilities has increased since starting university. This, at least, is an observation that indicates that the learning environment at the university is a positive one. The group also indicates that their “English has improved throughout this course(s)”³⁹. It should also be mentioned that the discussed group does not feel that the course(s) has lived up to their expectations, but looking at the overall score on Table 13 (and one statement from Table 16), we can see that there are more positive responses than negative ones.

If we compare this group of students with a more seasoned group, consisting of students attending their second and third year, we see that the second and third years have an average score of 3.00 on the first statement in Table 13, the same as the first group. However, the second groups expectations of the course(s) exceeds the first groups`, with an average score of 3.29. This might indicate that the more seasoned students have expectations that are more realistic because they are more experienced with the different procedural aspects of the university. It would be interesting to see if the first groups` average score would differ in a future questionnaire, when they have attended university for a longer period.

Upon further analysis of the questionnaire, it is apparent that there is also a difference between the students who have had 1 year obligatory English at upper-secondary school and those who have had 3 years. Among the first group, first years who arrived directly from upper-secondary school, there was a 50-50% split between 1-year mandatory English and 3-years of English. Among the students who had only 1 year of English, 67% disagreed with the statement. Whereas the other 50% of the first group, 100% of them chose to stay neutral. To be noted, this part of the analysis only included the group of students who are in their first year at the university. If we expand the analysis to all the students (respondents), as

³⁹ Statement collected from table 16, no 1: “I would say my English has improved throughout this course(s)”, the group in question showed an average score of 3.73.

mentioned earlier, regardless of attending year, the consensus exceeds *neutral* with an average score of 3.26.

At the end of the questionnaire there was a comment section where respondents could leave a comment on anything relating to the two literature courses. One of the participants, who had 1-year mandatory English in upper-secondary school, voiced his dissatisfaction and said “They are both good, but it's too much with both British and Irish literature and American Literature in one semester.” The same participant disagreed with the statement mentioned earlier about preparedness. This statement, though from only one participant, still adds to the entire picture. Lecturers at the university have voiced their concerns about the course load, and the layout of the courses. It is important to acknowledge that even if the students’ preparedness is linked to their experiences at upper-secondary school, the universities have a responsibility to change if change is needed. Changing a course’s entire layout because of one person’s comment is not enough, of course, but seeing as the overall preparedness of the students was lower than what we would ultimately want, there should be made room for discussion.

Also included in section 2 of the questionnaire were statements regarding the students’ attitude toward the actual reading list that they are expected to read throughout the semester. The statements regarding the course work are listed as follows (w/average scores):

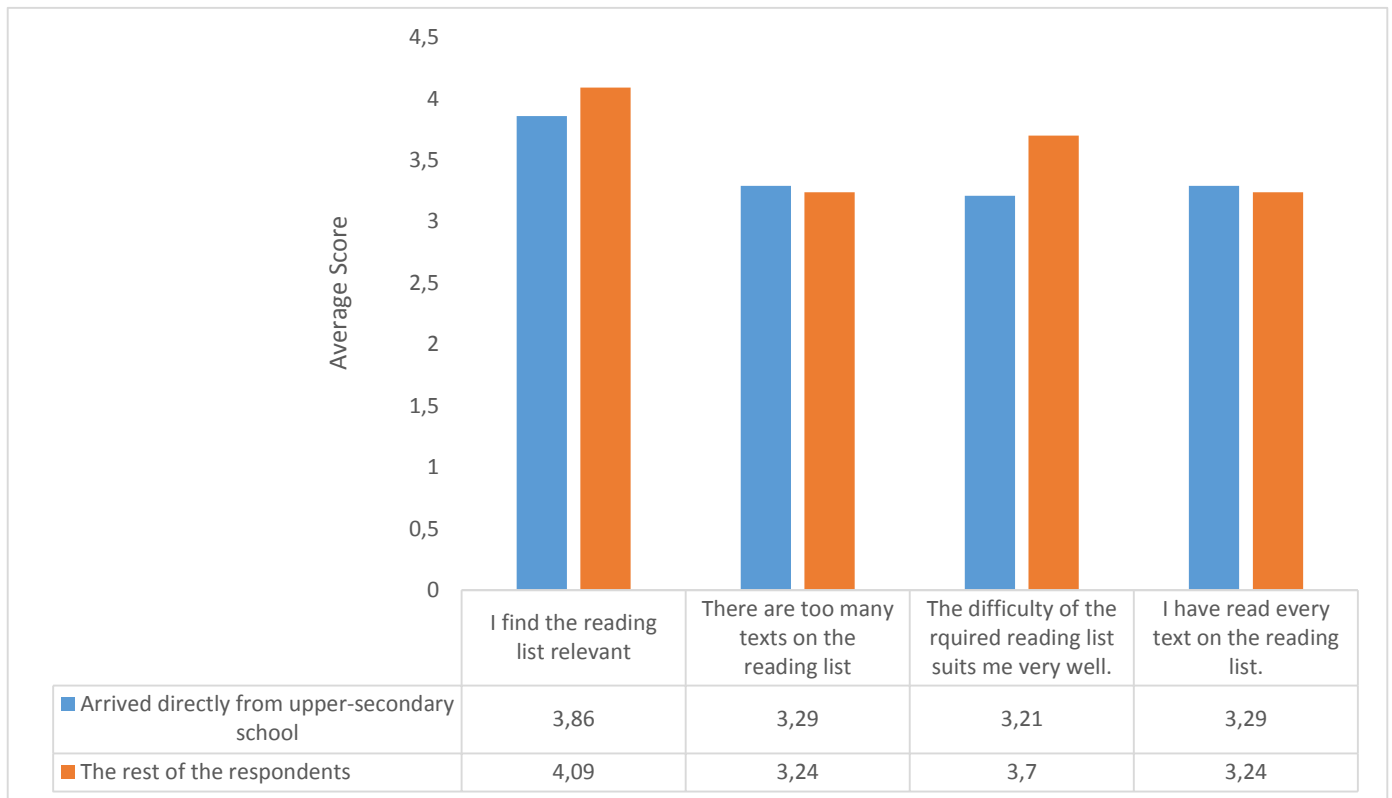
I find the reading list relevant. 4.02

There are too many texts on the reading list. 3.26

The difficulty of the required reading list suits me very well. 3.55

I have read every text on the reading list. 3.26

The results show that the students’ overall attitudes are *positive* on all accounts in regards to the course work. However, the overall data conceal the nuances that can be observed if we isolate certain groups. Starting with the group of students that arrived directly from upper-secondary school compared to the rest of the respondents, we get these results, in the graph below:

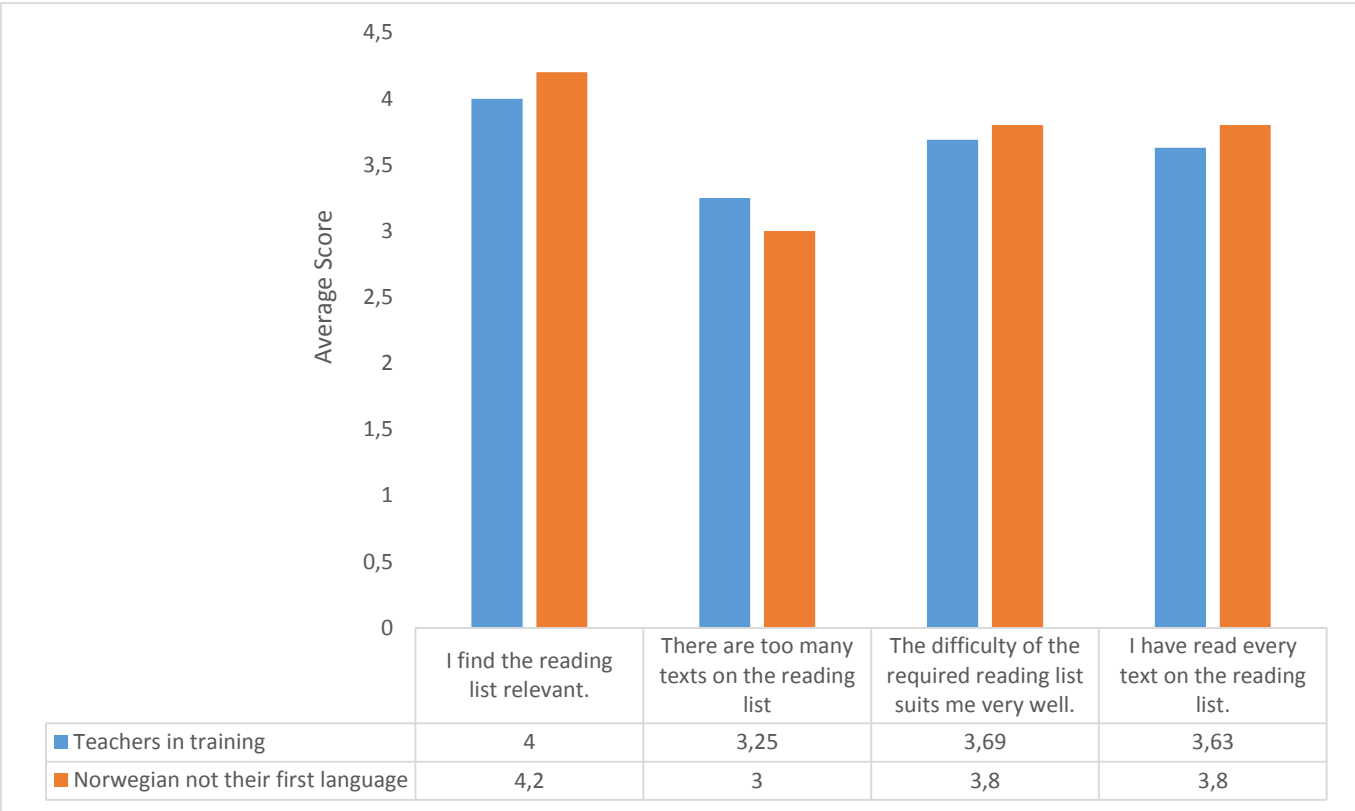


The results show that the average scores differ slightly. The first thing to appreciate is the fact that the students who have arrived directly from upper-secondary school still portray *positive* average scores. One of the more interesting statements is number two, “There are too many texts on the reading list”. Both groups of students show a *positive* average score, meaning they agree that the reading list is too extensive. Even though both groups report averages, slightly over *neutral*, that suggest that they have read everything on the reading list. This last statement, in particular, is one that has to be considered with caution. Number 4 is the type of question/statement that could easily be the subject of self-deception, or portraying oneself in a better light. Keeping this in mind, the collected data does not appear to be dishonest, as it is neither overly *positive* nor overly *negative*. It falls just above *neutral* with both groups. Even the average score of all the responses put together is 3.26.

Moreover, it is interesting to see that there is a difference in averages concerning statement number 3, “The difficulty of the reading list suits me very well”. The rest of the respondents report a higher average score than the other group. This was an expected piece of data, as the students who have attended university for a longer period would naturally have a less hard time with the difficulty than those who arrive directly from upper-secondary school. This can

be attributed to the simple fact that the other respondents have more experience with university level course work.

As with the other sections, investigating the collected data from the teachers in training is of strong importance to the thesis. If we isolate the Adjunkt- og Lektor-students the data and combine them with students who reported other languages than Norwegian as their first language (also these students have a different nationality than Norwegian), these were the results:



The results from the teachers in training and the other group are very reminiscent of the averages that the entire population portrayed. It is reassuring to see the positive attitude the teachers in training have towards the reading list. Both groups find the reading list relevant and none of them illustrates too much trouble with the difficulty of the reading list. It is interesting to see the difference in averages on the second statement/question, about too many texts on the reading list. Here, the group of students from other nationalities report the average score *neutral*. This is the lowest average score, of that particular statement, of any of the groups analysed. The reason for the low average, which is of a positive nature considering the

question, could be experiences of different cultures (from Norwegian), work and school ethics. Comparing the Norwegian school system to e.g. the Chinese school system (an entire Master's thesis in itself) would show big differences. This might be one of the reasons, but the researcher has kept the speculations to a minimum. In conclusion, the graph above show a positive trend among the teachers in training who attend the literature courses. They seem to have adjusted well to the amount of course work, though it should be noted that these numbers include much room for improvement.

Restating the second research question:

“Has their participation in the literature course(s) strengthened their English and academic proficiency?”

The second research question deals with the students' English and academic proficiency. As noted earlier, the group of respondents who arrived directly from upper-secondary school felt that their overall academic proficiency has been enhanced throughout the semester. The other components of Table 13 consist of statements directly relating to proficiency. The statements are as follows (listed with average rating at the end):

I have become a better reader after attending this course. 3.89

My vocabulary has improved during the progression of this class. 3.89

After attending this course(s) I have become better at analysing texts. 3.47

Attending a literature course(s) has had a positive effect on my overall academic abilities. 3.91

Starting out with number 1, the first noticeable data is the average score, which is 3.89. This shows that the respondents has experienced a positive effect on their reading abilities after attending the course. By applying a filter that only showed respondents checking *strongly disagree*, *disagree* and *neutral* on the statement, using the SuperMonkey-software, interesting data appears. Though this group of students, approximately 26% of the respondents, do not feel their reading abilities has become stronger, still acknowledges that their vocabulary has increased (though very slightly, average score 3.08), they have become better at analysing texts (3.33), and their academic abilities has increased (3.33).

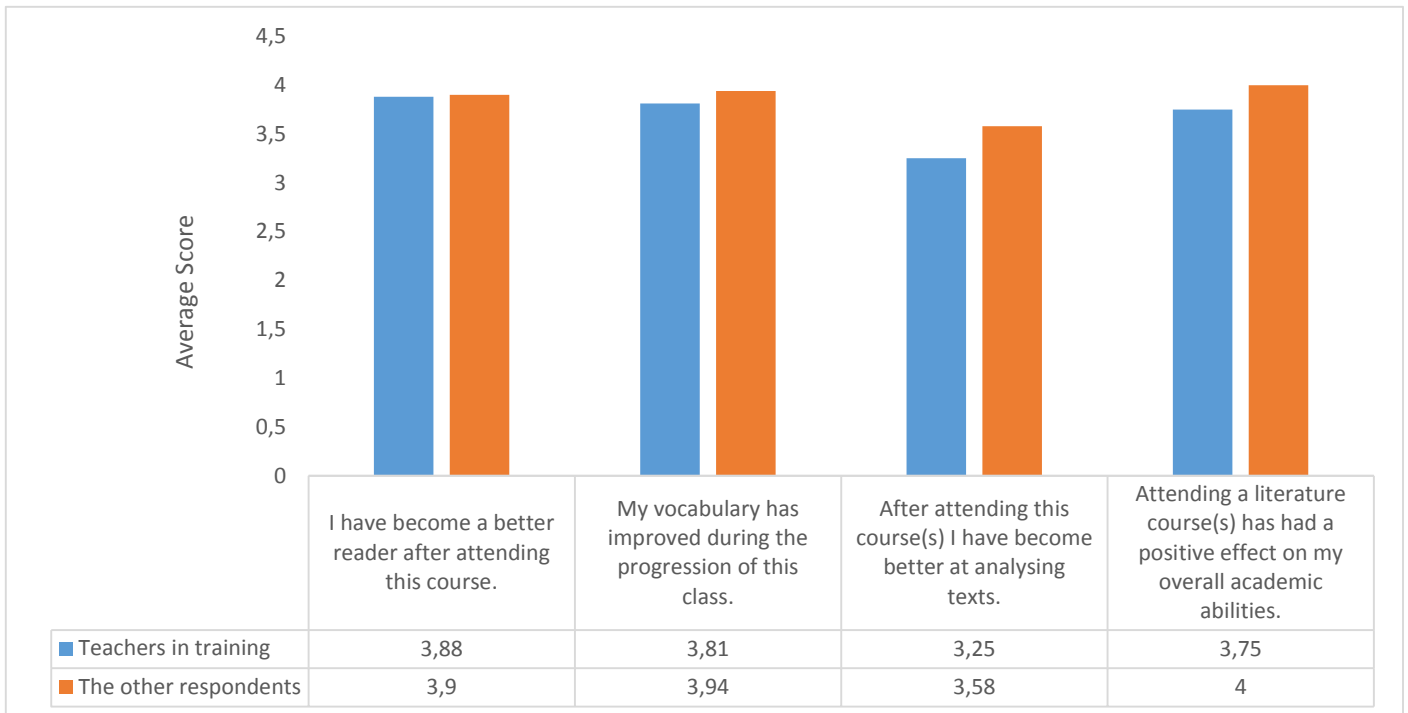
The majority of the respondents reported that they have in fact become better readers while attending the literature course(s). 34 of the 47 respondents informed a positive effect on their reading proficiency, with an average rate of 4.44. The same group of respondents checking *strongly agree* or *agree* on the statement also showed strong average scores on the other statements regarding English and academic proficiency; Vocabulary improvement (4.15), analysing texts (3.62) and overall academic abilities (4.12). These numbers show an optimistic attitude among the students. It would seem as if the efforts of the students, combined with the course(s') layout, has contributed to a solid learning environment.

9.4.1. Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet – Teacher Training Programme

Relevant to this thesis and to the researcher are the students who are part of the teacher-training programme called *Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet*. 34% of the respondents are part of this programme. The same filter-method was used to exclude all respondents who are not part of the programme. 87% of them had 3 years of English at upper-secondary school, the group consists of students attending their first, second and third year and the group is divided into 50% female and 50% male.

Interestingly enough, this group of students were slightly divided on the question of preparedness from upper-secondary school. 25% of the group felt that they had not been properly prepared for the literature course(s) they now attend, 19% remained *neutral* and the remaining respondents reported numbers exceeding neutral. There has been an ongoing trend of respondents, either all respondents together or in smaller groups (after applying filters), conveying that they were prepared at upper-secondary school, though not as optimal as one would hope. In either groups (or all) none have gone below the *neutral* zone, though none have exceeded a 4.00 average.

Continuing with the group of teachers in training, the numerical data (from section 2 of the questionnaire) showed a steady *positive* response rate concerning academic improvements. The graph below show the results of the teachers in training compared to the rest of the respondents' results:



Concerning the teachers in training, the strongest average score is 3.88 and came from “reading improvement”. Even though it is slightly worrying to see the teachers in training reported lower averages than the others in every category in the graph above, the fact remains that they are on the *positive* side of the average scores, which is encouraging. It should be noted however, that these numbers are not exactly where we would want them to be, but it does illustrate a positive trend.

Looking at the relatable section 5: English improvement and motivation, the first statement “I would say that my English has improved throughout this course(s)”, the average score reads 3.94. If we compare the average score of the teachers in training with the other respondents, we see that their average score exceeds the others average score, which was 3.58. This marks a positive trend among the students training to become teachers. It is vital that their experience at the university encourages, motivates and actually provides them with the right tool-set to enhance their English proficiency, so that they in turn may apply their skills in the classroom.

9.5. Reading Habits

The fourth research question reads:

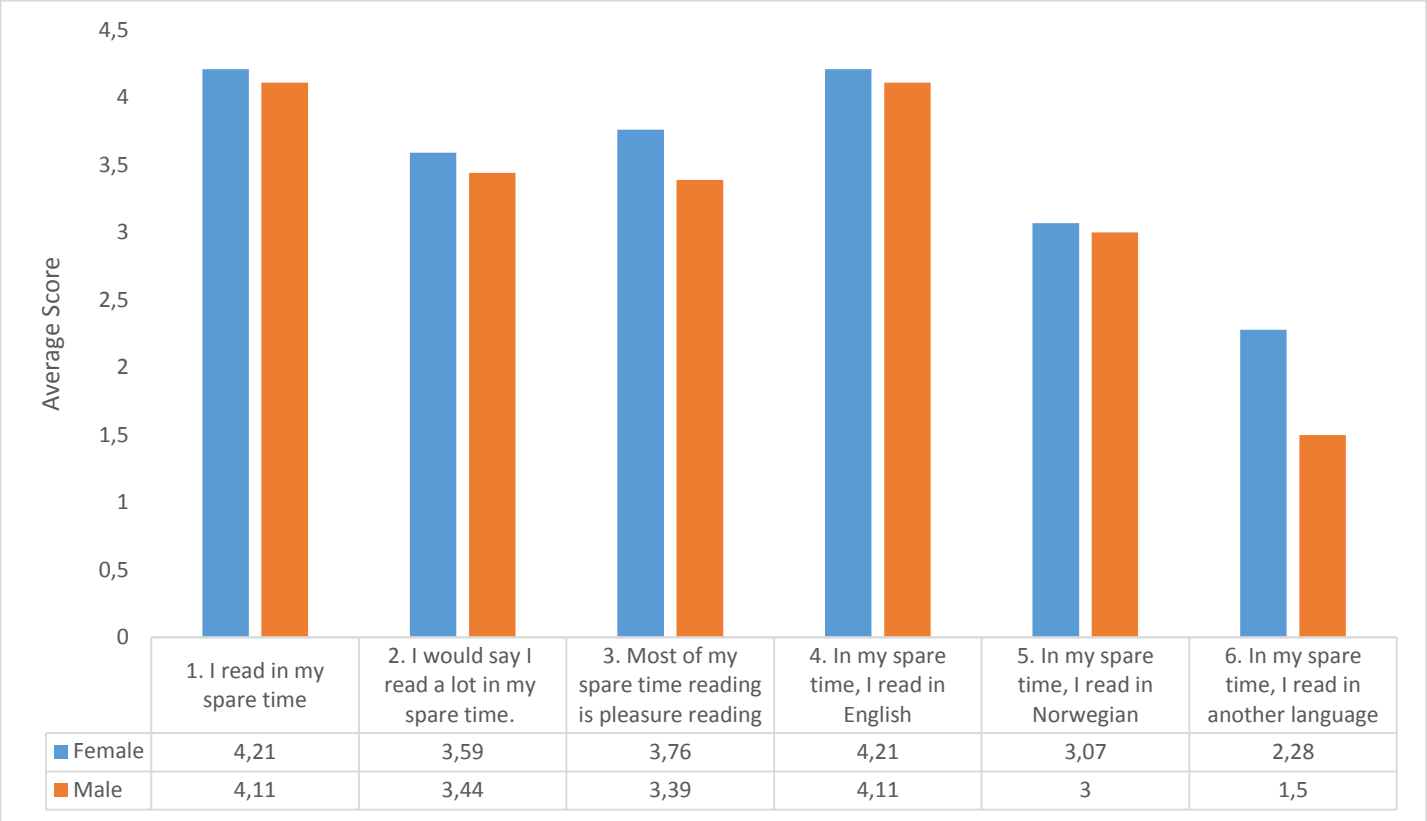
“What are the reading habits of the students at the University?”

This section of the discussion chapter aims to explain the findings regarding the students’ extracurricular reading habits. The reason *reading habits* had such a strong presence in the questionnaire was that the previous research done in the field of extensive reading has a very strong connection to spare time reading. In his 2005 doctoral study, Hellekjær (2007) investigated the English reading proficiency of upper-secondary level pupils and university level students and the research showed that EFL syllabi requires very little reading and that the pupils read very little on their own. It further showed that students who partake in extracurricular reading (of English) gained higher scores than the other pupils. The importance of reading outside of school, for pleasure, has shown to have a very positive effect on the students’ reading and writing proficiency. Previous research, such as what has been done by Hellekjær, was part of the reason questions/statements about reading habits was included in the questionnaire. Along with the inquiry on if/how the students read, a section on genres was also included. This was to get a sense of what literature the students actually read in their spare time and to see if there was any correlation between how much the students read and what the students read. The analysis starts of by analysing the difference, if there was any, between the female and the male students attending the course(s).

The numerical data that is of relevance can be found in Table 14, Table 15 and parts of Table 16. Table 14 focus solely on spare time reading, and the statements read as follows (with average score):

- I read in my spare time. 4.17
- I would say I read a lot in my spare time. 3.53
- Most of my spare time reading is pleasure reading. 3.62
- In my spare time, I read in English. 4.17
- In my spare time, I read in Norwegian. 3.04
- In my spare time, I read in another language. 1.98

61% of the population, the respondents, were female. Looking at the numerical data there is a slight difference between the reading habits of the female students and the male students. Below is a graph that shows each sex and their respective average scores on the statements from section 3: Spare time reading of the questionnaire:

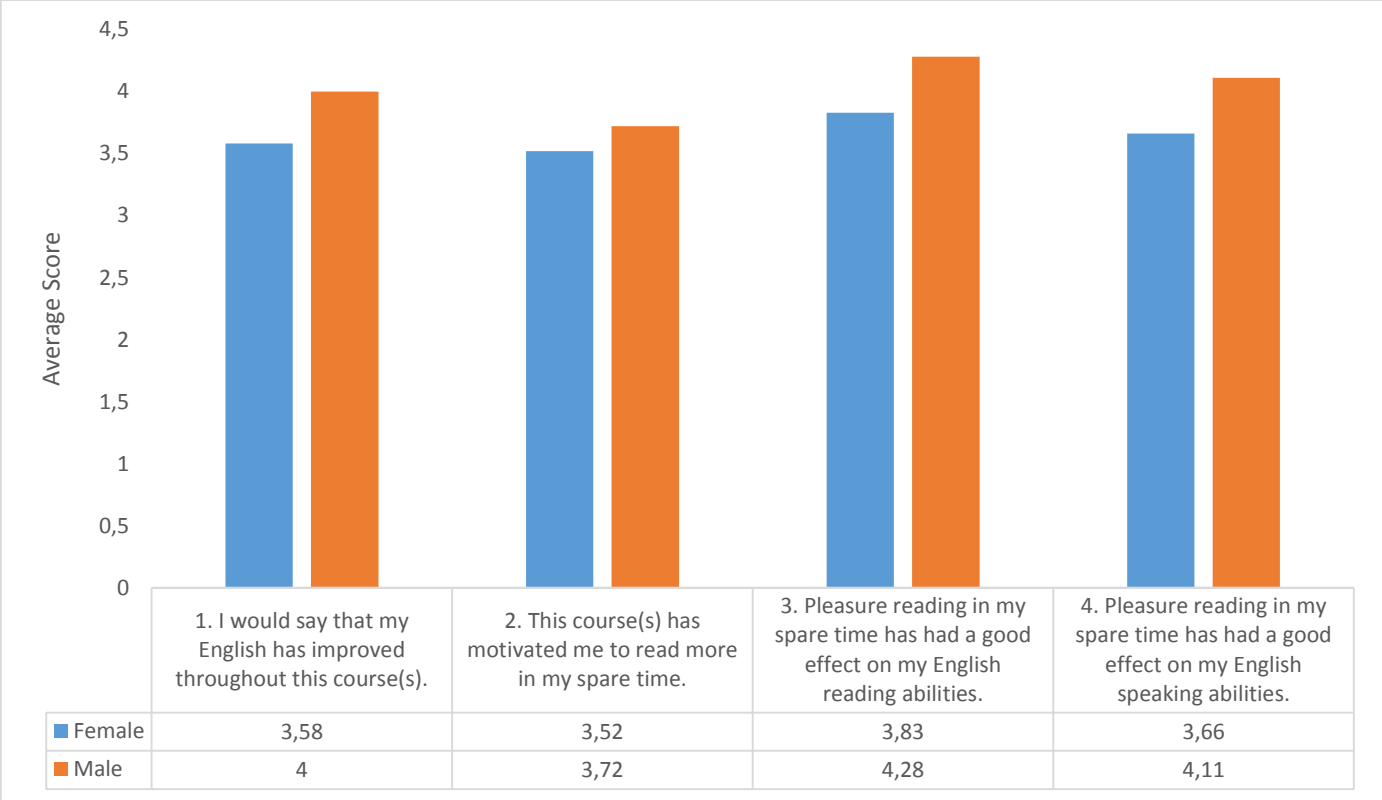


As the graph shows, the average score of the female respondents are higher than that of the male respondents on all accounts. This was expected, as women are more likely to read more than men are. Though the response was expected, the difference between them are not as big as the researcher would presume starting out.

One thing that is important to gather from this particular data is that the students are in fact participating in extracurricular reading activities. Drawing on previous research, Grabe (2009) wrote about the importance of extensive reading saying: “for programs that expect students to develop reasonably advanced academic reading abilities, there is no escaping the simple fact that one learns to read by reading”. Considering the respondents are part of a literature course(s) situated at the university, the importance of reading is very established. The impression of the students attending the literature course(s) is a positive one. Another piece of interesting data is statement “4. In my spare time I read in English”. According to their

average scores, both sexes read more in English in their spare time. Considering that the majority of the respondents are Norwegian, seeing data indicating that they read more in English than their native language is not only positive, but also encouraging. Without too much speculating, there seem to be a trend of students being influenced by their subjects at university to read more in a second language outside of school. There is always room for improvement, even here, but as of today, the students appear to have healthy and constructive reading habits outside of the classroom.

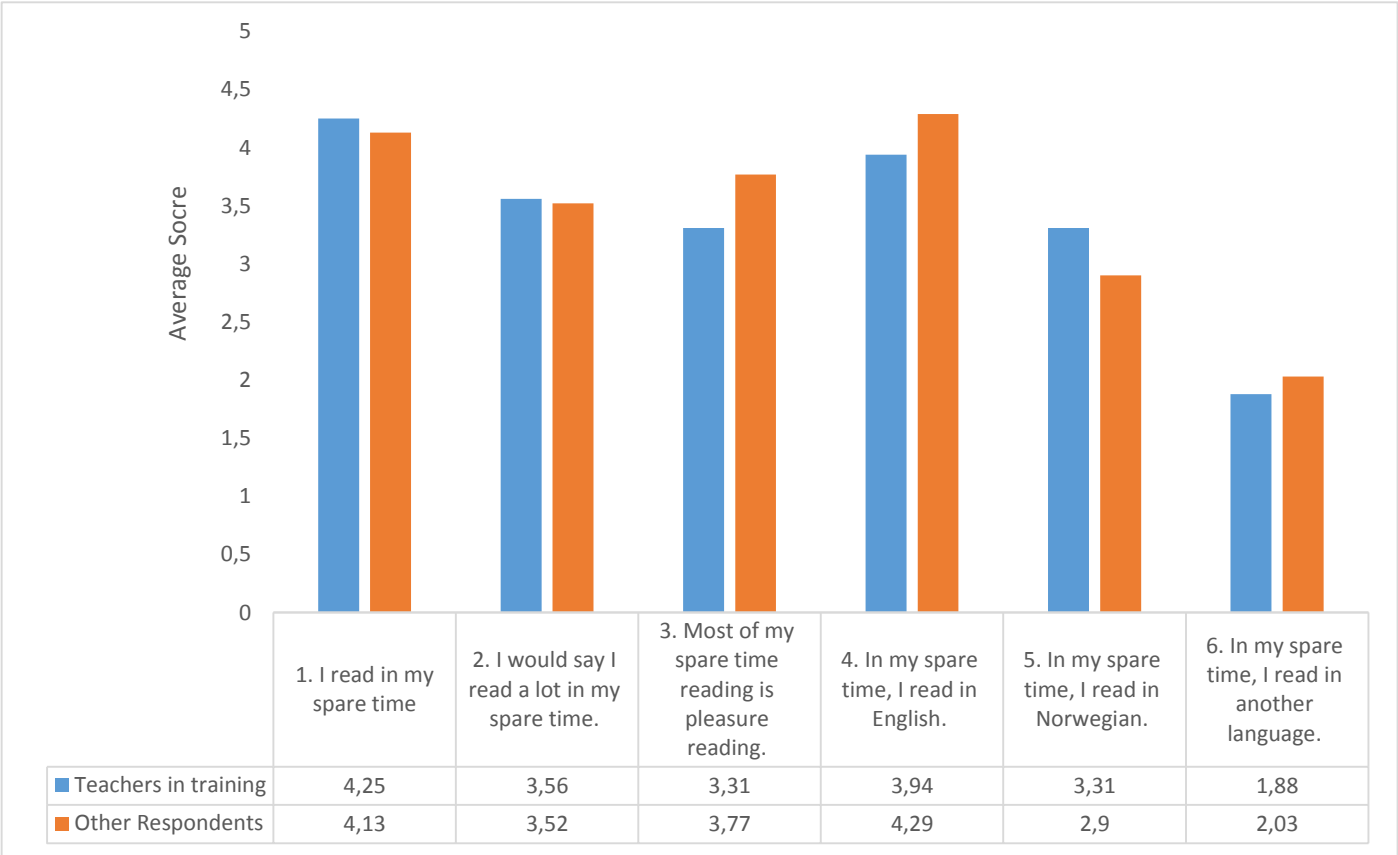
Furthermore, Table 16 of the Findings chapter deals with English improvement and motivation. Continuing the comparison of female and male experiences of their time at the university, the data from table 16 provides some interesting data. In the previous comparison, it is clear that the participating women read more than what the men read, but if we compare the average score of male and female English improvement and motivation, the trend is reversed. The graph below illustrates the difference:



The male population feel their English has improved more throughout the course than the female population has. Their motivation is also higher. The biggest difference is seen when

comparing the benefits of spare time reading. The male respondents show a higher average on both reading abilities and speaking abilities. There might be an underlying reason for these increased values among the male respondents that might relate to the previously stated reading habits. The female respondents already read more than the male respondents do, so it might be that the female respondents do not feel the same impact of pleasure reading as the male respondents do if their strong relationship with reading stretched further back than the male respondents do. The course(s) has motivated the male respondents to read more in their spare time, and this in turn might be part of the reason they feel a stronger sense of accomplishment in terms of heightened English proficiency.

Moving on, the next group of respondents that had to be included was the group attending the teacher-training programme (Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet). The initial thought of the researcher was that one would think that a group of teachers in training attending one, or more, literature courses at the university had strong reading habits, both with the course load and outside of the classroom. The graph below illustrates the tendencies among the teachers in training, compared to the other respondents who are not part of the teacher-training programme:



The trend the graph shows, of the teachers in training, is by no means alarming seeing as (with the exception of no 6. In my spare time I read in another language) all average scores are above *neutral*. These future teachers are expected, when they graduate and start working, to be able to enhance the pupils' English proficiency. This, at the core, is the English teachers' responsibility. Lazar (1993) wrote in his book *Literature and Language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*, that "there is no right or correct way to teach or use literature". This is especially relevant when we consider the autonomy the teachers have with the LK06. If literature is to be used in the classroom to enhance the pupils' English proficiency, this includes reading, writing and oral proficiency, it should be a prerequisite that the teachers in training participate in extracurricular reading. This is so their own English proficiency becomes developed, but also to use their experience with literature (and extensive reading) to provide the pupils' with relevant literature. Creating an environment for constructive learning and providing the students with the necessary tools for teaching, is the universities responsibility.

One part of the data that is noticeable is "4. In my spare time, I read in English". Here, the teachers in training score a lower average than the other respondents. It should be noted that among the teachers in training, there is a difference between the students whose main course is English (Engelsk hovedfag) and those who have English as their secondary course (Engelsk breddefag). The difference needed to be highlighted. When English is your main course, a lot of your focus as a student will be directed towards English and strengthening your English proficiency, but if your main course is something else (e.g. Norwegian, Religion, History etc.) your focus might be directed elsewhere. This is only natural, of course, seeing as the students main course is usually predominant compared to your secondary course. This becomes even more relevant after the students finish their bachelor's degree and start their master's.

When comparing main course and secondary course among the teachers in training, the findings relate what the initial thought of the researcher were. The average score on statement 4, among those with English as their main course is 4.00. On the other hand, the students with English as a secondary course have an average score of 3.83. The difference is not enormous, but it is there.

9.5 Genres

The next section of the discussion chapter revolves around what sort of genres the students read in their spare time. There is an inherent importance of knowing, reading and understanding different genres of literature. At the university, the students primarily read literature that is considered canon. Canon are works of art with a significant place in society. It was interesting to investigate what sort of literature the students read outside of the classroom, and to see if it was in any way coloured by their experiences at university.

The importance of reading and knowing different genres are especially important for the students attending the teacher-training programme. One cannot expect pupils to, only, read material that is considered canon. Like Neil Gaiman said in his lecture (2013): “literacy is more important than ever it was, in this world of text and email, a world of written information. We need to read and write, we need global citizens who can read comfortably, comprehend what they are reading, understand nuance, and make themselves understood”. If this is going to be achieved, pupils need to be able to choose for themselves what literature to read. The teachers’ role, in this capacity, is to provide an arena for the pupils where they could freely choose literature that suits them. The teachers’ responsibility of providing different genres of literature to her pupils is imperative to enhance the joy of reading. This responsibility should not and cannot be taken lightly.

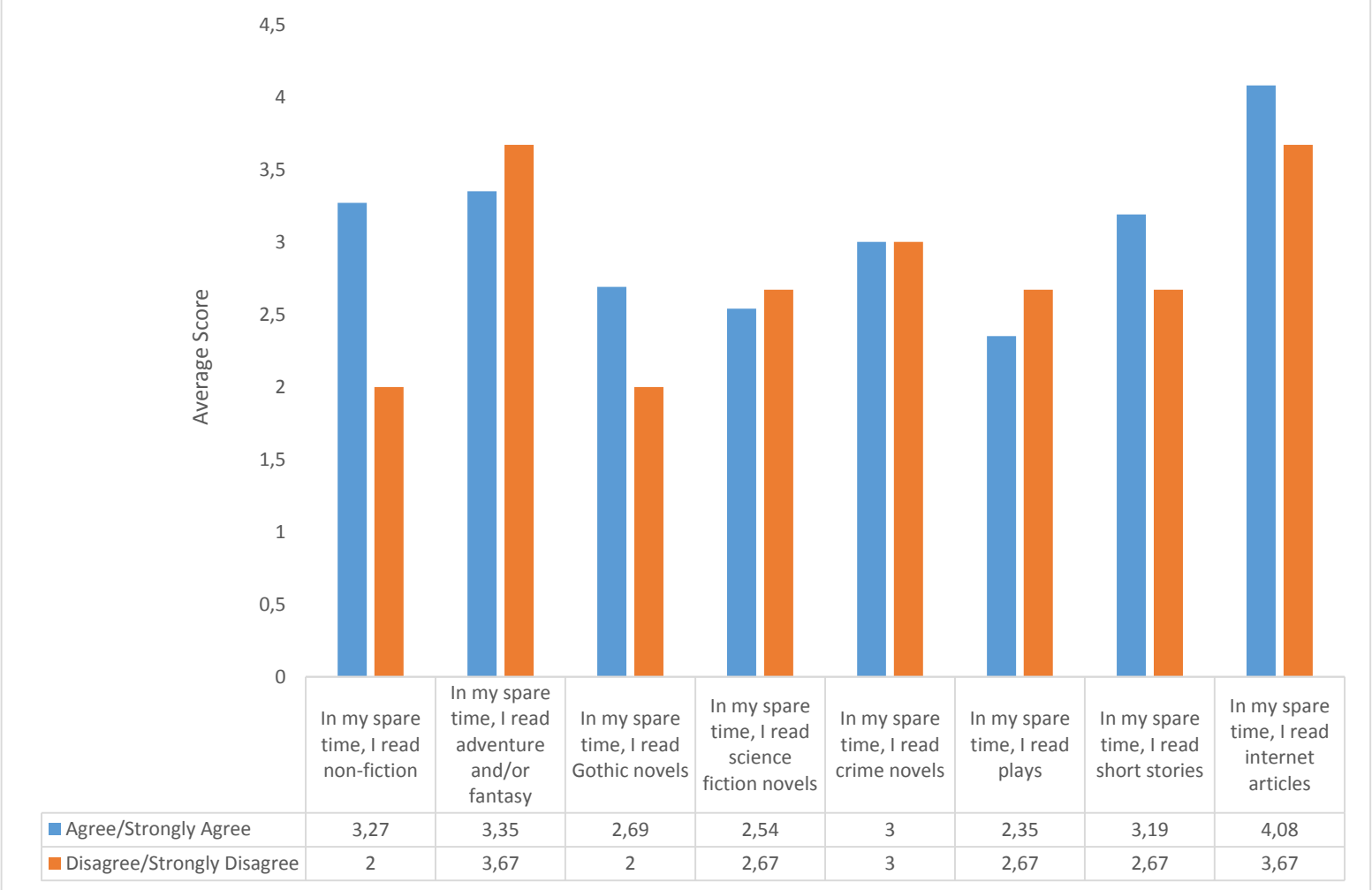
The statements came from Table 17 (w/ average score):

1. In my spare time, I read non-fiction. 3.11
2. In my spare time, I read adventure and/or fantasy novels. 3.34
3. In my spare time, I read Gothic novels. 2.49
4. In my spare time, I read science fiction novels. 2.59
5. In my spare time, I read crime novels. 2.91
6. In my spare time, I read plays. 2.30
7. In my spare time, I read short stories. 3.11
8. In my spare time, I read internet articles. 4.00

The data from all respondents show a very clear trend: Internet articles are the most read genre. This was as expected when the researcher constructed the questionnaire. Gothic novels and plays, genres often associated with canon, score below the *neutral* zone.

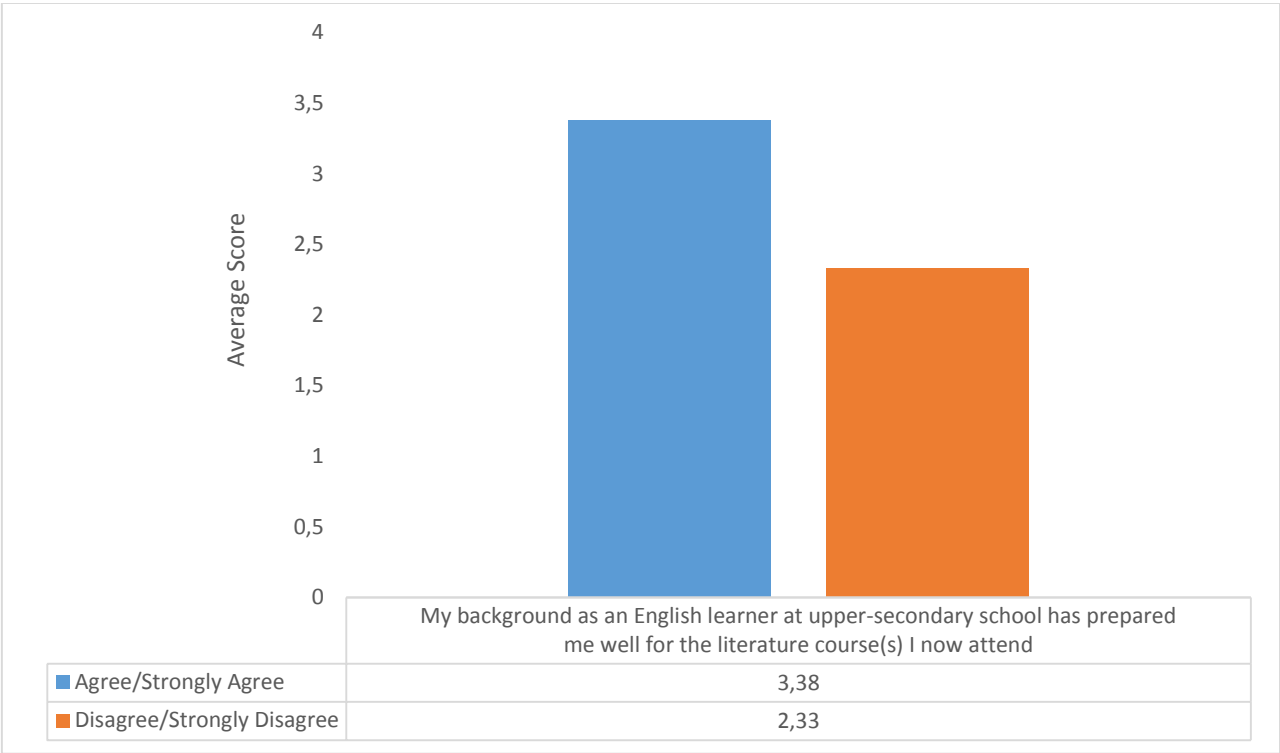
Adventure/Fantasy score above *neutral*, also expected, but so does short stories, slightly more unexpected though not completely, seeing as the students have already shown that the literature courses has motivated them to read more in their spare time.

Next, we isolate the students, who checked *agree* or *strongly agree* on statements one and two from section 3: Spare time reading (1. I read in my spare time, 2. I would say I read a lot in my spare time) and compare them with the students, who checked *disagree* or *strongly disagree* on the discussed statements. The results are in the graph below:



We can see that the students, who read the most, usually read adventure/fantasy novels and internet articles. The students who checked *disagree* and *strongly disagree* on the statements report that internet articles and non-fiction are what they read most. Interestingly, the “disagree/strongly disagree”-group have stronger averages than the other group concerning non-fiction, science fiction and plays. Both groups have a *neutral* average score regarding crime novels. The averages of both groups are low, compared to what the expectations of the researcher were. It was not unexpected that the genres with strongest averages were Internet articles and adventure/fantasy.

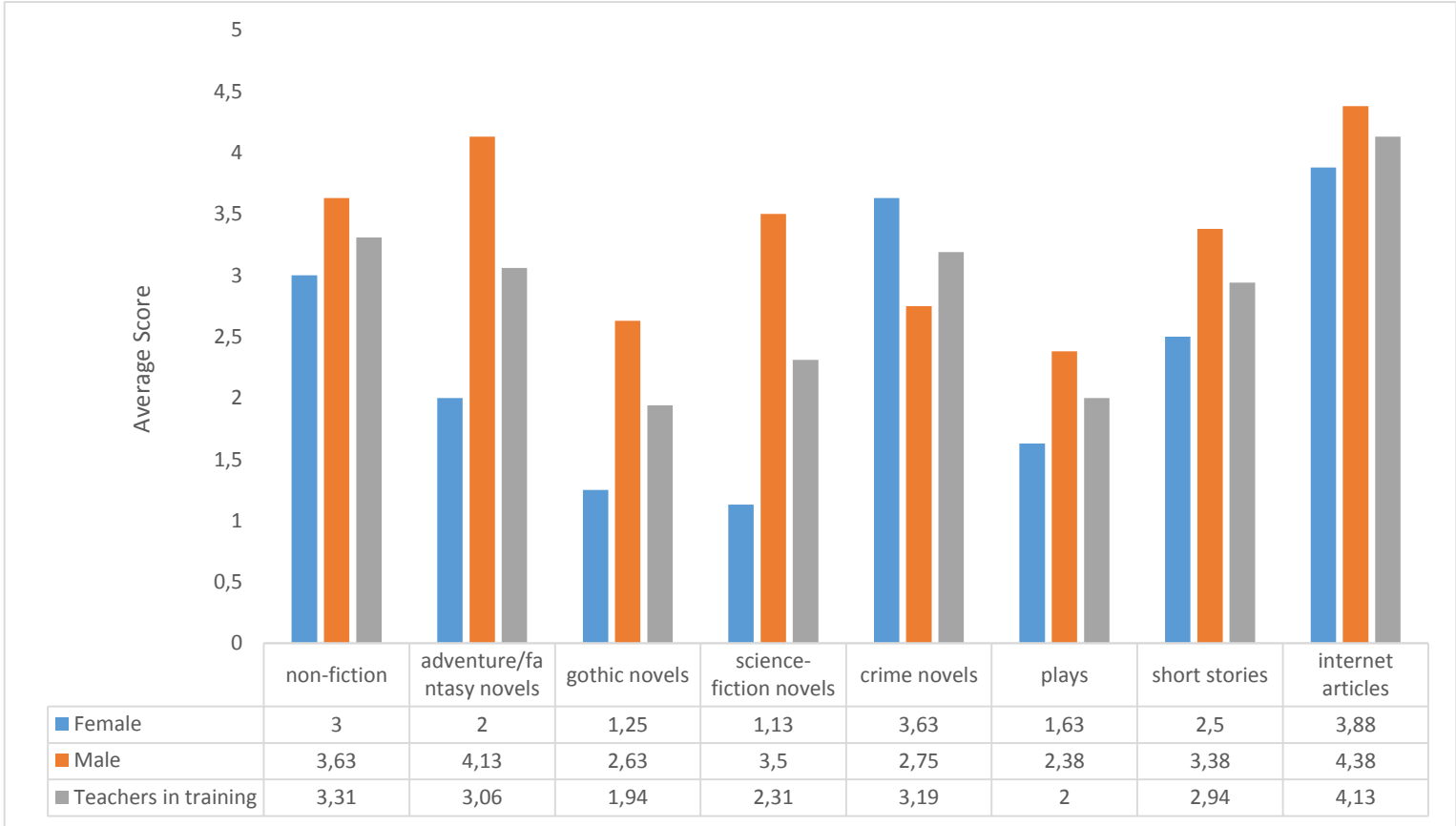
However, if we then compare the two groups and look at their average score on the statement from section 2 that read: “My background as an English learner at upper-secondary school has prepare me well for the literature course(s) I now attend”, we see in the graph below that the “agree/strongly agree”-group has a *positive* average of 3.38, while the “disagree/strongly disagree”-group show a *negative* average of 2.33.



However, correlation does not necessarily imply causation, but it still interesting to see that the respondents who consider themselves active readers also consider their background at upper-secondary school to have been beneficial in preparing them for the university studies.

As mentioned earlier, reading different genres and knowing about different genres are important for English teachers. Lazar mentioned how crucial it was that the classroom find materials that are relevant and meaningful to their own lives (1993:18). This can be achieved if the teacher has knowledge about different genres, and know how to utilize them appropriately so the pupils are given the chance to read literary genres that they themselves feel are meaningful.

The graph below illustrates what genres the students attending the teacher-training programme most frequently read, along with the difference between female and male students of the teacher-training programme:



With the exception of Internet articles, there are many discrepancies between the male and female respondents. The most notable ones are adventure/fantasy novels and science-fiction novels. Female readers showed an average score of 2 on adventure/fantasy novels. This number was especially surprising to the researcher, seeing as the adventure/fantasy genre has a very strong female readership. The discrepancy between men and women reading science

fiction was not very unexpected. The core audience of science fiction has long consisted of men, though that is not to say that women do not read sci-fi, because they do, only less frequently.

The more important data here is the grey bar, which consists of all the teachers in training. The average scores are, at times, discouraging. Non-fiction, adventure/fantasy, crime novels and internet articles all have positive average scores. On the other hand, gothic novels, science fiction, plays and short stories all fall below the *neutral* zone. This is slightly discouraging, as part of teaching English in upper-secondary school revolves around teaching different genres, not only to encourage extensive reading, but placing the genres and the different body of works inside a particular genre in a historical context. It is important for the teachers at the university to know with certainty that their students leave the university with knowledge about different genres and, even more importantly, a particular set of skills they can utilize in their future classrooms.

These numbers does not necessarily mean that the students' have little to no knowledge about these different genres, as many of them are in some capacity a part of the course(s) curriculum, but it would be a little more reassuring to see the students read a more diverse set of genres in their spare time.

9.6. Literature

In this section, the purpose of literature from the students' point of view was discussed. The research question read as follows:

In this transitional period and at the university, what is the purpose of literature?

'The purpose of literature' is difficult to explain. Many different academic disciplines try to define literature and what purpose it has in school or in society. In this particular thesis, the purpose of literature relates to how the students perceive literature and if literature is something, more than just a novel or a book that one reads. From the questionnaire, the last section (excluding the comment section at the end) revolved around asking the students if they felt that literature could be considered as a tool for enhancing English and academic abilities, if learning about literature can increase proficiency in different areas and if learning about literature helps motivate them to read more in their spare time. The reason for taking

this approach with the questions about literature is that the subjects are constructed with an emphasis on literary history, literary terms and a range of texts placed in certain historical periods, e.g. the Renaissance, the Restoration, Victorian period etc.⁴⁰. This would mean that the students would not only read texts of different genres, but also learn about the historical period when the text was written, they will be able to place different texts in a literary historical context and they should be able to contextualize different literary texts in English. These are some of the competence aims of the literature course. The statements produced in relation to this are as follows (w/ average score at the end):

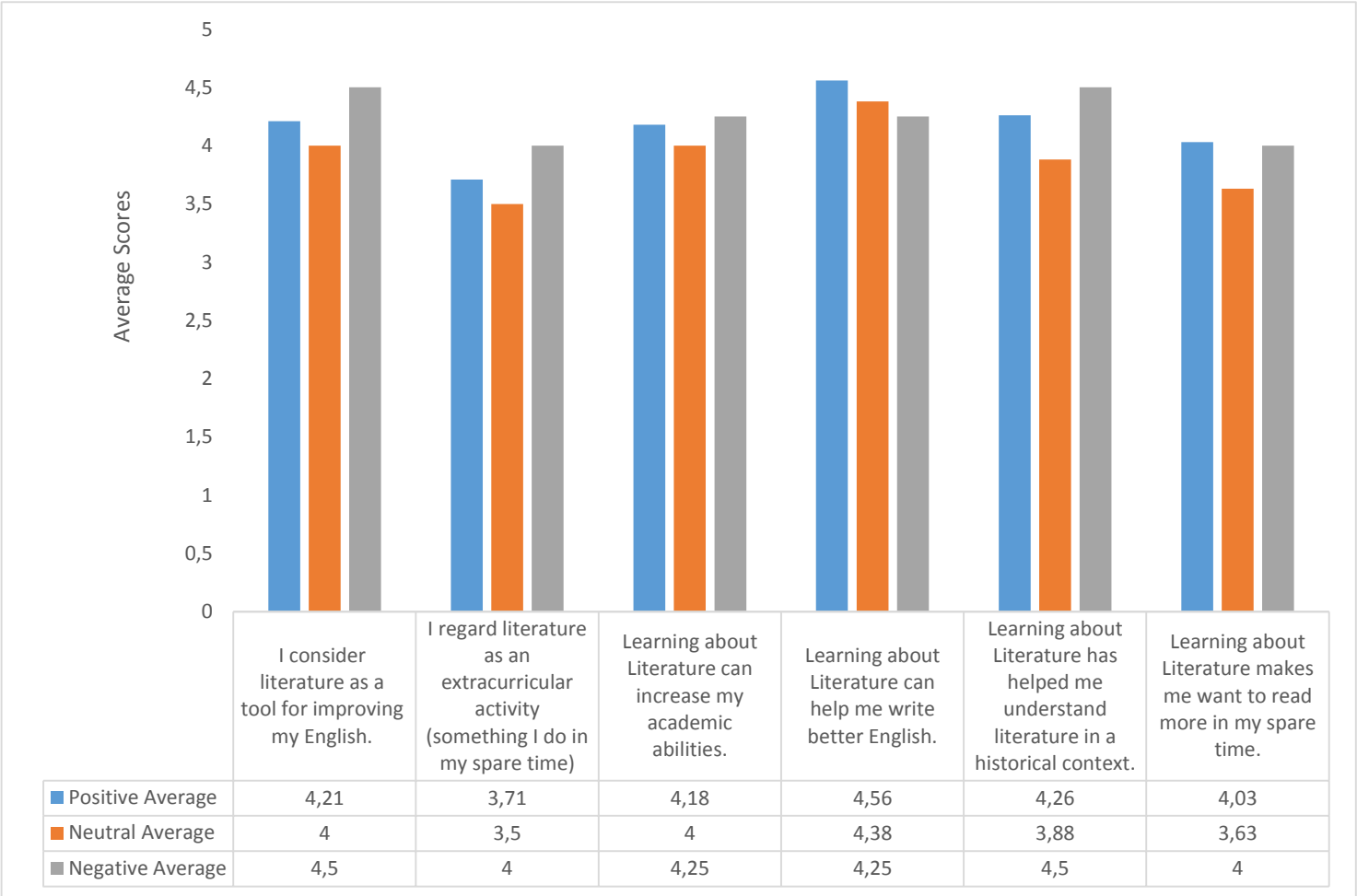
1. I consider literature as a tool for improving my English. 4.21
2. I regard literature as an extracurricular activity (something I do in my spare time). 3.68
3. Learning about Literature can increase my academic abilities. 4.14
4. Learning about Literature can help me write better English. 4.51
5. Learning about Literature has helped me understand literature in a historical context.
4.23
6. Learning about Literature makes me want to read more in my spare time. 3.98

What is first noticeable about this set of numerical data is the fact that all average scores' are on the *positive* side of the scale. There is a consensus among the respondents that, not only is literature a tool that can help improve the students' English proficiency, but learning *about* literature can increase the students' academic abilities, their written proficiency, understanding texts in a historical context and increase their motivation for extracurricular reading. These average scores are incredibly encouraging to see, as it shows that the students, who partake in courses like these, are gradually evolving their academic proficiency, especially in terms of reading and writing.

If we isolate the data in this section, by dividing between those that answered *negative*, *neutral*, and *positive* on the statements from section 2, statement 1, "My background as an English learner at upper-secondary school has prepared me well for the literature courses I now attend", we can see the difference in attitudes toward the purpose of literature based on

⁴⁰ UiS.no – En introduksjon til engelskspråklig litteratur – studieplan

their feelings of preparedness from upper-secondary school. The results are posted in the graph below:



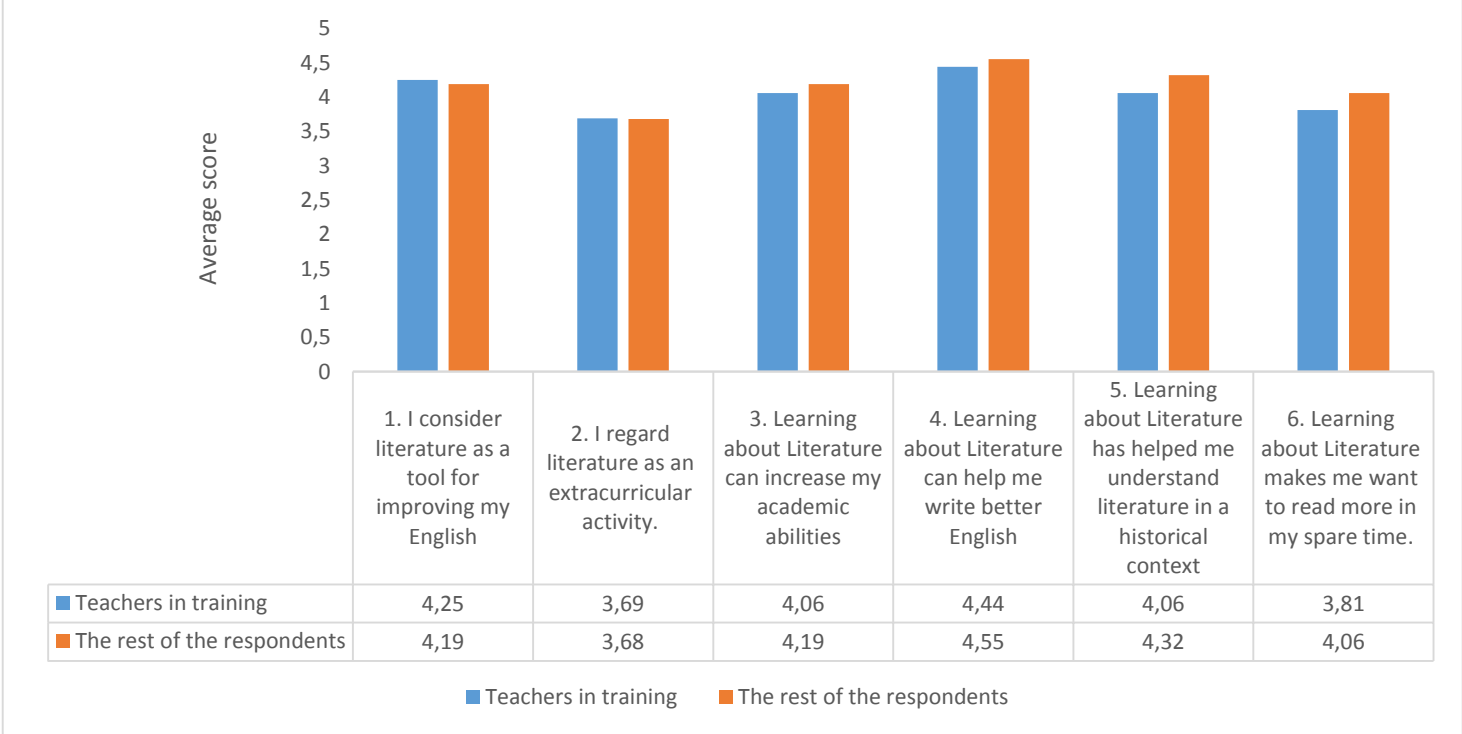
The first noticeable statistic we see is the overall *positive* averages that all three groups report. No matter the background preparedness, the consensus reads *positive*. This was not an expected outcome, as the researcher would have thought that the lack of preparedness would indicate a more negative outlook on literature and its usage. Keeping in mind these are all students who have chosen to study literature, based on the other findings this would not automatically indicate an overall positivity.

Looking past the obvious *positive* averages, something even more interesting appears. The respondents who reported they did not feel properly prepared, have average scores that surpass most of the other respondents. On statement 1, 2, 3, and 4, the average score is higher. This indicates, that among the *positive* results, the ‘underprepared’ students have an even

stronger attitude towards literature as a tool for further improvement of their English and academic abilities. The students who attend these courses show a predisposition of seeing the importance that literature has to offer, as a tool for improvement and as something to be enjoyed in their spare time. It would seem that the students who felt ‘underprepared’, show a strong sense of presence in regards to learning about and understanding what literature has to offer.

It was especially important to analyse the responses of the teachers in training. As with many of the other sections of the questionnaire, the students attending the Adjunkt- og Lektorprogram will use the knowledge they acquire at the university to become teachers of English. As literature’s place in the LK06 curriculum has become even more established than in those that came before, the importance of knowing literature, the knowledge *about* literature and the awareness of literature as a tool to enhance English proficiency has become a very important requisite of teaching English.

Underneath is a graph that show, in detail, the Adjunkt- og Lektor-students responses from section 17 of the questionnaire combined with the data from the respondents who are *not* part of the teacher training programme.



The graph above gave a clear indication of how the teachers in training feel about literature. Compared to the rest of the respondents, the data pretty much align, with the teachers in training scoring slightly below on the last three items. The numbers describing the responses of statement “2. I regard literature as an extracurricular activity” indicates that the respondents, teachers in training and the rest alike, consider literature and learning about literature as a way to become improved students in their field is very interesting. The fact that the respondents illustrate higher average scores on the other statements, while still keeping no 2 over *neutral*, is exciting.

The fact that the positive trend regarding the purpose of literature extends into the numerical data from the teacher-students is very encouraging. It indicates an understanding among the students that literature, with all its aesthetic properties, can still be considered as a tool for enhancing language learning and many of the aspects that language learning inhabits. This understanding will hopefully transfer into the students’ other subjects and courses.

9.7. Limitations

The immediate limitation of the study, or questionnaire, is that there could have been more statements included in the sections. The Likert scale model makes it easy to include a lot of items, regarding any topic. This could have been developed even further. Another limitation of the study, which can be avoided in any future project, was the exclusion of a second questionnaire. A second questionnaire, handed out to the same group of respondents (the two literature courses) during or at the end of their second semester would yield very interesting results. It would have added an extra layer of legitimacy to the study.

Choosing the Likert scale model as the primary method of information gathering was carefully considered during the initial stages of the thesis. The Likert scale is one of the most universal methods for collecting survey data. It is advantageous as the participants easily understand the method and it gives the participants the choice of answering in another way than just ‘yes’ or ‘no’. However, there are apparent limitations with this method as there are with practically any method of data collection. The Likert scale only give the participants 5-7 options to choose from, in this particular thesis 6 choices were given. The Likert scale aims to measure the participants’ attitudes with numbers. The numbers are then collected and made into a statistic using certain mathematical formulas. This takes away some of the more

“human” aspects of the respondent. A person's attitude toward something is usually more complex than what can be measured from one extreme (*strongly agree*) to another (*strongly disagree*). Therefore, one might say it fails to measure the respondents' true attitudes. To be able to truly gain insight into a person's attitude toward something, one would have to conduct a series of interviews. Due to the time constraint and the size of the population, an interview-approach would not be doable. What could have been included though was a small selection of interviews with some of the respondents, either after submitting their response or before.

9.8. Recommendations

For further research, the researcher would like to recommend adding even more sections to the questionnaire. In addition, it could be beneficial to conduct another survey after the students have attended their second semester of the course(s). Using the SuperMonkey-software as the main analytical tool would make this possible without being too time consuming. Had the aim of the thesis been slightly different, a lot more data could have been analysed in the discussion chapter. The Likert scale, combined with the SuperMonkey-software, opened up the opportunity to analyse and combine a whole range of data. Therefore, it is vital to recommend the two components for any future researcher who wishes to conduct a similar survey.

Another aspect that should be considered is the position of the teachers' of the courses. Conducting a semi-structured interview with one, or more, of the lecturers at the university would possibly yield interesting data that could easily be comparable with the responses provided by the students. The merit in conducting such an interview would be in comparing the students' expectations of the courses and the teachers' professional view of what they expect of their students.

Also for consideration, would be to conduct interviews with the students themselves, to gain insight into their thoughts, attitudes and beliefs about the courses they attend. This could then be used to provide an even stronger foundation to any hypothetical claims that a future researcher would make.

The most important recommendation, if the above components were to be considered, is proper planning before executing. If one were to include either a second questionnaire or a set of interviews, it would be imperative to plan the project in such a way that the researcher would have his/her data as quickly as the project layout allows. Constructing the questionnaires and sending them out on planned dates, would free up a lot of time to focus on the interviews.

10. Conclusion

This study was an initial attempt at investigating the experiences and preparedness of a group of students who attend the literature courses British and Irish Literature and American Literature at the University of Stavanger. The thesis came to be after literature teachers at the university, mentioned they were worried that students might not be completely ready to handle the difficulty of the literature courses. The thesis is concerned with the students' preparedness coming from upper-secondary school to the university, or the transitional period as it is called. Specifically, the thesis wanted to investigate if the students were well enough prepared for the work that awaited them at a university level. The study also aimed at trying to determine if the experiences the students' have had with the subjects they now attended had enhanced their English and academic proficiency. This, in turn, lead to identifying the reading habits of the students, especially regarding extracurricular reading and extensive reading within different genres. The research questions of the thesis were:

1. Are the students attending literary courses prepared or underprepared for the rise in difficulty concerning the course load?
2. Has their participation in the literature course(s) strengthened their English and academic proficiency?
3. What are their expectations?
4. What are the reading habits of the students at the University?
5. In this transitional period and at the university, what part does literature play?

Previous research was used to place the thesis in a historical context. The following relevant sources were used to place the thesis into context: research on the transitional period, extensive reading, language learning and literature learning. This created the foundation on which the thesis was developed.

The method used to acquire the necessary data was a quantitative research method. A questionnaire was constructed, using simple preliminary questions to determine basic, but essential background information. Furthermore, the questionnaire was constructed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, with an extra component aptly named Prefer not to answer (N/A). The Likert scale was used to assess the students'

attitudes toward their own experiences at the university. An assortment of relevant statements were produced for the respondents to answer. The Likert scale is the most recognized form of survey collection, and the respondents had no issues understanding it. The questionnaire was distributed by email, through its learning, to the two literature classes by courtesy of the teachers of the courses.

By using a mathematical software provided by the internet-based survey company SuperMonkey, the time spent analysing the findings from the questionnaire was greatly reduced. The software used an algorithm where one could easily isolate any part of the responses, thereby making it easier to combine and compare any part of the results. After analysing the data, it was presented using understandable and simple graphs made in Microsoft Word.

The findings indicated that the students to a certain extent have been prepared for the work that awaits them at the university. But the investigation also showed that there is certainly room for improvement. When looking at the first-year students who had arrived directly from upper-secondary school the data illustrated a *neutral* average score on feeling prepared. This certainly echoes the research by Hellekjær and the disquieting results of his study. On the other hand, the students reported that the literature courses had indeed strengthened their English and academic abilities. This included reading as well as writing. Part of this can be ascribed to their experiences with extracurricular reading, also defined under the banner of extensive reading. They did, however, express mixed feelings regarding their expectations of the literature courses, though the consensus seemed to be of a positive nature. The seasoned students illustrated more realistic expectations. This was expected and could be attributed to their familiarities with the university. Regarding literature, all the students gave the impression that learning about literature can be used as a tool for enhancing their English and academic proficiency.

Another important aspect of the analysis is the data concerning the students who are part in the teacher-training programme, Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet. Their responses are especially important in relation to the thesis and to the researcher, as he is part of the same educational programme. The teachers in training illustrated overall *positive* average scores concerning a majority of the issued statements. They found the reading list relevant, and reported that they did not have much difficulty with the texts, though an increase in the average scores will hopefully be demonstrated in the future. The trend of *positive* averages continued, as we saw with the groups' preparedness from upper-secondary school. Most of

the students felt that they had been prepared, but it has to be noted that 25% of the Lektor-students reported not feeling adequately prepared in upper-secondary school. This indicates that though some students feel a sense of readiness coming to the university, many others do not. This needs to be studied and properly attended to in the future, otherwise change will never happen. Another set of positive response came from the Lektor-students English proficiency progress. The teachers in training acknowledged the importance of learning literature. They felt their vocabulary proficiency, analytical skills, reading aptitude, and overall academic abilities had gradually increased throughout the semester. The more adverse aspects of the teachers in training's responses came from the data concerning their reading habits. Though their average scores exceeded *neutral* on most accounts, the numbers were slightly lower than what the researcher had expected. As teachers in training attending a literature course(s) it was expected that their reading habits, outside of the classroom, would be more extensive. Also slightly troubling was the lack of diversity in their spare time reading. The context chapter provided a multitude of conformational theory on the importance of extensive reading and knowledge of genres. This all comes back to being able to provide their future pupils with literature from different genres to create lifelong readers and learners. It is the teachers' responsibility to enhance his/her pupils' language proficiency. This is emphasized in the LK06 curriculum where reading is part of its five main pillars. It is important that the teachers in training are aware of their reading habits and how it effects, not only their own English and academic proficiency, but also their future pupils' language proficiency.

The Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet is a relatively new educational programme at the university. The researcher has had the pleasure of being part of the programme since the beginning. The future teachers that attend this programme are part in a tradition that spans all the way back to the end of the 18th century when English was first introduced as a subject (Fenner 2005:87). Since then it has been subject to many changes and improvements, culminating in the strong position it has today. Evidence of this is its robust presence in the Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet. Continuing this tradition the teachers in training and their continued progression as teachers of language is highly important and it was therefore imperative to give the group such prevalence in this thesis.

Looking forward, there are a lot of opportunities and need for further research in this particular area of study. In relation to the transitional period, it is vital to emphasize the importance of proper training in upper-secondary school. What the pupils experience at

upper-secondary school affect how they experience university as students. It affects their academic proficiency, as well as their language proficiency. The skills they acquire at an upper-secondary level has a direct effect on their performance at university, regardless of educational programme. In this thesis the underlying focus was on the English language. But because more and more educational programmes today use English in their curriculum the importance of English, and by extension English literature, has become increasingly relevant.

In conclusion, the significance of the thesis lies in its investigatory nature. The thesis set out to explore the attitudes of the students attending the two literature courses in relation to their experiences before and at the university. This thesis aimed to shed some light on this situation. It is the hope of the researcher that this thesis can contribute to further study of the attitudes and experiences of the students attending the university and the importance of proper language and academic training at upper-secondary school.

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11. Appendix.

In this section, you will find all the appendixes that has been included in the thesis.

11.1. Appendix 1: NSD form

The NSD form can be found on page 6-7



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Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS

NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Brita Strand Rangnes

Institutt for kultur- og språkvitenskap Universitetet i Stavanger

Postboks 2557 Ullandhaug

4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 22.11.2013
ref:

Vår ref: 36063 / 2 / KH

Deres dato:

Deres

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 25.10.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:
36063

*Expectations, Reality and Literature: English proficiency among literary students
and the practice of teaching literature*

Behandlingsansvarlig

Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder

Daglig ansvarlig

Brita Strand Rangnes

Student

Einar Mathias Thodal

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

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

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.06.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Haugstvedt tlf: 55 58 29 53

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Einar Mathias Thodal em.thodal@stud.uis.no

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no

TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no

TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 36063

Utvalget gis muntlig og skriftlig informasjon om deltakelse i studien. Personvernombudet forutsetter at denne informasjonen inneholder opplysninger om følgende:

- formål
- hva opplysningene skal brukes til
- hvordan data samles inn
- forventet prosjektslutt
- at data slettes ved prosjektslutt
- kontaktopplysninger til student og daglig ansvarlig for studien

Prosjektet avsluttes 15.06.2014 og innsamlede opplysninger anonymiseres ved at verken direkte eller indirekte personidentifiserbare opplysninger fremgår. Datamaterialet slettes

11.2. Appendix 2: The Questionnaire, as it appeared online in its entirety.

Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain data for my Master Thesis.
All participants will remain anonymous.

The questionnaire will consist of questions and certain statements regarding your educational progress and expectations in the two courses; British and Irish Literature and American Literature. It will also contain a section on extracurricular reading and your view of Literature as a whole.

I would also like to specify that this questionnaire is in no form an evaluation of the course(s) that you attend. The questionnaire is part of a Master Thesis that concerns itself with English learners at a university level. It has nothing to do with your feelings regarding either your teacher(s) or the University of Stavanger.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the survey at any time, without having to give a reason as to why.

The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete.
Thank you.

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

Section 1: About Yourself

1. Sex

- Male
 Female

2. Age

3. Nationality

4. Is English your first language?

- Yes
 No

5. If English is not your first language, what is?

6. Have you been through the Norwegian school system?

- Yes
 No
 Other

7. What year are you currently attending?

- First year
 Second year
 Third year
 Fourth Year
 Fifth year

Other (please specify)

8. Are you part of the Adjunkt- og Lektorprogrammet? (Teacher training programme)

- Yes
 No

Other

9. Which category does the course(s) you attend fit into:

- Årstudium (One year programme)
 Engelsk breddefag (English as a secondary course)
 Engelsk hovedfag (English as your main course)
 Enkeltemne (English as a single subject)

Other

10. When you started this course, did you arrive directly from upper-secondary school (Vgs)? (Not counting military service)

- Yes
 No

11. What sort of English background do you have from upper-secondary school?

- 1 year obligatory
 3 years

Other

12. Which course(s) do you attend?

- British and Irish Literature
 American Literature
 Both

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

Section 2: Expectations/Preparedness

13. For each statement below mark ONE number which best reflects your view.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer
My background as an English learner at upper-secondary school has prepared me well for the literature course(s) I now attend.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find the reading list relevant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are too many texts on the reading list.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The difficulty of the required reading list suits me very well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have read every text on the reading list.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have become a better reader after attending this course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My vocabulary has improved during the progression of this class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After attending this course(s) I have become better at analyzing texts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending a literature course(s) has had a positive effect on my overall academic abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After my first semester I feel that the course has lived up to my expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Comments on your expectations.

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

Section 3: Spare time reading

14. For each statement below mark ONE number which best reflects your view.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer
I read in my spare time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would say I read a lot in my spare time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my spare time reading is pleasure reading.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read in English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read in Norwegian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read in another language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

Section 4: Genres

15. For each statement below mark ONE number which best reflects your view.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer
In my spare time I read non-fiction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read adventure and/or fantasy novels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read Gothic novels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read science fiction novels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read crime novels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read plays.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read short-stories.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my spare time I read internet articles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

Section 5: English improvement and motivation

16. For each statement below mark ONE number which best reflects your view.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer
I would say that my English has improved throughout this course(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This course(s) has motivated me to read more in my spare time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pleasure reading in my spare time has had a good effect on my English reading abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pleasure reading in my spare time has had a good effect on my English speaking abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

Section 6: The Purpose of Literature

17. For each statement below mark ONE number which best reflects your view.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer
I consider literature as a tool for improving my English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I regard literature as an extracurricular activity (something I do in my spare time)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about Literature can increase my academic abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about Literature can help me write better English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about Literature has helped me understand literature in a historical context.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about Literature makes me want to read more in my spare time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

Section 7: Further comments

18. If you have any further comments regarding one or both of the literary courses, please voice your opinion in the space below. This part is optional.

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Questionnaire on being a student of Literature

YOU'RE DONE!

This completes the questionnaire. Thank you very much for taking time out of your day to participate.

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Done

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