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Abstract

Norwegian legislation requires teachers to adapt the instruction to the needs and abilities of all their pupils. This thesis presents a study about differentiation in Norwegian EFL teaching, focusing on experiences of adapted education among teachers and pupils in 6th and 7th grade classrooms. The study seeks to investigate attitudes towards and experiences of adapted education in ELF teaching.

Data was collected from two schools, using mixed research methods. The researcher conducted qualitative interviews of nine teachers and gathered quantitative data through questionnaires answered by 182 pupils. The main reason that these two schools were chosen was due to the structure of their EFL teaching. The two schools used the same textbook (*Stairs*) and its system of division into three steps. They both divided their pupils according to these steps, yet in different ways. One school practiced a whole class approach, teaching EFL in the pupils' original classes. The other school divided the pupils into groups according to which step they worked at, and did the EFL instruction in these groups. One of the main aims of this research was to look at advantages and disadvantages of these two approaches to EFL instruction.

Findings indicate that the teachers had a common understanding of the term *adapted education* and they believed that they put adapted education into practice. At the same time, they expressed that it was not an easy thing to do as they were obligated to adapt the instruction to the needs of all their pupils every day. This might be due to the fact that none of the teachers experienced that their school had any clear guidelines as to how adapted education should be implemented. Nevertheless, all nine teachers believed that their pupils experienced adapted education. Furthermore, results showed that the teachers who taught EFL in differentiated groups found it easier to implement adapted education in English compared to the teachers who practiced the whole class approach.

The findings among the pupils showed that those within the differentiated groups approach seemed overall more content with their English instruction compared to those within the whole class approach. A common concern when implementing ability grouping is that the weaker pupils might feel inferior. An interesting finding in this context was that neither teachers nor pupils seemed to experience this as a problem. The main advantages of the whole class approach reported by the pupils were that some would feel safer in their

original class, that they did not have to move between classrooms, they could learn from each other across steps and avoid social stratifications. The main arguments for the differentiated groups approach were that someone might feel inferior in a whole class setting, more efficient lessons when the focus was on only one step, ease the teachers workload and improvement of learning outcome. When asked which teaching approach they favored, the majority of both teachers and pupils reported a preference towards the differentiated groups approach.

This study contributes to the field of differentiated teaching and shows that there is a need for more research on how differentiated teaching and adapted education should be implemented in practice. It shows tendencies that teachers are uncertain as to how they might accomplish this requirement, since neither Norwegian legislation, universities nor the schools give them any clear guidelines as to how this should be done.

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List of abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
LK06	National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion of 2006
M87	National Curriculum of 1987
L97	National Curriculum of 1997
IEP	Individualized Education Program
NSD	The Norwegian Social Science Data Service
OFSTED	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and scope

This thesis is a study of attitudes towards and experiences of adapted education in English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction, among teachers and pupils in Norwegian 6th and 7th grade classrooms. It is a case study based on views on adapted education and differentiated teaching gained from two Norwegian primary schools, gathered from 182 pupils and nine teachers in 6th and 7th grade. Two different methods have been employed in the data collection: 1) a questionnaire designed for the pupils; and 2) interviews of the teachers.

One of the challenges teachers face in the classroom is a large variety of learners, and with that a large variety of needs. This thesis aims to study two approaches to adapted education in Norwegian EFL teaching, with focus on how differentiated teaching is done. Furthermore, it seeks to investigate how teachers understand and practice the concept of adapted education, and to what extent the pupils' needs and rights are met within the two approaches.

Teachers and pupils from two primary schools in the county of Rogaland participated in this study. One of the main reasons why these specific schools were found suitable for this research was that they used the same textbook, yet different approaches. Both schools used the *Stairs* (Thorsen and Unnerud 2007; Thorsen and Unnerud 2008) Textbook and Workbook and its system of division into three *steps*, both at 6th and 7th grade. The intention of this division is to give the individual pupil challenges at his or her level. Henceforth, *Stairs* will refer to the overall *Stairs* teaching material, including the textbook and workbook for both 6th and 7th grade.

The difference between the two schools was that at one of them, in the following referred to as School A (see further Ch. 3.2.1), pupils were divided into separate groups according to ability level or step in their EFL instruction. The present researcher worked at this school as an English teacher in the 7th grade in the initial stages of the present study. At the other school, henceforth referred to as School B (see further Ch. 3.2.2), pupils from all three steps were taught within their original classes. An additional interesting aspect was that

School A had tried both teaching approaches, and School B had only practiced the whole class approach.

The research questions devised for this thesis are as follows:

1. How are the teachers' perception and practice of adapted education?
2. How are the pupils' needs and rights to adapted education met at these schools?
3. Is there a difference in how pupils experience adapted education based on how their English lessons are structured (differentiated groups or whole class)?

1.2 Relevance and background

Norwegian legislation requires teachers to adapt education to the needs of all pupils. However, exactly how this should be implemented is not as clear. In this respect one may presume that teachers today face great challenges in their work, as they have a responsibility to adapt the education to all pupils every day. From this it follows that there is a need to investigate how teachers understand and practice this requirement from the authorities, and to what extent pupils experience that their needs are met.

Although some research has been done on adapted education, little has been done explicitly on teaching EFL at differentiated levels in Norway, at least as far as the present writer is aware. By including both teachers and pupils in this study one will get an idea of whether there is coherence between what the teachers believe they do regarding adapted education, and how the pupils experience it. By basing the study on samples from two schools that use different approaches, it will give an indication of how EFL instruction might preferably be structured. The aim of this study is to contribute to the field of research done on adapted education in practice, with main focus on adapted education through differentiated teaching.

In advance of this study the present researcher had gained experience with both teaching approaches in question through the job as an English teacher in 6th and 7th grade at School A. This was also what ignited the interest to study this particular field. The instruction at this school had traditionally been done through the whole class approach; however, the school had recently changed over to the differentiated groups approach in the 6th and 7th grade. The 6th grade had practiced the differentiated groups approach for one and a half year, and the 7th grade for half a year when this research started. The teachers in this school had

decided to move away from teaching all steps in one class, to dividing the pupils at 6th and 7th grade into groups of step 1, 2 and 3 at each grade. The reason behind this was that they all had experience with weak pupils struggling to keep up and maintain their motivation and concentration when the content of the lessons became too difficult for their proficiency level. At the same time the teachers saw that more advanced learners experienced boredom and also struggled with motivation and concentration if they were not sufficiently challenged. Meeting all these needs every English lesson, and having to go through homework and exercises for three different steps, were challenges they all experienced.

1.3 Thesis outline

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical basis for the thesis, defining the concept of adapted education and placing it within a Norwegian historical context, including legislation and previous research. Chapter 3 is an overview of the quantitative and qualitative methods used in this case study, namely the pupil questionnaires and the teacher interviews, as well as an explanation of the data collection process. In addition, method considerations such as reliability, validity and limitations are discussed in this chapter. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the questionnaires and interviews. These findings are further discussed in relation to the research questions and relevant theory in Chapter 5. Lastly, Chapter 6 contains an overview of the main findings, concluding remarks and recommendations for further research.

2 Theoretical orientation

This chapter is a presentation of terms, historical background, legislation and previous research central to the present study. Terms that are examined through this chapter are primarily *adapted education*, *differentiated teaching* and *ability grouping*. In order to understand the concept and challenges of adapted education, different theories and approaches are discussed in this section. The background of the concept adapted education is presented through previous and current legislation. The final part of this chapter focuses on previous research done in this field. Here practices, advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches to differentiated EFL teaching are discussed.

2.1 Adapted education and differentiated teaching

Experience tells us that not all pupils are able to adapt to one certain way of learning at all times. Great diversity exists among pupils regarding aptitudes, abilities and interests. Consequently, different pupils will benefit from various methods and approaches when it comes to learning (Haug 2012: 18). The school and the teacher have the responsibility to meet *all* pupils. Meeting all these different needs every day can be a great challenge.

One central aspect of adapted education is “to teach each pupil according to his/her ability level” (Mikalsen and Sørheim 2012: 191). At first sight this would seem rather straightforward. However, Mikalsen and Sørheim claim that this might not be the case, stating that “adapted education (AE) is considered one of the greatest challenges in the Norwegian educational system” (*ibid.*: 191). With reference to Bachmann and Haug (2006) they emphasize that the concept is easy to define but at the same time not so easy to understand, and in addition very challenging to practice (Mikalsen and Sørheim 2012: 191). Haug (2012: 18) argues that adapted education is a politically constructed term which can be diffuse, wide, general and abstract. From this one can see how it may be conceived as vague and challenging to put into practice. Haug specifies the multiple uses of the term, thus showing its complexity. He explains that the term is used as an overall concept, including general areas such as justice, democracy and equality (*ibid.*: 19). He further lists several other areas where the term is used, for instance that adapted education concerns specific conditions such as

differentiation or teaching methods. One of the aims of the present thesis is to investigate how teachers understand and practice this complex concept.

Bachmann and Haug (2006: 7) use the terms *narrow understanding* and *wide understanding* to explain the concept of adapted education. The narrow understanding is linked to different methods and ways of organizing teaching in the classroom, with focus on the individual pupil. The wide understanding could be seen as an ideology or a pedagogical platform, concerning the whole educational system. The investigation of this thesis specifically concerns learners' and teachers' experiences of what is done in the classroom, and thus the focus here will mainly be on the narrow understanding of adapted education.

Rønnestad (2015) has translated a model illustrating adapted education from Gustafson (2012: 19). She also supports the explanation that adapted education can be understood as "teaching being closely linked to each learner's level, aptitudes and abilities" (Rønnestad 2015: 25). Rønnestad points to Gustafson's way of illustrating this in suggesting that adapted education happens in the flow zone, where there is a balance between aptitude and challenge and where the pupil does not experience frustration or boredom. For EFL instruction to be optimal, the aim is to adapt the instruction so that it fits the pupils' flow zone. Ultimately, each pupil should experience challenges that suit his or her abilities.

One aspect of adapted education that is frequently mentioned is the importance of differentiated teaching. In some cases, *differentiated teaching* is referred to as varied teaching methods. In this thesis, the term *differentiated teaching* will mainly refer to instruction done on differentiated levels, and how the two schools in question differentiate in order to achieve adapted education. In this way one might say that differentiated instruction is a tool to achieve adapted education.

2.2 Historical background

English as a subject first became part of the Norwegian national curriculum in 1939, when it was included from the 6th grade (Flemmen 2006: 155). The requirement that *all* pupils should be taken into consideration has been included in the curriculum for just as long. Adapted education has been the ideal for over 70 years even though it has been expressed in different ways in the different national curricula (Haug 2012: 18). Earlier, the pupils were to a larger degree than today expected to adjust to the school. Today it is also expected that the pupils

adjust to the institution of the school and to their peers, but it is to a larger extent expected that the school should adjust to its pupils academically (*ibid.*: 18).

Adapted education is explicitly mentioned in the National Curriculum of 1987 (M87)¹ and also in 1997 (L97)². In both M87 and L97 the concept *tilpasset oppl ring* (in this thesis translated to *adapted education*) is included. In M87 it is emphasized that adapted education requires that the teaching should be done in a versatile and varied manner and that it should take the pupil's abilities into consideration. This is also emphasized in L97, where it is stated that the teacher should see the individual pupil and his or her needs and that all pupils have the right to receive challenges based on their aptitudes (p. 58). The evaluation of L97 revealed that it had shown too little consideration with regard to the diversity of the pupils. This is one of the reasons that adapted education is more evident than ever before in the current national curriculum (Haug 2012: 18).

2.3 Legislation

The current Norwegian National Curriculum is called the Knowledge Promotion (LK06), where the term adapted education occurs frequently. The *Core Curriculum*³ section of LK06 contains the overall goals for education in the Norwegian primary and secondary school today. In this section it is stated that each pupil has the right to education adapted to them and that "the school shall have room for everybody and teachers must therefore have an eye for each individual learner" (*ibid.*: 19). Further it says: "The pedagogical design must be pliable enough to permit the teacher to meet the pupils' differences in ability and rhythm of development with kindness and ease" (*ibid.*: 19). It is also stressed that the school needs to take the pupils' aptitudes and diversity into consideration and that a good school is one that provides enough space and challenges for everyone. It is especially important that particular concern is shown for those who might struggle and lose courage (*ibid.*: 19).

¹ <http://www.nb.no/nbsok/nb/7daa603c8ec0902f1b1b060a1c1a2c8f#0>

² <http://www.nb.no/nbsok/nb/adf3c4f27b9b41b8e2f231a54988bd42.nbdigital?lang=no#0>

³ http://www.udir.no/upload/larerplaner/generell_del/Core_Curriculum_English.pdf

Together LK06 and the *Education Act*⁴ (a law on rights and obligations associated with schooling and education in Norway) form the formal framework for what the education in Norway should consist of and how it should be carried out. About adapted education it is stated in § 1-3 that “Education shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupil, apprentice and training candidate” (The Education Act, § 1-3). In relation to teaching in differentiated groups § 8-2 says that “the pupils may be divided into groups as necessary”, but at the same time that “pupils shall not normally be organised according to level of ability, gender or ethnic affiliation” (The Education Act, § 8-2). This could be a challenge because the pupil has the right to education adapted to his or her abilities, but at the same time the school is in theory not allowed to divide pupils by ability. In the present study, the school where EFL is taught in differentiated groups emphasized that the intention was for the division to be flexible, so that the pupils would not experience being stuck at one level. This practice is in accordance with what is stated in the Education Act.

The *Quality Framework*⁵ (a section in LK06 that summarizes and expands on regulations from the *Education Act* and the national curriculum) states that adapted teaching for each and every pupil is characterized “by variation in the use of subject materials, ways of working and teaching aids, as well as variation in the structure and intensity of the education” (*ibid.*: 5). It is also stated here that adapted education should be done “within the community of pupils” (*ibid.*: 4) and that this is a “basic premise of the comprehensive school for all”.

2.4 Previous research

Much research has already been done on differentiated teaching, both in a Norwegian context and abroad. Some of the results from these studies may not be suited for broader generalization, mainly due to the often low number of informants; however, they do point to important aspects of differentiated teaching and ability grouping, and the section presented below forms the theoretical basis for the present study.

⁴ <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b3b9e92cce6742c39581b661a019e504/education-act-norway-with-amendments-entered-2014-2.pdf>

⁵ http://www.udir.no/Upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte_lareplaner_for_Kunnskapsloftet/5/prinsipper_lk06_Eng.pdf?epslanguage=no

2.4.1 Perceptions and practices of adapted education

In her master's thesis, Rønnestad (2015) focused on 10th grade pupils' experience of adapted education. Through her questionnaire she found that three quarters of her 82 informants reported that their English lessons suited them well, which according to Rønnestad (2015: 102) could be an indication that they experienced the presence of adapted education. One of her findings was that the majority of the interviewees associated the concept of adapted education mainly with weaker learners' need for extra help (*ibid.*: 99). The pupils were only to a lesser degree aware of adapted education towards more skilled learners. Although most pupils seemed satisfied, there was one group of more advanced learners who claimed not to be sufficiently challenged. Similar results were found in a study conducted by OFSTED (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2015) where it is also claimed that the more advanced learners were not sufficiently challenged. In her suggestion for further research, Rønnestad (2015: 105) mentions that it would be relevant to explore adapted English education from teachers' point of view as well.

Mikalsen and Sørheim (2012) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions and practices of adapted education. Their investigation was based on questionnaires answered by two groups of English teachers. One of these groups consisted of teachers who were part of a national project for the implementation of the *European Language Portfolio* in primary school. The results showed that the teachers believed that they put adapted education into practice and they seemed to agree on a common perception of the term adapted education. This perception mainly concerned teaching, materials, methods, texts and homework adapted to pupils' ability level (*ibid.*: 202).

Weka (2009) did a study on three Norwegian 9th and 10th-grade teachers' perception of the term adapted education and how it was reflected in the EFL teaching. The teachers in this study reported that they used differentiated plans according to level of ability and that this was a way of ensuring adapted education. All three teachers reported that they felt uncertain regarding the concept of adapted education, and whether or not the way they did it was satisfactory. Another issue that the teachers mentioned was the lack of time, which often resulted in a feeling that they were not able to follow up their pupils (*ibid.*: 84). One thing that Weka investigated was whether her informants emphasized the importance of the pupils

feeling a sense of belonging, especially since all the teachers reported that they used differentiated plans. The impression was that none of the teachers saw the feeling of belonging as an important premise for learning (*ibid.*: 84). Weka argues that it is important not to differentiate to such an extent that it compromises the sense of inclusion and belonging in a class.

Morgan (2014) presents a case study of a child with learning difficulties and describes how differentiated teaching was used to help this pupil. His use of the term differentiated teaching mainly relates to the use of varied teaching methods. In the case of this particular pupil, his teacher discovered that he started showing behavioral problems in the math classes. A possible reason for this is, according to Morgan, that the student experienced boredom because his teacher failed to engage and motivate him. Morgan states that some teachers tend to know how to engage all pupils so that nobody gets bored in class, and he believes differentiated instruction is a way to accomplish that. He states that this way of teaching meets the needs of different learners, so that all learners can experience success (*ibid.*: 34-35).

Further Morgan explains how differentiated instruction is based on classical pedagogical theory. One such theoretical starting point is Howard Gardner's theory on how pupils learn in different ways, through what Gardner calls different intelligences. Morgan (*ibid.*: 35) stresses the need for the use of various intelligences and teaching approaches in instruction in order to meet the needs of all students. He also states that differentiated instruction is based on Vygotsky's theory on the *zone of proximal development*: "A well known and empirically established fact is that learning should be matched in some manner with the child's developmental level" (Vygotsky 1978: 85). The zone of proximal development theory also relates to adapted education:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (*ibid.*: 86).

That is, the level of what a student can perform with guidance from a more competent other, like a peer or a teacher. Through differentiated teaching pupils get instruction that is more likely to be within the reach of their zone of proximal development.

Teachers should teach at a level that leads to instruction being stimulating. It is important that the instruction is challenging enough so that pupils are able to accomplish it,

but not so challenging and difficult that it frustrates them. The zone of proximal development can also relate to motivation and to Gustafson's (2012) model of the flow zone. If pupils experience instruction as too challenging or too easy they can experience boredom, resulting in decreased motivation. Morgan further points to brain research that has shown the benefits of differentiated instruction and claims that both too difficult and too easy instruction are shown to be detrimental. He argues that these two negative outcomes can be avoided through active use of differentiated instruction.

In his conclusion Morgan claims that differentiated and personalized instruction is getting more and more important as classrooms today are becoming more diverse regarding pupils' needs (*ibid.*: 37), and that one way of meeting the pupils' needs is through the usage of several strategies. He concludes that differentiated instruction "requires extremely hard work by knowledgeable and well-prepared teachers" (*ibid.*: 37), emphasizing that this is not an easy thing to do.

Along the same lines is Tomlinson's (2010) theory that great teaching is not an algorithm, as one simple recipe does not exist. Rather she focuses on what she calls *personalized instruction* as a means of differentiation. In this context, she lists three strategies for differentiation: knowing the students and their interests, beginning where the students are, and lastly, giving the students permission to work at their own pace. According to Morgan (2014), Tomlinson's strategy of beginning where the students are relates to their zone of proximal development and shows the importance of adjusting instruction to the pupils' needs.

2.4.2 Adapted education in EFL teaching

Flemmen (2006) did a study of what characterizes the English instruction in Norwegian primary schools. One of her research questions was how adapted education was mirrored in EFL teaching. Flemmen emphasizes that due to the pupils' varied experience and contact with English, there is a need for differentiated instruction in a subject like this (*ibid.*: 177). She wanted to investigate whether adapted education for different groups of pupils took place in the English lessons. Flemmen was not surprised when she observed that pupils were not given tailored individual plans in the English subject. However, she noticed that neither high-ability nor low-ability pupils were given tasks adapted to their level. Still, one form of adaption that took place was that small groups could be taken out with a second teacher for extra help.

Flemmen argues that if pupils do not get individualized instruction, the adapted education needs to take place in their class. According to Flemmen, the instruction needs to be wide enough so that all pupils can manage some of it, and so that high-ability pupils are not held back. This is possible only if the teacher is well prepared and able to see all the pupils. In addition to this Flemmen specifies the importance that flexibility, creativity, variety and adaption are integrated in the education (*ibid.*: 177). She claims that if the lessons are good, the need for differentiation decreases.

2.4.3 Ability grouping for adapted instruction

Several studies have been conducted on adapted education and ability grouping in the recent years. Much of the research mentioned in this section was done specifically on within-class ability grouping in relation to reading instruction. Nevertheless, many of the issues and findings in these studies are relevant to the present thesis in that several of the advantages and disadvantages may also concern homogeneous vs. heterogeneous grouping in general.

Shields (2002) presents a study on students' perceptions and attitudes in heterogeneous and homogeneous classrooms, where she compared pupils from these two approaches. She compared academic achievements and perceptions of school experience and teachers in both types of classrooms. Shields states that the belief in heterogeneous grouping is often linked to moral arguments, an inclusion model where all pupils should be educated together.

The findings of her study implied that homogeneous classes seemed to especially serve the needs of high-ability pupils. Pupils from such classes reported that they experienced more teacher reinforcement of self-concept, higher expectations from their teachers, more feedback, more learning time and more homework. Shields argues that some kind of homogeneous grouping will benefit the stronger pupils the most, in relation to their learning outcome, attitudes about themselves and school experiences. Furthermore, she claims that the pupils in the regular classes will not suffer emotionally or socially when the strongest pupils are taken out in separate, homogeneous classrooms.

Schumm, Moody and Vaughn (2000) conducted two studies on grouping for reading instruction. They wanted to find the best way to organize this kind of instruction, as there was a lack of studies done specifically on perceptions and practices of grouping for reading

instruction (Schumm *et al.* 2000: 478). Their studies focused on teachers' perceptions and practices of grouping for reading instruction, and the impact of these grouping practices on pupils' social progress, academic progress and attitudes.

They explain that the common way to organize reading instruction has been to organize pupils into small within-class ability groups, where the pupils are assigned to groups according to their reading level. They state that over the last years a trend towards more heterogeneous grouping has emerged due a to lack of research that provides convincing evidence "for or against ability grouping based on academic outcomes" (*ibid.*: 477). Other factors that have been noted are: that the quality of instruction to the weakest groups has been inferior, that groups tend to be stable and that pupils of minority groups tend to be over-represented in low-ability groups, thus leading to social stratification. (*ibid.*: 477-478).

With reference to previous research, Schumm *et al.* emphasize that even though heterogeneous grouping may benefit the motivation and self-esteem of high-achieving pupils, it might not have the same effect on weak pupils. However, they point to the fact that heterogeneous grouping has been used as a way to include the weaker pupils in order to avoid social stratification (*ibid.*: 478). Another issue is that teachers can be uncertain as to how to respond to the needs of pupils with learning disabilities in an effective way. Some of the most significant findings were that traditional ability grouping had disappeared, so that instruction for pupils with different reading levels had vanished. Instead, undifferentiated instruction within the whole class was the norm (*ibid.*: 481).

Results confirmed that teachers mainly seemed to use whole class instruction for reading, and that they used the same material for all the pupils. The findings also showed that pupils with learning disabilities made little academic progress from this teaching approach, and that their attitudes towards reading did not increase (*ibid.*: 485-486). However, a principal warned the researchers that one thing is what the teachers said, but another thing was what they actually did. What the teachers said they did in the interviews did not necessarily show in their actual practice. Still, the researchers were able to identify whole class instruction as a common practice, followed by independent work, group activities and student pairs (*ibid.*: 480).

The reason that most of the teachers gave for using a whole-class approach was that they felt it matched the school decisions (*ibid.*: 481). Other reasons were that whole class instruction required less planning compared to planning lessons for several groups, and social benefits, eliminating the possibility that pupils in the lower-ability group could feel alienated in a separated group. However, another teacher felt that whole class instruction had a negative

impact on the pupils' achievement. This teacher also added the issue of behavioral problems that whole class instruction led to, as the pupils who finished first would often start talking (*ibid.*: 482). One teacher expressed her worry concerning the pupils with special needs: "I'm not real happy with what I see the kids who have the lowest ability doing, because I don't think I have enough time to spend with just them" (*ibid.*: 482).

Findings among the pupils indicated that pupils of all reading levels preferred mixed-ability groups. Nevertheless, the results also showed that the pupils (including non-readers) thought that non-readers should be taught in same-ability groups (*ibid.*: 478). They also reported that a whole class instruction combined with independent work was a typical method used in reading instruction. In addition, results revealed that while average and high-achieving pupils made moderate academic progress in decoding and comprehension, pupils with reading and learning disabilities showed minimal gains (*ibid.*: 486). Schumm *et al.* (*ibid.*: 487) conclude that grouping practices need to improve and that instruction will have to move away from "one size fits all" in order to meet the pupils' specific reading needs.

Similar to these findings, are the results from Ankrum and Bean's (2008) study on the nature of differentiated reading instruction and practical ideas that might help teachers meet the needs of their pupils. Several scholars (e.g. Ankrum and Bean 2008; Schumm *et al.* 2000; Tomlinson 2010) state that a common problem for teachers is to meet the needs of *all* their learners. As Schumm *et al.* (2000) also point out, a trend in reading instruction was to group pupils in order to adapt the instruction to meet different needs, and that such within-class ability grouping was the dominant way to structure reading instruction for years. One of the consequences of this way of teaching was that the instruction assigned to the weakest groups was inferior compared to the stronger ones, as struggling readers did not improve (Ankrum and Bean 2008: 135).

Ankrum and Bean demonstrate that past research shows that within early attempts on differentiation, it was common to differentiate the *pacing* of the same material or lessons and that this kind of instruction was not effective (*ibid.*: 143-144). Since such ability grouping was not successful, whole class instruction took hold in many classrooms and became more and more common in the 1980s. Teachers began to use the same lessons, material and pacing for all pupils in the same classroom, thus creating little room for meeting the needs of the individual pupil (*ibid.*: 136).

Furthermore, Ankrum and Bean state that providing all students with the same reading instruction had a negative effect on student achievement (*ibid.*: 134). In classrooms consisting of pupils with variable reading abilities where teachers did not differentiate their instruction,

low- and average achieving students suffered, and high-achieving students only made modest progress. This was also one of the findings in Schumm *et al.* (2000: 486). Teachers in non-differentiated classrooms often end up focusing on the average learners, with the result that low- and high-ability learners' needs are not met. One of the reasons for the continuing use of whole class instruction is due to management issues (Ankrum and Bean 2008: 136).

Ankrum and Bean (*ibid.*: 136) stress that in an effort to "leave no child behind" there is a need for differentiated instruction in all classrooms, but at the same time that this is difficult for a teacher to achieve. Even though little research is done on how to differentiate, they explain that exemplary teachers have been observed teaching more often in small ability groups (*ibid.*: 137). In these classrooms pupils shifted between groups as needed, often in accordance with assessment results. They stress that small homogeneous group instruction is a necessary component in the literacy block, as whole group teaching does not meet the needs of all the pupils (*ibid.*: 139) and that true differentiation means that the lesson focus needs to be different for each group, as they different needs (*ibid.*: 144). In addition, material used in such instruction should be based on the pupils' level and needs and that "teachers must me able to accelerate struggling readers, increase the ability of average readers, and continue to challenge the students who read above grade level in their classroom" (*ibid.*: 143), illustrating the importance, but also the challenging aspect of classroom management.

2.4.4 Formation and operation of ability groups

Chorzempa and Graham (2006) did a survey among teachers on within-class ability grouping in reading instruction in the USA. They looked at pupils' movement between groups, as one of the main criticisms against this approach was that such movement rarely happens (Chorzempa and Graham 2006: 530). Another aspect of their study was to find out why or why not teachers used ability groups and what kind of differences existed in the different groups.

Chorzempa and Graham (2006: 529) state that providing instruction that is effective for all children is a prominent theme in education in general, and point to previous studies showing both advantages and disadvantages of this grouping practice. According to Chorzempa and Graham (*ibid.*: 529) proponents of the within-class ability group practice hold that it "allows teachers to adapt learning outcomes, instructional activities, and pace to better meet students' individual characteristics". However, those who do not support this practice claim that the weak students in the low-ability groups may experience lowered academic

expectations, social stigmatization, and decrease in motivation. Another negative effect is that the instruction given to lower-ability groups has been seen as inferior compared to that given to pupils in higher ability groups, thus leading to a wider achievement gap between the groups (*ibid.*: 529).

Teachers in the study gave various reasons both for and against within-class ability grouping (*ibid.*: 539). Reason reported for the usage of within-class ability groups were that it met students' needs, the curriculum material they used supported it, it was mandated by the district, school or principal and that this approach met the students' social needs. The most frequent reason for not using ability-grouping was the belief that mixed-ability groups were better for the students in that low ability students would hear good modeling and that high ability learners would learn tolerance (*ibid.*: 534). Other issues reported were social factors, how the pupils' self-esteem could be affected, that it took too much work and time, and some teachers said that they were not permitted by the district, school or principal to group students based on reading skills.

Eder (2006) presents a study on the formation and operation of ability groups, based on observation and teacher interviews, an investigation of mobility between groups in reading instruction in a first grade classroom in the USA (*ibid.*: 168). Although the focus of the study is specifically on ability grouping in relation to reading instruction, the issue of organizational limitations on group mobility is also relevant to the present research. Eder (*ibid.*: 165) states that even though the division into within-class ability groups has been described as very flexible in curriculum theory, some studies indicate the opposite. An issue that may occur when a pupil is supposed to move up or down a level is the changing number of pupils within the different ability groups, and the teachers' capacity to instruct a certain number of pupils in one group.

Results showed tendencies that some of the pupils would not be moved between groups because of time and management issues, and that the teacher had problems following up more than seven pupils pr. group. For instance, if there were several medium-ability pupils with strongly improved abilities, they could risk not being moved up because there were already too many pupils at the higher-ability group (*ibid.*: 177-178). Eder explains that some states in the USA have restrictions regarding the maximum number of students that can be assigned to one teacher. Also, it is common for a school to try to divide the pupils in a way that gives no teacher an "especially heavy or particular light teaching load" (*ibid.*: 179). Further she claims that "organizational constraints are likely to be even greater when students of different ability levels are assigned to separate classrooms" (*ibid.*: 179), as the pupils are in

one of the schools in the present study. Organizational requirements such as these could lead to rather “locked” ability-groups.

Eder concludes that the assignment of pupils to ability groups in the first grade seemed to be affected by factors such as time and group size, not only abilities (*ibid.*: 183), that the basis of assignment into groups is not then automatically based on the pupils’ own abilities, but their abilities relative to other members of the classroom (*ibid.*: 177).

2.5 Summary of theoretical orientation

As shown through this chapter, the concept and practice of adapted education is a complex matter. Studies show that teachers often believe that they put adapted education into practice (Weka 2009; Mikalsen and Sørheim 2012), but at the same time that they feel uncertain regarding this diffuse concept (Weka 2009). In the following chapters, this issue will be investigated in relation to the teachers in the present study.

Rønnestad (2015) draws attention to the fact that adapted education does not only concern the weaker students, as it is also a right for more advanced learners. Morgan (2014) stresses the need for adapted education because classrooms are getting more diverse. Similarly, Flemmen (2006) claims that differentiated teaching is of particular importance in English, due to pupils’ various contact and experience with the language.

A change in teaching approaches has been observed in reading instruction, as it has moved from the usage of ability groups (homogeneous approach) to a more heterogeneous one with whole class instruction (Schumm *et al.* 2000; Ankrum and Bean 2008). Consequently, this might lead to all pupils getting the exact same instruction, namely the use of a “one-size-fits-all” approach (Schumm *et al.*: 2000).

Schumm *et al.* (2000) demonstrate what they believe is an important matter in reading instruction, namely that grouping practices need to improve so that it can better meet the specific needs of the students. Ankrum and Bean (2008: 143) argue that differentiating the pace of the same material and/or lesson is not effective, and that it is clear that only a well prepared teacher can successfully differentiate the instruction for the pupils. They also stress that it is important that teachers are aware of and takes into consideration that a “one-size-fits-all” model does not fit all students as they all have different needs. They conclude that true differentiation is done when the lesson focus is different for each group, and that there is no specific solution to how differentiated instruction should be carried out (*ibid.*: 144).

The importance of varied teaching has also been mentioned in relation to adapted education (Morgan 2014). It has been shown how adapted education relates to well known pedagogical theory as that of Vygotsky and Gardner in that it is important to take the pupils zone of proximal development and various intelligences into consideration (Morgan 2014).

Through this chapter, several disadvantages of a whole class approach have emerged, such as: negative impact on pupils' achievements, behavioral problems due to boredom, weak pupils showing minimal gains and medium and high ability pupils making moderate progress. Several studies (e.g. Shields 2002; Ankrum and Bean 2008) illustrate the importance of more advanced learners being sufficiently challenged, thus stressing the demand for instruction that meets the needs of all student to a larger extent.

Arguments for whole class instruction include that it takes less time to plan, social aspects, that no one feels left out and no decrease in motivation for the weaker pupils. Other arguments could be that movement between groups seems to rarely happen within ability grouping (Chorzempa and Graham 2006; Eder 2006), and that the quality of instruction in the weakest groups has been shown to be inferior (Schumm *et al.*: 2000; Chorzempa and Graham 2006; Ankrum and Bean 2008).

School policy has also been shown to have an effect on the use or non-use of ability grouping. This indicates that there are individual practices between schools, resulting in the use of different approaches in the classrooms. None of the studies argue for ability grouping on an overall, general level, but they illustrate that it *can* be beneficial for pupils in certain settings and subjects, including both weak, average and more advanced pupils.

3 Methods

This chapter focuses on the methodology applied in this study. First, section 3.1 presents the theoretical orientation of different research methods within applied linguistics, followed by the reasoning behind the choice of method for the present study. Section 3.2 provides a description of the research subjects of this study, while sections 3.3 and 3.4 focus on the tools that were employed for the data collection as well as the data analysis procedures that were used. Finally, method considerations such as: reliability, validity and limitations as well as ethical issues are discussed.

3.1 Explanations of research methods

Research can be done through different methods of data collection. In applied linguistics there is usually a distinction between three main types of research methods, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Dörnyei 2007: 19). For the present study a combination of methods have been used, therefore all the three main methods in applied linguistics are explained at the beginning of the chapter. Both strengths and weaknesses of the different methods are discussed. First the methods are explained in general and further the focus is on how and why they are used in this research. The present study is a case study on pupils' and teachers' attitudes, experiences and practices of adapted education. It is a cross-sectional study, which means that the data have been collected at one point in time (Creswell 1994: 119).

3.1.1 Quantitative research

Overall, quantitative research mainly involves numerical data. One of the aims of this type of research is to find particular characteristics of a sample population, which again represent a larger group. After the data have been collected the findings are usually presented through statistics (Creswell 2012: 15). However, presenting quantitative data does not usually consist of merely providing statistics, the statistics also need to be analyzed and interpreted

afterwards (Johannessen *et al.* 2004: 199). In quantitative studies the researcher's focus is on a "meaning in general" (Dörnyei 2007: 27).

Quantitative research contains certain distinctive features and its most important feature is the use of numbers. Numbers in themselves do not necessarily provide clear meaning, they need to be explained and placed in a context. Another central feature is what Dörnyei (2007: 33) calls "a priori categorization", meaning that there is a need to specify categories and values prior to the study. Informants need to be made aware of what figures and answers in a questionnaire represent, so that they have the same understanding of what they are actually answering. This illustrates the importance of a thorough preparation phase in advance of a quantitative study. Another important aspect of quantitative research is the focus on common features or trends compared to the focus on the individual. The aim of research like this is to gather data from a sample so that it can apply to a larger group, this means that the researcher has the possibility to use the data to generalize (Creswell 2012: 14). A typical way of collecting quantitative data within applied linguistics is through some kind of test (language, psychological, attitudes), measuring a phenomenon or conducting a survey (Dörnyei 2007: 95). A survey commonly makes use of a questionnaire, so also in the present study.

The quantitative research method has both strengths and weaknesses to it. Proponents of this method often emphasize elements like the features mentioned above, but also that this method is systematic, focused, controlled, precise, objective and reliable, and finally that the data can be generalizable (*ibid.*: 34). In addition, the research process of this method is rather efficient if good preparations have been done in advance. This way of conducting research is well established and has a good reputation in the field.

On the other hand, reasons and explanations concerning the informants' answers are not being taken into consideration in quantitative research. It has also been claimed to be simplistic, decontextualized and reductionist, and to leave little room for the meanings and beliefs of the individual (*ibid.*: 35).

3.1.2 Qualitative research

While quantitative methods usually are associated with numerical representation, qualitative research is most often presented in more analytical terms as it mainly involves open and non-

numerical data. These are most often presented through non-statistical, verbal methods, as the researcher must analyze the statements (Creswell 2012: 19). In qualitative studies the researcher's focus is usually on "an in depth understanding of the 'meaning in particular'" (Dörnyei 2007: 27). This type of research does often consist of data based on answers of a small number of informants in order to get the participants' view on a certain matter (Creswell 2012: 16). Common ways of collecting qualitative data within applied linguistics are one-to-one interviews, group interviews, ethnography (studying a cultural phenomenon), case studies, diary studies and research journals (Dörnyei 2007: 124).

According to Dörnyei (*ibid.*: 35), there seems to be a rather general conception and agreement about the main features and principles of quantitative research. On the other hand, describing qualitative research seems to be less straightforward. Still, there are some main characteristics that pertain to qualitative research methods. First of all, one of the main reasons for doing a qualitative study is that it is exploratory. Another feature is that qualitative research is open and flexible. This research design has the benefit of being flexible in that it is able to include new openings or details that might appear during the research process, as it is usually not strictly prefigured (Dörnyei 2007: 37). Most of the data in qualitative research can be presented in a textual form, like in the present study where tape-recorded interviews have been transcribed. Even though qualitative studies are not mainly based on numbers, they can still point towards trends and important aspects of what is investigated, including rich and complex details. Other characteristics are that subjective opinions, feelings and experiences can be revealed so that one gets an insider's perspective. Also, a qualitative study is usually based on fewer informants than a quantitative one, so the process of getting participants might be easier. Lastly, qualitative studies are interpretive as the results are based on the researcher's interpretation of the data (*ibid.*: 38).

Qualitative research also has certain strengths and weaknesses to it. Among its strengths, it has been seen as a good way to explore new areas, make sense and go in depth of complex matters, answer "why questions", broaden the repertoire of possible interpretations and as being flexible (*ibid.*: 39-40). According to Dörnyei (*ibid.*: 41-42) several weaknesses of qualitative research can also be found, such as small sample size, the large role of the researcher, too complex or too narrow theories, and lastly, that it is time consuming. Johannessen *et al.* (2004: 153) maintain that one of the great challenges in conducting qualitative research is to process the data so that it becomes manageable, and to find good ways of presenting the load of unstructured data.

3.1.3 Mixed methods

Flick (2011: 186-188) uses the term *triangulation* about the inclusion of different perspectives on the issue under investigation. A way that this can be done is through the usage of different research methods, for instance a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. By doing this, triangulation can produce knowledge on different levels, which can also contribute to an increase in validity. The results in such a study can be complementary to each other, meaning that they can lead to a fuller picture.

The present inquiry makes use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, also called mixed methods, meaning that the researcher has gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. A common combination is the use of questionnaires and interviews, like in the present study (Dörnyei 2007: 24). The strength of the mixed methods approach is that it can benefit from the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods (*ibid.*: 45).

3.1.4 Classroom research and action research

Dörnyei (2007: 16-18) emphasizes that conducting a study is one of the most effective ways to create professional development. Not only does the researcher learn and develop from it but it can also benefit others, especially in the teacher profession where research may also help others to become better teachers by providing new insights. He emphasizes that research is not only done for one's own sake, but to generate and share knowledge. According to Creswell (2012: 22), these kinds of studies are often done to address improvements in educational settings.

As stated above, this thesis makes use of a mixed methods approach, and is anchored within classroom research. Dörnyei (2007: 176) describes classroom research as “a broad umbrella-term for empirical investigations that use the classroom as the main research site”. He further explains that this term mainly concerns research done on how learning and teaching takes place in a classroom, and that this is a primary field of research in applied linguistics. Two broad dimensions of the classroom environment are *social context* and

instructional context (*ibid.*: 186); this thesis is based on the latter. Instructional context concerns elements like the teacher, students, curriculum, tasks or teaching methods.

Dörnyei (2007: 176-177) explains that a combination of mixed methods in classroom research is indispensable, meaning that this approach is effective in getting insight into a complex environment such as the classroom. The reason for this is that “combining several research strategies can broaden the scope of the investigation and enrich the researcher’s ability to draw conclusions” (*ibid.*: 186). In other words, qualitative and quantitative research can supplement each other, especially in studies of complex environments such as a classroom.

One way of conducting research in a classroom is through action research. Dörnyei’s definition of action research is that it is “conducted by or in cooperation with teachers for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of their educational environment and improving the effectiveness of their teaching” (*ibid.*: 191). Creswell (2012: 577) emphasizes that action research is used when a specific educational problem needs to be solved. Burns (2010: 2) and Creswell (2012: 577) explain that action research has to do with exploring one’s own teaching contexts, meaning that it is a reflective practice. This involves matters that could have been done differently, or even better in one’s own teaching. Burns emphasizes in this context that the teacher becomes an investigator of his or her own teaching, thus at the same time being a part of the participants in the research. One problem with action research is, according to Dörnyei (2007: 191), that there is too little of it. Reasons for that could be the teachers’ lack of time, reduced motivation, or that they do not have the professional support they need.

3.1.5 Choice of methodology in the present study

The present study is an investigation into how EFL teaching is structured in different classrooms at two Norwegian primary schools. It is a classroom study done through the use of interviews with and questionnaires from the participants in these classrooms. As stated above, this thesis is based on both qualitative and quantitative research designs, or mixed methods. It makes use of a quantitative questionnaire with qualitative elements collected among the pupils, and qualitative interviews with the teachers.

Through the use of a mixed methods approach it is possible to investigate the research questions from different angles, through both the pupils’ and the teachers’ view, thus

widening the basis for answering the research questions. Additionally, as pointed out by Dörnyei (2007: 45-46) and Flick (2011: 188), the use of a mixed methods design may contribute to increase the validity of the results.

3.2 Participants

The present study is based on the experience of adapted education gained from two Norwegian primary schools in the county of Rogaland. More specifically, samples were gathered from pupils and teachers in 6th and 7th grade at these schools. One of the schools was an urban school, here referred to as “School A”. Here English was taught in groups according to proficiency level or *step*. The present researcher had worked at this school for one and a half years when this study was initiated. The other school was a rural school, here referred to as “School B”. At this school the pupils were also divided according to step, but the EFL teaching was done in whole classes, meaning that all proficiency levels were taught together in the original classes.

When conducting a survey in search of information to answer the research questions, it is obviously impossible to gather data from all relevant informants. The challenge is to find a sample representative of the particular group one wishes to investigate. Dörnyei explains this challenge:

The problem is that no matter how well-funded our research is, we can never examine all the people whose answers would be relevant to our research question, and therefore we have to face the fact that the final picture unfolding in our research will always be a function of whom we have selected to obtain our data from (Dörnyei 2007: 27).

Creswell (2012: 145) uses the term *convenience sampling* to describe the process through which a researcher chooses the participants for a study because they are available and willing to contribute. Further he emphasizes that the researcher cannot be sure that the participants are a representative sample. Nevertheless, the participants may still provide useful information. School A and its informants were chosen due to the convenience of doing research on the pupils and the colleagues of the researcher. In addition, this school had tried both the approaches to EFL teaching discussed in this thesis. The other school was chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, that it used the same textbook as School A, but had a different way

of structuring the EFL teaching, that is, they used whole class instruction instead of differentiated groups. This was a good base for comparison when investigating two different approaches to EFL teaching. Secondly, School B was also a school that the researcher was familiar with, so the process of getting informants was unproblematic. In addition, the researcher was supposed to start working at School B a year later, which made this school even more interesting to include in the study. Even though it was convenient to use these particular participants for this study, there is no reason to believe that they are not a representative sample.

Both schools used *Stairs* in both 6th and 7th grade, and its system of division into three *steps*. The difference, as stated above, was that School A taught EFL according to these steps in separated groups, while School B taught all steps in the original classes. The texts and exercises in *Stairs* are divided into steps 1, 2 and 3, according to degree of difficulty. These levels of proficiency are divided in accordance with what is expected from this age group. Pupils with low English proficiency work at step 1, where the material is mainly practice of what the pupils already know and some introduction to new material. Step 1 texts are shorter and less complex than at the other levels. On step 2 the texts are more complex and slightly longer. This step is for pupils with medium English proficiency. Step 3 is for more advanced learners and consists of more challenging texts and activities. The intention of such a division is to give the individual pupil challenges at his or her level.

Altogether 9 teachers took part in the interviews, and 182 pupils answered the questionnaire for this inquiry. The number of pupils who answered the questionnaire may vary from the original number of pupils in the classes due to some of them not being present on the day of the questionnaire survey. Figure 2 presents an overview of the participants of the two schools.

<p>School A</p> <p><u>6th grade</u></p> <p>3 teachers</p> <p>Step 1: 14 pupils</p> <p>Step 2: 22 pupils</p> <p>Step 3: 23 pupils</p> <p><u>7th grade</u></p> <p>2 teachers</p> <p>Step 1: 4 pupils</p> <p>Step 2: 26 pupils</p> <p>Step 3: 24 pupils</p> <p>Total: 113 pupils</p>	<p>School B</p> <p><u>6th grade</u></p> <p>2 teachers</p> <p>6A: 13 pupils</p> <p>6B: 17 pupils</p> <p><u>7th grade</u></p> <p>2 teachers</p> <p>7A: 19 pupils</p> <p>7B: 20 pupils</p> <p>Total: 69 pupils</p>
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Figure 1: Distribution of participants from Schools A and B

As shown in this overview there are more pupils in 6th and 7th grade at School A than at School B. Optimally the number of participants from each school should have been the same; however, School B was a rural school with fewer pupils. Even though the number of pupils at each school is uneven, the questionnaire is still thought to be a good basis for comparison of the two approaches to EFL teaching.

3.2.1 School A

Five of nine teachers that were interviewed worked at School A. Of these, three worked at the 6th grade and two at the 7th grade level. The 6th grade at School A was divided into three classes. In the English subject, all pupils from the three classes were divided into groups according to the step at which they worked. This system had been implemented when the pupils started 5th grade. However, the arrangement of what step the pupils worked at had always been flexible, so several pupils had changed steps during 5th and 6th grade. The number of pupils in these three groups often varied due to frequent movement between steps. The teachers here explained that pupils moved between groups based on the results of their

chapter tests. Still, most often the step 1 group consisted of approximately 20 pupils, the step 2 group of about 22 pupils and the step 3 group of 22-24 pupils.

In the 7th grade at School A, two teachers were interviewed. This grade was divided into two classes and like the pupils in 6th grade at the same school, the 7th graders were also divided into three different groups according to step 1, 2 and 3 in their English lessons. The reason that only two of the three teachers at this grade were interviewed is that the third teacher is the researcher of this study.

The size of the three groups in the 7th grade was not even. There were very few pupils on step 1, and several on step 3. The first group consisted of 4 pupils who worked with step 1, all of whom had individualized education programs (IEP) in English. However, in the beginning of the school year the weakest group consisted of both step 1 and step 2 pupils, but as the teachers saw that the step 2 pupils did not gain from being in that group they had to find another solution. There was also a very large group of pupils on step 3. The solution to this was that the step 2 pupils from the weakest group were moved up a group, and the step 3 pupils were split. This resulted in one group consisting of four step 1 pupils, one group of 26 step 2 and step 3 pupils, and the last group of 24 step 3 pupils. This made the size of the two last groups almost as big as the original classes.

The teacher of the first group partly followed her own plan, while the teachers of the second and third group planned their lessons together and made small adjustments for their own group when needed. Consequently, the step 3 pupils were given the same opportunities and tasks in both the second and the third group. The pupils in 7th grade at School A started this system at the start of 7th grade, as they had had EFL teaching in their original classes through 5th and 6th grade. The fact that these pupils had experienced both ways of structuring EFL teaching is an interesting premise for the present inquiry.

3.2.2 School B

At School B four teachers were interviewed, two at the 6th grade and two at the 7th grade level. The 6th grade at this school consisted of two classes and the EFL teaching also took place in these classes. Class 6A consisted of 13 pupils and 6B of 17 pupils. There was one teacher who had the main responsibility for the English subject in both these classes. Another

teacher who was in one of the classes as a second teacher was also interviewed for this study. Her main concern in the EFL lessons was the weaker pupils.

The 7th grade at this school also consisted of two classes. Class 7A consisted of 19 pupils and 7B of 20 pupils. Teachers of both these classes were interviewed for this study. In both 6th and 7th grade at School B the EFL teaching was done in original classes, while at the same time making use of the same 3-step system as School A.

3.3 Teacher interviews

To ensure the informants' anonymity, the teachers will henceforth be referred to with numbers according to which school they worked at. The teachers from School A are referred to as Informants A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5. Teachers from School B are referred to as Informants B1, B2, B3 and B4.

3.3.1 Interview as a research tool

The interviews of the nine teachers make up the qualitative part of this study. Using interviews for collecting data is the most common method in qualitative research (Johannessen *et al.* 2004: 132). A typical qualitative interview is like a professional one-to-one conversation where the aim is to reveal beliefs and opinions of the individual interviewee.

There can be different degrees of structure in one-to-one interviews. At the one end is the *structured interview*, where the researcher has prepared a thorough interview guide with questions that are tightly controlled through the interview in order to get the specific questions answered. With this format the exact same questions will be given to all the informants. This makes it easy for the interviewee to focus on what they are supposed to; however, there is little room for spontaneity.

At the other end of the scale is the *unstructured interview* or *open interview*, which allows for complete flexibility. Here the researcher does not prepare an interview guide, as neither the question nor the order of the interview is set. This format is more like a conversation where the informant functions as the talker, and the researcher as the listener.

However, the researcher might pose a couple of clarification questions during the conversation. This kind of format is preferable when deep meanings and opinions on a certain matter is the target, as it functions more like a relaxed conversation compared to the structured interview (Johannessen *et al.* 2004: 133-134). At the same time, it makes it more challenging to compare the answers afterwards (Flick 2011: 183).

In-between these two ways of structuring an interview is the *semi-structured interview*, which is the most common interview format. With this format the researcher usually has an interview guide with open-ended questions prepared in advance, encouraging the informant to elaborate (Johannessen *et al.* 2004: 135). Dörnyei (2007: 136) stresses that this format is convenient for a researcher who has a clear overview of the phenomenon in question and is able to ask broad questions that the interviewee can elaborate on. It is common for the researcher to ask all the informants the same questions, making it easy to make some sort of comparison of the answers later.

3.3.2 The interview guide

The interview guide for the present study was semi-structured (see Appendix A). Although the interviews followed a rather structured interview guide, it also allowed follow-up questions and the teachers were encouraged to elaborate on certain matters when needed. The reason for choosing this of structure was that the researcher from the outset had a clear overview of the subject in question and wanted to reveal attitudes and experiences in relation to this exact issue. Additionally, the results are easier to compare with a semi-structured interview compared to more unstructured, open interviews.

The interview guide consisted of 17 questions, divided into four main categories: 1) Background information, 2) Adapted education and school practices, 3) Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education and 4) The structure of EFL teaching. The intention of the first part was to gain knowledge about practical issues and background information such as the informants' education, their experience with *Stairs* and the size of his or her group of pupils. The second part aimed to reveal the teachers' understanding of adapted education, and how the schools worked with this concept. The third part focused on what the teachers thought about their pupils' experience of adapted education. The results of this part are particularly interesting to examine in connection with the answers of the pupils'

questionnaire, so as to see whether there is coherence between the teachers' beliefs and the pupils' answers. The fourth and last part of the interview mainly concerned attitudes towards the two ways of structuring EFL teaching here examined.

Before the interviews were conducted, a test interview was performed with an English teacher who was not part of the study. This was done in order to make sure that the questions were understandable and to get an idea of how long the interview would last. Each of the teacher interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes, and they were conducted over the first months of 2016. The interviews were mainly conducted in English, recorded and later transcribed. One of the teachers who functioned mostly as a teacher's assistant, and who had no English education, strongly preferred to do the interview in Norwegian. This interview was first transcribed directly, and then later translated into English. Another teacher had a first language that was neither English nor Norwegian, so through the interview this informant would sometimes switch between English and Norwegian. This interview was also first transcribed directly, and later the Norwegian parts of it were translated into English.

The teachers were given the opportunity to have a quick look at the interview questions just before the interview started. Many of the informants asked to have a look, and it was the researcher's impression that this made the interviews more effective. Also, it did not affect the answers, as the informants did not have time to plan their answers in this short time. If the teachers did not understand the questions at once, the researcher would explain. Sometimes follow-up questions would be added if more information or explanation were needed, also the researcher would give confirming comments during the course of the interviews.

3.3.3 Data analysis

As stated above, the teacher interviews were first recorded, and then later transcribed. According to Dörnyei (2007: 139) there is a general agreement that semi-structured interviews need to be recorded, as taking notes is not sufficient if one is to get all the details from an interview. It is crucial to inform the interviewee that the interviews are audio recorded. Even though audio recording is less visible than video recording, one aspect to take into consideration is that some people might be distracted by the fact that they know they are

being recorded. This may lead to them not speaking and acting as they might have done in a more natural setting (Burns 2010: 70).

When conducting qualitative research, the utterances of the interview objects need to be converted into text before they can be analyzed, through the process of transcription (Creswell 2012: 239). There are different types of transcription, and Mero-Jaffe (2011: 232) explains that researchers often distinguish between two main methods, namely *naturalized transcription* and *denaturalized transcription*. The first one is a very detailed and less filtered way of transcription. In addition to the content, it focuses on elements that complement the speech, such as “breaks in speech, laughter, mumbling, involuntary sounds, gestures, body language” (*ibid.*: 232). In order to get an overview of all these elements, a video recording might be the best basis for naturalized transcription. Denaturalized transcription on the other hand, is more straightforward and focuses mainly on *what* is said and not *how* it is said. Here the focus is on an accurate description of the discourse, while descriptions of elements such as hesitation, accent and involuntary sounds are limited. The main emphasis is on the meanings and perceptions of the informants, and audio recordings are usually sufficient in this context.

One disadvantage of a naturalized transcription is that the transcriber might misunderstand the voices and other elements in the recording, which again may affect the conclusion. At the same time a detailed transcription such as this may contribute to a more complete and valid representation of the interview (*ibid.*: 232). A disadvantage of the denaturalized transcription is that it might lose certain socio-cultural characteristics. On the other hand, this way of transcribing makes it easier to read. Ultimately, however, the most important function of the transcription is that it validly represents what the interviewee is saying.

The interviews for the present study have been transcribed through denaturalized transcription, as this approach will produce the information needed for the further analysis. The transcription process was at times challenging, as spoken language is often characterized by hesitation and incomplete sentences. These interruptions have been followed by “...” in the transcription when needed. This was done in order to mark the sentences that were not completed, for instance if the informant would hesitate and start a new sentence in the middle of another. Thus, the quotes from the teacher interviews included in this thesis might be characterized by the fact that they are transcriptions of spoken language. The full transcriptions of the interviews are included in Appendix B.

3.4 Pupil questionnaires

3.4.1 Questionnaire as a research tool

According to Dörnyei (2007: 101), the questionnaire survey is one of the most common research tools in applied linguistics. The informants answering a questionnaire need to be carefully chosen, as they are supposed to be representative of a larger population. This is because research like this aims to reveal characteristics of a group, by investigating a sample of that particular group (*ibid.*: 101). In this study the aim was to find informants that are representative of Norwegian teachers and pupils of 6th and 7th grade. The respondents of the questionnaire in this study were the pupils of the 6th and 7th grade classes in the two participating schools.

The main reasons why the questionnaire is such a popular research instrument is firstly that it is rather easy to make and conduct, and secondly its ability to gather large quantities of information quickly. The results of a questionnaire are usually presented as quantitative data, but can also contain elements that will require a qualitative analysis, like for instance open-ended questions (Creswell 2012: 220). Dörnyei (2007: 102) divides the types of questions in a questionnaire into three different types: factual questions, behavioral questions and attitudinal questions. Both factual and attitudinal questions are included in the questionnaire of the present study, where the aim is to ascertain facts about the informants and also to uncover opinions and beliefs.

The common way to structure a questionnaire is through asking detailed questions or listing options where the informants have to choose one of the alternatives. Giving the informants multiple choice options makes results from such questionnaires particularly appropriate for statistic analysis. This is because all the informants will answer the question using the alternatives that are provided, which makes it easy to compare at a later stage (Creswell 2012: 386). However, it is not uncommon to include open-ended items in an otherwise closed-ended questionnaire.

One way of constructing closed-ended items is by using the *Likert scale*. Here the informants are asked to state to what extent they agree or disagree with specific statements. Each of these alternatives is often rated with a number. When presenting results in a survey like this these numbers are often averaged or summed up (Dörnyei 2007: 105).

Open-ended questions are parts of a questionnaire where there are no answer alternatives for the respondent to choose between. Instead there could for instance be blank spaces where the informants may write answers themselves. This way quantitative surveys can contain qualitative elements where it is possible for the researcher to explore reasons for the informants' answers to the closed-ended responses (Creswell 2012: 220).

The use of open-ended question can be an alternative when the researcher does not know how to formulate possible answers or if he wants to use quotes to exemplify important issues. Dörnyei (2007: 107) states that open-ended questions work best if they contain guidelines. One way to do this is through what he calls "specific open questions", which means that they ask for specific information about something.

The main strength of the questionnaire is that it takes little time to conduct and one can gather much information in a short period of time. Working with the results of such a survey is often also rather straightforward. In addition, it does not cost the respondents much to answer a questionnaire, compared to for example an interview. One weakness with the questionnaire is that the results could end up being unreliable if the questionnaire is not well enough constructed. Also, the informants need to be a good sample of the group that is under investigation, and all respondents have to have a clear understanding of the questions in advance. The questionnaire can also have limitations regarding revealing personal opinions and reasons for the informants' choices.

3.4.2 The questionnaire for the present inquiry

The questionnaires for this inquiry were printed out and conducted by the teachers from the interviews, who handed out the questionnaires to their own pupils. This was the most convenient way of doing it due to distance and time constraints. One limitation of this research tool is that the respondents may interpret words and questions differently (Flick 2011: 181). Because of this, the teachers were given very specific and clear instructions in advance. They were also instructed in how to introduce the questionnaire and go through and explain the questions, so that everything was clear before the pupils answered it. After this the teachers returned the questionnaires to the researcher.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts (see Appendix C). The aim was that it should be short, clear and to the point, thus be easy for the 6th and 7th graders to understand.

The first part was merely a clarification of what step the pupils worked at, where each pupil should tick of his or her step in a box. The second part consisted of four statements where the pupils should state to what extent they agreed with the statements through multiple choice options in the form of a Likert scale. The aim of this part was to reveal whether the pupils experienced that their education was adapted to them. The alternatives, translated from Norwegian, were “disagree”, “slightly disagree”, “slightly agree” and “agree”. No alternative in terms of “I do not know” was included in order to make the pupils reflect over the statements instead of taking an easy way out. Also, this made the results easier to analyze. The third and last part was short and asked: “I prefer my English lessons to be done in:” and then the pupils had two choices: “my regular class” or “groups according to steps”. Following this question was an encouragement to explain the reason for their choice in their own words. The questionnaire was written and conducted in Norwegian to avoid any misunderstandings among the informants, who had various levels of proficiency in English. Since this is not a study based on language analysis, but rather on attitudes and experiences, the conclusion was that the language used in the questionnaire was not of particular importance. The pupils’ comments to the last question have been translated into English when used in this thesis (see Appendix D).

3.4.3 Data analysis

The information gathered from the pupil questionnaires is presented in statistical terms, due to its quantitative nature (see further Ch. 4). The answers from the questionnaires have been counted and are statistically presented through diagrams. This was done to get a better overview of the results, to compare results from the different schools and groups, and to be able to point to trends that could, at least to some degree, be generalized. The qualitative element of the questionnaire, which is the last question, has been used to point to tendencies in the opinions and explanations given by the pupils. Quotes from this part of the questionnaire are also used to illustrate certain issues.

3.5 Method considerations

Creswell (2012: 159) states that reliability and validity are bound together in complex ways, sometimes overlapping each other. He further explains that if scores are not reliable, they cannot be valid. First one needs consistent and stable scores before they can be meaningful.

In order to ensure that research provides valid data, it is necessary to evaluate the whole process, not only the results. In quantitative research there are certain means to evaluate whether a survey is trustworthy, and some of these will be looked at in the following. In qualitative research however, it is more challenging to prove whether a study has been conducted in a good way.

3.5.1 Reliability

Reliability in general concerns the data samples, how these are collected, processed and presented. One way to check for reliability is to repeat the same survey, and if the results are the same it is a sign of reliability. Silverman (2005: 224) explains that “reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions”. This view of reliability is mainly applicable to quantitative research methods. Along the same lines is Dörnyei’s definition (2007: 50): “reliability indicates the extent to which our measurement instruments and procedures produce consistent results in a given population in different circumstances”. With regard to the present study, there is no reason to believe that the results of the questionnaire would have been significantly different if the data collection had been done by another researcher or at a slightly different point in time.

Within qualitative research it is not as straightforward, as this approach most often is based on conversation or observation. It would be more or less impossible to do an interview over again and get the exact same results. This indicates that it is easier to evaluate the reliability of a quantitative survey compared to a qualitative one (Johannessen *et al.* 2004: 195). Nevertheless, the researcher may increase the trustworthiness of a study by providing a thorough description of the study and its methods. These factors have been included through this chapter in order to increase the reliability of the present research.

For the present study the researcher used established measurement tools, and also it builds on other relevant studies where similar methods have been used. Through the usage of a mixed methods approach and action research in this study, the reliability has been further strengthened. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are well-established tools in the field of applied linguistics. By using both these methods, this inquiry is able to shed light on one matter from different angles.

3.5.2 Validity

Through this study efforts have been made to increase the validity. Dörnyei (2007: 49) explains that the term validity has been discussed among researchers, but that it overall can refer to elements such as “trustworthiness”, “authenticity” or “credibility” of research. He sums up by explaining that “a test is valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure” (*ibid.*: 51). Basically, it has to do with the overall quality of the research.

According to Dörnyei (*ibid.*: 52), there are two types of validity: internal and external. Internal validity is described as “if the outcome is a function of the variables that are measured” (*ibid.*: 52), meaning the extent to which one can say that no other variables caused the result, other than the ones that were intended. Flick (2011: 202) describes it as “how far the results of a study can be analyzed unambiguously”, referring to how well the research has been done. To some degree one could also say that this inquiry is externally valid. Dörnyei (2007: 52) explains external validity as the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized to a larger group. The results of this study cannot be generalized as such; however, they do provide tendencies of attitudes and experiences within the group the informants are a part of.

Other threats to the validity of a research are what Dörnyei (2007: 53-54) calls the *The Hawthorne effect* and that the participants might have a desire to meet the researcher’s expectations. The Hawthorne effect concerns the affect on the participants caused by the fact that they are being studied, and the possibility that they perform in a different way than usual because of this. Along the same lines is Dörnyei’s point that results can be affected by participants’ desire to meet certain expectations. These could both be threats to the validity of the present research, and perhaps especially at School A, where the pupils might get the impression that the teachers prefer the approach where the students are divided into groups

according to step, since they moved away from the whole class approach. At the same time it was clearly specified that the pupils were supposed to state their own personal opinions. In addition the questionnaire was anonymous, so the pupils would not gain anything from writing what they thought their teacher or the researcher wanted to hear.

Another effort that was done in relation to increasing the validity was that the questionnaire was done in Norwegian. Considering the age and the English proficiency level of the participants this was necessary in order to ensure that they all understood the questions. As mentioned, the questionnaires were handed out and collected by the teacher of each class or group. Optimally the researcher would have done this; however, due to distance, work responsibilities and time, this was difficult to carry out. Since the questionnaire was rather clear and straightforward, and the teachers had been given clear instructions, it is reasonable to believe that this made little or no difference in relation to the results.

The interviews were all conducted by the same researcher and the questions were all the same; they were also asked in the exact same way in all the interviews. Thus, the informants were all given the same basis for answering the questions. The aim was for the questions to be as clear as possible to avoid misunderstandings. Follow-up questions were asked to guide the teachers when necessary, and to make sure that they all answered the same questions.

An effort was also made to find a representative selection of samples. Even though a sample of nine teachers and 182 pupils is limited, it is likely that these teachers and pupils are good representations of 6th and 7th graders and their teachers in Norway. Both girls and boys were included in the study, as well as all levels of English proficiency.

3.5.3 Limitations

All surveys have their limitations, as does this one. Firstly, due to the time and space limitations of this thesis, the number of informants is rather small. It is not likely that the participants of this study show the whole picture of attitudes and experiences of Norwegian 6th and 7th graders and teachers, since this is a case study with a limited number of participants that cannot be generalized. Still, the aim is for this study to point to important aspects of adapted education in Norwegian EFL instruction.

Another limitation to this inquiry is that it only focuses on attitudes and experiences towards ways of structuring EFL teaching. Another aspect that would have been interesting to investigate is the pupils' academic outcome of these different approaches to the structure of EFL lessons. However, this aspect falls outside the scope of the present thesis.

3.6 Ethical issues

Creswell (2012: 23) stresses the importance of ethical practices being included in all steps of a research process. This should be a primary consideration at all times, and especially in the process of data collection and data reporting it is essential that the participants cannot be identified. In this process it is also important that the informants are cited correctly, so that no one is attributed opinions other than their own. Dörnyei (2007: 63-64) states that ethical issues are perhaps of greater importance in qualitative research than in quantitative because data from these studies often contain personal views. Creswell (2012: 620) points to several important aspects of this:

Ethical issues in qualitative research include issues such as informing participants of the purpose of the study, refraining from deceptive practices, sharing information with participants (including your role as a researcher), being respectful of the research site, reciprocity, using ethical interview practices, maintaining confidentiality, and collaborating with participants.

Another ethical issue to take into consideration is to ask all schools and participants for consent in advance of the research process. For the current study an e-mail was first sent out to the principals of both schools, who gave their approval immediately. Similarly, the teachers who were asked to participate gave positive responses at once. They were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed, and also that no personal information would be presented through this inquiry. The pupils were asked to participate in the study by answering a questionnaire, and all pupils were positive. It was decided that there was no need to ask for the parents' consent since this was an entirely anonymous questionnaire that did not reveal any personal information and mainly focused on the pupils' attitudes.

For this thesis an approval from The Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) was not needed. NSD has an online survey⁶ one can take to identify whether the research in question needs to be reported or not. The result of this test was that there was no obligation to report this study as there was no personal information included that could make it possible to identify the participants. In addition, no names of schools, teachers or pupils are mentioned. Only the researcher listened to the audio recorded interviews, so it was not possible for anyone else to identify any of the participants through those either.

3.7 Summary of methods

The aim of this chapter has been to present and give reasons for the methods used to answer the research questions in this study. Through the selection of informants, data were collected from two primary schools that used different approaches to EFL teaching: the whole class and the differentiated groups approach. Teachers of both 6th and 7th grade from these schools were included, as well as pupils from both these levels, representing all three steps and both approaches. The reason for this selection of informants was to get a good overview of the two approaches to EFL teaching, and to have a good basis for comparison of the two approaches.

Well-established research methods of applied linguistics have been used, qualitative for the interviews and quantitative for the questionnaire, in effect resulting in a mixed methods approach. By using this approach, the results of this study are able to shed light on the issue from more than one angle.

⁶ <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/meldeplikttest>

4 Findings

This chapter presents the data gathered from the teacher interviews and the questionnaires. The information collected from the nine teacher interviews is presented first, followed by the data gathered through the questionnaires answered by the pupils.

4.1 Qualitative findings, teacher interviews

To ensure the informants' anonymity, the teachers are, as mentioned above, referred to with numbers according to which school they worked at. The three teachers for the 6th grade at School A are referred to as Informants A1, A2, A3 and the two teachers for the 7th grade at the same school as Informants A4 and A5. The two teachers for the 6th grade at School B are referred to as Informants B1 and B2 and lastly the two for the 7th grade as B3 and B4. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one teacher strongly preferred to do the interview in Norwegian. Therefore, the interview with Informant B1 has been translated by the researcher as accurately as possible. The interview with Informant B2 was mostly done in English, but also here the informant spoke some Norwegian. The Norwegian parts of that interview have also been translated for this presentation.

The presentation of the findings in this section follows the order of the questions in the interview guide. For the presentation of the data, the questions in the interview guide have been grouped into four main categories:

- Background information
- Adapted education and school practices
- Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education
- The structure of EFL teaching

The interviews are not analyzed in detail; the focus is mainly on the teachers' opinions and beliefs about adapted education and the two learning approaches, as well as their impression of their pupils' experience of adapted education.

4.1.1 Background information

The aim of the questions in the first of the four main sections was to get an overview of the teachers' education, experience and background, as well as the number of pupils in their class/group and the teachers' experience with the use of the *Stairs* Textbook and Workbook. Information about the background of the participants provides a context for the answers to the questions in the remaining three sections. In order to obtain such information, the following questions were asked. The numbers follow those from the interview guide (see Appendix A):

- 1) For how long have you been teaching English?
- 2) What grade do you teach?
- 3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?
- 4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)
- 5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

Answers from the first question showed that the teaching experience of the teachers that were interviewed varied from one to 15 years, an average of approximately 5 years. Most of the groups or classes that the teachers taught consisted of 20-25 pupils. At School A, especially for 6th grade, the number varied throughout the year as pupils moved between groups according to what step they worked at. The smallest group was the step 1 group in 7th grade at School A, which consisted of only four pupils. At School B the number of pupils was constant throughout the year as they had all English lessons in their original classes. The classes at School B were smaller than the groups at School A, at least for the 6th grade. This was to be expected, as School A was a larger school than School B.

While the teachers had different kinds of education, they all had some kind of teacher education. At School A all five teachers had gone through the general teacher education; however, one of them had no credits in English. One of the five teachers (Informant A5) at this school was in addition also completing a master's degree in English.

At School B the teachers had various levels of teacher education. Informant B2 was for instance educated in Germany, where the teacher education program is different from the

one in Norway. She was mainly a German teacher and did not have any education in English. The teacher that was in the same class and functioned as a teacher's assistant had been through the general Norwegian teacher education. The third teacher at this school had a master's degree in English, and the fourth teacher was nearing completion of his master's thesis at the time the interviews in this study were conducted.

Of the nine teachers, five had credits in English, varying from 30 credits to a master's degree. In Norway, all teachers with a general teacher education were able to teach all subjects at primary school at that time, even if they did not have any credits in the subject. This means that eight of the nine teachers were qualified to teach English in 6th and 7th grade.

When asked about how they liked the *Stairs* Textbook and Workbook the teachers seemed more or less satisfied. At the same time, many of them brought up some elements that could have been improved. The two step 1 teachers at School A thought the texts for step 1 were too easy, that they were short and that they lacked facts. Similarly, another teacher mentioned that also the step 3 texts were not challenging enough for some pupils and that he would have to supplement with books for silent reading, giving the most able learners access to authentic literature. Another teacher at step 3 also experienced that the Textbook did not have enough texts. Two teachers at School A believed that *Stairs* was outdated. Both schools had the first edition of *Stairs*, and these two teachers wanted to update to the second edition, which was published in 2014. Informant A5 explained: "I've had a look at the newest versions, and they are much more relevant in themes and everything to what you would expect today".

Even though the teachers talked mostly about the Textbook, since that was the book that was used the most, five teachers specifically mentioned their dissatisfaction regarding the Workbook. Informant A1 wanted more grammar exercises and Informant A2 missed exercises for developing oral skills. Informant B2 experienced that many of the exercises in the Workbook were too superficial, only scratching the surface of the different themes. Informants B3 and B4 expressed their dissatisfaction with the Workbook by stating that they did not really like it at all. They reported that they kept finding errors and mistakes in this book and spent much time on making additional exercises for their pupils. Overall, the majority of the teachers seemed satisfied with the Textbook and *Stairs*' division into the three steps.

4.1.2 Adapted education and school practices

The intention behind the questions in this section was to reveal the teachers' understanding of adapted education, how they had worked with it through their education and at their school. In addition, some of these questions were included to get information about how the teachers practiced and implemented adapted education and differentiation in their own teaching:

- 6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?
- 7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?
- 8) How do you work with adapted education at your school?
- 9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?
- 10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?
- 11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?
- 12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

Question 6 was about how the teachers understood the term adapted education. There seemed to be an overall agreement among the teachers about this concept, which also relates to the definition by Mikalsen and S rheim (2012: 191) given in chapter 2 (see p. 12). The general consensus may be illustrated by these examples:

It is about getting the most out of every pupil at their own level (Informant A1)

I think it means to give each pupil instruction on his level (Informant A2)

Make sure that everybody gets something that is adapted to their level (Informant A3)

Working with things that the pupils understand, so that they can have a progress, and feel that they are learning something (Informant A4)

Teaching the pupils in a way that they will understand (Informant A5)

I think it is a tool that can be used to ensure that everyone can experience success when working with the curriculum (Informant B1)

Adapted education is for me that you of course take care of all the pupils in your class and that you make lessons that are good for everybody (Informant B2)

I think that adapted education is education for everyone, that fits everyone, and that is challenging and educative and developing for everyone, based on their abilities (Informant B3)

Informant B4 had a definition along the same lines. He said that “As far as I’m concerned I think that each pupil should be met at their level in the classroom”. This seems like a straightforward definition; however, he also added: “Which is extremely hard to do. Because if you focus on the strong pupils it is easy to forget the weak ones and vice versa. So it is really hard to focus on everyone at the same time”. From these examples one can see that there seems to be a common understanding of what adapted education is, which mainly concerns instruction that is modified and adapted to all pupils, so that they are all sufficiently challenged.

The teachers did not give clear answers to whether they experienced that their school had a common understanding of the term adapted education. It appeared as if they all *believed* that their school had a common understanding of the term in theory, but that the practices within the schools and among the teachers were not necessarily the same. In theory the schools had a common understanding, but not necessarily in practice. Informant A1 described it in this way: “I think the school at least believes it does. But it is not really practiced in the same way all across the board”. Informant B4 also shared this view: “I think the leaders have a pretty good idea of how they want it. But if you visit several classrooms you would see a wide specter⁷ of differentiation, so I don’t think we are on the same level, on the same page as teachers”.

When asked how they worked with adapted education at the schools, all the teachers reported that this was not something they worked a lot with in the school as a whole. At the same time, they were under the impression that there was a basic agreement at the schools regarding the meaning and importance of adapted education. Informant A2 stated that in her experience the school did not have a common policy on how to organize the education and division into groups, rather the teachers who worked at the same grade would make such decisions together. This was also emphasized by teachers at School B: “We don’t talk about it that much, but I talk to the English teacher in the other class” (Informant B4). This informant

⁷ Here meaning “range”

also stressed that the main focus of adapted education mostly was on the weak pupils. At both schools it appeared as if the administration left solving the issue of adapted education to the teachers, either in the respective classrooms or at the different grades.

Five of the nine teachers that were interviewed for this study could not recall having had any courses or lectures about how to practice adapted education, neither in their education nor at work. The rest of the teachers gave vague answers. Informant A3 could remember some courses at the University and some at her work place as well: “some teachers have been to for example a math course and afterwards they present it to the rest of the group and show examples”. Informant B2 said: “Of course a little bit, but we are always focusing on the weakest and not on the strongest [...] adapted education for the weakest, but not for everybody”. Informant A2 had a similar experience “No, we only had a few lessons about pupils with special needs, that need special education”, further she explained: “We didn’t learn about adapted education for the majority, or the strong pupils. The lesson plan at that time didn’t focus on the majority and the strong pupils. That was L97”. Although this was her experience of the education, she was under the impression that there was a change going on at her school, from having the main focus on the weak pupils, to also focusing on the stronger ones. One example that she gave in this context was to provide the stronger pupils with more advanced week plans.

Some of the teachers mentioned that adapted education and differentiation had sometimes been mentioned in a lecture, like for instance Informant B3: “No I don’t think so. Maybe a little bit on the University, but not at my school as a course or anything”. To the same question Informant B4 replied: “No, actually not. Often they just tell you ‘You have to teach differentiated’, and then it is up to you”. From these examples it appears that all the teachers had a clear idea of what adapted education is, and knew that they were supposed to practice it in their classrooms, but at the same time the schools did not give any clear explanations and directions as to *how* they were to implement this.

When asked how the teachers implemented adapted education in their own teaching, Informant A1 pointed out that in his opinion there were certain subjects where this was easier to do compared to others. Both mathematics and English were mentioned here, due to the simple fact that the textbooks in these subjects were divided into three levels: “it is mostly in English and mathematics because those are the easiest subjects to do it in as the books are already divided into three sections”. In his opinion differentiation was not as easy to implement in subjects such as religion. In addition to the separated groups according to step at

School A, Informant A2 mentioned that she would also differentiate within the step 2 group that she taught. This was because she knew that the pupils were different within this group as well, for instance she said: “sometimes I have to give some extra work for those who finish first”.

One way of differentiating at School A was to move pupils up or down a step/group if they saw that pupils struggled or did not find the teaching challenging enough. Informant A4, who taught four pupils at step 1 in 7th grade at School A, felt that differentiating was not a problem with such a low number of pupils. Informant A5 said that she tried to differentiate through different teaching methods within her step 3 group, and that she would always prepare extra exercises to give pupils more challenge if needed.

A method that Informant B1 used to adapt was to place the weakest pupils in special groups during certain lessons every week. Together with these pupils she would then go through themes and grammar that the whole class was going to learn about a week later. This way she made sure that the weak pupils were one step ahead compared to the rest of the class when they went through the same themes with the whole class. This was a method of adapting the instruction to the weak pupils’ needs, so that they would be better prepared and have the possibility to contribute more in a whole class setting.

Informant B2 had a very strong focus on the weakest pupils in her class, as she explained “Very often all the pupils do the same [...] I am thinking that even if the weakest pupils don’t understand everything, at least they understand *some*, and it is good for them to be there”. One way that she would differentiate was that she used acting as a teaching method, giving the pupils roles and lines according to their proficiency level.

Informant B4 mentioned the strongest pupils specifically and explained that “So some of my pupils are barely at step 1, and have trouble making a sentence. And others read fluently English crime literature, authentic literature. So it is really hard to try to teach all of them at the same time, in the same classroom”. A solution to this problem was that he would give the step 3 pupils more authentic literature to read, and divide the pupils into groups of step 1 and 2 when reading texts, which in his experience worked well. Informant B3 used the same method when it came to reading. She had three teacher assistants in her classroom who had the responsibility for three very weak pupils in her class. Another way she would differentiate was the way she gave written and oral feedback to her pupils: “I can give more advanced response to the step 3 students, more challenging response [...] Just more than you would do to a step 2 student”.

All the teachers at School A mentioned in one way or another that they found it easier to implement adapted education in the English subject compared to other subjects. Many of them reported that there were often clearer differences between pupils in this subject. Informant A1 explained that “I find that it is easier. Like I said because of the books that we have. I find that it is much easier to discover the differences between the pupils in English as well”.

Another aspect emphasized by many of the teachers in this context was *Stairs*' division into steps. Informant A2 stated this explicitly: “I think that it is easy because of *Stairs* [...] If we didn't have *Stairs*, but another textbook that didn't divide in that way, it would have been much more difficult”. Informant A5 also stated that the division into groups made the differentiation easier to carry out for the teachers. She said: “it is a lot easier for me as a teacher to find suitable material like books, texts, clips, anything that I can use”. She compared the system of division into steps in separated groups at 7th grade with a 5th grade class she taught where they had English lessons in their original classes: “so that means I have pupils from step 1 and under, to step 3 and above, because they are very strong. So it is a lot harder for me to cover it all”. One of the consequences of this was that “In order to make sure that everyone understands, the strongest pupils lose out because they are not challenged enough. So I find that a lot more difficult”.

At School B a slightly different view existed. Here teachers seemed to think that it was more challenging to implement adapted education in the English lessons. Informant B2 explained that this had to do with time: “If you want to do something very thorough, then you never get time for anything”. In her opinion it was very time consuming to get through to every pupil in the classroom. This informant said that she enjoyed teaching the whole class together, but at the same time she felt as though she needed more lessons in a week to have time for the adaption she wanted. Also Informant B3 and Informant B4 experienced the implementation of adapted education in English to be challenging. They both reported that English was a subject where pupils often had very different proficiency levels and thus it was challenging to reach all of them. Informant B4 explained this: “so if I try to adjust my level of English to step 3, then step 1 will not understand anything. And if I speak so that step 1 understands me, step 3 think it is boring because the information gets repeated and it is too obvious. So that is a challenge”. Similarly, Informant B3 expressed: “I just think that the difference between the step 1 and step 3 is just so much greater than in other subjects”. She believed that one of the reasons for this could be pupils' various contact with the language

through for instance video games, movies and the Internet. Informant A1 shared this belief, that some pupils had more input than others. The time issue and great variation in proficiency levels among the pupils were the main challenging aspects reported by teachers at School B.

Various answers were given by the teachers when they were asked how they decided which step the pupils should work at. Some of the teachers, especially for 6th grade at School A, mainly based the decision on the tests for each chapter. Here there seemed to be a frequent movement between the groups and the aim was most often to get pupils to work at a higher step. However, Informant A3 explained that she had once moved a student down one step due to poor efforts with homework and glossaries. In 7th grade at the same school the pupils would change groups less often. Here it appeared as though the pupils had more influence on the decision, and they were always encouraged to work towards a higher step if possible. Teachers from both 6th and 7th grade at School A said that when the pupils were first divided into steps, they would look at results from previous chapter tests or from the national tests before deciding which step would fit the individual pupil. A conversation with the pupils' former English teacher was common as well.

Informant B2 explained that she usually asked her pupils, and that they already were assigned to a step when she took over as an English teacher in the 5th grade. She said she looked at their written work and listened to them read. Also, she explained that she would adjust exercises to each pupil, and for instance try to give them exercises from a higher step than they usually worked at if possible. Informant B4 said that he always included the pupils in the decision, but that he had said no to one pupil who wanted to move from step 3 to step 2 because the pupil thought it would be easier for him. Informant B3 said that her pupils could more or less choose; however, choosing to move down a step was not really the pupil's choice alone. At School B the teachers also stated that they would talk to the former English teacher of their class about steps.

4.1.3 Teachers' perception of how pupils experience adapted education

The questions in this section were included in the interview guide in order to investigate the teachers' perception of how the students experienced adapted education. Questions 14 and 15 were also incorporated to address the issue of whether dividing pupils according to level of ability might compromise the pupils' feeling of inclusion. The answers here are particularly

interesting to consider in connection with the answers to the pupils' questionnaires, so as to see whether there is coherence between the teachers' view and the pupils' answers from the questionnaires.

- 13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)
- 14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?
- 15) What kind of challenges may occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges may occur by not doing it?

All the teachers who answered the interview seemed to be under the impression that their pupils did experience adapted education, and that the instruction fit them. Informant A1 thought that his pupils at step 1 in 6th grade appreciated and benefitted from the division into groups according to steps:

I think they benefit from it greatly because when you are in a regular class you get the pupils who aren't really good in English, they will just try to hide away because they feel embarrassed speaking up. They will probably avoid doing tasks because they know if they do the tasks they might have to answer out loud [...] but when they are in with their own peers it is easier to speak up because they know that everybody there is at their level. I think they enjoy it, it is easier for them. Definitely.

He experienced that his pupils seemed more comfortable with peers at their own level. Here they had no chance to hide away, and would have to raise their hand and speak up. In addition, his impression was that pupils felt more comfortable doing that with classmates who worked at the same step. In this setting they would not compare themselves with others who had a higher proficiency level in English. This teacher explained that the pupils also challenged each other in the step 1 group.

Informant A2 pointed to a social aspect of the division, namely that it was good for the pupils to work with others that were not in their original classes in certain subjects. Her experience was that some pupils had been skeptical to the division when it was initiated at the

beginning of the 5th grade, but that they all quickly saw the positive aspects of it. Informant A3 shared her colleague's opinion and explained that: "I think that their confidence is better because they are more at the same level. And also, we have more pupils on step 3 than step 1, which means that the teacher can help them more on step 1, than if they were a full class". Informant A4 thought that the pupils experienced adapted education to a larger degree with the physical division: "I think that our pupils in 7th grade experience it because it was a very clear difference from a whole class of 27 or 28, and they were all so different". In the parent-teacher meetings she had also talked to both parents and pupils about this and stated: "each one of them said that they liked this much better". Informant A5 at the same grade felt that the pupils experienced that the teaching fit them. More so than in the 5th grade where she also taught English, but in whole class:

Because we usually get feedback quite soon if they are not happy, for instance if the homework is too easy. But I have never, yet at least, experienced that working the way we do on 7th grade. But I do notice that in 5th grade some people are not happy if they get homework that is too easy or things like that.

In 6th grade at School B the teachers seemed very preoccupied with the pupils being together as a class. Sometimes the step 1 pupils would be taken out in small groups, so Informant B1 stated that those pupils probably experienced adapted education in that way. Informant B2 believed that the pupils experienced adapted education due to the different steps. Informant B4 also focused on the weakest pupils as he explained: "I hope they experience that the education is adapted to them. Especially the weaker pupils get extra help, extra sheets [...] I think that they appreciate this extra help". Similarly to the other teachers, Informant B3 also thought that her pupils had a positive experience with steps and adapted education:

I think they do experience it, and I think they have a healthy way of looking at it because it is not like there is this feeling that step 3 is really good and step 2 is really bad you know. At least I haven't heard them saying things like "oh, you are stupid because you are on step 1" or anything.

Question 14 asked the teachers how they made sure that their pupils felt a sense of inclusion and belonging in the English lessons. This question was included to reveal whether or not the teachers thought that division into steps or separated groups could compromise the pupils' feeling of belonging. Informant A1 was convinced that the step 1 pupils he taught had a

stronger sense of inclusion and belonging in the step 1 group, and that it was easier for them to contribute to what was happening in the lessons. Informant A2 experienced that when they started dividing the pupils into physically separated groups according to steps, all the pupils wished to be at step 3. However, after she had explained that it was important to work at a step that fit them and not think about groups, it had not been a problem at all.

Some of the teachers gave examples of specific activities they would do with their class or group in order to create a good social environment in the classroom. Informant A3 explained that she used her computer to choose where the pupils should sit, so that they sat with different pupils every week. This way everybody had to work with a different classmate every week. The same teacher also talked about teaching English in whole class vs. teaching English in differentiated groups: “in whole class you might have to work with somebody that is not at your level [...] this can make them⁸ feel excluded, because they do not have as much in common, they do not have the words to express themselves”. In her opinion pupils would actually feel less included within a whole class approach, because then they might compare themselves to others to a larger degree.

Informant A4, who taught a group of four step 1 pupils at the 7th grade believed that her pupils felt very safe together. They had been reading and talking more in the lessons after they went away from the whole class approach. The year before they had been much more quiet, and almost did not contribute at all. In the interview she said that “Now they raise their hands, speak and read”. Nor did informant A5 think that this was an issue in her group. The reason for this was that her group consisted of the same number of pupils as the original classes. Also these pupils were used to switching groups, so she did not experience that there were any problems with the pupils not feeling included in the group.

One thing that they did in the 6th grade at School B to heighten the weak pupils’ sense of inclusion, was to prepare the step 1 pupils for next week’s lessons. As was also the case in question 10 (see p. 54), Informant B1 replied that taking the weakest pupils out in a group of their own in order to go through the curriculum for the following week, was a way of ensuring the weak pupils’ sense of inclusion when they were together with the rest of the class. Informant B2 who taught both 6th grade classes often focused on the same text for all the pupils so that everybody should feel included in the same activity. Both these teachers’ focus

⁸ The weak pupils

when talking about inclusion was on the weaker pupils. Informant B3 explained that sometimes the class would go through texts from all steps together, and other times they would all read the same text: “so that we talk about the same theme. In that way they can all join in on the conversation and not feel like we are talking about something completely different from what they read this week”. She also added that this was challenging to do every week because “*Stairs* is not made like that”. The teacher of the other 7th grade, Informant B4, mentioned specific activities that he did with the whole class, such as playing games. Here he mixed pupils from steps 1, 2 and 3 together in groups, so they would have to cooperate across steps.

Question 15 was: “What kind of challenges may occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (in relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges may occur by not doing it?”. To this question Informant A1 replied that by not differentiating “the weakest ones get left behind and the strongest ones get held back a bit”, explaining the effects on both the weak and the strong pupils if teaching is not differentiated to the needs of the pupils.

One follow-up question aimed to reveal whether the teachers had experienced that pupils felt uncomfortable in being divided into steps. Informant A1 explained:

No, that is the funny thing. I haven’t experienced that at all. But it is important to talk about that, so that they know that the groups aren’t set in stone, they can move up if they do well and they can move down if they don’t. It *could* be a problem, but I haven’t experienced it as a problem at all. And even the parents have told me that they enjoy watching their kid actually enjoying English for the first time.

Informant A5 also shared this view. She said that one always worries about the social issue, especially in relation to the weaker students, but at the same time: “I actually find that we worry too much about that, because it is usually not a problem. They accept it”. In fact, none of the teachers had any negative experience with dividing the pupils into steps. It seemed as though all the pupils understood that people have different needs and levels of proficiency. In addition, all the teachers knew that the social aspect of dividing could be a possible challenge, and spent time explaining and talking to the pupils about it.

Time was an issue that several teachers mentioned. The teachers at School A said that teaching a whole class of three different steps often led to situations where the pupils had to listen to for instance homework or texts that did not concern them directly, but which was relevant for one of the other steps. Another disadvantage of not differentiating was that the

pupils would perhaps compare themselves to others to a larger extent if the same was taught to everyone, and thus creating bigger differences.

Informant A4, who taught the four step 1 7th graders, pointed to both positive and negative aspects of differentiation in separated groups based on steps. On the one hand, she experienced that her pupils more often felt a sense of mastery and that they dared to participate more in the small group, which was not the case when they were in a whole class. On the other hand, she sometimes missed the opportunity to have the weak pupils interact with and learn from the stronger pupils.

In 6th grade at School B the focus seemed to be mostly on teaching the same for all the pupils, so that everybody was included in the same activity. Informant B1 explained that “the main idea is that as much as possible is supposed to be for everyone”, but at the same time the teachers paid extra attention to the pupils that they knew would struggle. The other teacher at the same grade said that when planning and conducting lessons, the most challenging thing was to take the strongest pupils into consideration: “the thing I think is most difficult is to not forget about the very strong pupils. Because the weak pupils take very much space and I often worry that the others are just sitting there wondering what to do”. Informant B4 pointed to a central disadvantage of teaching the same to all pupils: “If you teach the same to all pupils, then probably one third will not understand and one third will be bored because it is too easy for them. So it is really important to differentiate, I think”. Informant B3 summed up these aspects: “I think that there is always the possibility of some of them feeling left out or feeling like they are not good enough if they are on step 1. I also think that one of the greatest challenges is time. Because you are supposed to teach three different levels at once”.

4.1.4 The structure of EFL teaching

The questions in the fourth and last part of the interview guide mainly aimed at revealing attitudes towards the two ways of structuring EFL teaching in question.

- 16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)
- 17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

All the teachers at School A stated that they preferred the way that EFL teaching was structured at their school. Reasons given for this were that it benefitted both the pupils and the teachers. Informant A1 explained: “I find that the pupils enjoy being in the differentiated groups”, and also for his own sake he found it positive: “For me it is much easier, because I can just focus on the one group compared to a whole class situation, where you have to focus on everybody”. Informant A5, who also taught English in 5th grade talked about her experience with both teaching approaches: “I have to say that I definitely prefer the way we do it in 7th grade because of course you meet the students where they need you to be, and you find material that suits to them”, in this setting she also stated: “I think they are all more taken care of, and met where they need to be met”, indicating that the EFL lessons were more adapted to each step. As for her own job, she said that: “You don’t waste a lot of time dividing your attention between the three steps. Also of course it is a great time saver”.

Informant B1 expressed that she was satisfied with the way they organized the step 1 pupils in a smaller group, preparing them in advance each week. Informant B2 said that she did not feel like she had any basis for comparison, since she had never been in an EFL classroom except from her own. One problem that she experienced was the issue of time when dealing with three steps at the same time: “we need more time! That is the only thing. I don’t think that we can do it in another way. We have to take care of step 1, 2 and 3 the whole time. [...] Only three lessons a week are not enough”. Informant B4 stated that if it was up to him he would have wanted to divide the pupils in the same manner as School A: “If I could have chosen I would have divided them into three classes, one step 1 class, one step 2, one step 3 with one teacher for each”. Informant B3 also expressed her concern with the whole class EFL instruction as she said: “I think that it is not beneficial for everybody. There is always someone who is losing. Well, not always, but in many cases”. At the same time she also mentioned a positive effect of this approach: “But also it is good, for instance in oral activities, there are always mixed groups so they can always lean on, learn from and help each other”.

None of the teachers at School A wanted to teach English in another way than what they were doing. They all preferred the divided groups; nevertheless, some issues were brought up. Informant A1 said that one thing he would have liked to change was the size of his step 1 group. He explained that his pupils needed more help compared to for instance the step 3 group, where the pupils were able to manage on their own to a larger degree. He did

not always feel like he could help all his pupils when they needed it and explained: “Because when you get like 20 pupils or more, and just one teacher, it is almost impossible to help everybody, and to cope”. Another issue that was mentioned in relation to question number 17 was that the pupils could benefit from mixing with the other steps. Informant A3 and her colleagues would try to make all the pupils at 6th grade do things together sometimes, such as one time when they made a mini library.

At School B, the teachers did not agree to the same extent. Informant B1 was satisfied with the way they structured the lessons for the step 1 pupils, like she also mentioned in her answer to the previous question. She did not have any thoughts about whether the rest of the pupils should be divided into separate groups as well.

Informant B2 mentioned the issue of time also in the last question of the interview guide. She expressed that if she had more time she would be able to take better care of her strongest pupils: “I think the way it is now is good, something for everyone. I could just wish that we had more time. And if we had had more time I could take much better care of the step 3 pupils I think”. She was very preoccupied with the pupils being together as a class. When asked whether or not she thought dividing her pupils into three separate groups could have been a possible approach she was skeptical, because then the pupils would not be together as a class. She explained that the reason for this was her experience with the German school system. In Germany, she said, pupils were divided into different schools according to ability. In her opinion this was not a good system at all, and she thought that Norway had come such a long way in the right direction compared to Germany. She was afraid that division in one subject would be a step in the wrong direction. Also, she stressed that pupils learn from each other, and that that was something she wanted in her classroom.

Informants B3 and B4 did not share the same view as they both believed that differentiated groups in EFL teaching would benefit the pupils. Informant B3 explained:

I think that the students would benefit more from being divided into three groups. If we were three teachers we could have had three levels and that would have been much more beneficial for the students, and also for the teachers. And we would have had time to do so much more.

Informant B4 pointed to a challenge if they were to move over to the differentiated group approach: “The challenge on our school is the money. Because you need salary for one extra teacher”.

4.1.5 Major findings from the interviews

Through this section the teachers' views and practices regarding adapted education have been presented. The answers to the questions in the first of the four sections of the interview guide provided the background information about the teachers. The second section of the interview guide revealed the teachers' understanding and practices of adapted education, which showed that they all had a more or less common understanding of what adapted education is. In addition, it was clear that none of the schools had clear guidelines as to how the teachers should implement adapted education in the classroom. In the third section the answers from the teachers showed that they all believed their pupils experienced adapted education, and also, they gave several examples on how they made their pupils feel included in their class or group. When the teachers were asked which of the two teaching approaches they preferred, all teachers at School A said they favored the differentiated groups approach. In addition, two of the four teachers at School B did the same.

Throughout this whole section on the qualitative findings of this research, the results have pointed to different aspects of the two teaching approaches; differentiated groups and whole class instruction. The teachers have mentioned both advantages and disadvantages of the two.

4.2 Quantitative findings, pupil questionnaires

In this section the results from the pupil questionnaires are presented. The questionnaire was originally conducted in Norwegian to ensure that all the pupils understood the questions; however, for presentation purpose in this chapter the questions have been translated into English. The original questionnaire that was handed out to the pupils is found in Appendix C. The majority of the questions were closed-ended and written in a simple manner to avoid any misunderstandings. The different questions are dealt with in turn, and the results from the two schools are compared throughout the chapter, in order to be able to study and compare answers from pupils being taught in both whole class and differentiated groups in their EFL instruction.

4.2.1 Question 1

The first question simply asked the pupils which step they worked at, in order to be able to see the pupils' step in connection to their answer to the other questions in the questionnaire.

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
School A	18 (16%)	40 (35%)	55 (49%)
School B	16 (23%)	31 (45%)	22 (32%)

Figure 2: Questionnaire, Question 1, Schools A and B

Of the 182 pupils who participated in the questionnaire 34 pupils worked at step 1, 71 at step 2 and 77 at step 3. Figure 2 shows the number of pupils at each step at the two schools, both in actual figures and percentages. It shows that School A had a lower percentage of pupils working at step 1, and a higher percentage of pupils working at step 3 compared to School B, while School B had the highest percentage of pupils working at step 2.

4.2.2 Question 2

The second question in the questionnaire consisted of four statements with graded answers in the form of a Likert scale. The pupils were asked to decide to what degree they agreed to these statements by choosing between these alternatives: “disagree”, “slightly disagree”, “slightly agree” and “agree”. These were the statements that aimed to investigate how the participants found their EFL instruction:

- a) I enjoy the English subject
- b) The English instruction suits me (not too easy and not too difficult)
- c) I am motivated for working in the English subject
- d) My teacher uses varied teaching methods in the English instruction

Statement a) aimed to reveal the pupils’ general attitude towards the English subject. Statements b) and c) were devised in order to ascertain whether the pupils thought that their EFL instruction fit them and also how motivated they were. Motivation in the English subject could be an indication of whether they felt that the education was adapted to them. The final statement was included in order to investigate whether the pupils experienced that their teachers used varied teaching methods, as this is often recognized as a way of differentiating instruction. The following results were collected from the 113 pupils at School A:

Statement	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree
a) I enjoy the English subject	1 (1 %)	4 (4 %)	17 (15 %)	91 (80 %)
b) The English instruction suits me (not too easy and not too difficult)	2 (2 %)	5 (4 %)	43 (38 %)	63 (56 %)
c) I am motivated for working in the English subject	3 (3 %)	1 (1 %)	32 (28 %)	77 (68 %)
d) My teacher uses varied teaching methods in the English instruction	0 (0 %)	4 (4 %)	24 (21 %)	85 (75 %)

Figure 3: Questionnaire, Question 2, School A

The majority of pupils at School A seemed to be overall content with their EFL instruction. As seen in Figure 3, the percentage of pupils that answered “slightly agree” or “agree” is much higher compared to the two remaining alternatives. In all four statements the alternative “agree” was used by most pupils.

School B had fewer pupils choosing the alternative “agree” than School A. These are the results gathered from the 69 pupils at School B:

Statement	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree
a) I enjoy the English subject	2 (3 %)	7 (10 %)	26 (38 %)	34 (49 %)
b) The English instruction suits me (not too easy and not too difficult)	3 (4 %)	10 (14 %)	28 (41 %)	28 (41 %)
c) I am motivated for working in the English subject	2 (3 %)	12 (17 %)	36 (52 %)	19 (28 %)
d) My teacher uses varied teaching methods in the English instruction	3 (4 %)	8 (12 %)	22 (32 %)	36 (52 %)

Figure 4: Questionnaire, Question 2, School B

As seen in Figure 4 the answers at School B are more spread among the different alternatives, and the overall percentage of pupils choosing “agree” is lower than at School A on all statements. However, a division could be made between “slightly disagree” and “slightly agree”, where “slightly agree” and “agree” are considered as positive attitudes towards what is asked in the statement and “slightly disagree” and “disagree” are considered to reflect negative attitudes. With a division like this, one can see from Figures 3 and 4 that the vast majority of pupils at both schools had a positive attitude towards all four statements, even though the percentage is slightly higher at School A.

To get a clearer overview of the answers from the two schools, all statements in Question 2 are presented through separate diagrams in the following, comparing the results from both schools, and showing the relative figures for each statement.

Statement a) “I enjoy the English subject”

The first statement asked the pupils to what degree they enjoyed the English subject. This statement was included in order to reveal their general attitude towards the English subject. In reply to this statement, the answers in Figure 5 were collected from the two schools:

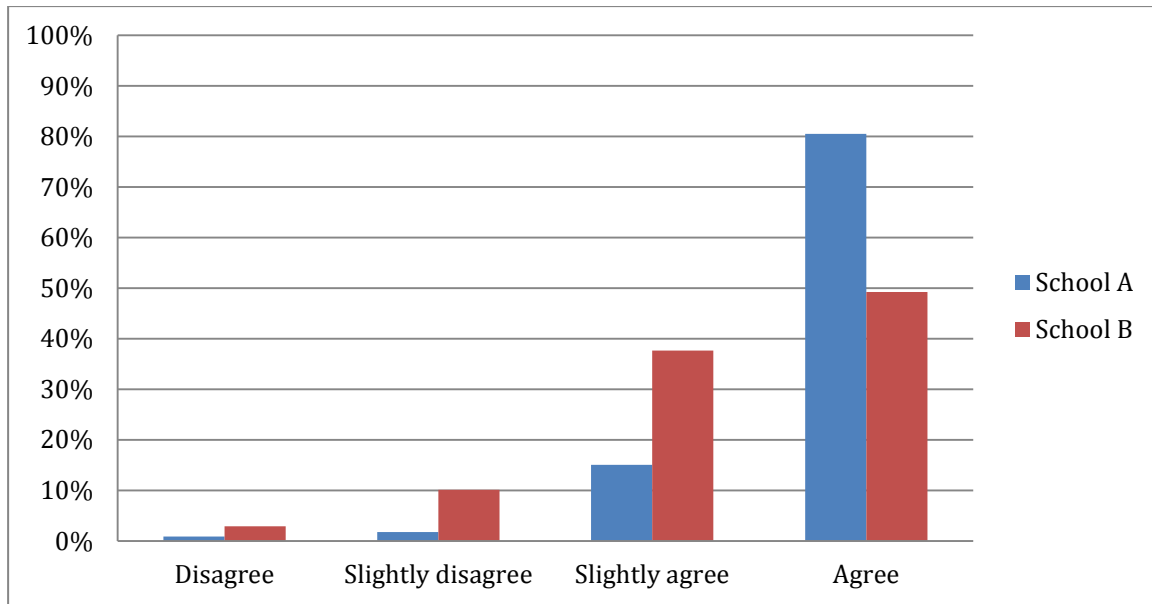


Figure 5: Questionnaire, Question 2, statement a) "I enjoy the English subject", Schools A and B.

Looking at School A, as many as 81 % of the pupils said that they agreed to this statement. Additionally, combining the two alternatives that reflect a positive attitude, 96 % of the pupils agreed or slightly agreed that they enjoyed the English subject. In comparison, at School B 87 % of the pupils agreed or slightly agreed to the same, leaving a very low percentage of the pupils choosing the two remaining alternatives that indicate a negative attitude.

Statement b) "The English instruction suits me (not too easy and not too difficult)"

The second statement asked to what degree the pupils experienced that the EFL instruction suited them. This statement aimed to reveal whether pupils thought that the instruction was too difficult or too easy, or if they felt that the instruction fit their needs.

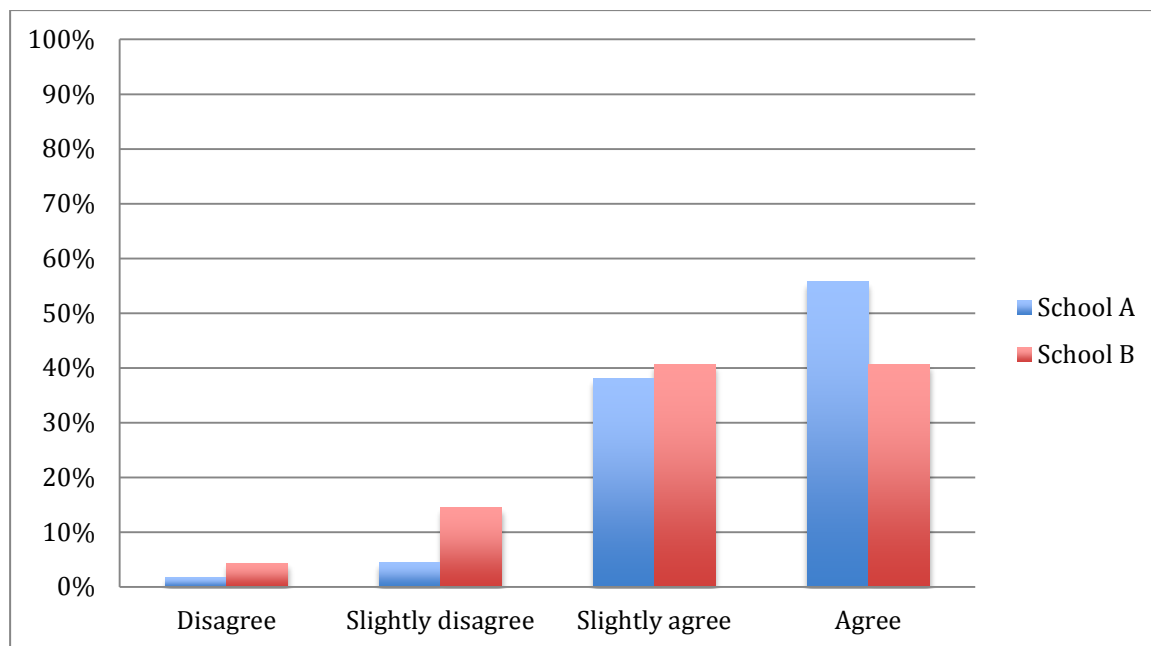


Figure 6: Questionnaire, Question 2, statement b) “The English instruction suits me (not too easy and not too difficult)”, Schools A and B

As can be seen in Figure 6, at School A 94 % of the pupils experienced (answered “agree” of “slightly agree”) that the English instruction fit them. At School B, 81 % of the pupils said the same, while nearly 20 % of them had a negative attitude. The distribution of responses between the alternatives “agree” and “slightly agree” is more or less even at School B, while there is a higher percentage of pupils choosing “agree” compared to “slightly agree” at School A.

Statement c) “I am motivated for working in the English subject”

The third statement focused on the pupils’ motivation in the English subject. As mentioned, investigating motivation in relation to the English subject can be an indication of whether or not the pupils experience that the EFL instruction fit them. Of the four statements, statement c) is the one where there is the biggest difference between the two schools:

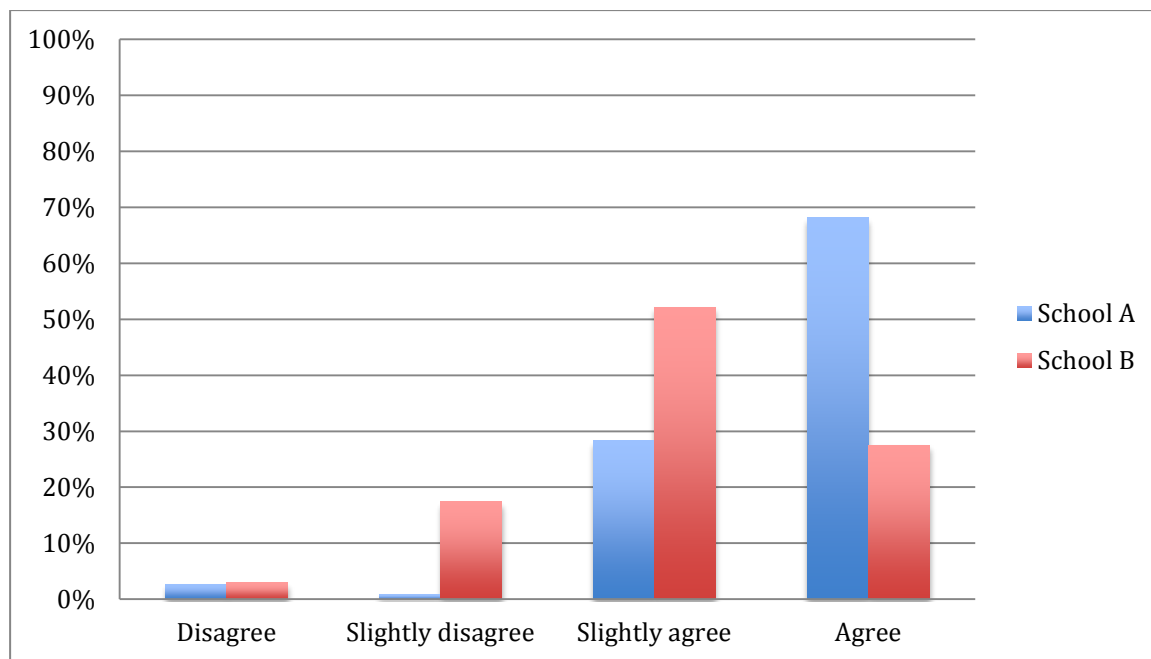


Figure 7: Questionnaire, Question 2, statement c) “I am motivated for working in the English subject”, Schools A and B

Figure 7 shows that School A also scored higher on this statement. 96 % of the pupils at School A stated that they were motivated for working in the English lessons (“agree” or “slightly agree”), while 80 % of the pupils shared this opinion at School B. Although a very high percentage of pupils from both schools had a positive attitude towards this statement, one can see a rather big difference between the two schools with regard to the answers “slightly agree” and “agree”. At School A approximately twice as many pupils said that they agreed to this statement, compared to those who slightly agreed. At School B it was the other way around, here almost twice as many answered that they slightly agreed, compared to those who agreed. Also for the alternatives that point towards a negative attitude there is a significant difference between the schools. At School B 20 % or 14 pupils out of 69 answered “disagree” or “slightly disagree”, while only 4 % or four out of 113 did the same at School A.

Statement d) “My teacher uses varied teaching methods in the English instruction”

The fourth statement aimed to reveal whether the pupils thought that their teacher used varied teaching methods. The reason for including this was, as mentioned, that varied teaching methods often have been seen as a way to adapt education. Figure 8 shows the replies to statement d):

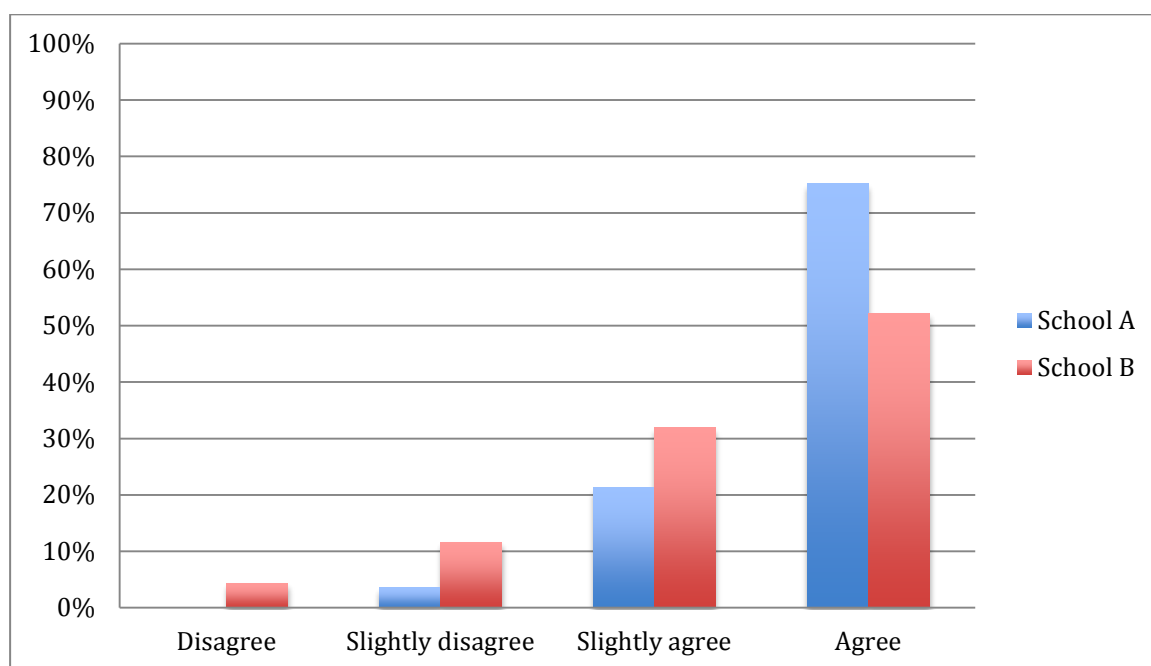


Figure 8: Questionnaire, Question 2, statement d) “My teacher uses varied teaching methods in the English instruction”, Schools A and B

Also in the last statement, an overall higher percentage of the pupils from School A ticked one of the two positive alternatives. 96 % of the pupils agreed or slightly agreed that their teacher used varied teaching approaches, while 84 % of the pupils said the same at School B.

4.2.3 Question 3

The third and final question in the questionnaire asked the pupils to choose which of the two approaches to EFL instruction they preferred. The question was “I prefer my English lessons to be done in:” and the pupils were to choose “my regular class” or “groups according to steps”. This question was included in the questionnaire to get a clear impression of what the pupils thought about the two approaches, as this was also a question in the teacher interview. It was particularly interesting to study this at School A since they had experience with both approaches. Figures 9 and 10 show the distribution of the pupils and classes/groups from Question 3:

	Whole class	Differentiated groups
6 th gr. step 1	4	10
6 th gr. step 2	4	18
6 th gr. step 3	1	22
7 th gr. step 1	0	4
7 th gr. step 2/3	3	23
7 th gr. step 3	6	18
School A total	18	95

Figure 9: Questionnaire, Question 3, School A

As seen in Figure 9, the majority of the pupils at School A preferred differentiated groups in their English lessons. At School B the difference was not as significant:

	Whole class	Differentiated groups
6A	5	8
6B	7	10
7A	4	14
7B	9	11
School B total	25	43

Figure 10: Questionnaire, Question 3, School B

Looking at the results in Figures 9 and 10: of the 182 questionnaire participants 43 pupils stated that they preferred English lessons in their original class, that is, the whole class approach that School B practiced. On the other hand, 138 pupils wanted the EFL instruction to be done through physically separated differentiated groups according to steps, the approach that School A practiced. One pupil did not answer the question.

Following Question 3 the respondents were asked to give reasons for their answer in an open-ended question asking “why do you prefer this approach?”. The pupils wrote their answers in Norwegian; these have been translated into English by the present writer for this

presentation as accurately as possible. Several reasons were given for the pupils' choices, these are presented in the next section of this chapter. The full translated responses to this question are attached as Appendix D

“I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class”

Numerous different reasons were given by the 43 pupils who said that they wanted their English lessons to be done within their original class. However, certain aspects were mentioned more often than others. One of the most frequent answers was that the pupils felt safer in their own class. An example here is a step 1 pupil from 6th grade at School A who explained: “I prefer to be with my regular class because then it is easier and we feel safer”. Similarly, a step 2 pupil from 7th grade at School B said: “Because then you have your friends around you and feel safe”. This issue had more to do with the social aspect of group division, rather than learning outcome.

Another reason that was reported by some pupils was of a more practical character. For instance, a step 2 pupil in the 7th grade at School A gave the following explanation for wanting whole class instruction: “Because then I do not have to move back and forth”.

Additionally, the aspect of pupils learning from each other across steps was emphasized by pupils both at School A and School B. One example was a step 3 pupil at 7th grade, School A: “I liked it better when we worked in our own classes, because then step 3 can teach step 1 and so on”. A step 2 pupil from 7th grade, School B shared this opinion: “Because then those at step 1 can learn from those who are at step 2, and those who are at step 2 can get better. Step 2 can get help from step 3”. These pupils pointed to an important aspect of teaching, namely learning from a more competent other.

Some pupils emphasized the obvious division between steps in their explanation, and the issue of someone feeling inferior because they were at the lowest step. A step 3 pupil from the 6th grade at School A said “I think that the English lessons should be in my regular class because then we can choose which step we want to be at and those who for instance are at step 1, they might feel poor in English because they are at the lowest step”. This pupil had possibly misunderstood the mechanism of choosing steps, but in his opinion it would be less obvious which step each pupil worked at in a whole class setting. A step 2 pupil from the same grade and school shared this view: “I think that the English lessons should be in the

pupils' classrooms because, for instance, the ones at step 1 think that they are less smart, that they don't know anything". Another pupil (step 3, 6th grade, School B) gave a reason along the same lines: "I think we should have the whole class together in the English lessons, because then there is less focus on who is working at the different steps". Several pupils that were not at step 1 mentioned things like these, showing concern for how the weakest pupils might experience being in a separate step 1 group.

Although very few step 1 pupils said anything about this aspect themselves, one step 1 pupil in 6th grade at School B mentioned it explicitly: "I believe this because we are very few at step 1 and we are only boys. It is embarrassing to be at step 1".

"I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps"

The reasons among the 138 pupils who preferred English instruction in physically separated differentiated groups according to step also varied. While some pupils who preferred whole class instruction said that they felt safer in their original class, others did not share this opinion and said that they felt more comfortable in groups according to step. Particularly interesting findings were discovered in the answers from the step 1 groups at School A. As previously mentioned, the step 1 group in 7th grade at this school consisted of only four pupils, all of them with IEPs in the English subject. While many pupils who worked at step 2 and 3 were concerned that step 1 pupils would have negative experiences with being in a separate step 1 group, the answers from this particular group indicated otherwise. All four pupils in this group stated that they preferred EFL teaching in separated, differentiated groups. Keeping in mind that these pupils had tried both teaching approaches through the last two years, this is an interesting observation. Several positive effects of the differentiated groups were reported by these pupils:

It is better in groups because it is easier to raise my hand and there is not as much noise. I get help faster (step 1, 7th grade, School A).

Because it is much easier, you get much more help and you are with pupils who are at the same step as you. You learn much more compared to when everyone is together (step 1, 7th grade, School A).

It is easier and you get more help (step 1, 7th grade, School A).

I think it is better to be divided into groups because then we get to learn more. If you do not know what the others are saying you do not learn anything. Also it is easier and you get more help (step 1, 7th grade, School A).

The first pupil appreciated the smaller group because he felt safer in that environment, thus being able to participate more in the lessons. All four pupils stated that they got more help in the smaller group, which according to them made it easier to learn English. One thing that was mentioned by teachers, pupils and in the theory chapter (e.g. Vygotsky 1978, see p. 17) is the interaction between pupils of different proficiency levels. Although this is most often seen as a positive effect of a whole class approach the fourth pupil quoted here did not think so. This might be because of the pupil's very low proficiency level in English, resulting in minimal improvement from whole class instruction, as he did not get instruction at his level.

The reasons given by these four pupils might also have to do with the size of the group. As Informant A1 (the teacher of the step 1 group at 6th grade, School A) from the teacher interview said (see pp. 61-62), he wished that the step 1 group could be divided into two, due to the high number of pupils. Because of the difference in number of pupils within the step 1 groups at School A, the step 1 pupils at 6th grade might not have the same experience of group division as the step 1 pupils at 7th grade at the same school. Still, approximately two thirds of the pupils in the 6th grade step 1 group indicated that they were more content without the stronger pupils there. One pupil said: "Because it is a bit challenging to be with those at step 2 and 3" (step 1, 6th grade, School A), and another: "I like that we are divided into steps because then it is not too difficult for me. Since most of the pupils in my class are at step 2 and 3" (step 1, 6th grade, School A). Overall, among the weak pupils who had tried both approaches the majority preferred differentiated groups.

Additionally, some step 2 pupils from both schools mentioned the experience of feeling inferior compared to the stronger pupils within the whole class: "Because then it does not take as much time to go through the reading homework and it is not as embarrassing if we say something wrong because there are fewer pupils there" (step 2, 7th grade, School B) and "I think it is best being divided into steps because then pretty much everybody is on the same level, and nobody is very much better than you. Then we do not feel like our English is weak" (step 2, 7th grade, School A).

Another aspect of group division that was reported by both teachers and pupils was the time issue. Several pupils from both schools reported this as the reason for their choice. The following examples are from pupils at School A:

Because if we had the English lessons in our own classes we would have to wait for the other steps (step 2, 6th grade, School A).

Because then you do not have to go through the step 1, step 2 and step 3 homework and use the time on that (step 3, 6th grade, School A).

I think that it is better now (divided into groups according to step) because then we get to work with pupils from the other classes and get to know them better. And also because we used a lot of time in the English lessons going through the homework of step 1, step 2 and step 3 when we had English in our original classes (step 3, 6th grade, School A).

It is better to work in groups because then you learn better and you do not have to wait for other steps to finish. That is why it is better to have groups for each step (step 2, 7th grade, School A).

As the pupils from School A had actually tried both approaches, they were able to compare the two. At the same time, many of the pupils from School B also saw time saving as an argument for group division, even though they had not tried this approach:

It takes longer for step 1 and 2 to read and write, so they kind of slow things down (step 3, 6th grade, School B).

Because then we can get started faster and we do not have to listen to all the steps (step 3, 6th grade, School B).

Because then it will be easier and then the lessons would be less split, so then we can get more done in the lessons (step 3, 7th grade, School B).

From examples such as these one can see that not having to wait for other pupils was something that a lot of pupils believed would benefit their English instruction. Some pupils also thought that a division into groups according to steps would lead to clearer instructions as to what each step should be working on. In addition, many pupils believed that not having to go through homework, texts and exercises for all steps would lead to more efficient EFL instruction. No step 1 pupils mentioned this as a reason for their choice, the step 1 pupils who preferred differentiated groups had other arguments for their choice.

Also within the arguments for group division a social aspect was emphasized. Unlike the argument for whole class instruction, which focused on the pupils having their classmates and friends around them, some pupils saw the positive effect of mixing pupils from different classes. Here the emphasis was on the pupils' enjoyment of getting to know more of their peers. One pupil explained this: "Because then we get to know more pupils in the 6th grade" (step 1, 6th grade, School A).

One effect of physically separated differentiated groups that was mentioned both by teachers and some of the pupils was the benefit of having to teach only one step instead of three. Two pupils mentioned this as a reason, taking the teachers' workload into consideration. One pupil explained that "it is easier and the teacher can teach one step instead of three (step 2, 7th grade, School A)", and another said: "Because it is easier for the teachers" (step 3, 7th grade, School A).

Some pupils simply explained that they preferred differentiated groups because that gave them instruction at the level they were at. These quotes are examples of such reasons:

Because then you get help at the level that you are at (step 2, 6th grade, School A).

I believe that I get instruction that suits me, and which is not too difficult (step 2, 6th grade, School A).

I want to get the instruction that I need. In my regular class the proficiency levels are very different (step 2, 6th grade, School A).

I think it is good to be divided into groups according to step, because then I do not need to listen to things I already understand, it is much better to learn new stuff (step 3, 7th grade, School A).

Because then for instance: those at step 1, they do not understand everything, but if we were divided into steps the teacher could perhaps explain things more often, if they do not dare to ask out loud (step 2, 7th grade, School B).

In this respect, many of the pupils, especially at School A, expressed a belief that their learning outcome improved through differentiated groups. This could be because they had experienced a difference since they went away from whole class instruction. The following quotes illustrate this:

Because then it is much easier to get better at English (step 3, 6th grade, School A).

Because it gets easier for those who are poor in English to get better, and also things can get too easy for step 3 (step 3, 6th grade, School A).

I think it is easier and I learn more (step 2, 7th grade, School A).

Then you learn much more that you did not know, because for instance step 1 might need more repetition (step 3, 7th grade, School A).

I feel that I learn more when we are in divided according to step (step 3, 7th grade, School A).

Also pupils from School B had thoughts about what it would be like to be divided into groups according to steps, and many of the same arguments were given at School B. Pupils from all

steps commented on how differentiated groups could be beneficial. One pupil said: “Because then we could learn something that everyone in the group think is challenging” (step 3, 6th grade, School B), and another: “It would be easier. It would take less time. It is more fun. More motivating” (step 2, 7th grade, School B). A third pupil mentioned group work in this setting: “Then everybody would know more or less the same. Then it would not be like one pupil from step 3 does everything, while a pupil from step 1 does very little (if we have group work)” (step 2, 7th grade, School B). The optimal outcome of group work, especially within whole class instruction is that the weaker pupils can learn from the stronger ones.

Unfortunately, this can also turn out as this pupil said, the stronger pupils ending up doing most of the work. This can for instance be because the weaker pupils do not understand the content or what to do.

4.2.4 Major trends from the questionnaire

In this section the focus has been on results from the three questions in the questionnaire answered by the pupils in 6th and 7th grade at School A and School B, and certain trends have surfaced through these results. One of the findings of importance was related to Question 2, where the four statements showed that most pupils from both School A and School B seemed overall content with their EFL instruction. However, School A scored slightly better on all statements compared to School B.

One of the most interesting findings from the questionnaire was related to Question 3, which showed that an apparent majority of all the participants wished to have their EFL lessons in differentiated groups. At School A, approximately only one fifth of all the pupils wished to have their English lessons in the original classes, yet at School B more than half of the pupils wanted the same. What is interesting to note here is that the vast majority of the pupils who had experience with both approaches preferred differentiated groups.

The reasons that the pupils gave to Question 3 pointed to several important aspects of both the whole class and differentiated groups approaches. Examples of arguments for whole class instruction were that some pupils felt safer in their original classes, some did not want to move back and forth between classrooms, pupils could learn from each other across steps, and finally, the issue of someone feeling left out. Many pupils from steps 2 and 3 were concerned

that the weaker pupils would have negative experiences with being divided into groups. However, the results showed that almost none of the step 1 pupils even mentioned this.

Arguments for group division were that some pupils might feel inferior compared to stronger pupils within whole class instruction. It could lead to more efficient English lessons when the focus was on only one step and also it could ease the teachers' workload. Some pupils said that they enjoyed getting to know other pupils and some pupils also expressed that they believed that their learning outcome improved through differentiated groups.

This concludes the results from the questionnaire. Through this section the purpose has been to look at trends among the answers gathered in the questionnaire. The next chapter contains the discussion of the different aspects focused on through this chapter, and also in relation to the research questions.

5 Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings from Chapter 4 in light of previous studies and theory on adapted education and differentiated teaching presented in Chapter 2. This analysis is done with reference to the main aim of this research; namely to answer the research questions devised to investigate teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards and experiences of adapted education and teaching approaches in Norwegian EFL teaching.

For this study three research questions were developed to investigate teachers' perception and practice, as well as pupils' experience of and attitude towards adapted education. The reason that the two schools in question were included in this study was that they used different teaching approaches in their EFL instruction. For the purpose of answering the research questions nine teachers were interviewed and 182 pupils answered the questionnaire.

The structure of this chapter follows the order of the research questions, as the three research questions are dealt with in turn. Lastly, the findings discussed through this section are brought together in the summary at the end of the chapter, where also advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches are discussed.

5.1 Research question no. 1: How are the teachers' perception and practice of adapted education?

The first research question focused on the teachers' practices and experiences of adapted education. This issue was investigated through interviews of the nine teachers who participated in the study. From the results presented in Chapter 4 it became evident that there was an overall agreement among the teachers regarding their perception of the term, and that the teachers were aware of and worked towards adapted education for their pupils in different ways.

The general consensus among the teachers was that adapted education has to do with providing the pupils with instruction that fit their level (see pp. 50-51). In this way, all pupils should experience that they are sufficiently challenged, which again should result in progress.

This is in compliance with Mikalsen and Sørheim's (2012: 202) findings where the teachers also agreed on a similar perception of adapted education.

Within the present study, the teachers' views seemed to be in accordance with the pedagogical theory of Vygotsky (1978, also see p. 17), which says that in order to adapt education to each pupil the instruction needs to be within each pupil's zone of proximal development. If a teacher succeeds with this task, the pupil will not experience the instruction as either too easy or too difficult.

None of the teachers had any difficulty describing adapted education, still; one of the teachers stated explicitly that it was extremely hard to put into practice even though he had a clear understanding of what it meant in theory. This relates to Mikalsen and Sørheim's (2012: 191) claim that adapting education is one of the most challenging tasks in the Norwegian education system. It also mirrors what Bachmann and Haug (2006) said; that adapted education is easy to define but very challenging to carry out. A reason for this could be that although Norwegian law requires teachers to tailor their instruction to their pupils' specific needs, it does not give clear clarification on how this should be accomplished. This shows that there might be a need for more specific instruction concerning *how* to adapt education, not only a requirement that it should be done.

Several teachers interviewed for this study said that there had been little or no focus on adapted education at the universities where they received their education or within the schools where they worked (see pp. 51-52). A teacher at School B expressed that the focus of adapted education was mainly on the weak pupils. All teachers believed that their school had a common understanding of the meaning and importance of adapted education; however, there was very little instruction as to how they were to implement it in the classroom. The majority of the teachers reported that a common practice within the schools was that it was up to them how they wanted to implement it. Since there, according to the teachers in this study, seems to be little focus on the practical aspect of adapted education, it was not an unexpected finding that the teachers appeared to be uncertain regarding the overall school policy. One reason for this may be that adapted education is, as Haug (2012: 18) states, a politically constructed and rather vague term. It is apparently not only challenging for the teachers to know how to implement it, but possibly also for the universities and the schools as well.

The present results showed that all the nine teachers believed that they did put adapted education into practice. At the same time, most of them stated that they found it challenging to reach all of the pupils in the classroom on a daily basis. Still, several methods were

mentioned as possible ways to ensure adaption (see pp. 52-53). At School A they used methods such as dividing pupils into physically separated groups according to steps, moving pupils between the different groups as needed, using varied teaching methods and preparing extra exercises for those who would finish first. At School B other methods were mentioned in this context: having the weakest pupils taken out in groups, having teacher assistants in the classroom, using acting and games across steps and trying to do much of the instruction for everybody at once. It appeared that several of the means used to differentiate at School B had the weakest pupils' feeling of inclusion in focus, an issue that will be further discussed in section 5.2 (see pp. 84).

When looking at practices within the two approaches to EFL instruction, another particularly interesting finding became evident through the interviews. All teachers at School A with the differentiated groups stated that they found it easier to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects (see p. 54). One of the reasons for this was the way that *Stairs* was divided into steps and the division of pupils into groups according to these steps. This was something that several teachers mentioned explicitly, as they compared this approach to the whole class approach they had practiced before. Other frequently mentioned benefits of the differentiated groups approach were that it was time saving and the teachers felt that the instruction suited the pupils better.

Contrary to this, the teachers at School B seemed to experience that it was more challenging to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects. One of the main reasons for this was the very different proficiency levels among the pupils within the classroom. These findings relate to Flemmen's (2006: 177) results. Through her study she found that due to Norwegian pupils' various contact and experience with the English language, the need for differentiation is crucial in this particular subject. Additionally, Morgan (2014) claims that differentiated instruction is getting more and more important because classrooms are getting more diverse concerning pupils' needs. This is reinforced by Informant B4's statement that there seemed to be greater differences among the pupils in English compared to other subjects (see p. 54).

None of the teachers preferred overall ability grouping, but teachers at School A argued that mathematics and English were subjects fit for instruction through differentiated groups, due to great variation in the pupils' skills in these subjects. A possible reason for this could be that certain subjects are more fit for division compared to others, and perhaps English in particular, which according to Flemmen (2006: 177) is a subject to which the

pupils have varying degrees of exposure to. A possible reason for this might be pupils' exposure to the English language through different types of media, such as the Internet and television, as Informants A1 and B3 also believed.

Seven of the nine teachers seemed content with the way that the EFL teaching was structured at their school (see p. 61). Especially at School A, the teachers were satisfied and believed that their pupils experienced adapted education to a larger degree within the differentiated groups approach compared to the whole class approach. Informants B3 and B4 wished to move away from the whole class approach practiced at School B in order to try out the differentiated groups approach. Furthermore, Informant B4 stated that this might be challenging with regard to resources within the school, since it would require one more English teacher at each grade (see p. 62). This is in accordance with Ankrum and Bean's (2008: 136) suggestion that one reason for the widespread whole class instruction is management issues. However, there were extra teachers or assistants in all EFL classrooms in 6th and 7th grade at School B, so perhaps a reorganization of the teachers at each grade could be a solution to this issue if they were to implement the differentiated groups approach at this particular school. In this way the teachers could have been assigned to one group/step each.

In response to this research question it is evident that the perception of adapted education is much the same among these informants, while the practices vary. The majority of the teachers reported a preference towards the differentiated groups approach, as they believed that approach to a larger degree fit the needs of their pupils.

5.2 Research question no. 2: How are the pupils' needs and rights to adapted education met at these schools?

The two schools that participated in this study had different approaches to EFL instruction through which they adapted the education in distinctive ways. The second research question aimed to reveal whether and how the pupils' needs and right to adapted education are met at these schools using different approaches to EFL instruction. In the following the focus is on administrative aspects and teaching approaches and whether there is any indication that one of these approaches leads to instruction being more suited to the pupils than the other.

Findings show that both schools worked with differentiating EFL instruction in some way, for instance they both used *Stairs* and its division of steps as a method. This contrasts

with the findings in Flemmen's (2006) study on English instruction in Norwegian primary schools; that neither low-ability nor high-ability pupils were given tasks adapted to their level. In her study, she also discovered that a common way to adapt instruction for weak pupils was to take them out in a small group for extra help, similar to the practice of School B.

School A and School B used different methods to ensure adapted education. As seen in regard to the first research question, all the teachers believed that they put adapted education into practice in their lessons. In addition they were all convinced that their pupils experienced adapted education and that the EFL instruction more or less fit them. An interesting finding in this context was that all the teachers from School A seemed to believe that their pupils experienced adapted education to a larger degree with the differentiated groups compared to the whole class approach that they had practiced earlier. At School B teachers reported that they believed the pupils experienced the instruction to be adapted to them through the division into steps within the whole class, and that weaker pupils experienced it through being taken out in small groups for extra help.

The teachers at School B frequently referred to the weaker pupils when they talked about adapted education. In this relation some of the teachers at this school had heavy focus on activities that the pupils could do together as a class, across steps. The reason for this was mainly their focus on all the pupils feeling included in the class as a whole, regardless of step. Another positive effect of such activities is that the weak pupils can learn from the stronger ones, which is in accordance with Vygotsky's theory that a child can develop in collaboration with a more competent peer (1978: 86).

However, within a constant heterogeneous group such as this, a possibility exists that the heavy focus on inclusion might compromise the learning outcome to some extent. The concern for the weaker pupils is often a focus among teachers, as well as in the Norwegian legislation (see p. 14). It is emphasized in the Knowledge Promotion (p. 19) that it is especially important to show concern for the weak pupils, and at the same time that there should be space and challenge for everyone. It is obviously important to care for the weak pupils; however, if teachers' main concern is on the weak pupils, what then about the stronger pupils?

This issue is investigated in OFSTED (2015), where it was found that more advanced learners did not seem to be sufficiently challenged. Also in Rønnestad's (2015) research a group of more advanced learners expressed the same. Flemmen (2006) also shares this concern as she emphasizes how important it is that the stronger pupils are not held back.

Whether the focus of including the weakest pupils leads to the stronger pupils being held back is an issue that teachers need to take into consideration.

From the present study, there is no simple solution to how this should be done. Nevertheless, the issue of inclusion towards the weak pupils and enough challenge towards the stronger pupils is perhaps more likely to be an issue within the whole class approach and is illustrated in some of the interviews. Informant B2 did for instance say that in her experience the focus in lectures or courses on adapted education was always on the weak pupils (see p. 52). When she stressed the importance of all pupils being together as a class, her focus was mainly on the weakest pupils as well, and how they would benefit from it. She also tried to use the same text for all her pupils so that everybody should feel included in the same activity. An issue in this context is how the strongest pupils experienced it if she mainly had her weakest pupils in mind when selecting texts. Furthermore she reported that she wished she had more time, and that if she did she would be able to take better care of her stronger pupils. This indicates that she felt she did not have enough time for them as the situation was.

One way of avoiding that the heavy focus on the weakest pupils' feeling of belonging might compromise the stronger pupils' learning outcome, could be the approach that School A practiced, that is, the differentiated groups according to step. Within this approach the teacher is able to focus on only one group of pupils at the time. If the teacher has a group of only high-ability pupils it is most likely easier to adapt the instruction to their needs. The same goes for a group of low-ability or average pupils. From this approach one still might end up with a problem, whether this kind of division might compromise the pupils' feeling of inclusion.

When the teachers at School A were asked how they experienced the issue of inclusion and group division, Informant A1 was convinced that the weakest pupils at 6th grade had a stronger sense of belonging within the differentiated groups (see p. 56). By not having differentiated groups the weakest pupils would in his opinion get left behind while the stronger pupils would be held back.

Informant A2 explained that she had experienced a shift at her school, from a heavy focus on the weak pupils, to also focusing on stronger pupils. One example was that some of her pupils had a more advanced week plan (see p. 52). Additionally, Informant A5 said that teachers always worried about the social issue of group division, in that someone might feel inferior if they were at the weakest group (see p. 59). Yet, neither she nor any of the other

teachers at School A had experienced that at all. Additionally, the issue of strong pupils being held back might be less problematic when these pupils are in a separate group where they are given the instruction they need to be sufficiently challenged. These findings show that the worry regarding social stratification as a consequence of ability grouping mentioned by Schumm *et al.* (2000) and Chorzempa and Graham (2006) might not be such a major concern as teachers often believe. This will also be discussed in relation to the pupils' experience in the following research question.

5.2.1 Grouping practices

In Eder's (2006) study, one of the findings was that it was common for schools to divide ability groups in a certain way that gave no teacher an "especially heavy or particularly light teaching load" (Eder 2006: 179). She also claimed that organizational constraints are likely to be a big problem within ability grouping in separate classrooms. In the interviews for the present study the teachers were asked about the size of their groups (see p. 48) and how they divided the pupils into steps (see p. 55). At School B the distribution of pupils into steps did not affect the size of the groups, since they had the whole class together. At School A however, this was an issue that the teachers needed to take into consideration. The 6th grade teachers at this school said that the size of the groups varied slightly throughout the school year, and pupils were moved between groups based on test results and effort.

In 7th grade at the same school the size of the groups was not an issue to the same extent, even though the distribution of pupils between the groups was not even at all (see p. 34). At the beginning of the school year the groups had been rather even, and the weakest group consisted of both step 1 and step 2 pupils. As the teachers saw that the step 2 pupils did not gain from being in that group they had to find another solution. This resulted in a small step 1 group, a second group consisting of 26 step 2 and step 3 pupils, and a third group with 24 step 3 pupils. The practice at this school contrasts with the findings from Eder's (2006) study. Had the size of the three groups been predetermined and locked for the entire year, many of the step 2 pupils would probably be held back in the weakest group. Had the teachers decided to have groups consisting of only one particular step, the step 3 group would have contained too many pupils for one teacher to follow up. This kind of flexibility that School A

practiced, could be a possible solution to the problem of “organizational constraints” that Eder (2006: 179) discovered.

Findings relating to this research question indicate that both schools are working with adapted education in the EFL teaching, and that none of them practiced a general “one size fits all” approach (as discussed in Schumm *et al.* 2000; Ankrum and Bean 2008). However, one might argue that the differentiated group approach could benefit a wider range of pupils compared to the whole class approach, especially in relation to the strongest pupils.

5.3 Research question no. 3: Is there a difference in how pupils experience adapted education based on how their English lessons are structured (differentiated groups or whole class)?

While the second research question (“How are the pupils’ needs and rights to adapted education met at these schools?”) focused on the practices within the schools and the teachers’ experiences, the third research question aimed to shed light on the pupils’ experiences of adapted education. The pupils’ answers to the second and third question of the questionnaire are particularly interesting to consider in this relation, as the teachers from both schools reported that they believed their pupils experienced adapted education. The second question contained four statements on attitudes towards the English subject and in the third question the pupils stated which teaching approach they preferred and why.

The findings show that there is more or less coherence between what the teachers believed and the pupils’ experience of adapted education. However, there is a slight difference between the schools. On all statements in the second question of the questionnaire School A scored higher than School B (see section 4.2.2, pp. 64-70). This means that the pupils from the differentiated groups approach to a larger extent experienced that: they enjoyed the English subject, the instruction suited them, they were motivated and that the teacher used varied teaching methods.

At School A there was a significant difference between negative and positive attitudes towards the statements. Combining the two alternatives that pointed towards negative attitudes, the results varied from 4 - 6% on the four statements. At the other end, the percentage of pupils showing positive attitudes varied from 94 - 96%. At School B the

differences between negative and positive attitudes were less extreme. The percentages that pointed towards negative attitudes towards the statements varied from 13% - 20% at this school, while positive attitudes were between 80% - 87%.

Nevertheless, it is evident that there is a clear difference in the percentages indicating negative and positive attitudes at both schools. A positive finding such as this indicates that the vast majority of pupils at both schools mainly experienced that adapted education was present. Additionally, even though the majority of pupils preferred differentiated groups, none of the approaches seem to compromise the pupils' wellbeing in the EFL classroom.

These findings can be linked to what Morgan (2014: 35) says about differentiated instruction. He stresses that differentiated teaching should be based on Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development (see p. 17). The results from this research, especially from statements b) and c), are positive in relation to whether the pupils experience that adapted education is present. Statement b) focused on whether the pupils experienced that the instruction fit them, and statement c) on their motivation in relation to the English subject. These specific results indicate that the vast majority of pupils at both schools experienced that the instruction was stimulating and within their zone of proximal development. However, a larger percentage of pupils seemed to experience this at School A compared to School B.

Also on statement d) a positive attitude is apparent as 96% of the pupils at School A and 84% at School B expressed that they experienced that their teachers used varied teaching methods in the English instruction. This indicates that the teachers made an effort to use various teaching methods, perhaps because they are aware of the diversity among the pupils. This supports what Morgan (2014: 35) states as an important aspect of differentiated instruction; that there is a need for taking various intelligences into consideration, through the use of different teaching approaches.

There might also be a connection between the answers to the different statements in the questionnaire. Perhaps pupils at School A scored higher on motivation because their teachers used more varied teaching methods, or maybe they enjoyed the English subject because of varied teaching methods. In addition, it is likely that the pupils at School A experienced that the education suited them because of the differentiated groups. All in all; in the present study, the group that was most satisfied with their English instruction was the pupils from School A, with the differentiated groups approach. In addition, there is a possibility that the reason why as many as half of the pupils at School B were pleased with

their current EFL instruction approach was because they were not fully aware of the alternative.

5.3.1 Low-ability pupils and inclusion

It is a common concern that weak pupils might have negative experiences from ability grouping. Chorzempa and Graham (2006: 529) state that those who do not support within class ability grouping in reading instruction claim that weak pupils might experience lower academic expectations, social stigmatization, as well as decrease in motivation. However, not having instruction within the pupils' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978: 86) or the flow zone, as Gustafson (2012: 19) calls it, can also lead to a decrease in motivation.

One of the most striking findings from the questionnaire concerned the weakest pupils' experience of ability grouping. It was very interesting to see their preference regarding teaching approach and following explanation (the third question of the questionnaire, see p. 75). At both schools the majority of step 1 pupils expressed that they preferred the differentiated groups approach. 14 out of 18 pupils at School A and 9 out of 16 pupils at School B stated that they wanted their English instruction to be done in differentiated groups.

One might expect that the pupils in the 7th grade step 1 group at School A would experience issues like those mentioned by Chorzempa and Graham (2006: 529). The fact that they seemed to enjoy the group division was also unexpected due to the low number of pupils in this particular group. This is because one might think that being only four pupils on step 1 in 7th grade could be experienced as embarrassing. However, the reasons given by the step 1 pupils in this particular group stand in great contrast to what Chorzempa and Graham (2006) found to be arguments against ability grouping. Apparently these four pupils in the present study had only positive experiences with being divided into steps.

Of the 14 step 1 pupils in 6th grade at School A, ten reported that they wanted EFL instruction in differentiated groups, and gave many of the same arguments. For instance, some of them felt more comfortable with peers at the same level, without the stronger pupils present.

Other findings of interest in this context were that several pupils from step 2 and 3 were concerned that the step 1 pupils would feel embarrassed and inferior compared to the rest of the pupils when being in separate groups. Most teachers also mentioned that this was a

common worry, but at the same time that they had not heard or experienced that the pupils thought about it at all.

One issue to consider here is that the pupils were divided into steps both within the differentiated groups and in the whole class approach. This means that the division would be visible also within the whole class approach, maybe even more so since they were all in the same classroom. In addition, at School B the weakest pupils were frequently taken out in groups, which also made the step 1 pupils very visible to the rest of the class. If the step 1 pupils experienced being at step 1 as embarrassing, this practice could perhaps lead to a stronger feeling of social stratification than if all steps were divided into groups.

The reason that the majority of step 1 pupils actually preferred ability grouping could be that they experienced that this kind of instruction fit their needs more than whole class instruction did, that it was more fitting towards their zone of proximal development. It appears that many of them felt more comfortable without stronger pupils there. Effects of differentiated groups were that they dared to participate more, did not have to wait for the other steps and that they did not slow things down for the other pupils. Social stratification was obviously not an issue for the majority of the weak pupils in this study. In addition, the division seemed to increase the motivation of the pupils, as illustrated by the step 1 group from 7th grade at School A. These discoveries relate to the finding that Schumm *et al.* (2000: 477) refer to, that heterogeneous grouping most likely does not benefit the weak pupils.

5.3.2 High-ability pupils

Schumm *et al.* (2000: 478) point to a common practice, namely that heterogeneous grouping is often used as a way to avoid social stratification. As previously stated, namely that it is obviously positive that the weak pupils are taken into consideration, but one effect of a heavy focus on the weak pupils can be that the strong pupils are being held back. As mentioned in regard to the teachers in the second research question, previous studies (Flemmen 2006; OFSTED 2015; Rønnestad 2015) show that strong pupils can experience not being sufficiently challenged. Additionally, some of the teachers also mentioned that they struggled to follow up the strong pupils within a whole class approach. From this, chances are that heavy focus on including weak pupils might negatively affect the learning outcome of the stronger pupils.

In the questionnaires for the present research, results showed that also on step 2 and step 3 the majority of pupils preferred differentiated groups (see Figures 9 and 10). There was a greater majority of pupils preferring differentiated groups at School A compared to School B. This indicates that the step 2 and step 3 pupils who had tried both approaches had more positive experiences with differentiated groups compared to whole class instruction.

Overall, the fact is that most pupils in this survey preferred differentiated groups to whole class instruction, which contrasts with the findings of Schumm *et al.* (2000) in their study on reading instruction. In their research the majority of pupils wanted mixed ability groups. A possible reason for this could be that Norwegian EFL instruction is a subject suited for differentiated groups, as indicated by Informant A1 (see p. 52) and Flemmen (2006, see p. 18).

5.4 Summary

From previous research (Schumm *et al.* 2000; Flemmen 2006; Morgan 2014) it is evident that there is a need for differentiated instruction in all classrooms in order for all pupils to succeed, as it is clear that teaching for the average pupil is not beneficial for either the strong or the weak pupils (Ankrum and Bean 2008). However, exactly how this should be done is not clear, and scholars are divided in their views on ability grouping as a means of differentiation. Following below is an overview of the main advantages and disadvantages of the two teaching approaches that have emerged through this present study.

Social stratification is a common worry in regard to ability grouping. However, results from this study showed that this was not the impression of neither the teachers nor the pupils. At the same time, it was apparent that the teachers were aware that this could be an issue. Among the pupils, only one of the step 1 pupils used it as an argument for whole class instruction. Judging from the results, nor did it seem as though whole class instruction was a guarantee for the pupils' feeling of inclusion, as many pupils felt safer within a homogeneous ability group. As a part of their explanation to the third question of the questionnaire a few pupils stated that they felt safer with their original classes, while several others said that they felt more comfortable with only peers at their own level present. That is, depending on the pupils, both whole class instruction and differentiated groups may lead to social benefits for the pupils.

The issue of learning from each other was an advantage mentioned by some teachers and pupils. This is in compliance with Vygotsky's (1978: 86) theory of the zone of proximal development, which is what a child can learn in cooperation with a more capable other like for instance a classmate. This was something that especially teachers from School B emphasized within the whole class approach. In the study done by Chorzempa and Graham (2006: 534) one teacher also emphasized the benefit of low ability students experiencing good modeling, which to a larger degree would be possible in a whole class setting with pupils from different steps. Within the differentiated groups approach pupils can also learn from each other, but in the weaker groups the good modeling will perhaps mostly come from the teacher.

With a textbook such as *Stairs* it is evident that it is more effective to teach one step at the time, compared to three. The reason for this is that even though texts in *Stairs* belong to the same chapter, the content is very different for each step. This makes it almost impossible for a teacher to have the same focus for all pupils at once in the lessons, and forces him or her to teach material from three separate steps in one lesson. As a result, all pupils that do not belong to the step of the text being discussed might experience both boredom and decrease in motivation. This could further lead to behavioral problems, as Schumm *et al.* (2000: 482) also noted in their findings. If a teacher is to conduct the EFL lessons through the whole class approach, it would most likely be easier to do with a textbook where the content of the texts was the same for all steps, only simplified or developed to the need of each step. This way at least the content of the text would be the same, thus making it easier for the teachers to include all pupils when reading or discussing a text. In the study of Schumm *et al.* (2000: 482) one of the teachers said that whole class instruction required less planning compared to planning for several groups. Whole class instruction with a textbook such as *Stairs* is not beneficial in relation to time used for planning, as the teacher ends up planning for three different steps.

Results from the present study show that both teachers (see p. 54) and pupils (see p. 75) reported the time issue as a reason for their preference regarding approach. Many of them stated that differentiated groups made the lessons more efficient as they would otherwise contain much waiting. One teacher at School B explicitly mentioned that if she had more time she would be able to follow her strongest pupils up better. Also in Weka's (2009: 84) study teachers said that lack of time often resulted in a feeling that they were not able to follow up all pupils sufficiently.

A central aspect of differentiated teaching is that the pupils get instruction at their level. The importance of this has been emphasized by teachers and pupils in this study, as well as in previous studies mentioned in Chapter 2 (e.g. Rønnestad 2015; Shields 2002; Ankrum and Bean 2008). How this should be done is not as clear, as is evident from both the present study as well as others.

Results from the present study indicate that ability grouping might be a beneficial way of organizing EFL instruction in 6th and 7th grades with a textbook such as *Stairs*. However, it does not support permanent ability grouping in general. If this research had been done among younger or older pupils, the results might have been very different.

All in all, the findings of this study seem to support the claim of Ankrum and Bean (2008: 144) that true differentiation is done when the lesson focus is different for each group.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to gain insight into experiences of and attitudes towards adapted education in 6th and 7th grade classrooms. The main aim has been to study differentiated teaching within two approaches to EFL instruction, that is, the whole class approach and the differentiated groups approach.

For this case study data was obtained through mixed methods research, making use of quantitative as well as qualitative tools. The data were collected during the first months of 2016. Quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire that was handed out to and answered by 182 pupils, and qualitative data were collected through interviews of nine teachers. The informants who participated were from 6th and 7th grade at two schools in the county of Rogaland. Both schools used the *Stairs* Textbook and Workbook and its system of division into steps. One of the schools (School A) practiced differentiated grouping according to steps in the EFL instruction, while the other (School B) taught all steps within the original classes.

Bearing in mind that this is a case study with relatively few participants, results from the present research cannot function as a basis for generalization of pupils and teachers in Norwegian 6th and 7th grade classrooms as a whole. However, the study may be useful in pointing out possible tendencies.

Findings revealed that the majority of the pupils favored the differentiated groups approach to EFL instruction, in that 138 out of 182 pupils reported a preference towards this approach. It was also shown that a larger percentage of the pupils within School A compared to School B preferred differentiated grouping. This is particularly interesting since the pupils at School A had previously practiced the whole class approach. At School B, more than half of the pupils wanted their EFL instruction to be done within the whole class. The reason for this might be that they were not fully aware of the alternative, as they had only tried that one approach.

The pupils reported different reasons for their choice of approach. Although the reasons varied, some benefits of group division were mentioned more frequently than others, such as the time issue, meaning that they did not have to wait for the other steps. Also, they felt safer with pupils at their own level, they got to know peers that were not in their original class, and finally, group division simply gave them instruction on their level. Arguments for

the whole class approach, on the other hand, included that the pupils did not have to move back and forth between classrooms, they felt safer within their own class and learned from pupils from other steps. Some also argued that the weak pupils would probably not feel inferior within this approach.

One particularly interesting finding was in regard to the weakest pupils. While step 2 and step 3 pupils seemed to worry that the step 1 pupils would have negative experiences with differentiated groups, findings among the weak pupils showed the opposite. This was clearly illustrated within the step 1 group in 7th grade at School A, where the pupils only stated positive experiences with differentiated groups. It seemed like most pupils on all three steps experienced that the instruction was more suited to them through physically differentiated groups according to steps.

Even though it is a common worry that ability grouping might compromise the pupils' feeling of inclusion, findings among the teachers and pupils in this study implied that this was not a problem. Instead another issue became visible, namely that the heavy focus of inclusion might compromise the learning outcome of the stronger pupils.

All in all, the vast majority of pupils at both schools showed positive attitudes towards the English subject. Nevertheless, pupils at School A seemed overall more content with their English instruction compared to those at School B. There appeared to be a slight difference in how pupils experienced adapted education based on how their English lessons were structured, in that the differentiated groups approach seemed to fit the needs of the pupils to a larger extent than the whole class approach.

The teachers in the present study had a common understanding of the concept adapted education. They were aware of the requirement that all pupils have the right to adapted education, and they worked with it in different ways. In line with previous research on this matter (Mikalsen and Sørheim 2012; Bachmann and Haug 2006), the teachers stated that it was easy to define this concept, but difficult to put into practice. This finding was not surprising, as there seemed to be little or no focus within the universities and schools on how adapted education should be practiced in the classrooms. Rather it was up to the teachers how they wanted to implement it. Still, even though they found it challenging, all teachers believed that they did put adapted education into practice in some way.

Through the interviews it was evident that the teachers at School A experienced it as easier to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects. Contrary to this,

teachers at School B felt that it was more challenging in this particular subject. This is probably why the majority of teachers at both schools favored the differentiated groups approach.

Even though Norwegian legislation does not really support ability grouping over time, this study shows the possibility that it can be beneficial in specific subjects at certain ages. Furthermore, if it is done with the kind of flexibility that School A practiced it is likely that it will not lead to social stratification.

This study has contributed to map some of the challenges of adapted education in Norwegian EFL teaching, especially with a textbook such as *Stairs*. It has also investigated advantages and disadvantages of two approaches to EFL instruction, namely differentiated groups and whole class instruction. Results in this case study showed that the teachers are aware of, and work with adapted education. Findings also imply that both teachers and pupils experience EFL instruction as best suited to the pupils' needs through the differentiated groups approach, and that it is easier to teach in accordance with the zone of proximal development within this approach.

Although the present study is related to experiences and attitudes, one aspect that would be interesting to investigate in relation to these two approaches is whether one of them seems to affect the pupils' learning outcome more than the other. In this study there are no clear indications that this is the case. However, Figure 2 (see p. 64) shows that School A had a higher percentage of pupils on step 3 compared to School B, and School B had a higher percentage of pupils on step 1. It is not possible to draw any firm conclusions from this; however, there is a possibility that these differences could be tied to the different teaching approaches within the schools.

Unfortunately, due to the time limit of this project, this was not possible to measure in the present study. In order to investigate such matters, it would have had to be done through a longitudinal study over several years, including pre- and post tests of the pupils' English skills.

Through this study it has become clear that there is a need for more research on *how* differentiated teaching should be done. There is no doubt that teachers are aware of the importance of adapted education, but as Norwegian law requires them to implement adapted education, more research is needed on how this can best be accomplished.

From previous research (such as Rønnestad 2015; OFSTED 2015; Flemmen 2006; Schumm *et al.*: 2000), it appears that the focus has mainly been on low-ability pupils. Further research on differentiated teaching needs to also include high-ability pupils. In the final stages of this study the researcher discovered a news article⁹ (Ropeid 2016) on how differentiated teaching can benefit the stronger pupils, which might be an indication that there could be more focus on this in the future. In this article more use of ability grouping is suggested to benefit the strongest pupils. The need for research on differentiated teaching is also noted in studies mentioned in Chapter 2 (Ankrum and Bean 2008; Schumm *et al.*: 2000).

It would also have been interesting to conduct similar studies to the present one on younger and older pupils, so as to investigate the effects of ability grouping on different age groups. Additionally, it would have been valuable to see how pupils with various proficiency levels cope when they start secondary school, after having been divided into steps through the last years of primary school.

Another aspect of importance in relation to the present research is the pupils' learning outcome. This was mentioned as one of the limitations of the present study, and it would have been valuable to study the pupils' learning outcome within each of the two approaches in order to see if there are differences in how they affect the pupils' English skills.

⁹ <https://www.utdanningsnytt.no/nyheter/2016/september/differensiert-undervisning-skal-hjelpe-dei-flinkaste-elevane/>

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Appendix A: Interview guide

This is the interview guide that was used for all teacher interviews.

Interview guide

Background information

- 1) For how long have you been teaching English?
- 2) What grade do you teach?
- 3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?
- 4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)
- 5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

Adapted education and school practices

- 6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?
- 7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?
- 8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?
- 9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?
- 10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?
- 11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?
- 12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

- 13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)
- 14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

15) What kind of challenges may occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges may occur by not doing it?

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

Appendix B: Interview transcripts

Following are the full transcripts of the nine teacher interviews.

I : Interviewer

Nine informants: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, B2, B3 and B4.

Informant A1

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

A1: I have been teaching English for about 8 years now.

2) What grade do you teach?

A1: This year I teach the 6th grade.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

A1: About 20. It depends, a few of them are out with a separate teacher in a smaller group. So about 20.

I: And what step?

A1: Step 1.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

A1: I took English as a part of my teacher-training program, and I have now got about 90 credits in English.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

A1: I actually think it is fine. I would like there to be more exercises when it comes to grammar. And I feel sometimes the step 1 texts are a bit too easy. There is... a few of the

texts are just about five or six sentences and that's it. So it should be more. But yeah, over all I quite like it to be honest.

I: Do you like the way it differentiates into steps?

A1: Yeah definitely.

I: Do you use the step 2 texts in your group?

A1: Yeah I do, I would like to. The whole point of having the groups is that they can progress and get to the step above. And in order to do that I sometimes use the step 2 texts. I find that some of them are quite easy to understand for the step 1 pupils, and then I'll use them. But not all of the time.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?

A1: Well the way I understand it, it is about getting the most out of every pupil at their own level. And many of the pupils will struggle to perform if they get texts and tasks that are too difficult for them. So it is about making it possible for them to achieve and learn more at their own levels.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

A1: Well I think the school at least believes it does. But it is not really practiced in the same way all across the board. So no, I would say no, no common understanding.

I: At least not in practice? Maybe in theory?

A1: Yeah, yeah.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

A1: We have step 1, 2 and 3 in English. We do... actually not this year, but the last group of pupils I had, we had differentiated education in mathematics as well. We had three different steps, if you will, in mathematics. So it is basically in English and mathematics. It is easier in that way because some of the textbooks are divided into three sections, so it is... Yeah, we divide them into three different groups, like steps 1, 2 and 3, and the groups aren't set in

stone. So the pupils can move up a step or they can move down a step. It is the same in mathematics and English. Yeah, it is a way to find the right step for them. So the three groups, that's mostly in English or mathematics.

I: Is it something you talk about in your meetings? When you meet with all the teachers?

A1: Yeah, I would say we do.

I: With the teachers of the whole school?

A1: No. Just the teachers on this particular grade. So not like all teachers at the school. I can't remember... rarely. We probably have done a few times. I can remember the last time.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

A1: No... In my education? That is a long time ago... I don't think so, I don't think we had any lectures or anything like that on differentiated education.

I: What about adapted education in theory, or in general?

A1: Oh, it is a long time ago, I don't remember. Yeah, no I'm not sure, sorry about that.

When it comes to the school, we haven't had any like real... We should have gotten to go to like lectures and things to learn more about this but I don't think we have, no.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

A1: Yeah it is mostly in English and mathematics because those are the easiest subjects to do it in as the books are already divided into three sections. We can just follow the books. But if you plan to do it in like religion and other subject it is a bit more difficult. I haven't done it I'm sorry to say, but it is mostly in English and mathematics.

I: Because of the textbooks?

A1: Yeah, you can follow the textbooks. If you plan to do it in religion or something else you have to do... there is a lot of work you have to do in order to make the differentiation.

I: And in your lessons? Are there any specific things that you do to make sure that the pupils experience adapted education?

A1: Yeah, if I know that there is a pupil in my class that is struggling in that particular subject, I'll make him do less than the others intentionally. In order to make him work, I make him do less than the others. Just get the basic things. Like for instance now, we just had a few weeks on the Sami people and then it is just about learning what the flag looks like, and that they had their own language, just the basic things.

I: In what subject was that? Not in English?

A1: No it was "samfunnsfag", social studies.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

A1: I find that it is easier. Like I said because of the books that we have. I find that it is much easier to discover the differences between the pupils in English as well. You have the pupils that are extremely smart and get it quite quick and read well. And you have on the other side of the scale, those who really can't read at all. So it is quite easy to pick them out and see where they fit. I find... Yeah in English I find it a lot easier actually.

I: I guess this is kind of another question, but why do you think there are such big differences in English?

A1: I don't know really... it might have something to do with the fact that some pupils I know are really into computer games and music and have more input. And a lot, some of the pupils who have parents from another country, not English speaking countries, they will struggle to learn Norwegian, and as a result of that they will struggle to learn English as well. But there is probably lots of reasons, but mostly it is about being around English, the more you are around English, and speak English, and if the parents at home work on the English, they will get better at it. So I think it is not just one thing, it is about working regularly with English and speak English and listen to English. And someone have natural talents as well so they are just naturally good with languages. But it is about working with it.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

A1: That is difficult as well, but you easily pick out the best ones and the poorest ones. Those in the middle... It is about how they perform at the tests really. Each chapter is finished with a test and we assess the pupils by the test scores.

I: So do you change the groups after each chapter test?

A1: Yeah, at least we will have a talk about someone moving up or someone moving down.

I: Do the pupils have any say in this? Or the parents?

A1: Sometimes the parents will ask us to consider their child and we have also had parents who wanted their children to be put down a level, just because they find the homework a bit hard.

I: They see that they are struggling?

A1: Yeah, so we listen to the pupils as well and of course the parents, but in the end it is up to us, where we feel that the pupils belong.

I: So do they often switch groups or is it basically the same?

A1: No they are quite consistent I would say. Not too often. I have one probably going up to step 2, probably after this test. We just recently had a chapter test, so he will probably be bumped up a level.

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

A1: I think they benefit from it greatly because when you are in a regular class you get the pupils who aren't really good in English, they will just try to hide away because they feel embarrassed speaking up. They will probably avoid doing tasks because they know if they do the tasks they might have to answer out loud and they don't want that. But when they are in with their own peers it is easier to speak up because they know that everybody there is at their level. I think they enjoy it, it is easier for them. Definitely.

I: Do you think they experience that the education is more adapted to them there, compared to a in a whole class?

A1: Yeah, yeah, it is easier for them to learn as well because if they are in a group with pupils that are at the same level, they can challenge each other in a good way. Not having to continually hear the best pupils reading, because that can be ... it is kind of hard for them to hear because "they are so good, and I am so poor", its harder for them. But in the groups they are in now, it is easier because they can challenge each other.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

A1: That is actually easy because when they are in the groups, the step 1 group, they know that everybody is there for a reason. And that makes it easier for them to speak up. So I have absolutely no problem getting the pupils to speak up and answer the tasks and raising their hands. And they want to contribute because they know that we are all at the same level and it is about getting the most of each lesson.

I: So you think in, relation to inclusion and belonging, that they have a stronger sense of that in the small group?

A1: Oh yes, definitely. Without a doubt.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

A1: By not doing it you will kind of... the weakest ones get left behind and the strongest ones get held back a bit. And by doing the differentiating you will... the challenge can be that the guys at step 1 know that they are the poorest.

I: Do you experience that they think this is a bad thing? That they are at step 1?

A1: No, that is the funny thing. I haven't experienced that at all. But it is important to talk about that, so that they know that the groups aren't set in stone, they can move up if they do well and they can move down if they don't as well. It *could* be a problem, but I haven't experienced it as a problem at all. And even the parents have told me that they enjoy watching their kid actually enjoying English for the first time. And that is because of the groups. So it is all about giving the right information and telling them that this is just a way to make it easier for them to learn. But of course you could get a stamp in your forehead saying that you are a loser.

I: Yeah, but that is not your impression?

A1: No, not at all. So it is all about talking to all the children, all the pupils.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

A1: Like I said, I find that the pupils enjoy being in the differentiated groups and that they can work their way up.

I: And as a teacher what do you think?

A1: For me it is much easier, because I can just focus on the one group compared to a whole class situation, where you have to focus on everybody. Giving the best pupils something to stretch for and just trying to keep the poorest performers interested in the subject at all. So it is a completely different world teaching just one group. It is much easier... much, much easier.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

A1: I was just sitting and thinking about it because it is... I enjoy it, but the only thing I would change is there was anything; I would perhaps change the size of the groups. At least the poorest, the step 1 group. Because when you get like 20 pupils or more, and just one teacher, it is almost impossible to help everybody, and to cope. Like the step 3, the best group they can manage on their own. They are good in English, and they can use the dictionary and they know how to learn and how to find out the things that they need, but at step 1 they need help all the time and when you get like 20 plus pupils it is quite hard, almost impossible to manage and help everybody.

I: So you would prefer smaller groups? Maybe two groups of step 1?

A1: Yeah, definitely. At least if we could have an assistant or something. But I know it is hard for the schools to manage. But that would be the only thing that I would change, just make the lowest groups smaller, like ten pupils. If I could just split my group in half and just have ten pupils that would be great, so just smaller groups basically.

I: Yeah. One more question; are there pupils with IEPs in English in your group?

A1: Yeah, three of them. They are out with a separate teacher because they would really struggle at step 1 as well. They would not learn, they need to be in groups of one or two. So I have three of them yes.

Informant A2

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

A2: I have been teaching English for about five years.

2) What grade do you teach?

A2: This year 6th grade, but I have also taught 5th and 7th.

I: And what step do you teach?

A2: Now I teach step 2, the medium level.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

A2: At the moment it is 22 pupils, but it varies. Because after each chapter, pupils may change levels, so it can be less than 22 pupils, or it can be more than 22 pupils.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

A2: Actually I have no credits in English. I am a general teacher, my education is four years, and I am what we call “adjunkt”. I have 60 credits in social subjects and 60 in arts and crafts.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

A2: Yes, this is the only textbook I have been using, so I haven't got any real basis for comparison. I like the way it is differentiated into three levels. That makes it more practical for us, as we also organize the teaching into three levels. We think it is more effective and easier this way to give each pupil what he needs. I like the pages with grammar in textbook

and the instructions on how to write in different genres. I miss exercises in workbook to improve their oral skills, like dialogues between the pupils.

I: And you like this differentiation?

A2: Yes, I like it very much.

I: What do you think about the texts?

A2: It is the step 2 texts that I know the best, I think that they are good for my group. Maybe the texts on step 3 are a little bit too focused on facts. So maybe step 3 have to use texts from step 2 on step 3.

I: Do you ever use step 3 texts with your group?

A2: Sometimes, if I find a text that is easy enough. So sometimes we use the text, not for a special step. I can take a step 3 text or I can take a step 1 text.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ering)?

A2: I think it means to give each pupil an instruction on his level, it may be a high, medium or low level.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

A2: Yes I think so. It is easy to focus too much at the weak pupils and forget the strong ones. It has been like that at our school as well, but it seems that it is changing now. We have a couple of pupils that have a more advanced week plan. One of them is doing the math lessons at 7th grade. So the way of thinking is improving at our school. That means from only focusing on the weak pupils, to also focusing on the strong.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

A2: I don't know how they do it in the lower grades, because I have only been in the 5th, 6th and 7th grade. On 6th grade, we teach English on three different levels and groups, step 1, 2 and 3. We also have a small group for pupils that are weaker than step 1. *Stairs* has got six

chapters, and we finish each chapter with a test. If we find that a pupil should change the level, we make the decision together with the parents and the pupil, between two chapters. I know they also use this way to differentiate the English education on 5th and 7th grade. In mathematics we haven't divided into groups out from levels, but the math book they use is organized into three different levels. I know that on 7th grade, they also divide the pupils into groups out of levels.. The school doesn't have a common policy on how to organize the education, when dividing into groups. I think it is more up to each teacher if and how they want to organize it. But the school does not have common instructions.

I: So most of the time it is okay with the school, the way the teachers want to organize it?

A2: The school accepts how we organize it, but they want us to be aware of all the different pupils and levels. But we are free to organize it the way we want to.

I: And do you also get the resources to do so?

A2: Yes, we are three English teachers, so we can have step 1, 2 and 3, but we have also a fourth teacher to have that small group with the pupils with IEPs. It is not given that we can get that fourth teacher, so we were lucky to have that. And I think a problem can be that the group on step 2 could be very big, maybe even more than 30 pupils, but on 6th grade we are lucky because our pupils are very strong in English. That means that the largest group is step 3, but they are not more than 30 pupils.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

A2: No, we only had a few lessons about pupils with special needs, that need special education. We didn't learn about adapted education for the majority, or the strong pupils. The lesson plan at that time didn't focus on the majority and the strong pupils. That was L97. They would might get some extra worksheets in class, if they finished before the others. At work we haven't had any courses about the subject, I wish we could.

I: Yes, because often we know what this is in theory but don't get any information on *how* to practice it?

A2: Yes.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

A2: As I said, we have organized the English education into three levels. I teach the medium group. I don't differentiate within this group. That means that they all get the same work to do, both oral and in writing.

I: Do you differentiate within this group? Do you have different ways of working with things?

A2: I can see that there are differences between the strongest and the weakest pupils, so sometimes I have to give some extra work for those who finish first. I can pick some exercises from step 3 maybe, or give some extra from step 2. It depends on what they need.

I: So you adjust within this group as well?

A2: Yes, but I don't plan it, but I take it as it comes.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

A2: I think that it is easy, because of *Stairs* that helps organizing it in three levels. If we didn't have *Stairs*, but another textbook that didn't divide in that way, it would have been much more difficult. So I think, thanks to the books, it is easier for us.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

A2: Yes, when the pupils start in 5th grade, the starting point is "Nasjonale prøver" from autumn in 5th grade. There they are divided into "nivå 1, 2 og 3", so we base it on that and we might also speak with the teachers from 4th grade, who knows them in English, and the parents as well.

I: Do the pupils themselves have a say in this? Are they a part of the decision?

A2: Not the first decision, maybe we discuss it with the parents and ask if they agree in the 5th grade, because that is the first time we organize them this way.

I: What about now, in the 6th grade?

A2: In the 6th grade, then we continued with the levels that we had before the summer.

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

A2: When we introduced in the start in the 5th grade some of them were excited, in a positive way, and some were skeptic. There was one pupil that started to cry. But after we had explained what we thought about it, she said that she had misunderstood and that it was fine. But I think it is important that they are used to work together with other classes, mixed. Not only in their own class. It is an advantage if they know the other classes well. And they were focusing on who was good and who was weak.

I: Do they do that now?

A2: No, they did it in the beginning.

I: But not now?

A2: No not so much, we had to talk with them because they were focusing on who was good and who was weak, and who was on the different levels. So we had to make them understand that it is not a competition, and that they should not compare themselves to others. It is very important to tell them only to focus on themselves. They also know that they might change the level after each chapter, they know that they have this possibility.

I: Yes, that they are not “stuck”?

A2: Yes. It can be a motivation for some pupils to work well and do a good test, because they hope they can change it. It seemed that when the pupils were used to the new groups, they found it positive to work on their own level. But there was a period in the start where we had to talk with many of them.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

A2: That is a very important question because I can feel that we have to work a lot on the climate in the group. Because it is not necessarily given that this is a group that will work well, because they are not used to this group.

I: Because then they don't have the feeling of belonging to their whole class in this subject?

A2: Yes, therefore I think it is important that they are used to the other classes, and to work with them sometimes. So I try to have a focus on the social environment of the group.

Sometimes I, or the pupils, choose a game in the end of the lesson, I give them the possibility to play a game, maybe something that is socializing. And sometimes I ask them how they feel about the group, orally or written. But I can see that the sense of inclusion, or a lack of it, is important to be aware of. I think that with these new groups it is very important to work with social issues.

I: And do you experience that there is a good atmosphere in you classroom?

A2: Yes, I think that the atmosphere in the whole group is good but there are two or three pupils that I have to work with all the time, to make them be nice and good members of the group.

I: So you don't think that anyone feels excluded because they are on step 1, or step 2... Do you ever experience pupils feeling that they are in "the loser group" or things like that?

A2: Yes in the beginning we felt that they all wanted to be on step 3, and even though it was a pupil that was very weak, he asked me "do you think I can reach the step 3 group soon?", and then I had to explain in a nice way that the most important thing is to work on your step, not to think about groups.

I: So do you experience it as a problem now?

A2: No.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

A2: As I said, the social environment is essential so that the pupils dare to read out loud, to do role-plays etc. It has to be a good environment for them to read out loud. Therefore, if I suggest for a pupil to change group and he doesn't dare, or doesn't want to, I will not force him. It is important that a change is done with a good dialogue. In order to change level, this pupil might do some extra work or some work from step 3's program even if he is still on step 2. Because I will not force anyone if the problem is that he doesn't dare to.

I: What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it the way that you do here? For instance teaching in whole class?

A2: I think that the times when I have taught all the pupils in the whole class, it hasn't been effective at all because it is difficult to organize how all different levels can listen to their new texts. And when one step is listening to their text, the others have to wait, doing something else, so it is not a good way to use the time. It is not effective. And also you can't have a discussion on a high level like you can with the step 3 pupils. And also the step 1 pupils, maybe they don't dare to speak if they see that "oh, I am not as good as the other pupils". And if they speak together with other pupils who are on the same level, they are encouraged to speak more. I think so.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

A2: I like the way we do it. I feel that this subject has a big focus at my school. Sometimes I have to underline that we also have to focus at other subjects, like arts and crafts and music etc. It might be because of the "Nasjonale prøver" that English, together with Norwegian and mathematics has such high priority. So I think that the subject of English has a big priority in this school. And as an English teacher I think that is very good. But as an arts and crafts teacher it is not so good.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

A2: I am satisfied with the way we do it, but I still wish we could have more focus on the oral language, like let the pupils have more dialogues. Because when I grew up I remember that our English books often had exercises like where we did dialogues with another pupil. But in *Stairs* we don't have that. And I think also we should create more situations where the pupils could use the language in a natural way. Like if we could write with an English class in English, speak with some English people in some way.

I: Okay, so which do you like best: structuring the teaching in different groups of step 1, 2 and 3 or the whole class?

A2: I prefer in three different levels, absolutely.

Informant A3

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

A3: For four years.

2) What grade do you teach?

A3: 6th grade.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

A3: It varies, but it is between 24 and 26.

I: And what step do you teach?

A3: Step 3.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

A3: No credits in English.

I: And what kind of education do you have?

A3: "Allmennlærer".

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

A3: I wish there were more texts for them to read, but I like the way they structure the book. They have some grammar, some reading, writing parts. I like that. And the steps of course.

I: Do you think the texts are good?

A3: Some, some could be better and some have some words that are not very common, that even I've had to look up. I remember one time, I think it was in 4th grade: "the queen was in

the parlor”, and I was like “what’s a parlor?”. And actually I had to look it up in a dictionary, so that was not easy for a 4th grader to know.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?

A3: It means that the stuff that we have to go through has to make sense to the children. Like they have to understand it, and I have to give them tasks that they are actually able to manage and of course in one class you have different types of levels. So you have to make sure that everybody gets something that is adapted to their level.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

A3: I think so... I hope so.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

A3: Well some of the books are separated, like in English, into different levels. And it is the same in mathematics, you have different types of exercises, some are just to calculate and some are more like text task and that way you can vary the education, like the way you teach it.

I: Is it something that you talk a lot about? In you meetings, when all the teachers are together for instance?

A3: Hm.. I think we do, but not... it is not always on the agenda but I think we do it. And sometimes, like on the parent-teacher conferences, we talk to some of the parents, that the pupils should maybe do a different step, either in mathematics or English, or maybe for example in science some kids just need tasks that are just “find the answer in the text” but for others, that is just so easy for them that they get easily bored, so they should try to do some research on their own on something.

I: Yeah, so you experience that you talk about it and that everyone is aware of adapted education?

A3: Yes.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

A3: Yes, at the University, but not... Well, some courses at work as well. We have talked about it in the common meetings.

I: Have you talked about examples of how to do it in practice?

A3: Yes I think so. Some teachers have been to for example a mathematics course and afterwards they present it to the rest of the group and show examples. Like in for example mathematics, on *Multi* online, there are differentiated tasks there as well.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

A3: Usually the kids work in groups. And for instance, I have the step 3 group in English, and I make them talk a lot to each other and that way they learn through others, which I think is better than just working alone. I also do that in mathematics, they have to explain how they think and that way you get a lot of different perspectives on how other people think, that maybe is new to you. Sometimes I have different levels on the tasks, and I like to also change the way I teach. Some tasks are oral, some are written, some are presentations. Because not all kids like the same stuff, so I change it.

I: And how do you do this in the English lessons?

A3: In 6th grade we have already separated the pupils into three levels. And after each chapter we see if they have to change group, up or down, or just stay at the same level. I teach step 3, which is the hardest and I rely a lot on oral teaching, like they have to actually discuss stuff and say their own opinion.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

A3: I feel sometimes that English lacks other books that I can copy from. There are not that many good English books, while for example in Norwegian we have a lot of material. That way it is harder, I use the Internet a lot, but it is often on subjects like Christmas where I can find a lot. So there is not as much as I can find in other subjects. So I miss that.

I: And do you think it is easier to differentiate the teaching? Perhaps in English?

A3: Sometimes.

I: Why? Or how? Does the way that the textbook is structured matter?

A3: Of course, that would make it easier, because then I wouldn't have to read all the texts to know which one is which step. But there is some stuff that everybody has to go through, for example the grammar parts. It is similar for everybody, everybody needs to learn it. So in that way it is not that much difference. It is just mostly the texts and some of the tasks that are harder, so that they do not get as much help.

I: So does the way that the textbooks are structured, affect how challenging it is to implement adaption in English?

A3: Yes, it is easier compared to for instance mathematics or Norwegian.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

A3: There are a lot of different ways. Most often we look at the chapter tests, but it is not them alone. For instance, not too long ago I moved one of the kids in my class because she didn't deliver very well homework. She did well on the chapter test, but her homework and her glossaries weren't that good. So of course if you just study for a test, you can always do well. And the same with oral presentations, how structured they are, how much they can work on their own. Like there is a lot of stuff we look at.

I: So it also has to do with the pupil's effort?

A3: Yes and their results.

I: Do the parents or the students themselves have a say in which step they should work at?

A3: Some ask and work towards a step for example. And I have experiences the opposite: I had one kid in my class that said "step 3 is just too hard on this theme", so he did step 2 on that chapter, and then he moved back. So they can let us know that "this is too hard" or "this is too easy" and we will look at the test. It is usually the teacher who decides.

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

A3: I have had mostly good experience with it here. Do you think in the English subject now?

I: Yes.

A3: Some pupils work really hard because they want to reach a certain level, like going from step 1 to step 2, or step 2 to step 3, and they can also work with others that are at the same level as them. It is not embarrassing because they don't know it, I think that their confidence is better because they are more at the same level. And also, we have more pupils on step 3 than step 1, which means that the teacher can help them more on step 1, compared to if they were a full class. So I think that they experience adapted education, but of course I think some students can get a little sad if they have to move down a step of course. But if they just work hard they can manage to get back.

I: So it is kind of a motivation to work harder?

A3: I hope so. But I think that the way the teachers talk with the pupils is very important. Like "you've been on step 2 or step 3, you can do it, it is just a matter effort". It is not like "okay, bye".

I: Do you think there is a difference in how they experience adapted education if they are in groups according to step vs. a whole class?

A3: I don't think the variation is that visible if you have a whole class. Then it would be just me telling some of the kids like "you can do this task, or this task".

I: So then you would adjust it in the class?

A3: Yes. Maybe more subtle, but we used to have three steps in English in a class, and for instance when we had to go through the homework it took a lot of time and some students were really bored because they would have to listen to others homework and texts.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

A3: We often have oral activities, they sit in pairs and I make my computer choose who they are going to sit with, so it is different from week to week. In that way they get to know everybody and work with everybody. And I also like to have discussions in the classroom,

like at the end of almost each lesson I separate the pupils in two and they for example have to discuss “are you for or against school uniforms?”. Then they have to decide and talk together and discuss and have something in common. And I think that makes them feel included.

I: Do you think there is a difference in sense of inclusion depending on whether they are divided into ability groups vs. a whole class?

A3: I do, because as I said earlier, in whole class you might have to work with somebody that is not at your level, or maybe some will get bored, or some doesn't feel that they can reach up to the level of others. So this can make them feel excluded, because they do not have as much in common, they do not have the words to express themselves.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

A3: Of course some might get sad, maybe they have their best friend on a different step, but then they actually have to be a little independent and work with others. And if they have to change step, they can feel excluded from the group that they originally belonged to.

I: What kind of challenges do you think can occur by not differentiating in the way that you do?

A3: Of course people can get bored as I said earlier, and they might feel that they don't have the capacity or... that they feel that they are not good enough compared to the rest. Of course we would have to spend a lot of unnecessary time going through stuff that does not concern all students. We would use perhaps twice as much time on homework then, because we have three texts and three different homework to go through instead of just one, so it would not be efficient in relation to time.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

A3: It is good.

I: Did you do it in 5th grade as well?

A3: Yes. But not in 3rd and 4th grade. I am not even sure if the whole school does it. But we do it here in 6th grade. And my experience is that it is very good. And I have only gotten good responses from parents as well, which I think is important because they have a huge saying in this.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

A3: I am satisfied with the way that we do it. Maybe sometimes they would benefit from mixing, or for example having presentations in front of the other groups as well and do more stuff together because we are very, very separated now into three steps.

I: Maybe a combination?

A3: Yes maybe a combination. But there are some chapters that are more adaptable for that. For example now we have something we call "The Bookcase" where we made a mini library and where they are going to read a lot of books. That is something that we do together.

Informant A4

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

A4: For eight years.

2) What grade do you teach?

A4: Right now I teach 7th grade, but I normally work with 5th till 7th grade.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

A4: Now I have four.

I: And what step are they on?

A4: Step 1.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

A4: I have 30 credits in English.

I: And general teacher education?

A4: Yes.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

A4: At first I liked it, but that was 7-8 years ago. Now I think that maybe *Stairs* is not so updated and maybe the school should invest in something new.

I: What do you think about the division into steps?

A4: I think it is... I don't know because I feel that it is very different from the step to step, because step 3 has lot of fact texts, but step 1 only has like acting, made up stories. So I feel that the group I have don't get to read much fact about things.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?

A4: I think it is about seeing. For me it is easier because I have four pupils, so I can see what each of them needs and wants. But if you have a group of, say 25, it is not that easy to meet them. But I feel that adapted education is about working with things that the pupils understand, so that they can have a progress, and feel that they are learning something.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

A4: As far I know I think we have a common understanding, but I don't know what the practices are.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

A4: At our 7th grade we have differentiated groups so I think that we work with it in a good way. I think that maybe you could group them together like that from 6th grade.

I: In all subjects?

A4: No, maybe I feel that it is easier to do it in English, and mathematics.

I: Why is that do you think?

A4: Right now it is also because *Stairs* is graded in step 1, 2 and 3, but I feel that the pupils are very different, in what they know and how their second language is, from for example Norwegian as a subject.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

A4: Not that I remember.

I: I guess you have had theory about it, but have you had anything specific on how to practice it that you remember?

A4: Maybe we have talked about it, but I don't feel like I have learned very much about it.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

A4: Well, I have, like I said, four pupils and I start every lesson with talking about something. Maybe about the weather or stuff like that. So everyone gets to say something about how the weather is, or what they did in the weekend and stuff like that. And it is also easy when I only have four pupils, because then I can take one of them out and I can talk to him or her about something that I saw in the homework, that he or she didn't manage to do. So I feel that adapted education is easy to do especially when they are step 1, and also each of them are IEP pupils, and all of them have CDs.

I: So they get adapted educations through things like CDs?

A4: Yeah.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

A4: I think that it is easier to do it in English.

I: Why?

A4: Good question. Maybe because it is a clearer division into groups. Okay you know “this group, they are very good at that”, but in Norwegian for example you have maybe one person that is good at speaking and reading, but not writing. But in English I feel that if they are not so good at speaking and talking, they are also not that good in writing.

I: And you said earlier that it also has something to do with the fact that the textbook is already divided?

A4: Yes.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

A4: At first I think we focused on the chapter tests. Since we did this in 7th grade, some of the teachers had had the pupils since 5th grade. From this we had an idea of which step they should be at. We also based the decision on chapter tests when we grouped them. And maybe we saw after a few lessons that someone should be on a different step.

I: Do the pupils have anything to say in this?

A4: Yes, they do but it is also in cooperation with the parents. For instance in the meetings with the parents where we discuss how things are going.

Teachers’ perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

A4: I think that our pupils in 7th grade experience it because it was a very clear difference from a whole class of 27 or 28, where they were all so different. Some of them have an IEP, while some of them are step 3 or even higher. So when decided to group them, I talked to every one of them in the parent meeting, and each one of them said that they liked this much better. So I feel that they experience it.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

I: Could it be a problem that there are only four pupils in one group, in the sense of belonging, compared to a whole class?

A4: Yes, that is a challenge, or an issue to consider, because we only have these four and their English is very weak, so there is not someone helping them to get forward. But I feel that even if they are only four pupils, the group is very safe together. They dare to read and talk and they are not afraid to say something if there is something that they don't understand.

I: Do you see a difference from last year?

A4: Yes, I do because these four pupils were very quiet in the whole class. Now they raise their hands, speak and read.

I: Do you think that they experience it as negative, being in a small group?

A4: No I don't.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

A4: There is something with working together with a lot of different types of pupils, and also working together in a group. Because when I only have four they can only work two and two. Or, I can take all of them together in a group, but you're missing a bit of the point when they are so few in the group. And also the thing I said about having more pupils in the room to interact with, more pupils that can give them challenge. More pupils to speak with and learn things from. Those things are things that I experienced more in a larger group, because then maybe we placed one of these weak pupils together with stronger pupils, and then they learned more from it. But now I feel like I have to learn them the things.

I: What kind of challenges can occur by not differentiating in this way?

A4: Then they are not experiencing a sense of mastery, and they can be very quiet and "laidback". That is not very good second language learning. So... it is probably more challenging...

I: Yes, there are positive and negative sides?

A4: Yeah.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

A4: I think that the pupils in 7th grade feel that this is easier to work with, also because of the tests and the content of the lessons. The lessons within the step 3 group are very different from my step 1 group. The reason for this is that we adjust it to the pupils' needs.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

A4: No. If it was one thing it would be a new English book to work with instead of *Stairs*. I feel that we have managed to find a good way.

I: So you would not go back?

A4: No, I would not.

Informant A5

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

A5: I have been teaching English for as long as I have been a teacher and I have been working here for 15 years this summer.

2) What grade do you teach?

A5: This year I teach 5th graders and 7th graders.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

A5: In the 7th grade I have 26 pupils now, and they are all step 3 pupils. It is a group of strong English speakers and writers.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

A5: By now I have “engelsk mellomfag”, and I am currently working on my master’s thesis as well.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs Textbook/Workbook*?

A5: Well I have been working with that book for several years, and I have been quite happy with it. I haven’t got the latest version though, so I miss an updated book to work with, both textbook and workbook. I’ve had a look at the newest versions, and they are much more relevant in themes and everything to what you would expect today. So I am hoping for an upgrade very soon, but I am quite happy with the ones we use. However, I do make sure to add quite a bit of information from other sources when that is necessary.

I: What do you think about the division of steps?

A5: I quite like that, I think that there is a great division and a big difference from step 1 to step 3. Definitely. A very significant difference, so of course we try to push pupils from step 1 upwards, because that material is extremely easy compared to step 2 and 3.

I: So the biggest difference is between step 1 and 2?

A5: I think so, yeah.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?

A5: Well, with that term I think about finding ways of teaching the pupils in a way that they will understand. I try to vary my methods in class, because of course I have 26 very different pupils in there, even though they are strong learners. They do have different needs and different challenges, so that is what I try to cover. I try to give them varied education. Different techniques. Do you want me to say something about those?

I: Yes.

A5: Sometimes we will use visual aids, and sometimes we just listen to texts and see what they can take from that, whether they actually get what the text is about. We read a lot and they discuss a lot, and sometimes I have a lot to say, so I kind of take over the whole education, and the whole lesson will be me speaking. And other times I try to let them do the work. So we try lots of different techniques.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

A5: I think we do. Because this is a topic that we have in the past discussed quite a lot. I feel that even though there are different perspectives and opinions and of course people operate in different ways, I still think we all know that this is all about providing the pupils with the right type of education, a type of education that is suitable for them individually.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

A5: Most of the time we just work with the teachers that teach the same subject at school, so we always discuss things in teams or between teachers that teach English at the same grade. That is usually where all the discussions happen, at least that is what I am used to. Not so much for the whole school together.

I: So you share a lot of experiences with your colleagues?

A5: Yeah, I try to even though we often chose to divide chapters and plan for each other for a period of time. But then I am used to working with people who... We just discuss things in the passing.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

I: We often know what it is supposed to be as you said, but how to practice it?

A5: That's right. We haven't had anything for many years now. But I remember that we had some lectures about adapted education during my first years of teaching. I remember that people came here and talked about it related to various subjects. But that is a long time ago though.

I: Do you miss it?

A5: Yes. Actually I think it would be good to update the information a bit.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

A5: Well I already said a little bit about that, but still I try to vary my teaching methods and that is maybe the most important thing. And of course also make sure that if I see someone struggling I make sure that they are taken care of and maybe give them a bit more attention or at least make sure that the tasks I give them are more suitable. And the goes for the pupils who are really strong, I make sure that they actually get challenges. So I always have some extra challenges available just in case.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

A5: Well, the way we organize it on the 7th grade is easy for us teachers. That they are divided into groups, so the weakest group is taught in step 1 and under, so that their education will be to their level. And the same for step 2, at least we have tried as well as we can, we have step 2 and step 3 pupils together in one group. And then I have a step 3 group. And it is a lot easier for me as a teacher to find suitable material like books, texts, clips, anything that I can use. It is a bit easier when I don't have to worry about finding a text like only half of the group will understand. I know now that I have strong pupils on the whole, and so it is much easier for me to find suitable material. And I can actually compare this a bit to the 5th graders I teach because they are in original classes, so that means I have pupils from step 1 and under, to step 3 and above, because they are very strong. So it is a lot harder for me to cover it all. In order to make sure that everyone understands, the strongest pupils loose out because they are challenged enough. So I find that a lot more difficult.

I: So you think it is better for the teachers, what about the pupils?

A5: Absolutely, because they will find that they get a much more suitable education. The homework, texts and everything will be to their level.

I: What about other subjects you teach? Do you think it is easier or more difficult to differentiate your teaching compared to English?

A5: Compared to English... I don't know, I mainly teach English. Of the theoretical subjects anyway, so I usually have more practical subjects. But I have in the past of course, and I find that it is a lot easier to organize the education if they are divided into groups.

I: So maybe it has to do with the textbook?

A5: Absolutely, yeah.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

A5: It takes some time because you need to get to know the pupils, and I did not know the 7th graders that I teach this year before I started with them this fall. So I had to get to know them, but of course then communication with the former teachers was the key. A thing that is really important to remember, even though my group hasn't changed yet, is that we are always very open to that. So if we find that some pupils are struggling we will definitely consider them working on a lower step. It is very important to keep that open, that we always say in the beginning of the year that they are not stuck on for instance step 3. If it becomes too hard, or I see that they are struggling, and if they have lots of mistakes on their chapter tests and things like that, then we need to reevaluate in discussion with the pupils and their parents.

I: Is it up to the teacher or are the students included?

A5: Oh, definitely! Especially 7th graders. With younger pupils you have to maybe take more control, but they usually know what they want. But we can recommend solutions and it is up to the pupils and their teachers to see if they agree. And I also find that especially the stronger students don't want to loose face and change steps. Often, if they have a little warning like "You didn't do this, you didn't understand very well, maybe you should consider now... you've had a few chapter tests where you haven't done too well, maybe you should consider a step down...". Then I find that they start working a lot harder to be able to stay where they are.

I: So can it also have something to do with their own effort?

A5: Yes. I think so!

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

A5: I am not sure how occupied they are with it, or if they even think about it. I think that maybe they do.

I: Do you think that they experience that the teaching fit them?

A5: I think so, I definitely think so, because we usually get feedback quite soon if they are not happy, for instance if the homework is too easy. But I have never, yet at least, experienced that working the way we do on 7th grade. But I do notice in 5th grade, that some people are not happy if they get homework that is too easy or things like that. So, yes they do give feedback in that way. But I actually think in 7th grade, that it is a sign that this is something that works because it is not a topic that is up for discussion very much.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

I: Then I am thinking especially when they are divided into groups, and do not have the sense of a whole class inclusion or belonging.

A5: Yeah, at least it hasn't been an issue in my group, because they are 26 pupils, quite a big class. And also all these 7th graders are used to switching groups, so they don't have like a very set system. I don't think they really notice very much when they enter the English class, that they are in a new big group. I think they just accept it, so it is not really something that we discuss much.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

A5: We are always worried that there will be a social issue, that the weaker students will feel inferior. I actually find that we worry too much about that, because it is usually not a problem. They accept it, I think they all understand that step 1 students struggle the most, and I notice that step 2 pupils often want to reach step 3. So of course we are always aware that there can be challenges, especially if someone is struggling and are not happy with other people knowing that they are working on step 1 or 2. Some pupils are afraid of losing face and all of

that. But I find that that rarely happens though. But that is a worry, and of course sometimes we can get feedback from parents who are worried, because they find that they really expect their child to be a step 3 pupil, and in reality they are not. So those are possible challenges, but we don't really notice them. It's not really a problem.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

A5: Well, I actually teach in the two different ways that I am used to, or that are common in our school. So you are either in your normal class where there are students belonging to each of the steps, or like we do here in 7th grade where they are divided into their set groups. And I have to say that I definitely prefer the way we do it in 7th grade because you meet the students where they need you to be, and you find material that suits to them. And so you don't waste a lot of time dividing your attention between the three steps. Also of course it is a great time saver because you are focused on your step and that's it. And of course you need three times more planning if you are to cover all three steps. So it is definitely a big plus, *especially* for the pupils. Because I mean if we saw that it was good for them to sort of see each other's experiences on different steps, then of course we would make the effort and put down the extra work. But still I don't see that, as this is much better for them. I think they are all more taken care of, and met where they need to be met.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

I: So you basically already answered this, is there any other way you would like to structure your teaching?

A5: No, I prefer this way.

Informant B1

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

B1: Two years with the pupils I teach now, and one year in an “English specialization” class in lower secondary school before that. So three years altogether.

2) What grade do you teach?

B1: 6th grade.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

B1: In 6A we have 14 pupils, and the group that I am I charge of consists of four, sometimes five pupils.

I: In the classroom?

B1: Yes, we are in the classroom as much as possible, but when we go through grammar I take out the four pupils that are step 1 pupils. Then we go through the same as in the classroom.

I: Are these pupils with IEPs?

B1: Yes, they are IEP pupils.

I: But you are 14 pupils in 6A altogether?

B1: Yes.

I: And you are in the classroom as a second teacher?

B1: Yes, the other and I teacher talked about all the pupils, their level of proficiency and what step they should work at. And from that, I have the main responsibility for those on step 1, the ones with IEP.

I: Do you also plan the lessons for them?

B1: Yes.

I: And the other teacher plans for the rest of the class?

B1: Yes, because she has the responsibility for step 2 and 3.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

B1: I am a general teacher.

I: Do you have any credits in English?

B1: No, mainly in “special needs education”.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

B1: I think it is... We hear from the teachers working in lower secondary school, that they prefer that we do not have pupils on step 1, because they experience that there is a great difference. So as they get closer to starting lower secondary school, we try to make them work towards step 2. And that is the thing about adapted education, that we are supposed to challenge them in places where we see that they have potential. We try to go through the curriculum in depth, so that they can work towards step 2.

I: So you are always working towards the next step in a way?

B1: Yes.

I: But at the same time it is perhaps not that easy to make them work at step 2 if they are not ready for it?

B1: No, but sometimes when we read texts, especially to two of my students who mainly work at step 1, we give them step 2 texts. And when I teach grammar I always start on step 1, and after a while often I see that we are ready to move on. In that way we monitor the pupils closely.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?

B1: I think it is a tool that can be used to ensure that everyone can experience success when working with the curriculum. Adapted education is a good basis for teaching. I notice that I give the pupils more options in my lessons compared to what I have done previously.

I: How so?

B1: For instance, earlier I could have said that everyone should make mind maps about verbs. But now I give my pupils the choice on what method they want to use, so that they can

choose the method they prefer and learn best from. So I think I give the pupils more options now, so that they can pick the method they learn the most from using, what they know best.

I: So you encourage them to use the method that they prefer?

B1: Yes.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

B1: It is a term that is being talked about, but I do not think that we have one specific common understanding of it. I think that it varies from grade to grade. I think that everybody does it, but I do not think we have one common understanding.

I: You do not have a common way of practicing it?

B1: No. Some divide pupils in groups, differentiate and some teach everyone together. The way I understand it is up to the teachers of each grade.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

B1: Yeah, what shall I say? When all the teachers have meetings, the importance of adapted education is emphasized. And when teachers have meeting with colleagues working at the same grade we give each other tips on how to organize different themes, exercises and working methods.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

B1: No it was more of that in our practice periods in different schools in cooperation with our practice teacher, and we would try out different methods. And also at the university they talked about and explained the term.

I: Sometimes there can be good explanations to the term, so that you know that you are supposed to adapt the education, but what about *how*?

B1: Yes, that was often what happened at the university, they talked a lot about it, and we had to use the practice periods to work with it really.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

B1: The way I do it now is to ask the other teacher what she is going to go through and which texts. So I try to prepare my pupils in advance. Like for instance next week I know that they are going to talk about possessive pronoun and personal pronoun. So we started on that last week in my group. The purpose of this is that when the rest of the class, step 2 and 3, start this my pupils experience a sense of belonging and mastery. Because they have heard about it before.

I: So you prepare them for what is coming?

B1: Yes, because I, well both of us, want all the pupils to be in the class. But sometimes we see that some pupils need more help and monitoring than others. So the way we do it is that we practice it a week or two in advance so that the weakest pupils can experience participating in the whole class.

I: What is your experience with taking some pupils out of the classroom? Do they seem fine with it?

B1: Luckily they seem to be completely fine with it. The group is rather big as it is now, perhaps it would have been worse if it were only one or two pupils.

I: So your impression is that they experience a sense of belonging in the small group?

B1: Yes, and I do not take them out every lesson, it varies. And if there are certain activities towards the end of a lesson, the other teacher usually has some sort of game or activity, she will tell us to be back in time for that.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

B1: I think in a way that the basics are the same in all subjects. But I think it shines more through if they are all together, if everybody gets the same curriculum or grammar in one class where there is step 1, 2 and 3. Because then it would have been very obvious. If they all had started on possessive pronouns at the same time, we would have noticed that not everybody would have been able to follow. But I do not know whether that is very characteristic for English or if it concerns all subjects. In a way I think it does.

I: Perhaps it depends on how the textbook is built up? Perhaps it is more obvious in English with the use of *Stairs*?

B1: I agree.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

B1: We went through all the pupils and their level of proficiency, and then it is the other teacher that divides them into step 2 and 3.

I: Do the pupils have any say in this?

B1: Yes I think they are a part of the evaluation, and also if there are pupils working at step 2, they have the chance to try out step 3 texts or exercises at step 3. So it is not determined that they have to work at step 2.

I: Okay, so work towards a higher step as much as possible?

B1: Yes.

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? (If so, how?))

B1: It is very obvious for them as they go out in the small group. So it is probably very obvious that those who work at step 1 get the extra help that they need, when they physically leave the classroom. Of course it would be favorable to have all pupils in one class, but we emphasize that some pupils need more help in English, and others may need it in mathematics, so we are very open about it. In that way it is not created a big division between the pupils.

I: Do you know how things are in the other end? Those who are at step 3 and even more advanced, adapted education in relation to them? Perhaps the other teacher would know more about that?

B1: Yes.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

B1: That we are prepared in advance, and when they start on certain themes in class, the weak pupils have the background information that they need, and they have already worked with it for a week or two.

I: So then they do not have to feel left out because they do not understand?

B1: Yes, and then they are very good at raising their hand, and they enjoy it when they can contribute. They experience the difference themselves, and that they are on track.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

B1: It requires a lot of planning, to make sure that there is progression. And to make sure that they feel a sense of belonging in class, so one has to plan the lessons from that. The main idea is that as much as possible is supposed to be for everyone. And if we have lessons where we just listen to a text, work with understanding or terms, then the weak learners are in the classroom, and we know who might need some extra help.

I: So you know who to keep an eye on?

B1: Yes.

I: What challenges can occur by not doing it like this? If you do not differentiate in the way that you do?

B1: I think that motivation is central here. They can lose their motivation.

I: How so?

B1: In that they just think that they don't understand and give up. If we had said that now we are going to learn about possessive pronouns, then they would not have had the same progression as if they had practiced it in advance.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

B1: I feel that the step 1 pupils experience that they master more of what is going on, and that one gets a better overview of which goals they achieve in their IEPs. We see that it is important to cooperate with all teachers involved in the subject for the pupils too achieve their goals and feel that they master the subject, along with motivation.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

B1: I think that... Or the thing that I don't know is whether the other teacher thinks that step 2 and 3 should be divided into groups, but you have to ask her. But yes, at least I see that is it very important with the extra help for the small group, when there are things that they need extra help for.

I: Yes, so you experience that dividing into groups as this works?

B1: Yes.

Informant B2

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

B2: 2 years.

2) What grade do you teach?

B2: 6th grade.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

B2: 32 all together in 6th grade, but they are divided into two classes. So in 6A there are 14 pupils and in 6B there are 18.

I: So you teach both classes in English?

B2: Yes.

I: Do you teach them on your own?

B2: Yes, but I have help.

I: In all lessons?

B2: Yes.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

B2: I am actually a German teacher, German history. I am not an English teacher, I am not educated in English.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

B2: I like the texts in the textbook. And some of the exercises in workbook are good, but I think workbook is too superficial. Because I think that there is so much going on in workbook, I feel that it does not go into depth on the different themes. It is more like it is just scratching the surface. As a result the pupils do not get enough practice unless I make more exercises.

I: So do you make your own exercises?

B2: Yes, very often. But I use workbook too of course, because they have very good questions and exercises for the texts in textbook.

I: Do you use a lot of time making your own exercises?

B2: Yes.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset opplæring)?

B2: Adapted education is for me that you of course take care of all the pupils in your class and that you make lessons that are good for everybody. I adjust the teaching to each group, but I am not very strict at it. It is not like I adapt every lesson for each and every pupil. I have other teachers in my English lessons as well, and they take mostly care of the weak pupils.

I: Do they have IEP, those pupils?

B2: No, we just see and know that they are weak, but they do not have IEPs. So the teacher who is with me in 6B, she takes care of the pupils that are on the lowest grade, step 1 and I take care of the rest. And the second teacher in 6B takes care of the same pupils in that class.

I: So you focus mainly on step 2 and 3?

B2: Yes.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

B2: Yes I think so. Everybody in upper primary school have steps 1, 2 and 3. And we talk about and work with it, but everybody do in their own way as well.

I: So you don't necessarily do the same thing?

B2: No, so we are not like "here is the workbook, and here is the textbook" and we do everything in them, but of course step 1, 2 and 3 is the basic.

I: What about other subjects, do you have like a general, common understanding of adapted education in the school? Do you talk about it in your meetings and such?

B2: Yes, of course. Especially in mathematics and Norwegian we have focus on adapted education. And we talk about it all the time because we have all kinds of pupils, the weakest and the strongest.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

I: So you basically answered this question too.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

B2: No, nothing. Not in my education either because I have a German education and we did not have focus on that at all.

I: What about in your work?

B2: Of course a little bit, but we are always focusing on the weakest and not on the strongest. Yes, adapted education for the weakest, but not for everybody.

I: Often we talk about the fact that everybody has the right to adapted education, but not necessarily *how* to do it?

B2: Yeah.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

B2: I of course use the texts in *Stairs*, step 1, 2 and 3. And of course some exercises in workbook too. But very often I just focus on one text and I read it with the whole class and we translate it. Very often all the pupils do the same, because I am thinking that even if the weakest pupils don't understand everything, at least they understand *some*, and it is good for them to be there. We never read very difficult texts, but even if it is a challenging text that they maybe should not be working with I have them in the classroom. Step 1 as well. Especially in 6B, because the teacher in the other class do things in different ways. She takes the pupils out sometimes.

I: So the second teacher in 6B does not take them out?

B2: No she doesn't. She is with them in the classroom all the time. And I often go through a text with the whole class so that everybody have to read and listen. I want them to have the listening practice, and that everybody should read. I think this works very well. If you are in my classroom you will not notice the division into step 1, 2 and 3. It is not obvious at least, because I like to include the whole class in what we do.

I: What does the second teacher in 6B do in the classroom?

B2: She is mostly there to support the step 1 pupils. Sometimes she takes them out to do exercises and things like that, while the others work at step 2 and 3. Taking them out as a group can often be better, so that she does not have to run around the classroom. So sometimes she takes them out, but we are a bit spontaneous.

I: And what about the more able learners?

B2: I take care of them.

I: Do they mainly use the textbook, or do you use other material?

B2: They use the textbook for the step 2 and 3 texts. And they get a bit more difficult exercises. We often do acting, because they love it. And then of course they know who is very good in English, and who isn't that good. So the very strong English pupils always get kind of the leader role with more responsibility. They have more text and lines to say, and stuff like that.

I: So they get more challenge?

B2: They get more challenge and sometimes more work as well.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

B2: It is very challenging, it more challenging in English, because we have English three times a week. If you want to do something very thorough, you never get time for anything because you have to do it for everybody.

I: Do you think it is very time consuming to have three steps?

B2: Yes, it is. But it is of course very good, but I want to have more lessons in a week to have time for everything.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

B2: Well, I ask them. And when I got the pupils I have now, I got them in 5th grade, they already had a step. I don't know what the other teacher did before, but I said "OK, you are on step 2, that's OK, but I want to take a look after a while if you maybe can be on step 3 or step 1". So I often look at their written work, and I listen to them speak. Sometimes we do the chapter test in *Stairs*. They are not stuck at one level, it is not like "you are at step 1, and you will stay there". They move up and down between steps. So if I see that a pupil is very good at the listening exercises she might get step 3 there. And the same pupil might not be as strong in writing, then I would give her step 2 on the writing part.

I: So in moving between steps, you are thinking mostly upwards?

B2: Yes I always try to push them in that direction. It is not as easy to move down. But of course if they work at step 2 and that doesn't work, they will have to move down.

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

B2: I think so. Of course they experience it because they know about the steps. So of course they experience it but I don't think, that the pupils on step 1 don't think a lot about the fact that they are in a separate group or that they are much weaker than the others. This is because they are most often a part of the whole class. So I think they experience it in a good way.

I: You don't think that someone would feel bad about being on step 1? You don't experience that?

B2: No, I have never experienced that.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

B2: I already talked about that. Everybody is in the class very often, and we often read the same texts and talk about the same things. It is not like they are always separated in the different steps. I try to do it that way, and I hope it is the right thing to do.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

B2: Eh... A lot of challenges? As a teacher you have much more to do, much more to take care of, you have to plan and prepare a lot more. The thing I think is most difficult is to not forget about the very strong pupils. Because the weak pupils take very much space and I often worry that the others are just sitting there wondering what to do.

I: Do you experience that they do that?

B2: Sometimes. And then I'm like "I have to find something!"

I: What about the pupils' experience of inclusion? Do you think they experience inclusion even if they are on step 1, 2 or 3?

B2: Yes I think so.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

B2: At my school... I really can't answer that because I have never been in another English lesson than my own. I don't know.

I: Do you think it is a good way of structuring it?

B2: I think so. I am not sure.

I: Do you think teaching the whole class in three different steps is OK?

B2: Yeah... we need more time! That is the only thing. I don't think that we can do it in another way. We have to take care of step 1, 2 and 3 the whole time. But we need more time. Only three lessons a week is not enough.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

B2: I think the way it is now is good, something for everyone. I could just wish that we had more time. And if we had had more time I could take much better care of the step 3 pupils I think. Because that is the problem.

I: Do you think another way of structuring English lessons (like the other school in this research) could be to divide them into steps? One step 1 group, and step 2 and step 3?

B2: That they get their own teaching? But then they are not the whole class.

I: You think that is an important feature?

B2: I think it is important, but I think of course that we can... Well, we have three teachers in the class, English teachers, so we could have had three groups, and they could be with their

teacher... I think that that is a good way to teach English, but I mean that they should be a whole class very often too. I worry that it would be as it is in Germany. I really feel that Norway has a good system, everybody is in one class. And also we have the resources (not always, but we should have) to take care of everyone. The strongest and the weakest. If you divide into three groups, if there is a constant differentiation, then you are back where they are in Germany.

I: Are they divided in all subjects in Germany?

B2: Yes, they are divided in all subjects, and they are even divided into different schools. One for the most able learners, and one for the average ones, and one for the weakest learners.

I: In separate schools even?

B2: Yes.

I: That is a bit extreme.

B2: And then it would be like that. I think that Norway is a step further in the right direction, having all pupils at the same schools and having resources at these schools in order to take care of all the pupils. Of course we are not always able to do that, but I guess a division could be good, but not a constant one. They would not function as a class.

I: Do you think it could be an idea to do it in English? In some schools it is common to do it in English and mathematics.

B2: Yes. I am not sure.

I: What about for you as a teacher?

B2: For me as a teacher, that I would teach only one step? Yes perhaps we could have taken the two classes together and divided them.

I: That is what they do at the other school in this research.

B2: I guess it would be a good way of structuring it but I don't have any experience with it. And I am thinking that that would be a constant division. They would not be a whole class. Or I guess they could be, but then again it would not be a constant division.

I: I guess there is a difference in how "extreme" you do it?

B2: Yes. Like we do it sometimes. If there are exercises that step 1 cannot do together with step 3, we split them. But when we do things like acting, there are many possibilities to avoid a clear division, because then they can all get different tasks.

I: So that the weak pupils learn from the stronger ones?

B2: Yes I think that is the case many times. Not only that the weak pupils learn from the stronger ones, but also that the strong learners can get even stronger.

I: In that they learn from learning others?

B2: Exactly, and that is what I am trying to do, but I don't think that it works all the time, because we have so little time. I think that three English lessons a week is way too little. English is such an important and huge subject, they are supposed to learn so much. All the competence aims we are supposed to get through in one year. I don't know how one is supposed to get through them all. So I have to focus on the ones that I find most important.

Informant B3

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

B3: I have been teaching English for almost two years now.

2) What grade do you teach?

B3: I teach 7th grade and 1st grade.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

I: In the 7th grade

B3: 21

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

B3: I have a master's degree in English literacy studies, 200 credits. And I also have the lector education.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

B3: I am not very fond of *Stairs* because I think that there is a lack of grammar exercises and also I think that some of the texts are kind of outdated and not really that interesting or relevant for the students. But of course, we use the old version of *Stairs*, not the new version. And I haven't looked at the new version, so maybe that's better. I also think that there could be more exercises that are reflective, and also I don't really like the exercises for step 3, because many of the tasks are in a separate folder, so you have to make copies all the time. And also there are not that many tasks. And the grammar is not really explained in an easy, understandable way. Also there are many mistakes in *Stairs*, all the time.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset oppl ring)?

B3: I think that adapted education is education for everyone, that fits everyone, and that is challenging and educative and developing for everyone, based on their abilities.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

B3: Yes I believe that we have a common understanding of what it is, but I think that many teachers use it differently, or they give different adaptations to their students.

I: How so?

B3: I don't know... I think that some of the teachers really challenge the students on step 3, and some of them don't really challenge them, they kind of just sit in class... I think that those pupils could do more if they were given the opportunity to develop. Or I think that the weak students get a lot of attention, not necessarily the high-achieving students. They don't get as much attention as the others. I think that it is common to adapt more to the "lower area".

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

B3: We don't talk about it that much, but I talk to the English teacher in the other class. So we have kind of come up with this common understanding, so we do it more or less the same. Sometimes I guess we talk about it at the school as a whole, but not that much. Maybe on the

weaker students as well. I think that goes for the weak students again, the weak students are always taken good care of. And we talk about *that* a lot. For instance how to give them homework that they can do. I talk about this with the assistants who are with me in the English lessons.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

B3: No I don't think so. Maybe a little bit on the University, but not at my school as a course or anything.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

B3: I always try to give challenges on both step 3 and step 1. And we have the step 1, 2 and 3 system. In step 1 we try to do a more thorough reading of the texts. Here we need to do more basic stuff, and I have three assistants in my class, on three pupils. When one of them takes out her student, they go through what we've done that week, or she might ask "have you understood what just happened in class", or "do you have any questions about this theme or what we are dealing with?", in terms of grammar of something that we are doing that week. And for the step 3 students, they get more advanced books, instead of reading texts in *Stairs* they can read Jon Nesbø. We have a lot of books, I have a student with an American mom, and she gave us a box full of American books for teenagers, which was great. So many of them read such books.

I: About the assistants, do you have three students that have their own assistant every English lesson?

B3: Yes, but they are only helping that one person. Also, I forgot to mention that one of the things that I do to differentiate or adapt is the way that I give response to their work. Both written and orally. I can give more advanced response to the step 3 students, more challenging response. Like "next time you need to focus on how you use like am or pm", or like specific grammar instruction. Just more than you would do to a step 2 student.

I: And that is a way of giving them more challenges?

B3: Yes. You can give them more feedback. If I would have given all that feedback to a step 2 student they would probably just lose all motivation because it would be too much. And you

can also give them specific challenges in regards to how they speak or how they pronounce words, and usually the step 3 students are eager to learn more. They want more challenges too.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

B3: I think that it is actually really difficult, actually more difficult than other subjects because English is such a varied subject, or the students are very different in terms of how interested they are and how much they have developed. Some of them are not necessarily great achievers in other subjects, but in English they are really great because they have been playing video games and talk to American people or others that they are playing with. So they use English a lot, they watch movies and they listen to music. Others might not have Internet at home, or they don't watch movies that much, or they are not that interested. And some of them struggle a lot. I just think that the difference between the step 1 and step 3 groups is just so much greater than in other subjects.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

B3: Well we see how they score, and actually the students can more or less choose. If they want to go up, they can choose to go up. But they can't choose to go down. But I am not really sure how they did it in the beginning, I haven't taught English in the 5th grade, and that is when they start with steps. So they were already divided when I got them. Some of them have gone up, but I think that you kind of just have a feeling and you can look at their scores, if they have like 30 out of 30 on every test, and you can see that they really have developed, you can move them to step 3.

I: Do they have a saying in this themselves?

B3: Yes, I've moved some of them now in the 7th grade, and they were all satisfied. I asked one pupil if she wanted to move, but she said no. She was fine with being on step 2, and she didn't want more challenge.

Teachers' perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

B3: I think they do experience it, and I think they have a healthy way of looking at it because it is not like there is this feeling that step 3 is really good and step 2 is really bad. At least I haven't heard them saying things like "oh, you are stupid because you are on step 1" or anything. And I think they like that I try to give them challenges. However, sometimes I have to say "I know that you can do better than that", so I make them to do better. They don't necessarily like that always, but I think they appreciate it in the end.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

B3: We listen to the three texts at once sometimes, and other times I find texts that are not in *Stairs* so that we talk about the same theme. In that way they can all join in on the conversation and not feel like we are talking about something completely different from what they read this week. But that is hard to do because *Stairs* is not made like that.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

B3: I think that there is always the possibility of some of them feeling left out or feeling like they are not good enough if they are on step 1. I also think that one of the greatest challenges is time. Because you are supposed to teach three different levels at once. And in regards to reading texts or doing tasks or just going through something, they are not always working at the same level, so that is challenging. Often they all have to do basic stuff because I am alone, I can't divide the class and the assistants are just on one person so I can't use them either. So I have to do "station teaching", where I run one of the stations. Other times I have to do the instruction for the whole class and teach all of them at once. The problem in such situations is that sometimes the step 3 students will be bored, and sometimes it will get too difficult for the step 1 students.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

B3: I think it is challenging. It is okay of course, you can manage. But I think that it is not beneficial for everybody. There is always someone who is losing. Well not always, but in many cases. But also it is good, for instance in oral activities, there are always mixed groups so they can always lean on, learn from and help each other. There is a very healthy environment in my English class so it is okay to get help, to ask for help, and to be unsure about something.

I: Do you experience that your step 1 are as active as the others?

B3: They are not that active, but I only have four step 1 students, out of 21. And three of them have their own assistant and an IEP in the English subject. That makes it even harder, because they are not regular step 1 students. I only have one who is actually a step 1 student, and the other ones haven't been in class. Like one of them was out of class the whole year, or actually both in 5th and 6th grade.

I: Do you think the weak students would benefit from being in one group?

B3: Absolutely.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

B3: I think that the students would benefit more from being divided into three groups. If we were three teachers we could have had three levels and that would have been much more beneficial for the students, and also for the teachers. And we would have had time to do so much more.

Informant B4

Background information

1) For how long have you been teaching English?

B4: That is a good question actually. I have been teaching my present class since August and I have also been teaching at Dalane Videregående Skole for half a year. So one year and two months.

2) What grade do you teach?

B4: 7th grade.

3) How many pupils do you have in your class/group?

B4: 21.

4) What kind of education do you have? (How many credits in English?)

B4: "Adjunkt" and "lektor-program", so it is a master's thesis in English, which I am writing now. So I have 240 credits in English so far.

I: And when you finish?

B4: 300.

5) How do you experience the *Stairs* Textbook/Workbook?

B4: The textbook is all right, at least for the step 1 and step 2 texts. I think the step 3 texts are not challenging enough. It is just a lot of text, but not high enough level. So presently I am using silent reading books for step 3, to give them some authentic literature instead of step 3. And I have also used English articles from American websites about different topics, instead of using the textbook. And the workbook has a lot of mistakes, which is not good, and confusing because you have to use as much time checking the workbook for mistakes, as it would take to make the tasks yourself. I don't really like the workbook.

I: Do you use it much at all?

B4: I use it sometimes. I have maybe used it ten times this year and I would say that seven of them there have been mistakes in the tasks they were going to do. So I have refrained from using it.

I: Okay, do you make your own exercises?

B4: Yes. And I prefer having them use the grammar when writing a short text. For example if I teach about linking words I give them the iPads, we have a class set of iPads, and ask them to use them to write a short text about a title I choose. And then I say “use these four linking words as much as you can”.

Adapted education and school practices

6) How do you understand the term *adapted education* (tilpasset opplæring)?

B4: As far as I’m concerned I think that each pupil should be met at their level in the classroom. Which is extremely hard to do. Because if you focus on the strong pupils it is easy to forget the weak ones and vice versa. So it is really hard to focus on everyone at the same time.

I: When you focus on one group, what is your experience of the other groups?

B4: Luckily I have a second teacher, which has main focus on the weaker pupils. She has the four weakest pupils. She follows them up on a daily basis in the classroom. She takes them out of the classroom and goes through what I have said afterwards. They also read their homework to her. She basically gives them extra attention, extra help.

I: And do you know how they experience being taken out of the classroom? Is that okay?

B4: Yes I think they find it very helpful, because that helps them to understand what to do and when to do it. And they avoid being made fun of in the class.

7) Does the school have a common understanding of this term?

B4: I think the leaders have a pretty good idea of how they want it. But if you visit several classrooms you would see a wide specter¹⁰ of differentiation, so I don’t think we are on the same level, on the same page as teachers.

8) How do you work with *adapted education* at your school?

¹⁰ Here meaning ”range”

B4: How I personally work with it?

I: No, together as a school?

B4: No, not as such. We haven't had meetings called "adapted education" or talked about it specifically, but we try to include it as often as we can in teaching.

I: Do you share your experiences with other teachers?

B4: We have recently started sharing with the other English teachers, tips and tricks when we teach, and how to reach everyone. But not the entire school, no.

9) Have you had courses or lectures on how to *practice* adapted education (in your education or at work)?

B4: No, actually not. Often they just tell you "You have to teach differentiated", and then it is up to you.

10) How do you implement adapted education in your own teaching?

B4: I am using the step 1, 2, 3 from *Stairs*. And I find that really helpful. Because they are at such different levels when they are 12 years old. So some of my pupils are barely at step 1, and have trouble making a sentence. And others read fluently English crime literature, authentic literature. So it is really hard to try to teach all of them at the same time, in the same classroom. And I can't send them out either, because they will not do what they are supposed to. So lately, when we go through a new text, I have put the step 3 in the back of the classroom, reading in those silent reading books, and then maybe a group of step 1 in one corner, and a group of step 2 in the other corner and then I have them read in groups to each other. So that works well.

11) How challenging is it to implement adapted education in English compared to other subjects?

B4: I think it is more challenging in English than say gymnastics or nature/science, because they are at such different levels. And the way you speak, the input you give them and how you teach are important aspects of their education. So if I try to adjust my level of English to step 3, then step 1 will not understand anything. And if I speak so that step 1 understands me,

step 3 think it is boring, because the information gets repeated and it becomes too obvious. So that is a challenge.

12) How do you decide which step the pupils should be on?

B4: After each chapter we have a chapter test, which include a reading, writing, grammar, and some general knowledge. Afterwards I look at how they did within their step, if a pupil has 22 out of 23 on step 1, then I write as a feedback: “maybe you should consider trying out step 2?”

I: So it is basically their choice?

B4: Yes. I have not forced anyone. When I started teaching the class they were already divided into steps 1, 2 and 3. But I have not forced anyone to change steps, but actually two pupils have come to me and asked if they could go from step 1 to step 2, to get some more challenge.

I: So it is from 1 to 2 or 2 to 3, and not the other way around?

B4: No, that is not an alternative. I have one pupil who always asks if he can go from step 3 to step 2 to get “easier” instruction, to have less resistance, but I always say no.

Teachers’ perceptions of how pupils experience adapted education

13) How do you think your pupils experience adapted education? (do you think they experience it? If so, how?)

B4: I think they are aware of it at least.

I: Do you think they are aware of their right to have adapted education?

B4: No I don’t think so, but I am pretty clear about who is on step 1, 2, 3. And then they experience that step 3 is doing something else, and that step 1 is doing something else. So they know that they are not all at the same level. I hope they experience that the education is adapted to them. Especially the weaker pupils get extra help, extra sheets, maybe with a key, what it means in Norwegian. But I think that they appreciate this extra help.

I: Do you experience that you have to plan kind of three lessons in one, with three different steps?

B4: No, because I am so lucky to have the second teacher which looks at what I have planned and makes adjustments, for the step 1.

I: So basically you plan for step 2 and 3?

B4: Yeah. And she is only supposed to help four of the seven step 1 pupils, but when she sees one of the other three struggling she helps them too.

I: Do those four have IEP?

B4: Yes, all of them.

I: Okay, so that's why she is there?

B4: Yes, the school has given extra resources in order to help them. And they probably will not get a grade in English next year.

14) How do you make sure pupils feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in your English lessons?

B4: I always use different games, in every lesson I try to have a game towards the end. For example *Alias*, or *My name* or *Ten questions* and so on. And then everyone is included, even if they are step 3. Then I get them to come in from the hall or wherever they are, and have a game with the others. And I always make teams with mixed pupils from step 1, 2, 3.

I: So they all come together and do something together towards the end?

B4: Yes.

15) What kind of challenges can occur by differentiating in order to achieve adapted education (In relation to inclusion)? What kind of challenges can occur by not doing it?

I: For instance, could someone feel left outside?

B4: Yeah, it could be a problem. Especially if you do not want to be on the step you are on. And all your friends are on step 2, and they get to go do something else in another room and you might feel left out.

I: But what if they say that they want to be on step 2, but you feel that they should not be? Has that happened?

B4: No, actually that has not happened. As far I can see they are pretty realistic about where they should be. I had a pupil who wanted to try step 3, and I gave him a silent reading book, and after ten minutes he gave it back. So he wanted to wait a little. It hasn't been a problem so far.

I: What kind of challenges do you think can occur by not differentiating the way you do?

B4: If you teach the same to all pupils, then probably one third will not understand and one third will be bored because it is too easy for them. So it is really important to differentiate, I think.

Structure of EFL teaching

16) How do you experience the way EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching is structured at your school? (also in relation to previous ways it might have been done)

I: Do you think it is a good way of structuring it?

B4: If I could have chosen I would have divided them into three classes, one step 1 class, one step 2, one step 3 with one teacher for each.

I: Do you think that that would be only positive? Or do you think it could have negative sides as well?

B4: I think it could have negative sides as well. Especially if the step 1 group has got a lot of "tough guys", which found it difficult learning English, and then tried to act tough to hide that fact, that could be a challenge. And it would be challenging teaching that class, but if we had a teacher that could manage these guys, I think it would be really helpful.

I: But do you think it has something to do with their age as well?

B4: Yes of course, it is a difficult age when you are 12 or 13, so maybe it would be easier further up or further down. I am not sure. Maybe in lower secondary school, 8th-10th grade. It would have been interesting to try out. The challenge on our school is the money. Because you need salary for one extra teacher.

I: But I am thinking that since they do not seem to mind working at different steps, then maybe they would not mind being in groups of different steps?

B4: No I don't think so because at least now when I divide them into steps in the classroom each day, then if they went to another classroom and came back. Then they could partner up on other pupils at the same level, instead of maybe the five pupils at their level. Maybe it gets boring after many years, just working with them.

17) Is there any other way you would prefer to structure your EFL teaching (other than what you are doing now)?

I: You basically answered this question.

B4: Yeah. We are trying now to make the English teaching at our school, this in a 1 to 10 school, trying to make it more fluent. Tell each other what we are doing at the different levels. Because as it is now, year 1-4 is "in their own world", doing their thing. And when they get to grade 5 to 7, we do our own thing, and then 8 till 10, they have a completely other way of doing it.

I: So you are working at making that transition smoother?

B4: Yeah, and inform grade 4 what they should practice, what is important to know when they get to a higher level. So that is a working progress.

Appendix C: Questionnaire guide

This is the original questionnaire that was handed out to the pupils.

1) Hvilket step jobber du på i engelsk? (sett kryss)

1	2	3

2) Sett kryss etter hvor enig du er i utsagnene:

Utsagn	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig
a) Jeg trives i engelskfaget				
b) Engelskundervisningen passer til meg (ikke for enkel eller for vanskelig)				
c) Jeg er motivert til å jobbe med engelskfaget				
d) Læreren min bruker varierte arbeidsmetoder i engelskundervisningen				

3) Jeg vil helst at engelskundervisningen skal foregå i:

Den vanlige klassen min Grupper inndelt etter step

Hvorfor mener du dette? (forklar kort på baksiden)

Appendix D: Pupils' reasons given to Question 3 of the questionnaire.

This appendix presents the reasons given by the pupils to Question 3 of the questionnaire, sorted by class/group.

The quotes are translated from Norwegian as accurately as possible by the researcher.

Teachers' names are replaced with "X".

Pupils' steps are specified in brackets after each quote when needed.

School A, 6th grade, step 1

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

Because I know more people in my class.

Because it is quieter.

I prefer to be with my regular class because then it is easier and we feel safer.

It is fun to have X.

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

It is fun because we have X.

Because I work better.

I like it best when everybody is at the same level.

It is easier.

It is cool, and we have to get used to it because it is going to happen in secondary school.

Because then we get to know more pupils on the 6th grade.

Because it is a bit challenging to be with those on step 2 and 3.

Because we have a nice teacher and it is fun.

I like that we are divided into steps because then it is not too difficult for me. Since most of the pupils in my class are on step 2 and 3.

Because then I can get to know more people.

School A, 6th grade, step 2

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

Then we can sit together like in a regular class instead of being divided into groups with persons that you do not know or do not like, and also if they are mean and the teachers will not do anything about it.

I like being in my regular class. There is less noise and I feel safer there.

I think that the English lessons should be in the pupils' classrooms because, for instance, the ones on step 1 think that they are less smart, that they do not know anything. The glossaries at step 1 are easy. Step 2 is okay. Everybody should have the same homework, which is okay. And also there should be texts for those who want it, they can be more challenging.

I mean that it is best to have English lessons in my class because there I know everyone.

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

Because then we are motivated to work harder to move up a step.

Because then you get help on the level that you are at.

I think that we should have steps because then you get to work/be taught at your own level.

Because then I get to be in another class. I like it there.

Because if we had the English lessons in our own classes we would have to wait for the other steps.

I mean this because if everyone had the same step, then it would be too easy or too difficult.

I believe that I get instruction that suits me, which is not too difficult.

Because then they get to know that (some are good at something, and others are good at something), and also we get to know other pupils, and we are always with our class otherwise.

Because then I get to know more pupils in the 6th grade.

I want steps because then you can be with others who are not in your class and those who are at the same level as you. I like to work with steps because then you can work towards getting to a higher step.

Because you can work at your level.

When we work in groups of steps we get to know the other pupils in 6th grade better, and we get to try out more teaching methods.

It is fun to be with others and it is easier to work with pupils that are on the same level.

Because I do not really like it in my own class, because I do not like the seating. And in differentiated groups you can talk to pupils at the same level as you.

I want to get the instruction that I need. In my regular class the proficiency levels are very different.

Because it is fun to be with other pupils and everybody is not on the same level. So when we are not in our original classes, everybody get instruction at their level.

Because I like to work with pupils from the other classes, and get to know them. I like being on step 2 because it fits me.

Because there is someone who are not so good, someone that are good and some that are in between. Also I like to get to know the pupils in the different classes.

School A, 6th grade, step 3

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

I think that the English lessons should be in my regular class because then we can choose which step we want to be at and those who for instance are at step 1, they might feel poor in English because they are at the lowest step.

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

Then everybody have assignments that fit their level of proficiency.

I think that we should be working in steps.

Steps because then you get instruction at your level.

I want groups according to steps because it is easier to work with those who are at the same level as me.

Because then it is much easier to get better at English.

I think it is best to be divided into groups according to steps, because then you know that you like the subject and you are motivated.

Because then you get the instruction that is for you, and you do not have to listen to things you already know.

Because then you do not have to go through the step 1, step 2 and step 3 homework and use the time on that.

Because it gets easier for those who are poor in English to get better, and also things can get too easy for step 3.

I like this division. Then I can work with pupils at my own level, and with other pupils at my level. I think that is good.

In my opinion we should be working in groups according to step, because then we get to work with things that we think is okay, not things that are too easy or too difficult.

In my opinion I think we should be divided into groups according to step because then those who are a bit better or a bit weaker than others can work with what they should.

Because then I get to work with things that are on my level.

Because then we can work with pupils from the other classes, which is fun! We can work with different things that suit us (not too difficult or too easy).

I think it is better to be divided into groups according to step because then the teacher plans tasks that we can manage (that are not too easy or too difficult). Also you get to know pupils in 6th grade who work on the same level as you. I have a positive attitude towards working in such groups.

Because then those who are more or less on the same level as you can work together. Then it is not like someone think that the homework was too difficult, while others think that everything is easy.

I think that we should be divided into groups according to step because it is fun to vary the classes, and also that we have different levels of ability. So that we do not all have the same homework and glossaries.

I think that it is better now (divided into groups according to step) because then we get to work with pupils from the other classes and get to know them better. And also because we used a lot of time in the English lessons going through the homework of step 1, step 2 and step 3 when we had English in our original classes. Then we also had to read all the reading homework for all three steps, that was not very fun.

Because then those who are good in English can get the instruction that they need.

I prefer that the English lessons should be done in groups according to step because then we do not have to read step 1, step 2 and step 3 texts, and also when the teacher reads the glossaries they do not have to read the glossaries for step 1, step 2 and step 3.

Because then you get challenged if you think things are too easy. In our original classes things can get too easy if you are very good.

I want groups according to steps since some are better in English compared to others. If we have English in our regular classes the lessons can get too easy for somebody, and too difficult for others. So I think we should have steps.

School A, 7th grade, step 1

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

It is better in groups because it is easier to raise my hand and there is not as much noise. I get help faster.

Because it is much easier, you get much more help and you are with pupils who are at the same step as you. You learn much more compared to when everyone is together.

It is easier and you get more help.

I think it is better to be divided into groups because then we get to learn more. If you do not know what the others are saying you do not learn anything. Also it is easier and you get more help.

School A, 7th grade, step 2 and 3

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

Because then I do not have to move back and forth. (2)

Because then I will not have to move around with my books all the time, and also I feel that I work best with my own class. (3)

I do not know, I just like to be with my own class. The English lessons are a bit easy. (3)

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

I like best being divided into steps because then we are not as many and we get to work with things that are not too easy or too difficult. (2)

I think it is best being divided into steps because then pretty much everybody is on the same level, and nobody is very much better than you. Then we do not feel like our English is weak. (2)

Because then we get to know people in the other class by doing exercises with somebody that you are never with. It is a nice way to get to know people that you never spend time with from the other class. (2)

Because it is easier and the teacher can teach one step instead of three (2)

I want groups according to step. Because then I get to know people that are not in my own class. (2)

Because it is better to be with those who are at the same step as you. You do not need to listen to something that is for another step, which might be too difficult or too easy. (2)

It is easier to keep track of. (2)

Because I like working with someone that I usually do not spend time with. (2)

I want to be divided into groups in the English lessons because it is fun with some variation compared to my regular classroom. (2)

I like it best when we work, read, have tests and do exercises. (2)

I think it is easier and I learn more. (2)

So that we do not have to listen to all steps, and so that everybody can focus on what they think is difficult and others think is easy. (2)

It is better to work in groups because then you learn better and you do not have to wait for other steps to finish. That is why it is better to have groups for each step. (2)

I do not know why I mean that. (2)

Because it works for me. (2)

Because I do not like English and I do not really want to learn it. I think it is best to learn English in groups. (2)

I prefer the English lessons to be in groups according to steps and not in my class. It is for instance because I think it is easier to learn English when we are in groups compared to in our regular classes. And it is a bit boring to be with the same class in all subjects. (2)

Because it is easier for the teachers. (3)

Then you learn much more that you did not know, because for instance step 1 might need more repetition. (3)

Because then we can work with more fitting methods. (3)

Because then it is easier to work. (3)

Because then everybody get to work with their step and nothing is too easy or too difficult. (3)

Because it is easier for both the teachers and me. I think it is easier now, because when the teacher speaks it is about step 3, not step 1 and 2. If we have someone on step 1 in my class, and I am on step 3, then it is easier when we are divided into steps. (3)

School A, 7th grade, step 3

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

I liked it better when we worked in our own classes, because then step 3 can teach step 1 and so on.

I prefer to be with my own class.

I think that we should have it in our own classes, because I feel safer there. And it is less stress.

Because I feel safest in my own class.

I do not trust everybody in this group, because of the past. I feel safer in my own class.

Because it is a bit more comfortable that way.

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

I think it is better for me to have the English lessons in groups according to step, because then I can work with others who are at my level. I just want to say that I really like it in this group and with my teacher X. X is a great teacher, very nice.

I prefer to work in steps, because I like to vary the class/group that we work in. We get instruction at our level, and I am very happy with my teacher, X.

Then everybody gets instruction on the level that they need.

I want groups according to step, because I think that it is good to work with other pupils in 7th grade, not just the ones in my class, and also to see how they work.

I think that the step I am at now works for me, it is not too easy or too hard. Also I clearly understand the things that X explains as well.

I think it is good to be divided into groups according to step, because then I do not need to listen to things I already understand, it is much better to learn new stuff.

I think it is good to work with English that is on my level, so that it suits me. But sometimes I do not understand everything and need to go through it again.

Because then I get to work with things at my level, and do not need to repeat everything several times.

I think it is better with these groups of steps because then we do not have to listen to those who learn a bit slower asking about a lot of things. Also we work at different pace.

Groups according to step are better because then it is easier to focus one step instead of two or three.

I feel that it is easier to follow, and you do not have to wait while we go through all the steps. Instead we begin straight away on the step that we are on.

Because I want to be with peers at my own level.

I want to have division of groups because then I get to work at my level, and I like to vary the classes a bit.

I like that we only work at the one level in the group, that we only focus on step 3.

Because then I do not have to read through others' homework and do the wrong exercises, that belong to step 1 or 2. It is also fun that when I ask for help they understand it.

I feel that I learn more when we are divided according to step.

In my opinion there can often be a lot of waiting if we are in the original classes, because it can, for me at least, be a bit boring to work with something I already know.

Because then I do not have to listen to the other steps' homework, and then I get more time to do something that also I learn from.

School B, 6A

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

I think it is better because then the whole class is together. (1)

Because then it is better and more quiet. (1)

I like working with my class. (2)

I work best alone, that is why. (2)

I want to be with my class. (2)

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

This is my opinion because those who are on step 2 and 3 do not need as much explanation as those on step 1. And the exercises for step 2 and 3 are too difficult for step 1. (1)

Because if others need help. (2)

It takes longer for step 1 and 2 to read and write, so they kind of slow things down. (3)

Sometimes the person I work with does not understand what we are supposed to do. I want the groups to be even, and not uneven. (3)

Then I could be with pupils from the other class, it would be fun to try something new. (3)

Because then I think we would learn more. (3)

Because it is easier if everybody is on the same step. (3)

Because then we can work with those who are at the same step, and it is better to work in groups. (3)

School B, 6B

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

Because I feel safer in my class (1)

I believe this because we are very few at step 1 and we are only boys. It is embarrassing to be at step 1. (1)

There are more people in my class that I can work with, I like it better. (1)

I mean this because then we can work together and learn the same things. Also it is fun in the lessons the way we do it. (2)

Because I think it is better to work in my class than in groups. I think I learn more. (2)

I think this because then everyone gets the same message. (2)

I think we should have the whole class together in the English lessons, because then there is less focus on who is working at the different steps. (3)

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

I think I would learn more with those who are at my level. (1)

Because it would have been more fun to work in groups according to the step you are on.

Because then I can learn from the pupils in the other class, and see how they work. (2)

Because then we can work in groups that allow us to only work with texts we understand. (2)

Because then I understand better what I am supposed to do. (2)

I do not think it is very exciting to learn English. (2)

I mean that it is better to work in groups according to steps, because then we learn what we need and it is not too difficult or too easy. (2)

Because then it would be a bit easier, and it would be fun to work with those who are on the same step as me. (3)

Because then we can get started faster and we do not have to listen to all the steps. (3)

Because there we can work with our step. (3)

Because then we could learn something that everyone in the group think is challenging. (3)

School B, 7A

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

I have many good friends on the other steps as well. And I also have friends on step 2. (2)

Because then those on step 1 can learn from those who are on step 2, and those who are at step 2 can get better. Step 2 can get help from step 3. (2)

Because it is much more fun to work together. (2)

Because I can. (2)

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

No comments. (1)

I do not know. (1)

Because I do not have to listen to all the steps. (1)

Then it takes less time to go through the homework, and we get to be with pupils who are more or less at our level. (2)

It would be easier. It would take less time. It is more fun. More motivating. (2)

Because then it does not take as much time to go through the reading homework and it is not as embarrassing if we say something wrong because there are fewer pupils there. (2)

Because then for instance: those on step 1, they do not understand everything, but if we were divided into steps the teacher could perhaps explain things more often rather than sometimes, if they do not dare to ask out loud. (2)

Then everybody would know more or less the same. Then it would not be like one pupil from step 3 does everything, while a pupil from step 1 does very little (if we have group work). (2)

Because it takes much less time to go through the homework, and then it would be only one step. (2)

I mean that because then we can work only with more challenging exercises and only read step 3 reading homework. (3)

Because then it will be easier to concentrate. It is annoying to listen to step 1 because we already know it. (3)

Because then I would have learnt more and faster instead of learning something that I already know. I also think that things would have gone faster and simpler. Like homework, we use a lot of time on that when we are in the whole class. It would have been exciting to try something new (but it depends on the teacher, if one is motivated or not). (3)

Because then it will be easier and then the lessons would be less split, so then we can get more done in the lessons. (3)

Because then I will get more motivated. (3)

School B, 7B

I prefer my English lessons to be done in my regular class:

(No comments) (1)

I think it is fine. (1)

Because I can. (2)

Because then you have your friends around you and feel safe. (2)

(No comments) (2)

Because I can. (2)

I think that there is less pressure. I feel more safe. (3)

(No comments) (3)

(No comments) (3)

I prefer my English lessons to be done in groups according to steps:

Because I think I will understand English better then. (1)

Then I would have more help. (1)

Because it is easy to have it in groups. (1)

We would get started faster. But if you need help it is easier to ask someone who is better than you in English. (1)

I prefer being divided into groups because then you learn more and get more help. (2)

I want instruction in groups according to step because then it would not be as much stress. (2)

Because I am at step 2, and I need to challenge myself a little bit. And others might need help with other things. (2)

I mean that it is best to work with those who are at my step because then I get better teaching and more help. (2)

I think it would be better if we had been divided into steps because then we would not have to do things from the other steps. (2)

I think that we should be divided into groups because a lot of the pupils in step 1, 2 and 3 have to wait pretty long. (3)

Because then we can learn more. (3)