

Teachers' and students' perceptions of vocational orientation in the English subject

Sturla Sagli



Mastergradsavhandling i engelsk fagdidaktikk ved
institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleforskning
Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Vår 2017

© Sturla Sagli

2017

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Vocational Orientation in the English Subject

Sturla Sagli

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

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The aim of this qualitative study is to investigate how teachers and students perceive vocational orientation in the English subject in upper secondary school. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with nine vocational students, three teachers who teach English at vocational education programs and observations of three English classes. The study examines the needs of, and the challenges teachers and students face in the implementation of vocational orientation in the teaching. The starting point of the study is the FYR-project and its objective to improve vocational orientation and the relevance of the common core subjects in vocational education programs. The findings show that both students and teachers are positive towards vocational orientation, but that they experience a number of problems in its implementation.

For students, the problem is primarily that the vocational orientation is not perceived as authentic. They find that the vocational orientation they have had in English does not always match the expectations they have for their future jobs. The vocational orientation is therefore of little relevance to the students.

For the teachers, there are two main problems with vocational orientation. First, the teachers find that they do not have sufficient competence in the students' specializations to make their teaching authentic, a finding that matches the students' experiences. In addition, their school made no attempts to improve the vocational competence of the teachers through courses, or by letting them build experience by teaching the same program over several years.

Next, conflicting goals in the vocational education undermine the implementation of vocational orientation. Central parts of the English subject, such as the written exam, do not include vocational orientation. In this way, teaching must focus on a more general vocational competence, instead of being tailored to each profession.

To sum up, the teachers' lack of vocational competence and the contradictory goals they are expected to follow results in a vocational orientation that has little relevance for the students. This study ends by discussing issues important for the successful implementation of vocational orientation and the FYR initiative.

Sammendrag

Målet med denne kvalitative studien er å undersøke hvordan lærere og elever opplever yrkesretting i engelskfaget i den videregående skolen. Undersøkelsen er basert på semistrukturerte intervjuer med ni elever og tre lærere fra yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogram og observasjoner fra tre undervisningstimer i engelsk. Studien undersøker hvilke ønsker til yrkesretting elever og lærer har, samt hvilke utfordringer de opplever under implementeringen av yrkesretting i undervisningen. Studiens utgangspunkt er FYR-prosjektet og dets mål med å forbedre yrkesrettingen og relevansen av fellesfagene på det yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogrammet. Funnene viser at både elever og lærere i utgangspunktet er positive til yrkesretting, men at de opplever en del problemer under gjennomføringen.

For elevene er problemet først og fremst at den yrkesrettingen som gjennomføres ikke oppleves som autentisk. Yrkesrettingen som gjennomføres føles for elevene kunstig og står i strid med de forventningene de har til fremtidige jobber. Yrkesrettingen er derfor ikke relevant med tanke på elevenes spesialisering.

For lærerne er det to hovedproblemer knyttet til yrkesretting. For det første opplever de at de ikke har nok kunnskap om elevenes spesialiseringer for å kunne gjøre undervisningen autentisk. Dette samsvarer med elevenes opplevelse. Skolen gjør ingen forsøk på å forbedre lærernes kompetanse, verken gjennom kurs, eller ved undervisning på de samme programmene over flere år. For det andre står disse forventningene og målene lærerne er pliktet til å følge i motsetning til hverandre. Sentrale deler av engelskfaget, som for eksempel den sentralgitte skriftlige eksamen, inkluderer i liten grad yrkesretting. Yrkesrettingen blir dermed for generell og for lite rettet mot de enkelte spesialiseringene.

Med andre ord, lærernes manglende kompetanse og de motstridende målene de forventes å følge fører til at yrkesrettingen oppleves som lite relevant. Oppgaven avslutter med å diskutere de ulike utfordringene knyttet til implementeringen av yrkesretting og FYR som må løses for å nå målsettingen om yrkesretting i engelskfaget.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Professor Glenn Ole Hellekjær, for your advice and feedback throughout the process. I am grateful for your support and patience. I would not have been able to do it without your help.

I would also like to thank Associate Professor Lisbeth M. Brevik for letting me be a part of the VOGUE project and helping me find informants. You gave me the early start I needed.

To friends and family, thank you for listening and supporting me throughout this year.

Oslo, May 2017

Sturla Sagli

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	The FYR-project.....	3
1.2	The English context	4
1.3	Research question	5
1.4	Key terms.....	5
1.4.1	Vocational orientation	5
1.4.2	Relevance	7
1.5	Structure of the thesis	7
2	Upper secondary education and training.....	9
2.1	Structure of upper secondary education and training	9
2.2	Common core subjects.....	12
2.3	The English curriculum	12
2.4	Assessment, examination and results in the English subject.....	14
2.5	Dropouts and graduation rates in VET	17
2.5.1	The four causes for students dropping out	18
2.5.2	Variations of drop-out in upper secondary.....	19
3	Literature review	21
3.1	Vocational English language learning.....	21
3.2	Relevance.....	22
3.3	Vocational orientation	24
3.4	Vocational orientation in the English subject.....	31
4	Methodology	34
4.1	Research Design	34
4.2	Research tools.....	35
4.2.1	Semi-structured interviews.....	35
4.2.2	Observation	38
4.3	Participants	39
4.4	Procedure	41
4.5	Data analysis.....	46
4.6	Ethical considerations.....	46
4.7	Credibility.....	47

4.7.1	Interview reliability	47
4.7.2	Observation reliability	48
4.7.3	Validity	49
4.8	Transferability	52
5	Results and analysis	53
5.1.1	The teacher informants' background.....	53
5.1.2	The teachers' perception of their own vocational competence	54
5.1.3	What is most important in the English subject?	56
5.1.4	Creating authentic vocational learning situations	59
5.1.5	Shared written examinations with general studies and the high fail rate	63
5.1.6	Secondary obstacles: textbooks and students in the wrong program	66
5.2	Students' perspectives	69
5.2.1	The students' background	69
5.2.2	What is most important in the English subject - what do students expect to learn?	70
5.3	Follow-up interviews	73
6	Discussion	78
6.1	What did I find?	78
6.2	Discussion of the findings	79
6.2.1	What do teachers perceive as the main challenges in the implementation of VO.....	79
6.2.2	What are the students' expectations of VO in VET, and how are they fulfilled?	84
6.3	How do vocational students and teachers in upper secondary perceive vocational orientation in English teaching?	87
6.4	Transferability	89
7	Conclusion.....	90
7.1	Implications of the findings	91
7.2	Suggestions for further research	91
7.3	Concluding remarks.....	92
	Literature	93
	Appendix	100
	Appendix 1: The teacher interview guide	100
	Appendix 2: The student interview guide	102

Appendix 3: The follow-up interview guide	104
Appendix 4: VOGUE - project	105

Figures

Figure 2.1 Illustration of the structure of General studies and VET	10
Figure 2.2: Overview of the grades at the written examination in the common core subjects.	15
Figure 2.3: Comparison of the grades between VET and general studies	16
Figure 2.4: Student finishing rate at upper secondary	20
Figure 2.5: Finishing rate at the different education programs in VET.	21
Figure 2.6: Goal triangle in the vocational education	30
Figure 4.1 The four steps of the primary data collection process..	43
Figure 4.2: An overview of all the phases of the procedure.	46

Tables

Table 2.1 The upper secondary school education and training programs	11
Table 4.1 The participating teachers experience and education.....	40
Table 4.2 The participating students	42
Table 5.1: What the teacher thought was most important in the English subject.	60
Table 5.2: Overview of the teachers attitudes	64
Table 5.3: The students' view of their current specialization	71
Table 5.4: Overview of the classes and students in the follow-up interviews	75
Table 5.5: Service and transportation and building and construction students experience with the English subject and VO after the first semester	78
Table 6.1: Overview of students' experience with VO	88

1 Introduction

My interest in vocational orientation was inspired by my supervisor during my teacher education practice period. Prior to this, I had never been in a vocational classroom. During my practice period, my supervisor showed me that vocational students are not weaker English users than their General Studies counterparts, as a quick glance at the national grades average can give the impression of. I saw that the vocational students had English language skills that are crucial for their future profession but often overlooked. By actively making use of the students' specialization in teaching English, my supervisor showed me how to engage vocational students, and how to make their real English proficiency relevant and useful. However, my recently obtained optimism was gradually dented as I started to investigate.

For the last ten years, the number of vocational students in Norway has steadily decreased, and in 2013 Statistics Norway (SSB) estimated that by 2035 Norway will lack 90,000 skilled workers. SSB's new findings ignited a debate about vocational studies and how to reduce some of the negative trends which have developed around the subject. The debate has two main themes; first, a concern for the falling prestige of vocational programs, and second, for the number of dropouts.

Higher education is the focus of many government initiatives, and knowledge is presented as Norway's most important future resource. With the government's increasing focus on higher education with the aim of changing Norway into a "knowledge society", it is not difficult to understand why vocational studies have been losing prestige (Hauglie, 2014, Blåsmo, 2016, Hauglie, 2014, Nordli Oppegaard, 2014, Reksten, 2011).

One example of how low prestige affects vocational studies is the upper secondary school application process. Parents are the single biggest influence on the students' choice of upper secondary program (Norstat, 2011 in reference NHO, 2015), and 30% of parents believe that vocational studies are not suitable for their children (NHO, 2015), and discourage them from taking it. Therefore, the low prestige of vocational studies presents a considerable challenge to the enrolment of vocational students (Mellingsæter, 2015).

The second theme of the debate is dropouts. One of every four students who starts on a vocational course in upper secondary drops out. The dropout problem is considered one of the major social concerns of Norway today, due to the increasing need for workers with

vocational expertise (Vogt, 2017, White paper: 44, 2008-2009). At the same time, SSB predicts that there will be a decline in the demand for unskilled workers – those without upper secondary education. This means that the number of dropouts will not only affect the future workforce but that students who drop out will also face an increased risk of becoming unemployed (Breilid & Sørensen, 2012).

In a recent article in *Aftenposten*, Vogt (2017) calls into question the premises of these concerns. He challenges the perception that dropouts really are the problematic issue. Instead, he argues, they are a symptom of Norwegian society's increasing impatience with young adults, and that the drop-out statistics fails to include that those who take a vocational education get their certification when they are in the middle or in the late 20's. In this way, many who are still under training are wrongly labeled as drop-outs.

However, this study's point of departure is the government stance on the issue, more specifically their efforts to reduce the number of drop-outs. In addition, measures that are taken to increase motivation, raise the status of vocational education and reduce the number of dropouts can hardly be harmful. Although, as Vogt (2014) point out, the wider social impact and individual consequences of dropping out can be discussed further.

In an effort to reverse the negative tendencies in vocational education, the government launched an initiative, declaring in 2013 that: "steps must be taken to raise the status of vocational subjects and to reduce the unacceptably high dropout rates." (The Office of the Prime Minister, 2013) One result of the new government initiative was *The Vocational Education and Training (VET) Promotion*. The goal of this undertaking is to prepare for Norway's future need for a robust, highly-skilled workforce (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014). To achieve this the VET promotion set forth three main goals: (1) closer cooperation between school and working life, (2) more flexible education and (3) improve the quality and relevance of vocational education, with the goal of improving the prestige of vocational subjects and reducing dropout rates. A consequence of the *VET Promotion* was the continuation of the FYR-project. The FYR abbreviation stands for *fellesfag* (common core subjects), *yrkesretting* (vocational orientation) and *relevans* (relevance), terms that are all central to this study, and which I will come back to later in this chapter.

Prior to this MA thesis, in the spring of 2016, I conducted a pilot for the present study as part of my Master program. In the pilot study, I investigated students' attitudes toward vocational

orientation in the English subject with the research question: "To what extent do vocational students perceive vocational orientation as useful in the English subject?" The pilot served as an introduction to vocational orientation, and will be presented more in detail later, in the methods chapter.

During the pilot, I realized that vocational orientation and relevance are not as intuitive as they might seem at first glance. They are complex phenomena, where many factors affect the results and perceptions. The pilot confirmed that vocational orientation was a subject that needed further study, especially with regard to how it is implemented in the English classroom. It is the aim of this study to examine how vocational orientation is perceived by its users; both the teachers and the students in the English subject.

1.1 The FYR-project

The current study is rooted in the FYR-project. The goal of the FYR-project is to increase the motivation of vocational students and reduce the number of dropouts in vocational programs. It is currently the only ongoing initiative promoting vocational orientation in Norway, and as mentioned, aims to make the common core subjects more relevant to the personal life and future goals of vocational students. The FYR-project has the agenda of improving upper secondary education by making teaching more relevant and vocationally-oriented.

The project started in 2011 as a continuation of *Ny GIV*, an initiative begun by the Ministry of Education and Research in order to boost the basic skills of students in upper secondary school. In 2014, the project was transferred from the Norwegian National Centre for Languages in Education to the Directorate for Education and Training (UDIR).

To achieve its goals of vocational orientation, the FYR-project aims to

- Improve teacher competence
- Develop teaching methods and resources
- Develop a culture of sharing across schools to improve vocational orientation

The goals include making the common core subjects easier, introducing interdisciplinary projects and making the common core subjects relevant to students. This brings us to the

focus of this study: the subject-specific goals, the vocational orientation. Vocational orientation, hereafter referred to as VO, is teaching that orients itself towards the students' vocational competence and interests. It is one of the central terms of this study and will be defined in greater detail later in this chapter.

1.2 The English context

To achieve a better understanding of English language acquisition by Norwegian students we also need to understand the new role of English in Norway today, and what this has to do with vocational orientation. A student training to become a carpenter in the 1970s might have thought that English would have little relevance to his working life, and he would be right, but today things have changed. In Norway today English plays an active role in everyday life (Kuppens, 2010, Viberg, 2000 as cited by Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015; Simensen, 2010). Today, students training to become carpenters no longer see English as irrelevant to his or her working future. Good English proficiency is vital in many construction sites, and especially for further specialization, and the students know this. It is, therefore, important that the changes in the role of English in modern Norwegian life are reflected in the English classroom.

English is everywhere, and long before a student starts to attend school, he/she has been exposed to English. Indeed, most English use is outside the school context, but the extent to which students use English, and what they use it for, varies a great deal. Some students use English to the point where they have become more proficient in reading English than Norwegian, while others struggle with the basics of English (Brevik, 2016a). However, no matter the level of students' English competence, research has shown that the students' out-of-school use of English, *extramural English* (Sundqvist & Wikström 2015), is different from that used in-school (Sundqvist & Olin-Scheller, 2013), and does not necessarily make them more proficient in the formal English that school-taught English (i.e. the teaching of English as a foreign language) often requires. In sum, English's new role in Norway today creates both new possibilities and new challenges; and it is important that English as a subject adapts to fit the new use of English in everyday life.

1.3 Research question

Vocational orientation has lately been advocated as the “silver bullet” against most of the problems facing VET and English’s new role. There are few studies on how effective VO is. This study explores how students and teachers perceive VO, aiming to provide new insight into VO by interviewing vocational students and teachers, and observing a vocational classroom where English is taught. The main research question of the study is:

How do vocational students and teachers in upper secondary perceive vocational orientation in English teaching?

With the sub-questions:

What do teachers perceive as the main challenges in the implementation of VO?

What are the students’ expectations of VO in VET, and how are they fulfilled?

1.4 Key terms

In this study, the terms “VO” and “relevance” are central. They are both an integral part of the FYR-project, yet neither of them has a single set definition, and both are often adapted to suit the field or situation in which they are being used. This leads to both terms suffering from the same issue, that the local adaptations of the term often differ. In the following, I will, therefore, present my definitions of these key terms.

1.4.1 Vocational orientation

VO is the central term in this study. Considering English’s new role in Norway and the ongoing initiatives to modernize VET, it is important to consider how these changes affect students and teachers in upper secondary. One of these changes is the current promotion of VO in English. As the full term vocational orientation suggests, VO aims to direct focus toward the vocational elements in education. In the literature, VO has no set definition (Haugset et al., 2014), and can easily be confused with other terms that are also dealing with foreign languages in professional contexts, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Vocationally Oriented Language Learning (VOLL), both of which share many characteristics with VO, such as approaching language learning in a professional context.

The interchangeability of these terms, and the lack of a clear-cut difference between them, does not make matters any easier. In this study, in order to avoid confusing VO with ESP and VOLL, I will therefore exclusively use the term “vocational orientation”, or VO. By applying the term VO, I want to emphasize the Norwegian context of this study. Each country has their own curriculum, school culture and a unique political and institutional context (Haugset & Stene, 2016). With the term VO, I describe a phenomenon unique to the Norwegian context, school organization and vocational education. Some of the features of VO involve theories of second language acquisition and motivation that are independent of the Norwegian context; other features, however, deal with challenges and possibilities only provided in Norway.

The definition of VO I use in this study is the same as The Karlsen Committee’s (2008):

Vocational orientation means that the teaching material, teaching methods and vocabulary used in the common core subjects’ classroom, should to the greatest extent possible have relevance to the students’ future professions. Vocational orientation also comprises how aspects of the common core subjects are used and will be useful in the program subject and in the students’ future professional lives (Official Norwegian Reports 2008: 18, p. 80)

In this definition, a key part of understanding VO is recognizing its aim to adapt the teaching to the students’ specialization. It highlights the importance of VO as something that is not separate from the common core subjects. In addition, it shows that teaching methods such as interdisciplinary projects can be useful.

Reading this, one might get the feeling that VO is something that will take over all aspects of vocational education because it involves both the common core subjects and the program subjects. This is not the case. Littlewood (2014) argues that individualizing the content of second language communication is one of the key factors in language teaching. VO is one way of doing this, although the possibilities are many, from writing poetry (Hanauer, 2012) and doing project work (Legutke & Thomas, 1991), to learning drama techniques (Maley & Duff, 1982). VO is just another tool in the teachers’ repertoire. What is most important in language learning is not the task itself, but that the task feels meaningful and personally relevant to the students. Creating activities that are pertinent to the interests and lives of the learner. Adapting the teaching methods, terminology and curriculum to the future professional life of the students is a crucial means of making the teaching relevant for the students, hence, for vocational teachers, VO can be a useful tool (Christiansen & Fjeld, 2016).

1.4.2 Relevance

I will only briefly present the definition of “relevance” used in this study; however, the next chapter presents a more extensive definition.

It is widely accepted that motivation is crucial for learning (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), and that relevance is an important part of motivation. In most contexts relevance relates to the degree to which something is related or useful to what is happening or being talked about. In social psychology, relevance is defined as: “the extent to which making a judgment has significant consequences for the self” (Sanbonmatsu et al. 1991, p. 125). Accordingly, if the message of what is being taught is not meaningful, and has no relevance to the student, it is unlikely that the student will invest much cognitive effort into learning and understanding it (Frymier & Shulman, 1995).

The same principle also applies in student motivation. The students need to believe that what they are learning will be useful to them in achieving their goals. If the teaching has no relevance, either professional or personal, it will have an adverse effect on the students’ motivation. Frymier and Shulman (1995) define this as the “what’s in it for me?” factor, or *relevance*.

For second language acquisition, relevance plays a similar role. The “what’s in it for me?” factor, or *relevance*, is applied by Dörnyei (2005) in a specific context, the classroom. His definition and use of relevance will be the one used in this study. He defines relevance as: “how the students perceive that the task connects to the needs and goals of the learners. The students need to see that there is a point in what they learn” (p. 280). This definition highlights the importance of meeting the students halfway and helping them to see and understand for themselves that what they learn has a purpose directly applicable to them.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters. This introductory chapter provides a general background and presents the central terms of this study. Chapter 2 introduces vocational education and the English language subject in upper secondary, in addition to the differences between general and vocational studies. Chapter 3 present the literature review. Chapter 4 gives a comprehensive account of the methodology of the study, which used observation and

student and teacher interviews to collect rich data in order to explore the phenomenon. The results are presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 concludes the study and provides suggestions for further research.

2 Upper secondary education and training

This chapter gives a description of upper secondary school education and training and the English subject at upper secondary. The chapter starts off by describing the structure of upper secondary. Next, it presents the common core subjects in vocational education and training. Third, it presents a synopsis of the curriculum in the English subject, and fourth, the different forms of assessment and grading. It ends with an overview of the graduation and dropout rates in Norwegian upper secondary school. Throughout the chapter, problematic issues of the English subject's implementation in the vocational education will be briefly presented in order to give context to the later discussion.

2.1 Structure of upper secondary education and training

Every student who has completed primary and lower secondary education has the right to three years of upper secondary school education and training. The structure of the programs varies, and it is important to understand the structural differences. Upper secondary education and training is divided into two main branches, the General Studies branch and Vocational Education and Training branch, hereby referred to as GS and VET. GS programs take three years to finish and lead to a university admission certification. VET leads to a craft or journeyman's certification. The normal procedure for VET is two years in-school studies, and a year of in-service training, also known as an apprenticeship. The in-service training is often combined with an additional year of productive work, making the apprenticeship two years, and the vocational study four years in total, 2+2. Vocational students have, in addition to their vocational qualifications, also the opportunity to qualify for higher education by taking a supplementary program. The two programs are presented in Figure 3.1.

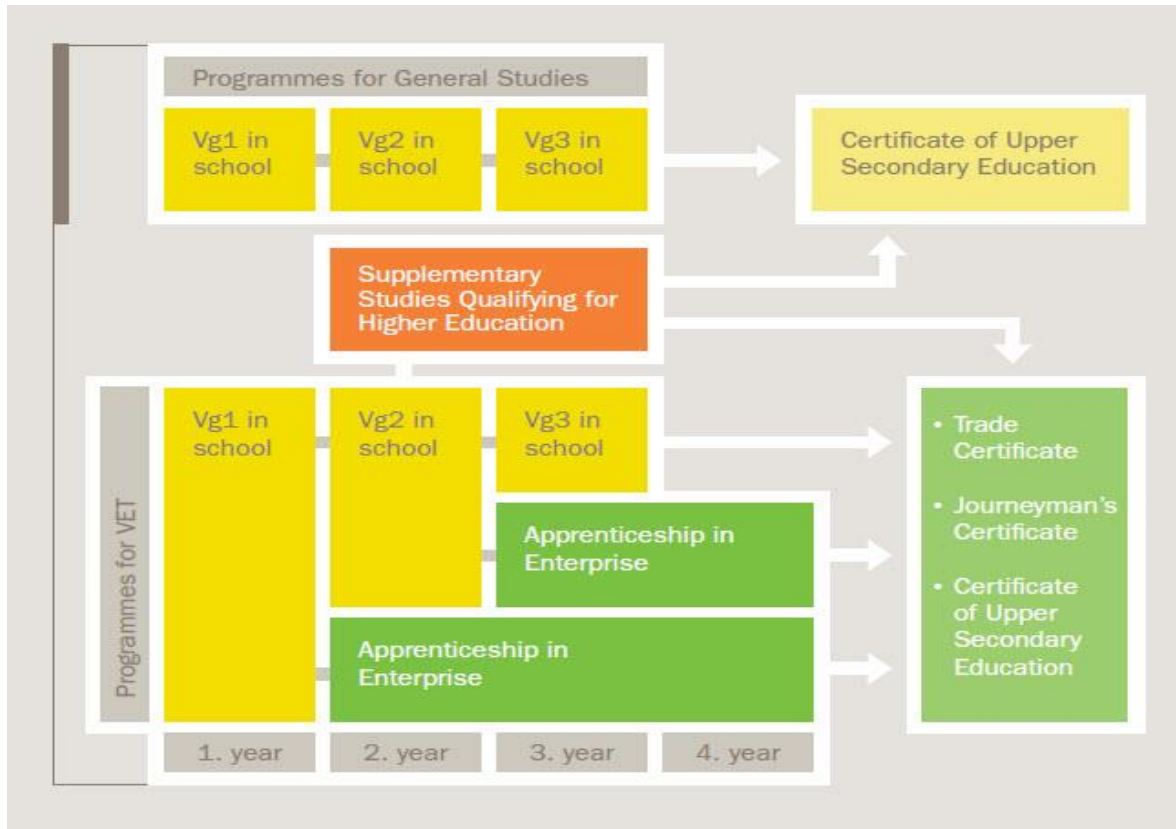


Figure 2.1: Illustration of the structure of General studies and VET (Udir.no, 2016)

As the illustration shows, GS provides a fairly straightforward path of in-school education leading to a certificate of upper secondary education. For the VET programs, the amount of in-school teaching may vary from one to three years, and time spent in apprenticeship can be everything from two to three years. However, most of the VET programs consist of two years of in-school education and training followed by two years of apprenticeship. In the following, will I only refer to the 2+2 structure for VET unless stated otherwise, as it what most of the VET programs are based on.

Upper secondary school education comprises thirteen different programs, five programs for GS and eight for VET. The different programs also have different sub-programs, or specializations, within their program. After completing Vg1 students have to choose their specialization. The table below shows the spread of thirteen main programs and the number of specializations.

Table 2.1: The upper secondary school education and training programs

General studies	Number of specializations
Program for Specialization in General Studies	3
Program for Sports and Physical Education	1
Program for Music, Dance and Drama	3
Program for Arts, Design and Architecture	1
Program for Media and Communication	1
Vocational education and training programs	Number of specializations
Program for Building and Construction	23
Program for Design, Arts and Crafts	53
Program for Electricity and Electronics	22
Program for Health and Social Care	13
Program for Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry	10
Program for Restaurant and Food Processing	12
Program for Service and Transport	9
Program for Technical and Industrial Production	67

As the table shows, the number of different specializations varies greatly from program to program. The sheer number of different specializations at vocational studies is a good illustration of the diversity in VET. In addition to differences in the content of the programs and specializations, comes the difference in years with in-school education and of in-service training. There also a distinct gender distribution in VET.

VET is male dominated, with 56% of the students being male (SSB, 2015). However, the gender distribution is homogeneous in most of the specializations. In Building and Construction, Electricity and Electronics and Technical and Industrial Production more than 80% of the students are male. The opposite is the case in Health and Social Care and Design, Arts and Crafts, which are females are in majority. Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry Restaurant and Food Processing have an about even distribution (SSB, 2015).

2.2 Common core subjects

The FYR-project's main focus is the common core subjects. The common core subjects are English, Norwegian, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education. The aim to the common core subjects is to give the students the professional qualifications required for working life in addition to the skills and knowledge needed for active citizenship (White paper 44, 2008-2009). Students at VET have both vocational training and obligatory common core subjects. The five common core subjects, Norwegian, English, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education, comprise 30% of the teaching in Vg1 at VET. The last 70% comprises 50% common vocational program subjects and 20% for in-depth study projects. The latter subjects build the basic foundation for their vocational competence. In Vg2 50% of the teaching is in the common program subjects and the last 50% is split between common core subjects and in-depth study with 25% each.

GS and VET share the same curriculum in the common core subjects, although VET has a slightly different distribution of periods than the general studies. In VET English is taught over two years, three lessons-per-week in Vg1, and two lessons-per-week in Vg2, while in GS the English curriculum is covered in VG1. The two-year split of English teaching in VET can cause organizational problems. Most students chose their specialization after Vg1, so the two-year distribution means that they will have the same English curriculum, but in two entirely different classes, which may cause transition problems. In addition, VET students risk being placed in "merged classes (storklasser)" with students from other specializations (Hernes, 2010). In these classes is it very difficult to adapt the curriculum to the students' individual specializations.

2.3 The English curriculum

The curriculum in all subjects includes basic skills, competence aims and subject content. The curriculum consists of four main subject areas with 27 competence aims. Integrated into competence aims are the five basic skills: reading skills, oral skill, numeracy, writing and digital skills. These five skills are fundamental to learning in all subjects as well as in work and social life and are included into all subjects' curriculum.

In English, the main subject areas are: (1) language learning, (2) oral communication, (3) written communication and (4) culture, society and literature. Although the curriculum is the

same for VET and GS, some of the competence aims involve adaptation to the educational programs. For GS and VET the English syllabus is identical.

I will in the following give a brief overview of the four main subject areas, with examples from the competence aims which includes adaption to the VET educational as they are most relevant for VO.

2.3.1 Main subject areas:

(1) *Language learning*. Language learning focuses on knowledge about the language, language use and insight to one's own language learning. At this level the competence aims in language learning revolve around evaluating one's own language development and using different learning strategies. There are no competence aims which include adaptation to the educational program.

(2) *Oral communication*. Oral communication at upper secondary deals with using and understanding the English language through listening and speaking. The aim is to be able to adapt to different situations, using suitable listening and speaking strategies, and to be able to express oneself fluently and coherently in general and academic topics. Three of the competence aims specify abilities related to the education program:

- Understand and use a wide general vocabulary and an academic vocabulary related to his/her education program.
- Understand the main content and details of different types of oral texts about general and academic topics related to one's education program.
- Introduce, maintain and terminate conversations and discussions about general and academic topics related to one's education program.

(3) *Written communication*. Written communication deals with "understanding and using English language through reading, writing and using suitable reading and writing strategies" (Udir.no, 2016). At the upper secondary level the competence aims focus on the use of suitable reading and writing strategies, having an extensive vocabulary, and being able to read and write different types of texts adapted to the given communication situation. The three following the aims deal with proficiency in the education program:

- Understand and use an extensive general vocabulary and an academic vocabulary related to one's education program.
- Read to acquire knowledge in a particular subject from one's education program
- Use own notes to write texts related to one's education program.

(4) *Culture, society and literature*. Culture, society and literature deals with cultural understanding in English-speaking countries. It involves presenting and discussing culture, news, texts by and about indigenous peoples and the role of English. Culture, society and literature has one competence aim dealing with a program specific topic.

- Select an in-depth study topic within one's education program and present this.

In total, 7 out of the 27 competence aims explicitly require teaching adapted to the education program. Even though English is a common core subject for all the upper secondary education programs with identical curriculum, English can still be adapted to the different education programs. Indeed, the importance of adjusting the English subject to the different education programs in upper secondary is emphasized by the Directorate of Education and Training: "learning in this subject shall therefore be made as relevant as possible for pupils by adapting each subject to the different education programs" (Udir.no, 2016). In other words, even when the competence aim does not explicitly state it, teaching should be adapted to the education program in question. However, the adaptation to each program creates problems for the assessment, which relies on centrally given written test.

2.4 Assessment, examination and results in the English subject

Many of VET students struggle with low grades in the common core subjects. This is an increasing problem with the new goals of the FYR-projects, where the aim is to prepare all students for graduation from upper secondary school. We do not know the exact reason for the grade gap between the VET and GS, but two important factors are low grades from previous schooling (UDIR, 2016; St.meld.nr. 44, 2008-2009; St.meld.nr. 16, 2015-2016), and the parents' education level (Støren, 2005). Parents' level of education directly impacts on the

students' choice of upper secondary program (Støren, 2005). Students from low education families tend to choose VET and students from high education families choose GS.

The grades in common core subject for VET students vary, but the high fail percentage in many of the common core subject is a major challenge. An overview is presented in Figure 2.2

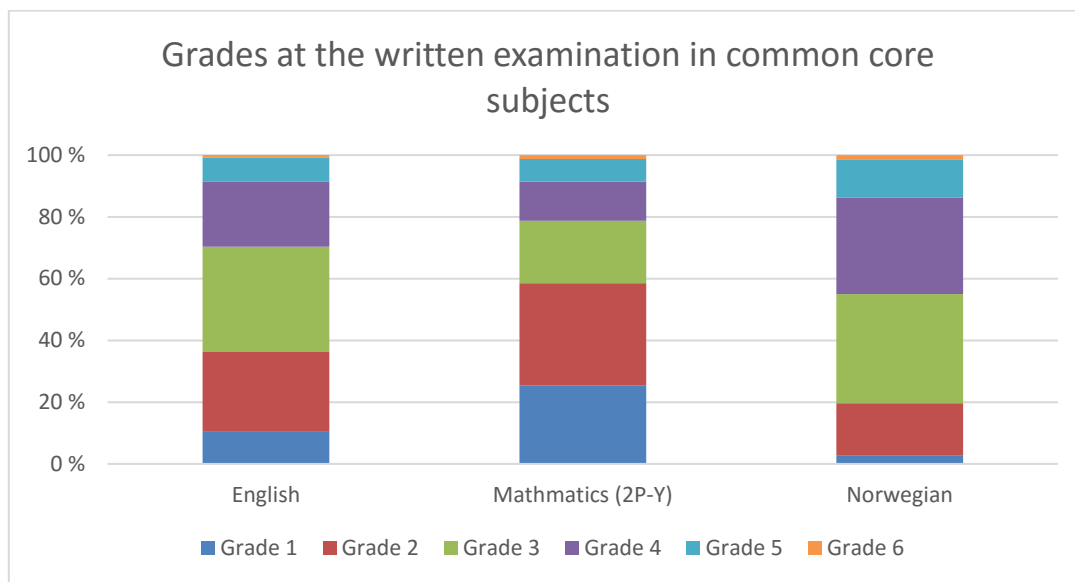


Figure 2.2: Overview of the grades at the written examination in the common core subjects in VET.

The figure shows that more than 20% fail the Mathematics examination and 11% the English, compared to in Norwegian where only 2, 6% of the students fail. The worst-case scenario for the failing students is that they are unable to finish upper secondary, dropout or are unable to finish with a passing grade.

English in upper secondary has three forms of assessment, continuing assessment, oral examination and written examination. In English, Vg1 GS students and VET Vg2 students can be selected for oral or written examination. In addition to the failure rates, the average grades in VET differ greatly from GS. Almost a full grade separates the average grade in VET from GS in almost all areas of assessment. This indicates that the VET students are weaker than those in general studies, or that they to a greater extent struggle with the academic and theoretical requirements at the upper secondary school level (Martinsen, 2014). The written examination is often perceived as a particularly challenging assessment for VET students. The figure below show the grade distribution differences between VET and GS.

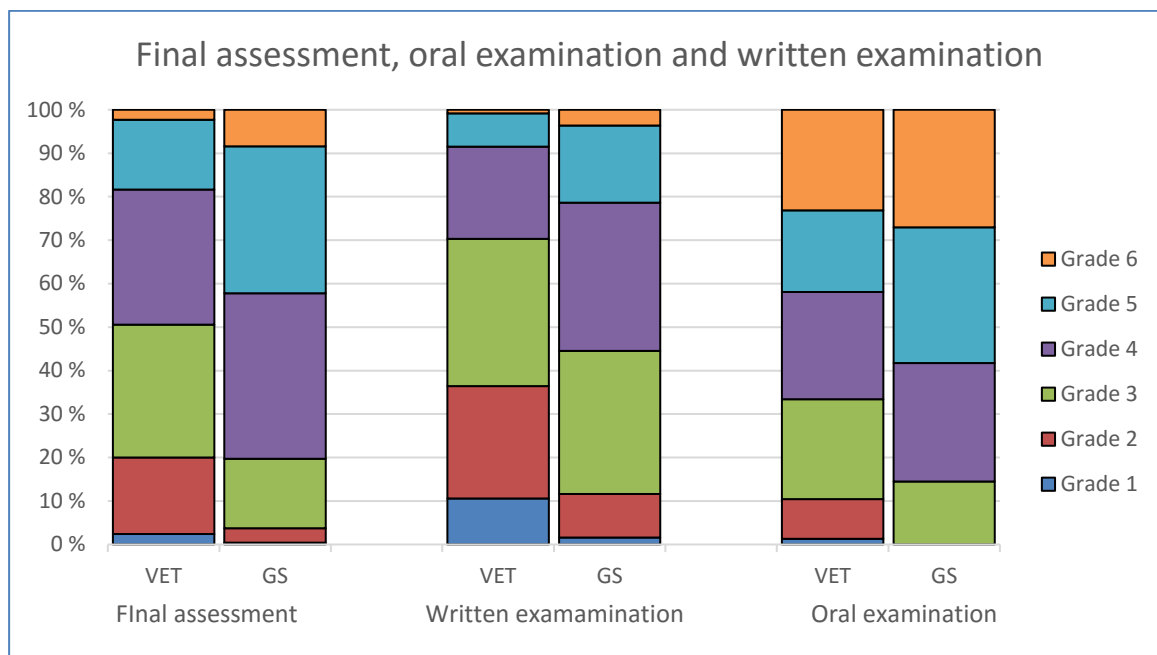


Figure 2.3: Comparison of the grades between VET and general studies student at the written examination, oral examination and final assessment in 2014-2015

The average grade in VET hovers a little below one grade under GS. It is especially in the written examination that VET grades are significantly lower, with an average grade of 2.9, over a full grade below the average grade in oral examination. GS score at average 3.7 at the written examination, while they score 4.6 in the oral examination. The figure highlights the high fail rate at VET on the written examination, and the challenge it causes for many VET students. 11% of the VET students fail, and 26% gets grade 2. Over 70% get the grade 3 or lower. In addition, almost none of the VET students get the top grade.

One of the obstacles with the written examination in English is its central organization. The central organization means that the Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for developing and censoring the examination. The centrally organized examination is shared with the GS and leaves little room for tasks relevant for the VET students because GS have no vocational specialization.

In addition to its organization, the content of the written examination has also been under criticism. Mürer's (2015) analysis of the English examination show that the written examination measures too few of the competence aims, and that the preparatory texts are demotivating for the vocational students. In another study, by Stene, et al. (2014) found that the principles regarded the examination as the largest obstacle for VO, especially in the one in written English. Moreover, they found that the teachers perceived the written examination as

favoring academic skills. Many of the teachers were therefore hesitant to use VO because it will not be relevant for the centrally organized written examination they must prepare their students for. The examination is of course a strong influence on teaching, and the demand for more VO is counterproductive if it is not followed up in the final written assessment.

Similarly, the higher oral grades are often attributed to the fact that the examination can be organized locally. Although the county authorities are responsible for the oral examination, it is often delegated to the individual school. This leads to the oral examinations being adapted to the students' education program because it is organized by the school and leave far more room to create tasks appropriate for the individual education program.

2.5 Dropouts and graduation rates in VET

For every four students who start a vocational course in upper secondary, one drops out. We still know very little about the problem, and what measures may have an effect (Hernes, 2010). What we do know is that high dropout rate in VET is not a new phenomenon, and it is not exclusive to Norway. It is a complex problem with many causes, and most measures have no immediate effect. Even though we do not know exactly what measures will have any effect, many of the previous measures designed to reduce the number of dropouts have had a positive effect (Hernes, 2010). Compensating for factors like the parents' education level may take years before any effect can be measured, hence there is no simple, quick-fix solution.

Due to the time-consuming relationship between the measure and when the effect can be assessed, there are often debates on the outcome of different actions against drop-outs and if they target the real issue. Recently there has been a debate on the theoretical requirements in VET and its links to the drop-out rates. Sund and Raaheim (2009) Kaarbø (2010), and Seljestad (2010), claim that the high drop-out rate in VET is due to the high theoretical requirements in the common cores subjects introduced in Reform 94. Punishing low achieving VET students in the common core subjects after reform 94. Hegna et al. (2012), on the other hand, point towards little evidence of for any connection between drop-out rates and the balance between practice and theory in VET, but argue that it can be a contributing factor. This was also supported by Hernes (2010). However, the debate has recently been nuanced in an article by Brevik (2016a). She shows that the VET students are just as good readers of theoretical text as their GS counter-parts, as long as the English subject is made relevant for

them. Although there is little consensus on the effect of the theoretical requirements does researches agree on four overarching causes for students dropping out (Lillejord, et al., 2015).

2.5.1 The four causes for students dropping out

The first cause, which seems to have the greatest influence, is as mentioned above – previous schooling, that is to say, grades and school performance. These have a negative, cumulative effect, which often starts early in the student's school career. Students who start to lag behind will continue to do so throughout their schooling. The transition from lower secondary to upper secondary will be especially problematic, as low performing students lack the necessary basic competence needed in upper secondary (Lillejord, et al., 2015). Low grades from lower secondary can also have a negative impact on these students' motivation (Hernes, 2010).

The second cause is the students' background. Social factors such as class, gender and ethnicity, all affect how likely the student is to complete upper secondary. It could be the systematic discrimination of access apprenticeship, such as Lødding (2001) proved there was against students with a foreign background applying for car mechanic apprenticeships. Or the effects the parents' education has on student performance. Extra vulnerable and with a higher risk of dropping-out are the students with multiple negative factors such as non-western boys from low socio-economic family.

The third cause is the students' identification with and engagement with the school. This factor is based on theories of social reproduction. Students' needs encouragement, and parents' perceptions and expectations are crucial for the student's success. If there is a mismatch between the values of the parents and those of the school, will it increase the chance of the student dropping-out (Nordahl, 2014). In this perspective, it is not the individual student, but the values of the school and the parents that is decisive for the students' success.

The last cause is the context of the education. Factors such as county can also affect the drop-out rate. Students from Finnmark, Troms and Nordland have a higher chance of dropping out than the rest of the country, even though score equal on every other factor (Falch et al, 2010). After Reform 94 many students also feel forced to start upper secondary even though they might not be motivated, leading to high drop-out rates (Markussen, 2010, as cited in Lillejord, et al., 2015).

2.5.2 Variations of drop-out in upper secondary

There is also a significant difference in dropouts and finishing rate between GS and VET. Overall, more students at GS finish and they finish more often within the allotted time. However, since 1994 the amount of VET students who do not finish upper secondary has decreased from 60% to 25% in 2015, but 25% is still a very high number. The latest attempt to further decrease the dropout rate is the FYR-project. The following figure shows the distribution of the finishing rate of students in VET and GS.

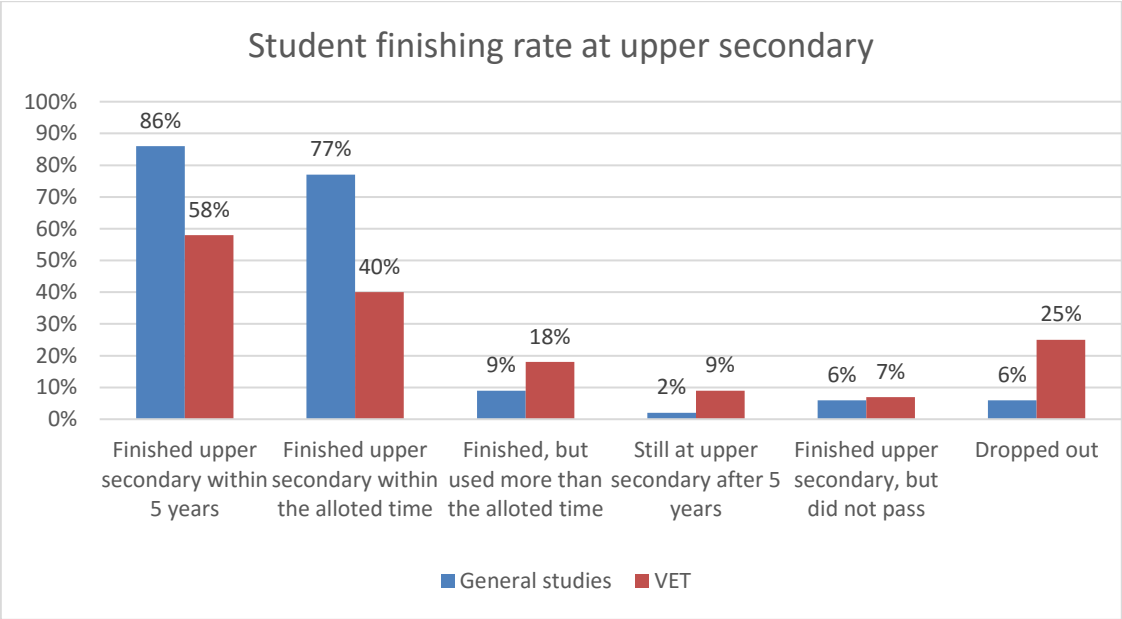


Figure 2.4: Student finishing rate at upper secondary

As can be seen, while 86% of the students in GS complete upper secondary within 5 years, only 58% VET student do within 5 years and 40% manage to complete it within the allotted time, while 25% of VET students drop out of upper secondary compared to 6% in GS.

There is also a great variation within the VET education programs. While some of the education program has a dropout rate of about 20% while others have over 40%, as can be seen in Figure 2.5.

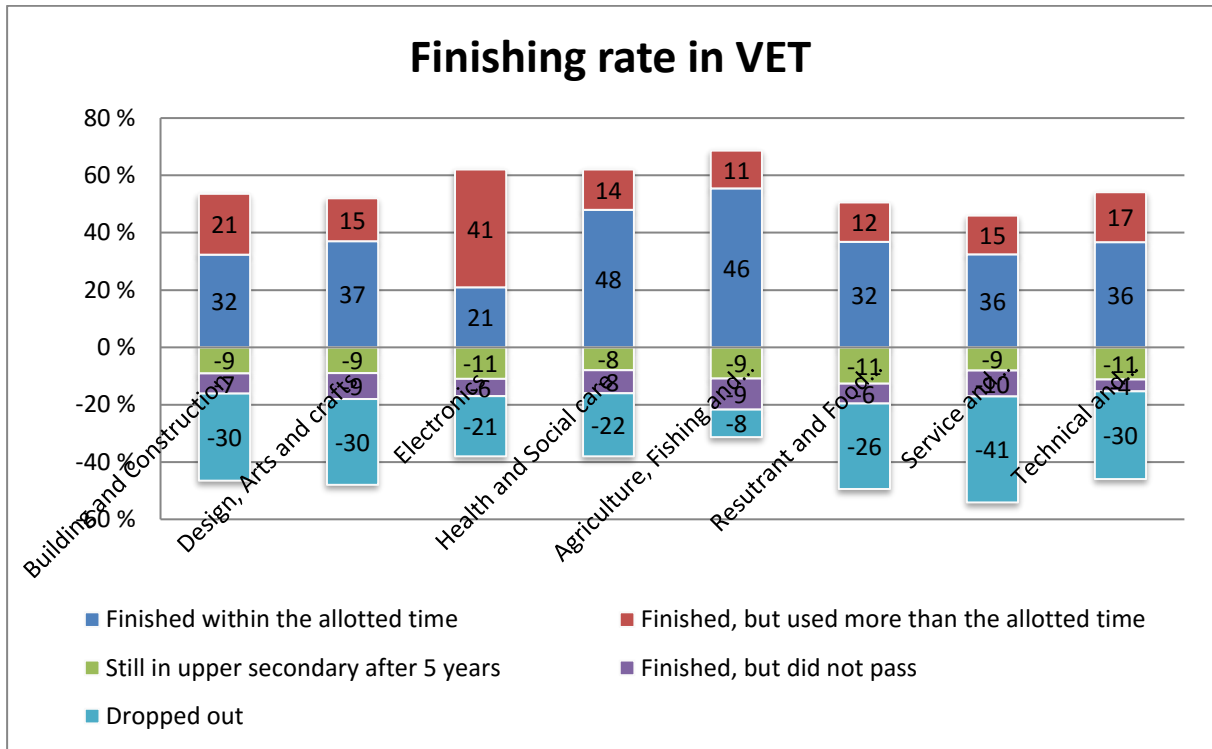


Figure 2.5: Finishing rate at the different education programs in VET.

The graduation rates vary a lot between the different education programs. While only 21% of the students in electronics finish within the allotted time, it still has one of the highest graduation rates and lowest dropout rate. Service and Transportation has 41% of the students dropping out, but the graduation rate is about equal to the rest of the education programs. The many differences have no easy explanation, but serve to show the diversity in VET.

To sum up, this chapter has introduced the structure and implementation of upper secondary education and training, with a special focus on the English subject and VET. The assessment in English and finishing rate in VET are the two problems which are frequently voiced. The similarities and differences between GS and VET are central to understanding the possibilities and concerns about students in VET.

3 Literature review

In this chapter, I present the literature review. The goal of this study is to look at VO today and will be rooted the LK13 English curriculum and the FYR-project. With this as backdrop, relevant theories such as theories of learning and second language acquisition will only be briefly presented where needed, as this study's focus lies on the perspectives of the teachers and students in the theoretical framework of VO used in the FYR-project.

3.1 Vocational English language learning

The history of VO in the English subject starts in the 1950s with the development of vocational English language learning. In its early beginnings, the post-war globalism led by the USA made English *the* dominant language in world affairs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The English language's dominance created a need for English instructions in specific communicative tasks, such as in the sciences, technology and business. In turn, the term English for specific purposes (ESP) appeared as an umbrella term for English language teaching for the respective fields (Vogt & Kantelinen, 2012).

From then on ESP has been the go-to term for vocational and subject-specific English. Recently this has changed with the Council of Europe's project "Language learning for European citizenship" (ibid). The project aimed to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. One of its subsequent goals was to prepare students for the transition from school to work in EU's free movement of labor. In this lies that the students' vocational competence does not solely rely on their workshop competence, but also their social and linguistic skills (Egloff & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

In the backwater of this project, the term Vocational Oriented Language Learning (VOLL) emerged. VOLL is a teaching method that approaches language learning in a professional context. At its core, it fosters "key skills, such as communication, ICT, problem-solving and working with others" (Sewell, p. 7, 2004). The rapid changes in almost all fields require more than a subject specific language competence, but a more general language and communication competence. Accordingly, VOLL considers that the "holistic communication skills that are necessary for efficient communication in the workplace" (Vogt & Kantelinen, p. 65, 2012)

and not only the subject specific. This means that VOLL is more than just learning vocational glossary, it is about preparing the students for real life communication needs.

The VOLL approach to language learning reflects the new paradigms in language education. Language education is no longer seen as just learning linguistic skills but as a part of a bigger process. In this process, VOLL place itself as a tool that helps foster the skills and needs not only for work but for life. Thus, as DiNapoli et al. (2001) put it: “VOLL becomes an integral part of a lifelong educational process which combines work-related skills with personal growth, cultural awareness and social skills” (p. 5).

From VOLL to VO in the English subject is the transition a minor one. As pointed out in the introduction does VO shares many of the characteristics of VOLL and ESP. However, in this study VO will exclusively be used as term pointing to the Norwegian context. With the FYR-project, VO in the English subject is a term that reflects the curriculum, school culture and a unique political and institutional context in Norway today.

3.2 Relevance

In the introduction chapter, the link between motivation, relevance and learning was established. Motivation is one of the key factors in second language learning, and relevance is an important sub-category of motivation. In addition, relevance was also used in the FYR-project as a measure to reduce drop-out rates. It is, therefore, important to have a good understanding of the term relevance is used.

In the FYR-project, the definition of relevance has a focus on vocational content. It defines relevance as: “the use of teaching methods, material, workspace and terminology relevant to the profession.” A problematic aspect of this definition is its focus on vocational content, and not student interests. In fact, the FYR-definition takes the students’ vocational interest for granted, and assumes that in order to increase motivation is it only necessary to relate teaching to their specialization. Although this is a study on vocational students, the FYR-project’s definition of relevance is too limited.

In this study, relevance is used in a wider learning perspective than FYR’s definition. In school is not uncommon for students to question the usefulness of the material taught. Frymier and Shulman (1995) call this questioning the “what’s in it for me?” factor, or

relevance. If a topic is to have any relevance for the student it must be presented in such a way that the student is able to understand why they are learning it. If the teaching fails to show that the subject's content is relevant to the students' goals, it may have a negative impact on motivation. It means that both the content and its presentation are crucial if the material is to appear relevant to the students (Frymier & Shulman, 1995).

Along the same lines is Keller's (1983) definition of relevance. She sees relevance in a student perspective with regard to motivation and defines relevance as: "whether the learner perceives the instructions to satisfy personal needs or to help achieve personal goals" (p.384). Her definition highlights the links between subject content and the students' personal goals. In other words, to increase the motivation the content needs to be adapted to the students' goal, often explicitly. Keller's conceptualization of relevance is also supported by Sass (1989) and Weaver and Cottrell (1988).

In the definitions by Keller (1983) and Frymier and Shulman (1995) relevance underlines what the students perceive as important to them. It is based on the needs of the individual student and his or her personal goals and is by definition independent of what of other exterior factors, like VO. Although VO can be relevant for an individual student, it cannot be directly pushed inherently relevant for students in VET.

The definition of relevance in this study draws upon Dörnyei (2005) and his theory of second language learning. His theory approaches relevance and motivation from a second language learning perspective and is well suited for English learning in Norway. In Dörnyei's motivational theory, relevance is a component in the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005), an approach which takes into consideration how motivation influences second language learning. The L2 Motivational Self System has three components: *Ideal L2 Self*, which represents the standards of what the learner wants to become; *Ought-to L2 Self*, represents attributes that are believed one ought to possess in order meet expectations and avoid negative outcomes, and *L2 Learning Experience*, which includes the aspects of the learning environment, e.g. teacher, curriculum or peers.

According to Dörnyei's (2005) theory, relevance is a motivational component of *L2 Learning Experience*. In the *L2 Learning Experience*, the students are in a *classroom setting* to improve their second language acquisition. Dörnyei (2005) defines relevance in this context as: "how the students perceive that the task connects to the needs and goals of the learners. The

students need to see that there is a point in what they learn” (p. 280). This definition highlights the importance of meeting the students where they are, and taking their interests into consideration. Dörnyei’s (2005) definition shares many similarities with Keller (1983), Sass (1989) and Weaver and Cottrell (1988) and Frymier and Shulman (1995). The “What’s in it for me?” factor, as Frymier and Shulman (1995) call it in their motivational model, shares many similarities with relevance in a classroom setting, although a different motivational model is used.

To sum up, student motivation is a combination of many factors, one of which is relevance. The complex nature of motivation make it limited what a teacher can do to during a single lesson, however, one motivational component that a teacher can make an effort to bring into the classroom is relevance. By drawing on Dörnyei’s definition of relevance the teacher can link the tasks and teaching to the students’ goal and interests to increase the motivation of the students. In this sense, the relevance aspect of VO can be understood as an operationalization of relevance. With VO as a tool that is used to make the teaching relevant for the students in order to make them motivated. Whether the FYR projects’ implicit assumption that VO increases relevance and thereby motivation is merited, is an assumption that will be investigated further in this thesis.

3.3 Vocational orientation

There is little research on VO in Norwegian classrooms. In most fields of research it is possible to draw information from papers across the world, but international research on VO cannot be directly applied to the Norwegian school. This is because of the unique political and institutional contexts in which the school research is applied rarely translate from one country to another (Stene & Haugset, 2016).

International studies on the vocational education such as Hua, T. L. and Beverton S. (2013), Houtte et al. (2012) and Lee and Bathmaker (2007) in respectively Taiwan, Singapore and Belgium, examine how vocational education compensates for the increasing differences between vocational and general students. In these three countries, vocational education is considered low status, and vocational education shares this and other similarities with Norway. An underlying theme in these studies is the concern that the current situation of the vocational education creates a class system based on educational attainment. In this system,

VET students get the short end of the stick. However, the contextual situation of the studies makes it difficult to generalize their results to Norwegian students, although similar accusations have been raised about the Norwegian system by Flemmen (2014).

In the Norwegian context studies of vocational education are varied. Sandal and Smith (2012) studied the transition from lower secondary to vocational upper secondary. Their study underlines the importance of trust in the students' identity construction, and how crucial trust is in the transition to upper secondary. Olsen and Reegård (2013) searched for which conditions in the learning environment are crucial for the vocational students' learning interests. The VET students wanted practical and relevant tasks, in addition, the social environment, common norms, set expectations, structure and support were crucial factors for the students' learning interests. Nyen and Tønder (2013) looked at to what extent vocational education enables the students to enter the labor market. They concluded that the VET to a high degree is a gateway to working life, but that there are differences between education programs and specializations.

Brevik (2016a and 2016b) recently published two articles on vocational students which include the use of VO. The first article presents three myths about vocational students, that (1) Vocational students are weaker readers than their general studies counter-part, (2) Vocational students are weaker in theoretical subjects, and (3) that the students' out-of-school use of English is not relevant for the school context. In turn, each of these claims is nuanced or challenged. Brevik argues that topics and material could be derived from a wider arrange of sources. Instead of looking at weaknesses in "traditional" theoretical skills, we can allow for the theoretical skills some students may have in what we typically perceive as "alternative" areas, such as vocational English. Unique skills and interests also facilitate for the students' opportunity to develop strong abilities, but are at the same time penalized in the current system.

The second article (2016b) presents an interesting analysis of vocational students in the upper secondary who are poor readers in Norwegian but have good reading proficiency in English. The students are active users of English at home but have difficulties transferring their out-of-school readings skills to the in-school context. They make a clear distinction between the two contexts, out-of-school and in-school. Brevik argues that teachers should make the link between the contexts more visible for the students, and calls for a greater use of the students' interests in the teaching instruction. This was also the theme in Kolsaas' (2014) MA thesis.

Kolsaas' (2013) MA thesis studies the attitudes and challenges expressed by teachers and school administrators on VO in the common core subjects. His results showed that there was a general agreement among the participants that VO was a positive influence on the teaching. However, the participants failed to agree on what the term VO meant. In addition, his findings showed that participants believed the implementation of VO required organization and resources outside the reach of individual teachers. Thus, VO needs to be an all-school policy instead of a personal endeavor. The top-down approach of VO means that if the school administration does not facilitate for VO it will not be possible to actualize all the criteria needed to implement it successfully.

Next, Hiim (2014) looked at how vocational students and teachers think VO can be useful for them. She claims that there is a gap between the content of the vocational education and the actual tasks in the given profession. Furthermore, she found that the vocational subjects and common core subject are not sufficiently relevant to the students. In order to focus the vocational education, Hiim argues that all the subjects need to be more vocationally oriented.

The vocational teachers in her study underlined the importance of the competence the common core subjects offers each profession, but that this should not be seen in light for their academic use, but it's professional. They argue that the common core subjects need to be vocationally oriented to each specific profession, instead of aiming at a more general basic vocational competence. In this way, the VO of the common core subjects will only be used when it *really* is relevant for the future profession. They add that not all topics need to be vocationally oriented. In addition, this frees more time to other competence aims in the common core subjects.

Further, the students in Hiim's study had trouble seeing the connection between the common core subjects and their program subject. Although they expressed that they needed competence in English, Norwegian, Science and Mathematics, they still had trouble seeing the relevance in the common core subjects teaching and wished they were more vocationally oriented.

Hiim concludes that the common core subjects in a much greater extent need to be based on the requirements of the students' future profession. She calls for new curriculum and assessment forms in the common core subject that are more in-line with the needs of the

students' specialization, and finally, for a reform of vocational education with more cooperation between school and working life.

Trøndelag R&D Institute's VO project – The implementation of VO

The largest study of VO in Norway is a two-part project conducted by Trøndelag Research and Development Institute (2014). The project aimed to give an overview of the interaction between VO and the school administration, common core- and program subject teachers, and the students. In the following have I extracted the findings most relevant to this study from the project.

First, when Stene et al. (2014) from Trøndelag Research and Development Institute searched for previous research on VO they found little systematic research. In chapter 1, I attempted to define the term VO. However, as pointed out, is there in practice no set definition of VO. Regardless, Stene et al. (2014) found three common features of VO which emerged across the different studies, books and articles.

1. VO is a term that is understood and implemented in different ways.
2. The school administration and organization of the teachers' day and working situation greatly affects VO.
3. In the end, it is the teachers who must implement VO, but the school administration, schedules, the needs of the students, the teacher's relation to their own and other subjects, didactical skills and curriculum all affect the results.

Regarding the first feature, the practice of VO, there does not seem to be a set method among teachers (Haugset & Stene, 2016). The most common form of VO among common core subject teachers was: to relate teaching to the students' future profession or education program. A form of VOs Stene et al (2014) calls: *demonstration of vocational relevance*. This form of VO is most common among the common core subject teachers. Other forms of VO, such as moving the common core subject teaching to the vocational workshop or using shared assessment, are less common. In vocational didactics, the dominating view of VO is a form of interdisciplinary work, where the boundaries between the common core and program subject are removed. Either way, VO is understood and practiced in many different ways, and there is no set definition everyone relates to.

The second feature, that the school administration and how the teachers' workday is organized affects the outcome of the VO, highlights the administrative responsibility for VO since the school administration can help or hinder attempts to vocational orient teaching through how they schedule and delegate tasks. In fact, one in five teachers perceives the workday organization as a major obstacle for their doing VO (Stene and Haugset, 2016). The consequence of is that it is not enough for the administration to just push VO over the teachers, the entire school organization must support the implementation of VO if it is to be successful.

Finally, point three underlines how the teachers are torn between the different and conflicting goals of vocational education. On the one hand, is it a stated goal of the Directorate of Education and Training that vocational education is to ensure a robust workforce, emphasizing the vocational aspects of the vocational education. At the same time, all students are supposed to be prepared to take supplementary studies, qualifying them for higher education. The resulting being an emphasis on academic goals and the need to ready the students for the common core subject examinations. In addition, is the goal to reduce the drop-out rate, which puts the focus on low-achieving students overrepresented in vocational education.

These three goals of VET can come in conflict with each other. There is not necessarily a positive effect between facilitating for all three goals at the same time. Preparing students for higher education while at the same trying to reduce the drop-outs by lowering the bar in the common core subjects is one example of how these goals come in conflict with each other. Likewise, is there a tension between creating a robust workforce and reducing the drop-outs, and preparing for high education and a more robust workforce. The goal triangle between a professional vocational specialization, academic goals, and a teaching adapted to low achieving students are not directly incompatible, but lacks a focus. The following figure shows these three goals of the vocational education and the tension between them.

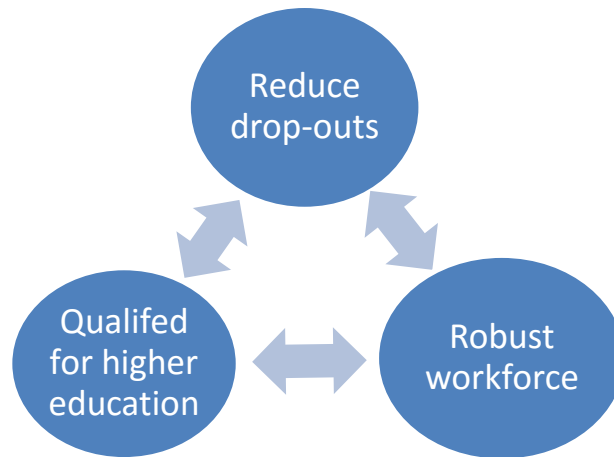


Figure 3.1: Goal triangle in the vocational education

As the figure shows, is there no positive link between trying to promote all three goals at the same time. In fact, it can be rather counter-productive, as Haugset and Stene (2016) comment upon, it is hard to optimize the teaching towards one of the goals without going at the cost one at least one of the other. The outcome of the goal triangle is an education that is too general. When all the goals demand equal attention at the same time the teaching becomes unfocused and lacks coherence.

Trøndelag R&D Institute's VO project - Student perceptions

Moving on from how VO is understood and the implementation challenges, the report explores student perceptions. The most central mechanism for VO to affect the students' motivation and expectation of success is relevance (Martinsen, 2014, Wendelborg et al., 2014). Accordingly, for VO to have any effect, the teaching must promote the relevance aspect of motivation. If the teaching fails to successfully show itself as relevant, VO can backlash and reduce motivation.

The clear relation between VO and relevance is important, but for the students, VO can give both a positive and negative effects. If the VO is perceived as relevant by the students, it can have a positive impact on their attitudes towards the common core subjects. However, if the VO is not perceived as relevant, it can have a negative impact on their attitudes towards school and give higher drop-out rates. In other words, ineffective attempts at VO will only make matters worse for students who are already poorly motivated. The same double-edged effect is amplified by teacher characteristics and competence. Confident and good class leaders will achieve good student results without VO, but these will be further improved with

VO. For teachers already struggling with their classes and with VO, however, it can make the situation even worse.

The last element in the report deals with examinations and grading. In their observations, Wendelborg et al. (2014) noticed that the students perceived VO as a hindrance for examination preparations. For the students, it was important that the VO did not interfere with the examination preparation. Grades were very important for the students, and the examination was a major focus. If the teaching was vocationally oriented close to the examination, or in other way let this affect examination preparation negatively, it greatly affected the students' attitude towards VO.

It is interesting to note that the study claims that VO and examination preparation are considered incompatible by the students, something I will talk more about in the examination section of the next chapter. In some cases, this was because only a minority of the students saw themselves having a vocational career in their current specialization, which meant a greater focus on the examination and less on VO. In other cases, the incompatibility was less evident but did not change the students' negative perceptions.

In sum, the research on VO points towards two main trends. First, the need for meaningful and relevant VO. VO is not unconditionally good, it is, therefore, important that VO is used when it is needed and is a purposeful addition to the teaching. For many students in VET, VO can be a useful way to make the content relevant, however, other factors has to be considered as well. If the adaptations of the teaching fail look at the individuals' interest it will not have the desired effect on motivation. Crucial for this goal is to be open to all topics, and not consider vocational topics as second grade to academic topics.

The second trend is the organizational difficulties in the implementation of VO, at the individual school and in a broader school context. In the broader context, VO suffers from the fact that the political goals do not necessarily reflect the school reality. The research by Trøndelag R&D Institute's show that the different goals of the vocational education do comply with each other. In addition, the examination often has an academic content, downplaying the need for VO. At the level of the individual schools, teacher and principles often experience organizational difficulties with the schedule and school organization in their attempt to implement VO. Meaning that in order for a successful implementation of VO the whole school organization needs to change.

3.4 Vocational orientation in the English subject

Central to this study is the previous research done on VO in English, but unfortunately, VO is little researched, and even less has been done in English. Most studies focusing on VO examine motivation, drop-outs and drop-out rates and compare general studies and vocational studies. However, there are five MA theses that focus specifically on VO in the English subject.

Befring's MA thesis (2015) used a mixed method approach to look at student experiences with vocational English in school and apprenticeships. Her findings indicate that both teachers and students find VO relevant. The majority of the students think that vocational oriented English improves their motivation and efforts in the subject. In addition to increasing their motivation, the students replied that vocational oriented English is easier to work with and they also get better results.

Furthermore, the study showed that if the teachers showed interest in the students' specialization, the students were more likely to experience the VO as authentic, and in turn, this had a positive effect on the students' motivation for English. However, she also found that teachers focus less on vocational topic due to their more academic training, and their lack of knowledge about vocational topics.

In the another mixed methods MA thesis Storevik (2015) examined VO of English in upper secondary school. The aim was to:

Study and explore the concept of vocational orientation, seen from both the students' and the teachers' perspective, and to investigate how the government initiatives promoting vocational orientation are implemented and used in upper secondary schools. (p.107)

She found that there was a general consensus among the teachers about the importance of VO. However, the VO was implemented quite differently due to varying perspectives on language learning in a vocational context. Experience and self-confidence were crucial for how VO was given priority. The inexperienced teachers were more bound to the curriculum and the textbooks, while the more experienced used VO more freely. This led the experienced teachers towards achieving both general and vocational competence aims in the curriculum through their use of VO. The results from the student questionnaire indicated that the students were positive to the English subject and VO. There were variations within the individual

classes and education programs, but the results were generally more positive than found in previous studies.

The third MA thesis, by Borojevic (2016), focused on the VO of the common core subjects in upper secondary school, with the research question: how do English teachers in vocational education use VO in the English subject. She, as others, found that the teachers' decision to do VO is influenced by both external and internal factors. With regard to the internal factors, these comprised attitudes towards VO, the willingness and ability to use the program subject for this purpose, cooperation with vocational teachers and flexibility in teaching methods. The external factors included scheduling, the curriculum, assessment and the nature of the subject. Her main finding was that VO is a useful tool to improve motivation, especially for low-achieving students. However, the positive effect was not reflected in student grades due to the centrally given English examination.

In the fourth MA thesis Sleveland (2014) looks at the English textbooks used in vocational programs, and how and if they facilitate VO. For vocational students, VO can be used to achieve both abstract and the concrete reading tasks. That is to say, there are possibilities to use experience from the workshop to make the teaching more concrete, and, conversely, to use the VO as a tool for abstraction.

Sleveland underlines the importance of not making a distinction between academic- and vocational topics because this hinders the linguistic expression. Accordingly, he argues that students are not a weaker English user just because they use the workshop as inspiration for their texts. What is important is that the texts are perceived to be relevant to the students, thus making them active readers. To use VO in such a way where the students become active readers can improve the reading proficiency because it makes the texts meaningful to the students.

It should be mentioned that Brevik's (2016a) article on myths about vocational students in upper secondary supports Sleveland's argument. By looking at how students in general studies and in VET use reading strategies, she investigated if there were any differences between the students' groups with regard to reading and strategy use. In the interviews, the general studies students said they used reading strategies because the teacher told them to. The vocational students, on the other hand, explained that they used reading strategies

because helped them understand the texts, and their use of strategies was extended to outside the classroom, to also the workshop and in apprenticeship activities.

Finally, Mürer (2015) studied the written English examination in upper secondary by examining six different Vg1/2 English examinations and supplementing this with student questionnaires and interviews. She found that the different tasks on the same examination measure different competence aims. Thus, students who take the same examination are assessed in different aims. In addition, the preparatory text to the English examination favors general studies students, as vocational students found the preparatory texts difficult, demotivating and boring. However, the vocational students were better at choosing tasks adapted to their specialization. All in all, she concluded that the examinations measured few of the competence aims, and she argued that the examinations had low validity and reliability.

The studies on VO in the English subject have many similarities with Stene et al.'s (2014) VO project. In general, teachers and students are positive to VO in English and sees different useful aspects of it. The students found VO to be motivating and helped them achieve their goals. The teachers believed it is a useful tool to increase the motivation for many VET students, but used VO very differently based on their experience and education. The studies show that VO can enable different texts, new teaching methods and greater variation in the teaching material. However, these positive effects of VO are not necessarily reflected in the examination as VO very rarely is a part of it. In addition, the fact that there is no consensus on what VO means is a common thread in all the studies. The different definitions of VO can become a problematic issue in its implementation and in practice as students, teachers and administration all understand the term differently.

This leads us to the present study, which aims to examine how VO is understood and practiced from a student and teacher perspective. The study investigates how students and teachers perceive VO, what challenges and opportunities they believe VO brings to the classroom and how they think VO can be used in their school day. The study comprises classroom observation, teacher- and student interviews to piece together the different perspectives in order to get a more complete understanding of VO.

4 Methodology

This chapter starts by introducing the research design used in this study. This is followed by a presentation of the participants. Then, a description of the methods used in the data collection and analysis is provided. Finally, this chapter addresses the credibility and validity of the study.

Context

I was invited by Associate Professor Lisbeth M. Brevik to participate in her ongoing project Vocational and General Students' Use of English in and out of school (VOGUE) to collect data for my MA thesis. The VOGUE project is placed at the Department of Teacher Education and School Research (ILS) at the University of Oslo. The project is led by Brevik, who works closely with other researchers. In the project master students have played a crucial role in gathering and analyzing data. Three master students are currently doing master theses related to the VOGUE project, of which I am one. VOGUE investigates the link between vocational students' use of English in and out of school by combining student achievement data, data from questionnaire interviews and classroom observations. It relies on quantitative and qualitative data from students and teachers at 90 schools.

My MA study is linked to one of the VOGUE schools; a large vocational school in the western part of Norway. I focus on vocational students' use of English in school, using classroom observations as well as student and teacher interviews.

4.1 Research Design

The aim of this study is to explore how students and teachers in VET perceive VO. There are few studies of VO in Norway, especially in the English classrooms. To acquire insight into a relatively unknown field is, therefore, useful to use an exploratory study. Stebbins' (2001) defines exploratory research as:

A broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life. (p. 3)

In this sense, exploration becomes a type of *investigative exploration*. Further, the investigative exploration has used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (2013) as:

The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (p. 160)

I chose a qualitative approach because of the study's emphasis on exploration and investigating a human phenomenon. Both interviews and observation are suitable methods to investigate my research question because they provide rich information from within the specific context where VO is used. As Halcomb and Davidson (2006) point out, interviews facilitate interactive dialogues between participants and researchers, making it a "data collection associated with the naturalistic [qualitative] paradigm" (p. 38). The observation provides for capturing and to experience the ways in which English is taught to vocational students *in situ* and to get firsthand information of the phenomena.

Combining methods is common practice in qualitative studies as the aim is to ensure rich data from the data collection (Creswell, 2013). Combining the different types of qualitative data will create a ground for a more complete understanding of the research questions, as well as strengthen the validity and reliability of the research by having data that complement each other and make it possible to triangulate (Cohen et al., 2011). For example, by observing the participants is it possible to get insights about the informant's perspective, which was not obtained in the interview, such as information the informant is reluctant to give or be based on tacit understanding (Maxwell, 2012). In the same manner, interviews complement observation by providing additional information missed in the observation.

4.2 Research tools

4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

The interview guides were developed with the assistance of my supervisor. I developed three guides, one for the teacher interview, one for the student interview and one for the follow-up interviews (see appendix 1/2/3). The guides were organized thematically; each theme started

with an open-ended question but had several terms if they did not bring it up. As the goal of this study was to explore, the slogan: “don’t follow the interview guide—follow the interviewee,” was characteristic of the interviews. The interview guides thus provided a stable structure that worked as a framework for the interviews but did not make them too rigid for exploration. The various guides will be accounted for in the following and can be found in the appendix.

Semi-structured interviews with teachers

I wanted the structure of the interview to be rigid enough for me to make sure that I was allowed to ask all the questions I wanted, and at the same time being open so that the participants were free to express what they wanted within the topic of the interview. During interviews, I experienced some time restrictions due to the limited availability of the research participants. The structure of the semi-structured interview thus ensured that I was able to complete the interview within the given time frame. The downside of the semi-structured interview is that some ideas or thoughts surrounding this topic might be missed due to its rigidity. I tried to avoid this by adding an open-ended question at the end of every interview.

The teacher interview guide covered four main topics.

1. Background information. (Education, job experience, language background etc.)
2. What the teacher considers the most important when teaching English.
3. Challenges and possibilities working with vocational students.
4. Opinions/experiences/possibilities/challenges using vocationally oriented teaching.

These topics were chosen based on the motivational theory of Dörnyei (2005), previous reports (Trøndelag R&D, 2014) and recommendation from my supervisors. The Trønderlag R&D’s rapport (2014) ranked what the principles meant was the biggest obstacles for VO. The highest factors on the list were examination, organizational problems and teacher confidence in VO, topics I made sure to cover during the interviews. Additionally, several of the articles mentioned challenges typical of VET students and potential drop-outs, known issues I wanted to explore the teachers’ perceptions of (Hiim, 2014; Kolsaas, 2013, Lillejord, et al, 2015).

I chose to interview the teachers individually. The how and why the teacher does what he/she does is the essence of my research question, thus these differences were information I was

interested in. I was concerned that the school policy or other “push from above” might affect the dynamics of the interview if I interviewed them as a group. For the project, it was not information about what they, as a group, were thinking that was of interest, but the thoughts and perceptions of the individual teacher. Consequently, the individual interview was purposeful.

Semi-structured interviews with students

Primary data collection

Concerning the students, I wanted insight into what they were thinking about VET and to see what they agreed and disagreed on. My goal with the students was to gain an understanding of their views and to explore their opinions. The focus group interview was chosen over individual interviews because I wanted to provide opportunities for the students to build on each other’s statements, and my hope was that the group dynamics would make it easier for the students to express their points of view. Hence, the collective conversation of the focus group interview is well suited to investigate it. Having small groups also made it possible to ask the same question to all the interviewees, without it being too time consuming or repetitive.

The student interview guide can be summed up in four main topics.

1. Background information
2. What use they see in English as a subject or language?
3. What they expect to get out of the English subject
4. Questions based on class room observations

The interview guide included a checklist of issues I wanted to explore in relation to each topic and tried to include them where it was natural in the conversation. This checklist was based on relevant theory relating to motivation and known issues of the VO. From theory, I knew that relevance, mastery and expectancy of success were important elements of VO and motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; Stene et al. 2014; Martinsen, 2012). These factors and VO were covered by examining their expected future use of VO and relevance. In addition, the students were asked about their expectations to the English subject and in- and out-of-school interest in specialization. The purpose of these topics was to explore the relation between how the

students perceived English language and the English subject and finding out how their vocational specialization relates to it. The guide had been tested during my pilot project in the spring 2016 and revised for these interviews.

Follow-up interviews

In the follow-up interviews, which took place after four months, I wanted to interview the same students, with the goal of finding out anything had changed in the last four months. For the same reason as in the primary data collection process, the group interview was chosen. The topics of the interviews were however slightly different, and be summed up in the following main topics:

1. What had changed since last time
2. What was their current perception of VO
3. In-school experiences with VO

As mentioned, the aim was to look at any changes in the English since the beginning of the school year with the first interviews, and how these had affected their view of VO.

4.2.2 Observation

The main purpose of the observation was to get firsthand information from classrooms. The focus of the observation in this study was to generate data that could be compared with what the teachers and students explained in interviews.

Observation as a qualitative research method differs from everyday observation. Basit (2010) makes the distinction between *looking*, or everyday observation, and *seeing*, or research observation. “Research observations require us to *see* what is happening, rather than what we *want* to happen, or *think* is happening” (p. 118). This distinction is crucial in order to understand the object of your observations. My objective was first and foremost to get information so I could check statements from the interviews against my observation. One the strengths of observation are that one is able to gather information *in situ* and get the information firsthand, rather than relying on second-hand information. Thus, the fieldnotes were mostly descriptive. It contained information about class size, gender distribution, as well as the different activities the class did. Elements such as quality, off-task talk or similar were not taken into consideration. I wanted to see how the teacher structured their teaching and

how they dealt with the student group in a broad sense, meaning that I was not interested in specifics but rather to get a general idea of the classroom dynamics. The nonparticipant observation is in accordance with this goal (Creswell, 2009). I sat at the back of the classroom and tried to avoid any interference with the environment. This made it possible to observe the classroom in natural settings, even though they were aware of my presence.

4.3 Participants

All in all, the interviews involved three teachers and nine students. The participant selection process of this study was based on what Maxwell (2012) calls *purposeful selection*. In this sampling strategy, particular settings, individuals or activities are chosen deliberately. Rather than making generalizations, I wanted to target a particular group something that purposeful selection enables. The groups targeted was vocational students and English teachers teaching vocational students.

Although the participants were purposely selected, is there still no guarantee that their views are typical of the group. Due to its small-scale much of the data is attributed to a single key informant, consequently, the study is prone to *key informant bias* (Maxwell, 2012). I tried to strengthen this with a systematic sampling so I could be able to claim that my informant's statements were representative of the group as a whole. However, as I was a part of the VOGUE project and the data collection had a limited time frame, this limited how selective I could be.

Teacher participants

I based my selection of teachers on two criteria: (1) they should be English teachers and (2) they should teach vocational students. I did not choose the participating teachers myself, but their names were given to me by the school administration on the basis of my criteria and that they were willing to participate. The teachers' experience and their formal education were very varied, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 4.1: The participating teachers' experience and education. The participants are all given aliases

Name	Gender	Age	Years as teacher	Years as an English teacher with relevant education	Education in English	Vocational experience
Per	Male	50-59	6	1/2	1 year	½ year
Ole*	Male	50-59	26	26	Master degree	6 years
Kari	Female	40-49	20	20	Master degree	Since 1998

*Has attended vocational school

Two of the teachers, Ole and Kari, have a master degree in English. They also had extended experience as English teachers. Kari had taught with different forms of vocational English and English for specific purposes for more than 18 years. Ole, who himself had attended a vocational school, has worked with vocational students for the past 6 years. Per had a less experience in teaching English. He was quite new English teacher and had just begun working at the school. It was his first time working with vocational English and had no previous experience with it.

Student participants

The students were chosen based on three criteria: 1) being vocational students with English 2) from the class I observed and 3) be willing to participate. At the beginning of the observation phase, I introduced myself and the study, and told the students that I wanted students for interviews. Students who were willing to participate could contact me after class, as I did not want the teacher to pick out the students. After the class was over I asked if anyone were willing to be interviewed. I usually had three or four students raising their hand, and I picked three randomly.

The table below shows the distribution of the participating students and includes information about the students and their vocational program.

Table 4.2: The participating students

Vocational program	Class size	Teacher	Gender	Age
Service and Transportation	15	Per	Male	15
			Male	15
			Female	15
Car Mechanics	15	Kari	Male	16-17
			Male	16-17
			Male	18-20
Building and Construction	14	Ole	Male	15
			Male	16-17
			Male	15

The student sample was students attending three different vocational programs, building and construction, service and transportation and car mechanics. The sample included mostly male students reflecting the gender distribution in classes, as the classes consisted almost exclusively of males. As the age indicate, most of the student had not attended any previous programs at upper secondary. The service and transportation and building and construction are Vg1 classes, and car mechanics Vg2.

4.4 Procedure

The procedure in which this study was conducted can be summed up in three phases, (1) the pilot study, (2) the primary data collection and (3) the follow-up interviews. The phases represent a stage of the process based on the time it was conducted. The pilot was a part of a previous course at the University of Oslo, EDID4010, and was completed in the spring of 2016. The next stage, the primary data collection, represents the data collection I did over a two-day period when I visited the vocational school in Western-Norway. The last stage, the follow-up interviews, are the two follow-up interviews I conducted in the Vg1 classes four months after the primary data collection to see if it were any changes in the students' experience and expectation to VO.

Pilot study

The project started with a pilot study I conducted in spring 2016. The objective of the pilot study was twofold. I wanted to see if students were motivated by VO, drawing upon Dörnyei's (2005) motivational theory in second language learning. An additional goal was testing if VO was a possible subject for my MA thesis and if interview was a useful method. The pilot study confirmed that VO was a possible subject to study and that interviewing was a suitable method.

Primary data collection

In the second phase, the primary data collection, I interviewed three different teachers and nine students at the same school and observed three classes. The primary data collection for my study was over a period of two days at one school specializing in vocational education in Western Norway.

The participants were divided into three groups. Each of these groups consisted of one English teacher and three of his/her students. The groups went through a process that can be summarized in four steps, presented as *primary data collection* in the figure below.

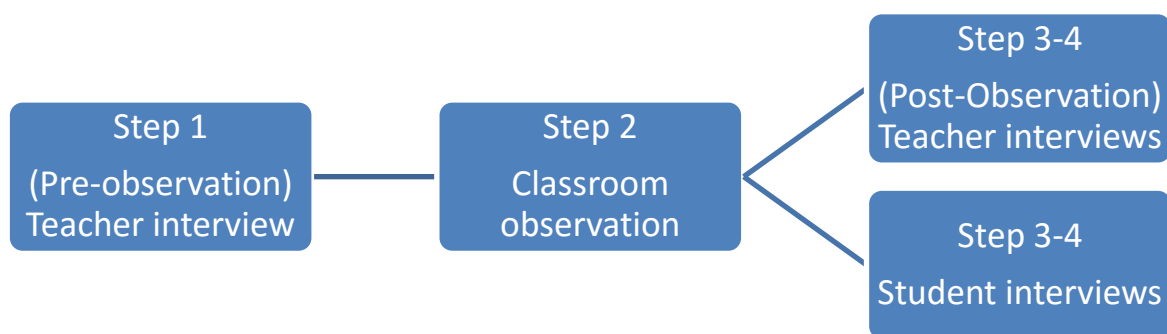


Figure 4.1: The four steps of the primary data collection process. Each of the four steps was repeated for every group.

The process started with (step 1) a teacher interview, (step 2) then I observed his English class. Afterward (step 3-4), I had focus group interview with three students from the class I observed or the (step 3-4) post-observation interview with the teacher. The two last interviews, step 3-4, happened in no particular order and were determined by practicalities. Each group went through the same process.

Step 1: Pre-observation teacher interview.

The interviews were conducted in Norwegian and recorded with the consent of the participants. Permission to interview and to use the information gathered was granted by NSD. All the interview participants were also given my e-mail in order to contact me in case they wanted to withdraw from the study or, as some of the teachers did, forward additional information.

The aim of these interviews was to explore the teachers' view of vocationally oriented teaching, as well as their personal experiences with VO. I, therefore, wanted to conduct the interviews before the observation to make sure that the eventual events or situations from the classroom observation did not interfere with this part of the interview. This also had the additional benefit of establishing a common ground for post-observation interviews, and to make sure that the teacher was comfortable with me observing their teaching.

The interviews started with questions related to the teacher's education and teaching experience. The first topic was introduced with an open-ended question "what do you consider to be most important when teaching English?" The subsequent questions of this topic explored the teachers reasoning and choices. This question aimed to explore how the teacher's view of what is important in English was enacted in the classroom context. The next topic revolved around the vocational student group. If they find that the VO students differ from the GS students, and if they did, how do they adapt the teaching, use of textbooks and handle special challenges related to the vocational students? The last topic was VO. If they did VO, how and when and which consideration did they have in mind when they tried to do VO. The interview guide is accounted for in Appendix 1.

Step 2: Observation

I observed one English lesson, 45 min., in every class. My role as an observer during this lesson is what Creswell (2011) calls a complete observer. I sat in the back of the classroom and took notes on the behavior and activities that students and teachers engaged. The only interaction I had with the class was a short introduction at the beginning of the class to let them know I was going to observe them.

From the observation, I obtained first-hand information of the content of the teaching. The aim of observations was to get firsthand information of the English teaching in a vocational

classroom. Additionally, were the observation a useful stepping stone for during the interviews. The observational protocol was mostly descriptive, with some additional reflections prepared with the interviews in mind.

Step 3-4: Student interviews

In the same manner, as in the teacher interviews, the students' interviews were conducted in Norwegian. Permission to interview and to use the information gathered was granted, and they were given my e-mail in case they wanted to withdraw. For the same reasons as the teacher interviews, I found semi-structured interviews to be the most suited approach to student interviews. The student interviews were organized in small focus groups, consisting of three students.

Before the interviews begun, I presented the interviews by stating that I was there to learn about the students' thoughts and viewpoints. Whether they were "good" or "bad" students in English, or what grade they achieved was of no concern to me. I told them my intention was to hear and learn from them.

The interviews started with a short background on all the students. Next, was how they well they liked their specialization. I wanted to see what they thought was challenging and what they mastered, in addition to looking at if the specialization was an out-of-school interest. The third topic was how they perceived the English subject to see their goals and expectations, and how they actually experienced it. The last topic was about the use of VO in English. If they had any experience with it, if it was at any relevance to them and to see if they thought their vocational English competence differ from their general competence. The interview guide is accounted for in Appendix 2.

I started each topic by asking each of the three participants the same question(s) individually. Then, after all the students had answered the initial question, I tried to build on the answers given by the students to explore their thoughts and preferences further

At the end of every interview, I asked if there was anything important they did not get the opportunity to say. The interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes.

Step 3-4: Post-observation teacher interviews.

These interviews were shorter and lasted between 10-15 minutes. The goal of these interviews was to get more substance to my observations. The interviews explored the goals of the lesson and what measures the teacher had done to motivate the students. I was also able to check if my observations were coherent with the teacher's statements.

Follow-up interview

The final phase that I added later in the process was the follow-up interview with the Vg1 students. I was invited back for a day visit to conduct follow-up interviews four months later. In the follow-up interviews, I wanted to look at possible changes that had happened in the last four months, especially with regards to VO. These interviews had two main topics, (1) what had changed in their English teaching since last time and (2) if their experience with VO had altered their opinions.

In sum, the procedure consisted of three main stages, the pilot study, the primary data collection and the follow-up interviews.

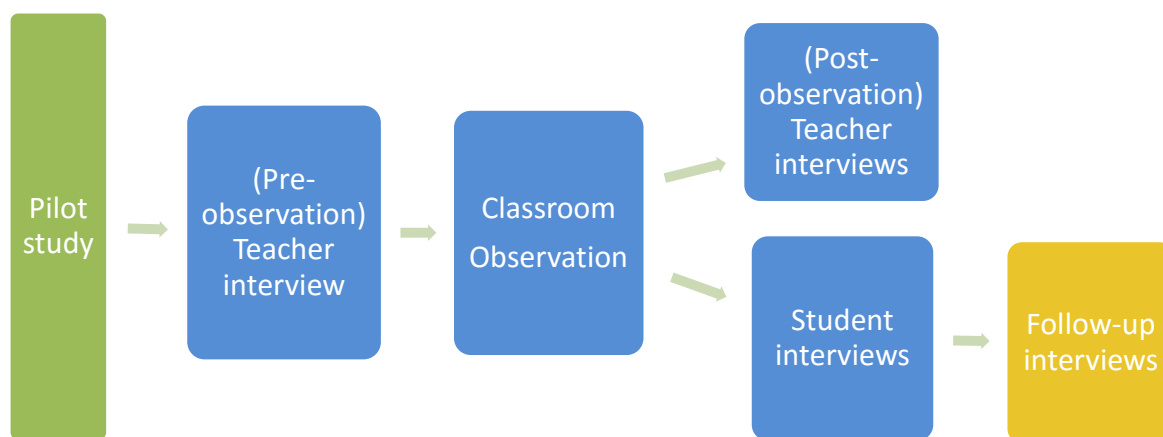


Figure 4.2: An overview of all the phases of the procedure. Each color represents one phase.

Most of the data is from the primary data collection phase and it serves as the basis. The pilot study created the foundation for the study and was the starting point, however, its data is not used here. Finally, the follow-up interview was used to check the Vg1 students experience in upper secondary altered their opinions on VO.

4.5 Data analysis

The data analysis started after all the data from the primary data collection had been gathered. The process for both the observation and interviews will be accounted for in the next two sections.

4.5.1 Interview

As Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) state, the content and goal of a study determine how you analyze your material. My material consists of a combination of the transcribed interviews, notes taken during the interviews, and notes and coding taken during the analyzing process. Since both the interview guide and the interviews were structured thematically, it was natural to also analyze them thematically. To start the analysis had I a pre-set list of themes I used in the examination of the interviews. In the beginning, I also used these themes to code. However, I tried to look at my data with an open mind and see if it was anything I had missed by focusing too much on the themes of this study. In this way, the exploratory nature of this study made it natural to adjust the coding to the finding, as new topic arose and other faded out.

Due to the limited time, not all the interviews were fully transcribed. I am, however, convinced that the extensive notes and coding are satisfactory for the analysis, as I have listened carefully to all the recorded tapes

4.5.2 Observation

The data was descriptive information of the classroom. The analysis of the observations was mainly to check it against what the student and teachers said in the interviews, and not analyzing to find the underlying causes.

4.6 Ethical considerations

This project has been approved by the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research (NSD), and the data has been handled per their guidelines. All the participants have given their consent, and it was emphasized that participation in the study could be retreated at any point, and the author's email address was provided. None of the students were under 15 years

which is the age limit set by NSD to be classified as vulnerable, in addition to the non-sensitive nature of this study made parents' consent redundant.

Furthermore, anonymity has been an important ethical aspect. No information that could directly identify any of the participants were gathered during the data collection. All information that could indirectly identify the informants has been categorized roughly enough for the participants' anonymity to be ensured.

4.7 Credibility

4.7.1 Interview reliability

Interview reliability concerns the question of whether the interviewee would provide the same answers if the interview was conducted by a different researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). In other words, if the results from this study can be reproduced. I will discuss this in relation the quality of the interviews, transcription and of the analysis phase.

First, Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) see leading questions as the main concern during the conducting of the interview. To avoid this, the interviews were conducted using the same interview guides. The interview guide was thoroughly tested and reviewed with the help of a pilot project, co-students, and my supervisors. The questions were asked in the same order and I used about the same time on all the interviews. However, since this study to some extent also had an exploratory dimension, I prioritized the authenticity of the conversation over some of the rigidity of the interview guide. I sometimes tried to get more information through relating or contrasting the follow-up questions to previous statements or episodes from the observation. Although it is desirable to keep the interviews as reliable as possible, it can sometimes counteract the inter-human aspect of the interview. It is my opinion that these adjustments not affect the reliability.

To further enhance reliability, I conducted a pilot study to test if interviews were a suitable approach to the investigation of this topic. In this project was I able to get experience at interviewing students, in addition to testing some of my questions. During the pilot, I soon realized that I would have to reduce the time frame of the interview. It made it very clear that one of the challenges of interviewing students is to keep it brief enough to keep the students' attention, but at the same time long enough for me to get the information I needed. I was able

to test some of my questions and determine the time required to complete the interviews. Overall, the pilot study helped me design a more realistic and logical project, and how to conduct it within a reasonable time frame.

Second, the transcription of the audiotaped data into written text can be a tedious task. During this process, several factors might affect the credibility of the data. As Poland (1995) points out, awareness that transcription is an interpretive activity and not just translation of the audiotape record is crucial. Halcomb and Davidson (2006) list misinterpretation of content, class, and cultural differences and language as some of the human errors that can occur during the interpretation. Moreover, technical difficulties like audio quality give the transcription an additional layer of complexity. To maximize the transcription quality, I used field notes to provide a more accurate description of the interaction and had good quality recordings. As the data was recorded and transcribed by me the inter-human relations that can be lost in the audiotaped data was not lost in the process. In addition, the transcription was done within a short time period of the interview.

The coding process was a process of finding fitting labels to the answers rather than measuring them. It is not uncommon to have two coders code the same material, and specify how coherent their coding in percent. This was not doable within the limits of the study, but due to the rigidness of the semi-structured interview, the answers for most of the categories were already established prior to the interviews with the help of my supervisor. I also got to control and limit each topic through the use of the interview guide.

A weakness of reliability of this study concerns the follow-up interviews. An unfortunate technical crash lost the recordings and I was unable to retrieve them. Fortunately, the interviews were fairly short and I had good notes. Due to this mishap, the analysis of the interviews is based solely on the notes and my recollection of the interviews. I discovered the loss shortly after the interviews and hurried to write down everything I could remember, but it goes without saying that the records would provide a much more reliable and detailed result.

4.7.2 Observation reliability

Observation reliability is “concerned with how consistently you are measuring whatever you are. Whether or not the findings are consistent and credible” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 239). Ary et al. (2010) propose two ways of enhancing the reliability of direct observation. One way is to

have two independent observers. The two observers can compare their findings from the same observation and determine the interobservation reliability. Due to the limitations of the master thesis, there was only one observer in the classroom.

The second way is extensive training in observation. The training makes it “so that they are competent in knowing how to observe and how to record the observations” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 220). Although I have some previous experience with observation, I was not extensively trained. I was, however, well prepared. I knew what I was looking for, and had consultations with my supervisor that to some extent compensated for my limited training

Another factor which may affect the reliability is the *observer effect* (Ary et al., 2010). The observer effect is “when people being observed behave differently just because they are being observed” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 219). As an alternative to my approach, I could have conducted the teacher interviews after the observation, in order to keep the teachers unaware of what I was looking for during the observation. However, I was mainly looking for factual elements in my observation, e.g., how many students were in the class, which topics were taught etc. In most of the cases, the teachers had already prepared their classes before they knew I was going in it. In addition, I had the opportunity to check with the students if the class I observed was a “normal” class.

4.7.3 Validity

Validity refers to whether you are investigating what you claim to be investigating, whether or not your results can be trusted. During the analysis I tried to identify *validity threats*; that is how I might be wrong in my assumptions. Maxwell (2012) points towards two important threats to the validity of qualitative conclusions, (1) “selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory” and “the selection of data that «stand out» to the researcher” (p. 124). A serious challenge for qualitative research is that the researcher will always be a part of the world she/he studies. This means that I will in some way or another influence the results. Being aware and reflecting upon of *how* I influenced the situations and my own subjectivity, therefore, became an important part of the process.

Another challenge was the sample selection. The selection of participant fulfilled criteria defined by me to fit the purpose of the study, but they had volunteered to take part in the research. Volunteering always proposes the concern of their motives for participating

(Maxwell, 2012). The teacher selection was based on criteria defined by me, but for the individuals, availability played an important role. It was a busy school and my visit was set to a specific date and time.

With regard to the selection of students, I suspect that some of the students might have chosen to participate to get out of class. However, I highly doubt it influenced their answers. Moreover, I was unwilling to let the teacher pick students or try to force anyone. I tried to encourage as many as possible to volunteer by stating that the interviews would be in Norwegian and that I did not care about their grade and I made it clear that I only was interested in their thoughts and opinions, and thereby my bias did not interfere in the selection process.

In addition, the study is missing two groups who in the literature are described as less positive towards VO (Wendelborg et al., 2014 and Befring, 2015); students who plan to take supplementary studies in order to qualify for higher education, and students from female-dominated vocational education. These were originally included in the data collection process. However, due to the data loss previously mentioned, I was unable to include them in the study.

The main threat to the validity of the interviews was *reactivity*. Reactivity refers to the effect of the researcher on the participants studied (Maxwell, 2012). How could I know that what the participants said was true and not just what I wanted to hear? I tried to do the participants comfortable in the interview situation so they would give me their honest opinions. At the beginning of every interview, I assured the participants of their anonymity and gave them my e-mail address so they could withdraw at any time. The location of the interviews was at the school; this was done out of practicality but also so interviews would be conducted in a familiar environment for the participants. For the student interviews, I avoided doing them in their classroom. I also actively member checked during the interviews in order to make certain that my interpretations were correct and clarify meaning.

In addition, during the interviews, I used a semi-structured interview guide. The purpose of the guide was to make sure that all the interviews had the same topics and that the interviews were similarity conducted. However, I wanted to explore the topics and follow the respondent during the interviews. The loss of control over the interview might affect the validity (Kvale

& Brinkmann, 2015), but I did not want to miss any perspectives. This balance between losing control of the interview and possible interesting finds was continually evaluated.

Reactivity is a challenge in observation as well, although not as serious as some people believe (Maxwell, 2012). Often the setting itself is more of an influence on the behavior of the participants than the researcher (Becker, 1970). However, in interviews reactivity can be a serious threat to the validity. The strategy of *reflexivity* was used to avoid or rather minimizing, reactivity in the interviews. Reflexivity is “the use of self-reflection to recognize one’s own biases and actively seek them out.” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 501)

Ary et al., (2010) refer to one challenge in particular when using direct observation, *observer bias*. Observer bias is when the researchers own beliefs, perceptions and biases affect the interpretations of the observation, this can result in an inaccurate picture of the situation. I tried to avoid this by using reflexivity. In my observations, I only look for factual elements, other factors, like the purpose of the class, was discussed with the teacher in the post-observations interview. This way, my interpretation of the classes I observed was left out of the observation data.

To reduce the risk of systemic biases due to a specific method the triangulation of the findings in order to increase the validity (Maxwell, 2012). I used different methods and diversified the informants in the data collection. The different methods had different biases making them compensate for each other. The teacher interviews were conducted both before and after the observation. I controlled the teacher during the observation and asked the students to give characteristics of their teaching. I also observed the students and a various sample from different education programs and classes. The data were therefore confirmed by multiple sources of data and complimented each other.

A consideration I had not taken into account was some of the students’ short experience in the vocational education. Given the point of time of which the primary data collection took place, some of the students had just recently started in upper secondary and could only provide their expectations of the English subject and not their experience. Due to this unforeseen error, I returned in early February to conduct follow-up interviews with these students. I chose not to interview the Vg2 students as they were out in practice and had already provided insight into

their experience with the English subject. The follow-up interviews were with the same participants and in the same groups as in the primary data collection.

4.8 Transferability

Transferability is “the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or to other groups” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 501). As with many other qualitative studies, this study relies on a small number of informants and the findings of this study is only valid for its sample. Any generalizations of the study outside the sample will be on the basis of *analytic generalizations*. Analytic generalizations involve an evaluation if the findings in one study can be applied to another situation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), and the receivers must judge for themselves if my findings can be applied to other situations. As to how transferable the findings of this study are, I will return to this issue in the discussion, section 6.4.

In the next chapter, the results of from the data collection will be presented.

5 Results and analysis

The goal of this study is to examine how the teachers and students perceive VO in the English subject. In the interviews, multiple topics were discussed and not all of the participants had something to say about all of them. Some provided additional insights which others did not mention. However, the purpose of the study was to explore. The categories used are the results of my research question and of what emerged as prominent during the analysis of the data.

The chapter starts with the teachers' perspective in section 5.1. First, it presents additional information about the teacher informants who participated in this study, in terms of their backgrounds and attitudes towards VO in English. This is followed by the teachers' views on what is most important in the English subject, and last, the teachers' perspectives on VO. The teachers' perspectives on VO are divided into four sub-categories: (1) The teachers' perception of their own vocational competence, (2) Creating authentic vocational oriented learning situations, (3) Shared written examinations with general studies and the high fail rate, and (4) Secondary obstacles: (a) textbooks and (b) students at the wrong program.

The second part of this chapter, 5.2 is the student perspectives. The structure is similar to the teacher perspectives. It starts with student informants' backgrounds, continues with what they regard as most important in the English subject and end with how they perceive their own English competence. The last part of the chapter present the follow-up interviews.

5.1.1 The teacher informants' background

All the interviews started with a few questions about the participants' background. The three English teachers who participated, Ole, Per and Kari, were from 40 to 59 years old. Their teaching background and experience as English teachers range from half-a-year to twenty-six years. They had all studied English and completed the necessary practical teacher training program, see table 4.1.

Per, who had only taught English for seven months, was the least experienced of the three teachers. He had previously worked as a teacher but had just extended his teaching qualifications to include English. Per also had a Master degree, but in a different field than English, theology. Next, there was Ole. Ole had taught English for twenty-six years and was a

very experienced teacher. He had a Master's degree in English and had attended a vocational school himself. Last was Kari. She had worked as an English teacher in various practices for around twenty years and had a Master's degree in English. She had held courses in vocational English for different companies before she moved to Norway and started teaching at the upper secondary school. Due to the differences in their backgrounds and how it affected their perception of VO, the teachers will be presented individually.

5.1.2 The teachers' perception of their own vocational competence

One might have expected that the teachers who volunteered to participate in this study all were very experienced with VO, but the three had very varied competence. Per thought he had low vocational competence, Ole's competence varied between the different specializations, and Kari felt very confident in her VO competence. In the following, I will present how the teachers perceive their own vocational competence and how it affected their use of VO.

Per

Per, was the least experienced of the English teachers. He had no courses in vocational English and had never attended VET. In addition, had he just started working as an English teacher and had little previous experience with his students' specialization, which was Service and Transportation. In the following excerpt Per talks about his own perception of his vocational competence.

Excerpt 1: Per's description of his vocational competence.

Interviewer: Do you find that your vocational competence is lacking?

Per: I have no understanding about service and transportation beyond what is common knowledge. I have no experience directly related to their education program, but I do pick things up as we go.

Interviewer: Okay, so you imagine this will develop over time?

Per: Yes, I do it as we go. We are a part of a group who works with trucks and trailers. You learn some things just by asking and looking at what they are doing. When I am with them and they are working on interdisciplinary projects I learn a lot too.

In other words, Per admitted that he knew little about service and transportation, and that this was something he wanted to improve. To increase his competence he took part in the program subject classes, where he observed what they were doing. By including himself and becoming a part of the service and transportation environment he hoped that his competence would improve over time. Furthermore, instead of letting this obstruct the use of VO, he compensated by working in close relationship with vocational teachers.

A problematic issue with this approach is the need for a vocational teacher every time he wants to do VO. Indeed, Per's competence made him dependent on the vocational teachers for his VO in English classes. However, he did not consider his lack vocational competence a hindrance in any other aspects of his English teaching than VO.

Ole

Ole, who had attended VET and has worked as an English teacher for many years, felt that his competence varied between the different specializations. In some classes, he felt he had sufficient competence, while in other where he felt out of place.

Excerpt 2: Ole's description of his vocational competence.

Interviewer: How do you perceive your own vocational competence?

Ole: Not as good as it should be. I do not know the names of many of the tools.

Interviewer: Is this something you are trying to improve?

Ole: Yes, I am working on it.

Interviewer: Is this your own initiative?

Ole: Somewhat, I feel that I am encouraged to do it, but when I get building and construction classes I must learn about building and construction, and if I get design I must learn about design. I do not read about different types of hammers unless I have building and construction students. But if I do, then I have the responsibility to learn it.

In the same way as Per, Ole considered his vocational competence to be inadequate. The responsibility he felt to improve his competence in his students' specialization was partly due to pressure from the administration, but also because he felt that he had a responsibility to acquire some basic knowledge about what his students are doing. In my observation of Ole's class, the class carried out a task which entailed building a vocational vocabulary specific for

building and construction. In the post-observation interview, Ole explained that he already knew what tools are most common at a construction site from his VET education and this knowledge made it easier for him to make vocabulary task due to his vocational competence.

However, in other specializations, Ole struggled. An example of this is when he had hairdressing students: “I had one year at hairdressing, and I am terrible at hairdressing. The students immediately figured out that I was completely lost, and I had no interest either. (...) I prefer to teach [vocational oriented] English in subjects I comprehend.” In other words, when he had specialization he felt lost in, Ole’s lack of background knowledge was a barrier for VO. He felt that the students saw him as unprofessional and that he was unable to his lessons relevant to the students. Ole point out that acquiring this basic knowledge can be a challenging task, especially when the specialization is outside his interest, and with no help from the school.

Kari

Kari has taken different courses in vocational English over the years through her different jobs as ESP teacher. She had been teaching ESP in shipping and maritime activities and felt confident in her own competence in vocational English and comfortable doing vocational work on her own. She considered her own experience to be quite good and felt confident doing vocational projects and tasks own her own. Kari did not perceive her vocational competence as a limiting factor for VO. During my observation, she actively used the workshop and used the cars in it to teach the students’ new vocabulary. The students confirmed this observation and said they often used the workshop during their English lessons with Kari.

The difference in training and experience between Kari, Ole and Per is reflected in how they perceived their own vocational competence and in their use of VO. And, as Ole exemplifies with his hairdressing students, not all VET specializations are easy to get into. Even though Ole had worked as a teacher for a long time and had previous vocational experience, this is not always transferable to other specializations. Not surprisingly, it also appears that the teachers’ vocational competence and use of VO are clearly related.

5.1.3 What is most important in the English subject?

The introductory part of the interviews ended with a question on what the teachers considered most important in the English subject. The teachers all considered communication to be one of the most important aspects of the English subject. However, they differed in their view on how to achieve this, and what secondary goals the English subject should strive for.

The main focus of Per's teaching was to create an environment where the students dared to fail. He tried improving his students' English reading and speaking skills by creating a positive environment where there was room to explore and fail, without always striving to be the best. He answered about what he thinks is the most important in the English subject as follows:

Teaching the students to read and speak. Attitude formation, create positive attitudes to language learning. Create confidence. The psychological aspects. My students have average or below average grades. They have never been the star of the class. I want to create an environment where they dare to talk and write, where they dare to try something new.

Being positive about reading and daring to speak in class was something I observed him teaching in his class, as he actively encouraged his students to participate actively.

Ole also wants to make sure that all his students could speak and understand English sufficiently. Communication was Ole's primary focus, and he shared many of Per's perspectives:

I want them to be able to speak and communicate in English. If they encounter new words or concepts I want them to be able to beat around the bush. And it is, of course, important that they learn a technical vocabulary, but even more so that they do not stop talking just because they do not know the right word.

In addition, Ole thought that there is some basic vocabulary the students should know. "This is vocational school", he said, "they have to know some basic vocational words, and they just have to learn them."

Having the courage to dare was central for both Ole and Per. They both wanted their students to acquire a level of competence, and confidence, that allows them to communicate efficiently in English, and not to let insecurities or minor language errors get in the way.

Kari was aware of the importance of being able to communicate and used warm-up activities to encourage oral activity in every lesson. She also focused much of her teaching on vocabulary, but her main emphasis was on the examination and preparation for their professional life. As she puts it, “There are different factors that we have to consider. We have to prepare the students for the examination, and at the same time give them something they need for their professional life.” Kari’s view was dichotomous, caught between teaching to prepare for the examination on the one hand, and the need to vocational English on the other.

Where Per’s focus was on improving the students’ attitude which he thought, in turn, might help them at the examination. Kari did have a more explicit focus on direct preparation. She pointed to the high failure rate and said that it is her responsibility to help the students pass in English, which for her is very important, in addition to being the most relevant for the students at that time of the year. She said: “(at the end of the semester) the students almost exclusively care about the grade, and as long as that is their primary focus will I continue to help them preparing for the examination.”

At the same time, she also wanted to ensure that her students are prepared for professional life. As she puts it: “this is a vocational school so doing it [vocational orientation] is a matter of course. It has to be taught.”

In the table below I summarize the views of the teachers on what is most important in English instruction.

Table 5.1: What the teacher thought was most important in the English subject.

	Examination	Vocational English	Communication	Confidence
Ole		✓	✓	✓
Kari	✓	✓	✓	
Per			✓	✓

To sum up, all three teachers agree considered communication to be one of the most important goals for English. On the other hand, they disagree on which secondary goals the English subject should strive for. Per’s focus primarily revolved around teaching his students to have confidence in their English. Ole shared this focus, but he and Kari also thought it was crucial that his student develops their vocational vocabulary. In addition, Kari considered

preparing the students for the examination an important aspect of the English subject. I will return to how these differences can affect their use of VO in the discussion.

5.1.4 Creating authentic vocational learning situations

After the initial questions on the teachers' background and what they regarded as most important in the English subject, the interviews shifted focus to VO explicitly. During this part of the interviews, the difficulty the teachers experienced when creating authentic vocational learning was a theme which often emerged.

Creating authentic vocational learning does in practice mean creating situations which mirror real-world situations in the students' professional future. As pointed out in the context section in the methods chapter, the school where the interviews were conducted was part of the ongoing FYR-project. One of the goals of FYR was to change teaching practices and make them more vocationally orientated, and authentic vocational learning situations are one of the ways of implementing this. To support the students during these types of tasks teachers needs extensive knowledge of the topic. This turned out to be one of the main issues between the principles of FYR and VO in practice. In the following, I will present further information about how the teachers dealt with the challenge of creating authentic vocational learning situations and how it affected their teaching of VO.

Ole

Ole felt that it was challenging do VO on his own, and considered his own competence as “not good enough” to do it effectively. Even with his previous education in VET, it did not give him the competence he felt he needed. He explained that without having proper knowledge about in the profession in question is it difficult to create English lessons which mimic it. The following excerpt is an example of when he tried to motivate the students by relating his teaching to their hairdressing program without having what he perceived as enough competence in the field.

Excerpt 3: Ole's experience doing VO without having the necessary competence

Interviewer: What is your view on vocational orientation in English?

Ole: I like it, of course, for some it is great.

Interviewer: What is the biggest challenge [when you try to vocational orientation]?

Ole: Firstly, I feel like am unable to reach them. Even though I have an education from VET, is it not related to what I am currently teaching, so it does not help me much. I cannot just do vocational orientation, the students are too smart for it. They realize if the teacher knows what he is talking about or not.

Interviewer: You do not think your competence is good enough?

Ole: No, (...) I tried to do “looks of the 90s”, and other similar tasks, but I just did not know enough about it and the students quickly figured it out too

One of the problems Ole experienced was that the FYR-project’s strong emphasis on VO actually forced the teachers to create situations which are not relevant for the students. Ole points out:

There is more focus [on vocational orientation] now. We have planning days with FYR. When the school facilitates for it, then, of course, is it going to have an influence the teaching. But I wish the vocational focus was something which came from us [the teachers]. That we, the teachers, said: “we have to do something about this”. It would be better that way, that the initiative sprang from us.

Ole’s concern was that the FYR-project had too little contact with the classrooms and the teachers. He argued that the vocational focus does not always have the effect it should have, and sometimes could be part of the problem instead of the solution because he was unable to adapt it properly to the individual students’ need.

In sum, Ole felt that the hairdressing vocational program was outside his competence, making it difficult to create an authentic learning situation. When he did not have the competence to create authentic tasks the students immediately noticed it, and the tasks lost its relevance. He added: “They realize if the teacher knows what he is talking about or not.” As mentioned before, Ole was very positive towards VO, but he voiced some concerns about the demands it puts on the teacher to always do it not matter the cost.

Per

Per experienced that when he tried to do VO on his own, the lessons felt constructed and fake. For him, the inauthenticity of the task was something the students noticed and made them unmotivated for the task. “The key to success”, as he puts it, was to actively work with the program subject teachers. In almost all his VO, Per, therefore, depended on the vocational teacher. He said:

There is a pressure from the administration for us to use FYR. (...) And I support it, in principle. It takes the students’ choice seriously and shows respect for the choice they have made, but it is still the matter of how to do it in practice. You must make a division between the ideals from the documents and how things really are. The ideal is that the common core subjects, as English, should be connected to something relevant, to their specialization. As much as I like this idea, I do not know how to do it in practice.

The distance between the project’s ideal and the reality is something that concerned Per as well and that he felt was demanding. For Per it was the program subject teachers who were the experts and knew best how to do the vocational projects and how to incorporate the English subject in it in a meaningful and authentic way. His systematic cooperation with them made it possible for him to create authentic situations without him having the competence to do it on his own. Indeed, his VO solely depended on interdisciplinary work.

Excerpt 4: Per’s view on the challenges of creating authentic vocational learning situations

Interviewer: Do you do vocational orientations in English on your own, or just in cooperation with a program subject teacher?

Per: I know there are many of the common core subject teachers who do it on their own, but I don’t do it that much. It does not work so well for me.

Interviewer: Why not?

Per: It just feels fake. I once tried to make a tourist brochure. But it just does not work out if it is not connected to the real world in some way, and it wasn’t.

Interviewer: So you feel that the relevance of projects disappears when you try to do it [vocational orientation] on your own?

Per: Yes. My subjective experience is that when I, as a common core subject teacher, take initiative to something vocational orientating the whole thing just feels fake and constructed. But when I do it in cooperation with a program subject teacher, preferably with something they are doing in their apprenticeship, it becomes real and authentic.

Kari

Kari did not feel that creating authentic situations was something that she struggled with. She felt that she had sufficient knowledge of the real-life needs of her students' profession to create these. In addition, the school provided her with a workshop which she could use freely in her lesson. This enabled her teaching to more authentic for the student. She said: "what I like about having students from building and construction and car mechanic is that you can just go into the workshop. Now instead of just being in the classroom, we can talk about the tools and the equipment in the workshop." The real-world context which the change of environment enabled made the relevance of the teaching more visible to the students. When I observed Kari's class, she actively switched between the classroom and the workshop, which was the room next door. Using the possibilities of the workshop made it easier for Kari to create authentic situations.

To sum up, so far, the teachers with low vocational competence struggled with creating authentic vocational learning situations. Per tackled the problem by actively cooperating with the vocational teacher when he did VO. In the specializations Ole felt he did not master, he also struggled and tried to improve his competence before getting the classes. Often the bad experiences created a barrier and made VO something they tried to avoid. Kari, on the other hand, saw the authentic vocational learning situations as a good way to increase her students' motivation. She felt that she had the vocational competence to actively use her students' specialization in her English lessons and that VO gave her a wide range of possibilities.

The following table gives an overview of the three different teachers perception of the own competence in vocational English and their attitude towards it, as well as if they perceive FYR as a realistic project.

Table 5.2: Overview of the teachers' vocational competence, attitude to VO and if they think the FYR-project is close to reality

	Positive to VO	Confident in vocational English	FYR-project is realistic
Per	✓		
Ole	✓		
Kari	✓	✓	✓

The table shows that Kari, the teacher with extended vocational experience, had no problems with VO. She perceived her own experience as good and felt confident doing vocational projects and tasks on her own. She had taken many courses in vocational English over the years through different types of work. Her perception of her own vocational competence was not a limiting factor for VO. Ole and Per on the other hand, were both positive about VO but felt that their lack of competence was a hindrance. This hindrance also let them to believe that FYR-project's ideals were too demanding. They felt that many teachers, themselves included, struggled to meet the demands of the project and it failed to see the reality of what it is.

There was a general agreement that FYR and VO, at least in theory, could be useful to make English relevant for the students. However, the three teachers had very different personal experiences as to how they could effectively implement VO in their own teaching. Ole and Per saw a gap between the expectations of the FYR-project and their reality in the classroom. This became particularly clear during their attempts at creating authentic vocational learning situations. Kari did not experience such a gap. With her own abilities to create authentic vocational learning situations, she was content with the current implementation of FYR. However, other elements of the English subject, such as the examination, made VO difficult.

5.1.5 Shared written examinations with general studies and the high fail rate

During the conversation on VO, a topic that concerned all the teachers was the requirements that the examinations imposed on teaching, the written examination in particular. Statements such as "I have to make sure that my students are ready and can pass the examination" and "what concerns me the most is the examination", were typical of what the teachers felt about the need to make sure that the students are well prepared for the examination. What

characterizes the challenge with the written examination is that it is organized centrally and shared with GS, as explained in chapter 2.

Ole was critical, pointed to the high failure rate and blamed it on the academic nature of the examinations. He felt it put the VET students at a disadvantage, and in some cases caused them to fail. “I like teaching in the vocational classes, but I am already stressed about the examination”, he said and adds, “I would not mind if they removed it completely. So many of the students are good in English but struggle with writing longer texts. So they fail, over an academic issue.” In his opinion, the examination plays on their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Instead of being tested in what they are good at, Ole complained, they are being tested in their weaker areas. He felt that it is unfair that something as academic as the current English examination keeps VET students from graduating.

At the same time, the examination makes VO seem as something that comes in addition to everything else on the curriculum. He said:

Everything must be academic, we have international news, etc. There is just so much to do, and that in itself is a stress factor. It is difficult to go in-depth, and everything is quickly done halfway before we must move on.

Ole shrugged at the current expectations for his students and felt like they were already set too high. He liked the ideals of FYR initiative, but without a complementary change in the written examination, he feared that the VO was just one more thing for them to learn, and was irrelevant for the students who have their hands full just trying to pass. In other words, exactly the students the FYR project is meant to support. “Is it achievable at all?” he wondered.

Kari shared many of Ole’s views. She also thought that the written examination often has a focus which favors the more academic GS students. When asked about what she thinks is most important in the English subject, Kari answered that we must make a distinction between what the students will need later in their professional life and the examination. “We have to consider what happens if they get selected for examination, which is either oral or written. At the same time (is it important) to teach them something they in will have a use for in their working life,” she said. For her, the best solution was to split the semester in two, where the first half is mainly vocationally oriented and the second half is examination

preparation. “By splitting it”, she argued, “the teaching focus on what is most relevant for the student at the given time.”

While splitting the semester is a method which works for Kari, it does show her expectations for the examination, with which she was not very happy. She felt it is too focused on the GS and wants it to be organized locally by the school, in the same way, the oral examination is. She said:

Us, the English teachers at this school, are not very happy with the written examination. It would be much better if we could organize the written examination locally. Make the written examination vocationally oriented and not just aimed towards the general curriculum.

In her opinion, VO is not necessarily always relevant for the students, especially when the examination draws near. The end result for Kari was that she is unable to combine VO with a proper focus on preparing for the written examination.

Per was more nuanced in his views. For him what was most important in English is to shape the students' attitude towards language learning, using whatever means necessarily. That did not automatically make him negative to VO, but he considered it more as a tool than a mean in itself. “My teaching method is that I mostly teach what works. I am very pragmatic. If a teaching method works the method is good, if the method does not, then it is bad,” he said. Using the examination and grades as a motivator might not be perfect, but if that is what works with his student, then he is going to use it. However, he feared the same as Kari, that at the end of the semester students become more and more occupied with the grades. In the same way as Kari, he tries to cope with it by adjusting the teaching to what the students want, and to what motivates them at different times in the semester. Thus, VO was something that became less relevant at the end of the semester.

High failure rates

Another issue with the examinations, the written, in particular, was the high failure rates. About 10% of the VET students who are selected for the English written examination in Vg2 fail. With 10% failing and 20% getting 2, this means that almost a third of the VET students get the two lowest grades, and this concerned all the teachers in my interviews. They were afraid that many of their students would struggle to pass the examination. It is therefore not

without reason that Per, Ole and Kari spend much of the semester preparing for the examination, without which the students will not receive their certification, and in a worst case drop out like so many VET student do.

Kari believed that her students are much better speakers than writers. “They like to talk”, as she said. Much in the same way as Ole, also Kari thought that the written examination often focuses on the weaknesses of the VET students and cause them to fail. “The written examination is a big challenge”, she said, “most of the students at building and construction and technical production are much better orally than in writing.” The high failure rate, Kari argued, did not reflect their abilities.

To sum up, the academic content of the written English examination concerned all the teachers. They felt that it did not test the skills of most of the VET students and that it was a requirement which laid huge restrictions on their teaching and forced the teaching focus away from FYR.

Furthermore, the high failure rate at the examination was a major concern. With so many of their students lagging behind, the teachers felt that the best chance to secure the students’ certification was to spend much of the semester preparing for the examination. Since the examination is centrally given and with an academic focus, it rarely includes vocational elements. This, in turn, lays the premises for their teaching, with content the teachers finds a bit out of place in vocational education, and which had little relevance for the students’ educational program.

5.1.6 Secondary obstacles: textbooks and students in the wrong program

The secondary obstacles for VO emerged at different phases of the interview. Not all the teachers had much to say about them, but they will be presented, however, in less detail since they were mostly perceived as secondary problems.

(a) Textbooks

A good textbook is a tool most teachers appreciate. Being able to consistently rely on the textbook can create continuity for the students and make it easier for the teacher to create quality lessons. However, in order to use the textbook in VO, you need texts and tasks

relevant to the students' specialization. In VET Vg2 there are 209 different specializations, making any effort to create a textbook adapted to each is close to impossible. Therefore, many schools compromise by using textbooks adapted to the educational program and not to the specializations.

In her class had Kari ordered a new textbook with content directly related to her students' specialization. She was very happy with that book but emphasized how rare it was. "This book is special," she said, "I was very lucky that I got to order it. There aren't many classes who have a book this good. I am not even sure if a book this good exists in the other specializations." She expressed that she had been lucky two times over – first that there was a textbook this good and second, that she got the funds to buy it.

When I observed her class, she actively used the textbook, which among others tasks had a vocabulary builder that listed car parts. The students were asked to use the words in a relevant setting, and afterward they would find the parts in the car at the workshop.

Kari was, however, disappointed with the standard textbook she normally had to use in her other classes. She thought it was too general and often missed out on what the students found interesting in their specializations.

In his building and construction class, Ole was content with his textbook, despite the lack of specialization. He wished it was better, but he did not know of any alternatives. In the class I observed, he tried to improve the students' vocational vocabulary using his own exercise for which he had printed out different types of hammers and used his own arrangement. He said the textbook rarely provides a good vocational task for him. In fact, when he wanted to do VO he rarely relied on the textbook.

When it comes to tasks relating to a specific vocational topic, the teachers felt that the textbooks did not provide good enough options. This can create problems not only for the teachers with less vocational experience, who might rely on the textbook as support for their VO but also for the more experienced teachers who see that the textbooks are inadequate and must therefore always create VO tasks from scratch.

(b) Students who are uninterested in their specialization

Many students in upper secondary education and training switch program. There are many reasons, but the result is that teachers all-too-often have students in their class without motivation for their current program, just waiting for the next semester to begin so they can start on a new program. This creates a particular challenge in the teachers' efforts to vocationally orient English. Since one of the main purposes of VO is teaching that feels relevant for the student, the implementation of VO backfires with the students who are going to change specialization.

Ole explained the challenge of having unmotivated students in his building and construction class when he vocational orients his English instruction:

Many of my students have no interest in building and construction. They do not know the terms and have no idea how to use the tools. (..) They attend this program without being interested. For some, the constant focus to vocational orient can be too much.

With the lack of interest in the program subject was it difficult to use VO to create meaningful tasks. Instead of making the common core subjects more relevant, VO made them less. By constantly relating English and the common core subjects towards the specialization, these students will increasingly be left out. "For some vocational orientation is great, but not for all", Ole said referring to the students who feel out of place at their current education program.

Related to this is when the students are not interested in their program subject projects. This is one of the challenges when working on interdisciplinary projects, as some parts of the project is out of the English teachers' control. Kari had had the problem. When the program subject's topic is not that interesting for the students, she experienced that the students are not interested in the VO either, "I have several times experienced that the students are not that interested in what they are doing in the workshop, then, they are not very engaged when I teach the same topic in English," she shrugged.

Trying to relate English to something the students already are tired of is not a very fulfilling task. As the teachers point out, the purpose of VO is lost when the students have no interests in the vocational aspects. In this way, VO sometimes felt like a burden imposed on the teacher and outside their control.

5.2 Students' perspectives

The student perspectives section comprises the results from the focus group interviews with the students in the primary data collection. The results from the follow-up interviews will be accounted for in section 5.3.

Before the student interviews began, I informed the participants about the study and the interview. I asked if they agreed to participate in the study and gave them my e-mail address in case they wanted to withdraw.

The first half of the interviews focused on the students' background and how they perceived the English subject. The second half focused on VO. I wanted to know what their experience with VO was, in particular, their thoughts about VO. In addition, the interviews explored at what they thought their future communicative needs would be, and how the English subject could help. I ended the interviews by asking if they had anything to add.

5.2.1 The students' background

The nine students who participated were between fifteen to twenty years old. All the students were content with their specialization and saw themselves working in a relevant field to their specialization. In addition, all the students thought learning English was relevant for their future, as displayed in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: The students' view of their current specialization

	Content with specialization	English was relevant for their future	Specialization was a spare time interest
Car Mechanic Vg2	All	All	All
Construction Vg1	All	All	All
Transportation Vg1	All	All	None

The car mechanic students were all passionate about cars and spent much of their spare time reading online and watching videos about cars. They stated that ordering parts online and reading vocational journals and instructions were important uses of English in their profession.

The building and construction students also had an out-of-school interest in building, but not to same extent and with as much passion as the car mechanics. They saw themselves communicating with foreign workers and saw that they needed to learn an English vocational vocabulary to meet the needs of the workplace.

In service and transportation, none of the students spent any of their spare time on their specialization. However, they had many different uses for English. For the one student who wanted to be a flight attendant, the need for English was obvious. The other two were still not certain about what they wanted to become, but they agreed that no matter what profession they chose, English would be necessary.

5.2.2 What is most important in the English subject - what do students expect to learn?

After the backgrounds questions, I asked the students what they thought most important in the English subject. In this, they expressed two main views. First, they were concerned with learning English that would be useful for their professional life. Second, they looked upon the English subject mainly as a formality.

The students, in particular those in car mechanics and building and construction, most clearly considered the English subject a formality. They considered their vocational English competence to be more advanced than what they were learning in their current course, and found their English subject to be redundant. The service and transportation students were a bit less categorical in their opinions. They shared the teachers' view about developing communication skills and highlighted the importance of being able to express themselves, both in writing and orally. What they first and foremost wanted was varied and relevant teaching. At the same time, they also expressed that they only wanted vocationally oriented English and that the scenarios should relate to professional situations.

The following excerpt highlights the car mechanics' expectations to the English subject.

Excerpt 6: Car mechanic students' expectations to the English subject

Interviewer: What are your expectations to the English subject?

Student 2: I think we only have English because we must have it.

Interviewer: You think the English subject is not needed?

Student 2: Not needed? Maybe. I think there are many of us who already know everything we learn. We do not learn anything new.

Student 3: What I like about English is that you get customers from all around the world. And they might not know Norwegian, so you have to speak English.

Interviewer: So you expect to learn customer relations?

Student 3: Yes

Interviewer: Do you all agree?

Student 1: It is okay to learn, but I think I already know it. But I think that is the most useful.

Interview interrupted by fire alarm

Interviewer: To sum up, you only expect to learn customers' relation? You do not expect to improve your reading or writing proficiency?

Student 1: We learned that in lower secondary.

Student 3: Maybe if you go to another country, I don't know, not really.

Student 2: I think it [the English subject] is only a formality.

As the excerpt shows, the students mostly considered their English subject a formality. The only scenario where they thought the English subject would help them with was for learning to deal with international customers.

The building and construction students expressed that they wanted to learn vocabulary specific to their profession, and expected the school to teach them this. Building and construction was long term interest for them all and they looked forward to start specializing. However, they were unsure of what to expect from English subject and also saw it mostly as a formality. As one of the students expressed: "I only want English related to my education program." Like the car mechanics, they felt that reading and writing was something that they mastered and should be finished learning. If there was any use for English, the students

expressed that it would have to involve learning more about how to use English in a professional setting.

To sum up, all the students had an almost exclusive vocational focus on what they thought most important in the English subject. The Vg1 students were unsure of what was expected of them and how upper secondary school was going to be, but at the same time, they had clear expectations about what they wanted from the English subject. Many of the students also felt that they have already mastered the , and therefore perceived non-vocational English as irrelevant.

In the last stage of the interview, the students were asked how good they felt their general- and vocational English competence was, and if they wished to improve. A common theme among the students was that non-vocational English was too easy. The student expressed that for them, proficient means being able to communicate what they wanted, no more, no less, and that they had already mastered this in general English.

The students also expressed that VO was what made English instruction interesting and relevant. The service and transportation students viewed themselves as “average” in English. They did not see themselves as experts but felt that they could say what they wanted to say in English. One of the students put it like this: “I think the English subject is alright. I am no master of English. I am well enough, I don’t amaze people with my perfect English, but I can speak.” The two other students shared his perception. For them, English was not about being able to speak perfectly, but to make oneself understood. However, they felt they did that their vocational English was still lacking. Similarly, reflecting upon the English lesson I observed, one of the building and construction students said: “I like English, but sometimes it is too easy. However, today we learned about different types of tools. I did not know anything about it. I learn much more this way.” It was only when the teacher did VO that they felt that they learned something new.

The car mechanic students, however, considered their general and vocational English competence to be well beyond what they were being taught. They had all learned about cars online and knew more technical terms in English than in Norwegian due to their out-of-school reading and videos. One of the students said: “Many of the words I only know in English. I actually had to learn what they were in Norwegian.”

Excerpt 9: Car mechanic students' perception of their English competence

Interviewer: You all consider that you are good in English?

All: Yes

Interviewer: Can you elaborate?

Student 1: I understand English just as good as Norwegian.

Student 2 and 3: Agree

Student 2: It doesn't really matter if it is in Norwegian or English most of the time

In other words, the car mechanic students felt their own English was good. They understood all the English they encountered, and they even considered their vocational English vocabulary to be better than their Norwegian. Still, they were positive to VO, they just wanted it to be more specialized; "I am really happy with the fact that the teaching is VO, and it benefits some of the other students. However, for me, it is just too easy."

All in all, both the teachers and students highlighted the importance of communication skills. However, while the teachers mainly wanted to improve the students' basic skills, the students considered their non-vocational English communication skill to be good enough already and wanted the English subject to prepare them for communication in a professional setting.

5.3 Follow-up interviews

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the interviews and observations for the main data collection were conducted early in the semester. When I first did the interviews in September, a number of the students had only been attending VET for little more than a month. They had certain assumptions of the English subject in upper secondary, but these could easily have changed if the reality did not match their expectations, and many of them expressed that they had not experienced much VO. I thought it would be interesting, and useful, with follow-up interviews to see if there were any changes in their views after their first semester. I, therefore, decided on a new visit to see whether their views had changed after they had attended a vocational education for a semester. Furthermore, the students' short VET

experience was a weakness with regard to the validity of my findings, and the follow-up interview could compensate for this.

In early February 2017, I therefore returned to the same school in Western-Norway to conduct follow-up interviews with the two Vg1 classes. The interviews were conducted in the same manner as last time, with focus group interviews with students from the same classes. However, due to sickness in both groups, I this time only had two students in each group instead of three.

Table 5.4: Overview of the classes and students in the follow-up interviews

	Participants	Participants in the primary data collection	Same participants
Building and Construction	2	3	Yes
Service and Transportation	2	3	Yes

In the follow-up interview was I particularly interested if their opinions about VO had changed, and if so, was it for the better or worse? The interviews were fairly short, between 10-15 minutes. In the interview guide (see appendix 3) had I prepared some questions which were similar to the first time. The main focus was to see whether and, in the case of change, why students had changed their views about VO.

The follow-up interviews started with a summarization of what they told me last time, this to check whether my understanding of their answers was correct and to lay the foundation of the follow-up interview. They all agreed with my summarizations and we moved on to the interview.

No challenges, no vocational orientation

The first questions of the interview concerned changes since the last interview. The first time the students expressed that they did not have much VO and the teaching was not very challenging. However, they believed this was going to change as the semester started to pick up pace.

Contrary to their initial expectations, all the students were surprised by the lack VO they had experienced. The service and transportation students could only remember one instance of VO, while the building and construction students had had it a couple of times.

The problematic issue of just doing VO for its own sake was raised by the service and transportation students. An example they gave was a task where they were to translate a report they had written in their program subject into English. The students were not too happy with the task, as it only required them to translate, but it was considered VO. However, the students did not consider direct translation an authentic English task relevant for a professional setting. They expressed the opinion that VO was not a must for them if the tasks were not good.

The next issue was to what extent they had found their English classes challenging, and the excerpt below presents their opinions.

Excerpt 10: Service and transportation students' experience with VO

Interviewer: Is there a task or class you remember that were challenging?

Student 1: The only time I remember being seriously challenged was the interdisciplinary project. We had to translate our report from Norwegian to English, and it was very long.

Interviewer: What was challenging about the task?

Student 1: Just the length of the report, it was so long, and it took a long time to translate. I mean it was not difficult to do. It just took a lot of time.

As the excerpt shows, the challenges the students experienced was related to the amount of work the task requires, not its content. The attempt at VO using translation was in their opinion, not a success as it only required a direct translation and nothing more. On the whole, the service and transportation students classified the challenges they experienced as workload-related more than cognitive.

The building and construction students' answers went along the same lines, as they had not experienced much focus on VO either. Nor did they feel that the English subject was particularly challenging. They could only remember a couple of instances they had worked

with VO, but, in contrast to the service and transportation students, the building and construction students were more pleased with the content of their VO.

Excerpt 11: Building and construction students comment on useful vocational English

Interviewer: Can you remember any vocational orientation in English since last time?

Student 1: Yes, we have learned some vocational vocabulary

Interviewer: Do you think you learned anything useful from it?

Student 1: I liked it, there are some many different tools and equipment. You must learn the right names for them.

Interviewer: Because you speak English at the workplace?

Student 1: Not always but sometimes. You have to learn the right names in English too if you do not know the name of the tool you, you will just keep getting the wrong tool.

In other words, the building and construction students were fairly happy with their VO. They considered learning vocational vocabulary relevant for their future workplace. This type of relevance for their future profession motivated them, and they both expressed they wanted more tasks like this.

Moreover, the students had experienced few real challenges since the first round of interviews, and those they had encountered was more related to the workload than to their English skills. In their opinion, the teaching was too easy and had not been academically challenging so far. Instead, most of the student told about tasks that encouraged speaking and other oral activities, but which did not “push” them academically. While they had become more comfortable with speaking English in class than in the beginning of the semester, they underlined that this had more to do with them becoming better at tackling the inauthenticity of the English produced in a school setting, not due to their improved confidence in their English skills. The only tension in students’ answers was whether the VO had been good or not. The results of the follow-up interviews are summed up in the table below.

Table 5.5: Service and transportation and building and construction students experience with the English subject and VO after the first semester

	Active in class	More than 5 instances of VO	Are challenged in English class	Content with their VO
Service and Transportation	Yes	No	No	No
Building and Construction	Yes	No	No	Yes

In sum, the students had experienced little change since the last interviews. In early interviews, the students expressed that they wanted and expected VO, however, no one of the students could remember more than one or two instances since the first interviews. However, they did not of the VO translation ask experienced by the service and transportation students. While they had initially expected a more vocational focus in the common core subjects, they were still content with the teaching. The implications of these results will be discussed further in the next chapter.

6 Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the interviews and observations will be discussed in light of relevant theories. A particular emphasis will be put on the educational implications of the research, and the case will be argued for a shift from a focus on VO to a focus on relevance in the FYR-project. VO's role, from this perspective, is that of a tool which can be used when appropriate to increase the relevance of teaching.

I will start with summarizing the findings, before moving on to explore the answers given by the participants to the sub-questions of this study:

What do teachers perceive as the main challenges in the implementation of VO?

What are the students' expectations of VO in VET, and how are they fulfilled?

In the subsequent sections, I discuss in broader terms how the results give an answer to the main research question:

How do vocational students and teachers in upper secondary perceive vocational orientation in English teaching?

Finally, the transferability of the study will be commented upon.

6.1 What did I find?

It is the aim of this study to explore how the users of VO, the teachers, and the students, perceive VO in the English subject. I have observed three vocational English classes, interviewed three English teachers and nine vocational students, all from one school. The teacher interviews were on their use of VO, and what possibilities and challenges they experienced when VO was implemented in their teaching. The student interviews focused on their experience and expectations of the English subject and VO, and their current and future need for English.

On a whole, the findings show a gap between the expectations towards VO in the FYR-project and VO in reality. The purpose of VO is to increase motivation by making the teaching relevant to the students' future profession. However, both students and teachers

express that this is not always the case. One reason was that the teachers experienced a number of hindrances in their implementation of VO. Although all three teachers were positive to VO, they did have difficulties in their everyday use of it. The type of difficulty differed between the teachers, but two main challenges emerged; (1) creating authentic situations and (2) the written examination.

First, the teachers often had trouble creating authentic vocational learning situations which were relevant to the students, usually because of lack of knowledge of the vocational subject in question. In these cases, the VO often felt forced and inauthentic. The result being that VO made the teaching demotivating.

Second, the written examination turned out to be an important challenge, or limiting factor. The written examinations are organized centrally and shared with GS. For this reason, the examination has an academic focus and rarely includes vocational elements. This, in turn, lays out the premises for the teaching of English. The teachers felt the academic English to be out of place in vocational education, and that it had little real relevance for the students.

Furthermore, the high failure rate found in VET examination results was a major concern for the VET teachers and put additional pressure on teaching in preparation for the examination.

6.2 Discussion of the findings

6.2.1 What do teachers perceive as the main challenges in the implementation of VO?

The participating teachers all felt positive about VO but experienced a number of obstacles in their attempts to implement VO in English lessons. What they considered the main challenge depended on their vocational competence.

Kari, who was an experienced vocational English teacher, used VO extensively in all her classes. Her main challenge was preparing for the written examination. Ole, the teacher with a VET education, preferred to use VO in classes from his previous specialization, and had trouble implementing VO in new education programs and when they were getting close to the examination period. Per, the teacher with no vocational experience and who had only just begun teaching English, relied heavily on the program subject teacher and interdisciplinary projects in his VO. He, therefore, used VO to a lesser degree because of his low vocational

competence and was worried that he had to spend so much time preparing for the examination.

Creating authentic vocational learning situations

As mentioned, the teachers' background and their use of VO were closely related. Furthermore, their background also reflected what they experienced as the hindrances to VO. Per and Ole, the two teachers without extensive vocational experience, saw the authenticity of their VO as the main obstacle to their implementation. When they used VO in specializations in which they had little familiarity, the students called the relevance of the teaching into question. The problem could either be that the task was inauthentic or that the teacher was unsuccessful in making the relevance visible for the students. In both of these cases, the teachers were unable to create authentic vocational situations.

In order to create authentic situations in VO, it is clear that the teacher needs to have a good knowledge of which tasks are most likely to be relevant in the students' future workplaces, and how to conduct these tasks. This means presenting open-ended content with meaning and significance for the students (Lomardi, 2007). If the VO is not authentic it is safe to say it is not relevant either. As Wendelborg et al. (2014) point out in their study, inauthentic VO damages student motivation because it is not perceived as relevant. In this way, VO can result in the exact opposite of what it is meant to accomplish. Indeed, Wendelborg et al. (2014) and Martinsen (2014) found, as I did, find that VO can have both a positive and negative impact on teaching, depending on the teacher's confidence in VO and class leadership. They pointed out that confident and effective class leaders will achieve good student results without VO, but these will be further improved with VO. For teachers already struggling with their classes and with VO, however, it can make the situation even worse. Yet, the question remains, why was creating authentic VO learning situations so difficult for the teachers?

In previous reports (Befring, 2015; Haugset et al., 2014; Sleveland 2014), teachers expressed that there can be a divide between the common core subject teachers and the program subject teachers. Haugset et al (2014) found that there was a culture clash between the teachers with vocational backgrounds and those with an academic background. In addition, Borojevic (2016) and Haugset et al (2014) found that language teachers often emphasize "Bildung" and the role of literature more than the vocational competence aims. This clash prevented cooperation between the program subject teachers and the common core subject teachers and

was an obstacle for teachers in developing their vocational competence and creating authentic vocational learning situations.

In addition, the research done by Sleveland (2014) and Brevik (2015a) highlights the importance of removing the barrier between the academic and the vocational. Their research shows that VET students read as well as their GS counterparts if the texts are vocational and that vocational texts are an effective way of engaging the interest of VET students. At the school where the data was collected, teachers actively tried to remove the divide between the academic and the vocational, and thus make it easier to create authentic vocational learning situations. They arranged FYR-meetings, where common core subject teachers and program subject teachers met and tried to place the common core classrooms near the workshops to make the physical distance as small as possible.

None of the participating teachers in my study expressed any resentment towards VO itself. They were happy to acquire vocational competence and teaching vocational topics. The teachers expressed that VO was very useful in preparing students for their future careers and it was a matter of taking their specializations seriously. This encouraging result does not match the previous reports of a culture clash made by Haugset et al, (2014), Sleveland, (2014) or Hiim (2014). The teachers' only resentment against VO was that the FYR-project's requirements for VO were too demanding.

However, instead of difficulties with cooperation, the teachers felt their biggest obstacle when creating authentic VO learning situations was that they did not have sufficient vocational competence. These tasks often have multiple solutions; it is necessary for the teachers to have in-depth subject knowledge so that they can better help each student in their individual approach to the task. Their low vocational competence made it very difficult to support their students sufficiently during authentic VO situations, and even more so, to create them, as we see with Ole and Per. Haugset et al. (2014) likewise found that insufficient knowledge of the students' specialization was a major obstacle for the teachers in their implementation of VO.

It is also important to note that competence in one vocational specialization does not translate across other specializations. This might seem obvious but it has real and practical consequences. The teachers in my study rarely taught at the same education program for the length of time needed to build sufficient competence. Ole could create authentic tasks in building and construction but failed to do so in the hairdressing specialization, and Kari also

expressed that she would have more trouble with VO in new specializations. Haugset et al. (2014) report the same issue. On average only one in eight teachers thought the school gave them sufficient time to improve their vocational competence (Haugset et al., 2014). Because of this organizational limitation, teachers are unable to improve their vocational competence to suit each of their students' specializations sufficiently.

When we see that when Ole and Kari were able to create authentic situations, it was because they had already acquired the competence from previous education or training. The school provided no opportunities to improve the English teachers' vocational competence in new specializations. Thus, the teachers had to rely on their own initiative or previous experience if they were to develop the competence required to implement VO successfully in their teaching.

This is a problematic issue because the effect of VO depends on the teacher's competence. If the teachers do not have sufficient vocational competence, the relevance of the VO will often be lost on the students. The teachers need to be able to create relevant VO tasks, with which to support their students. In order to do this, they need to develop enough vocational competence to make their tasks seem authentic. Because of the positive attitude the teachers expressed toward VO, it is my opinion that competence and relevance can be achieved through courses, interdisciplinary work, and perhaps most importantly, through giving teachers the opportunity to teach the same specializations over time. If they do, they will be able to build confidence in both VO and their specialization and develop their ability to make VO's relevance visible to their students.

The written English examination

The common core subjects' examinations for VET students are perhaps among the most controversial aspects of the vocational education, and many have voiced their concerns (Ruud, 2013; Henriksen, 2007; Breit, 2007). I have previously, in Chapter 2, given an account of how the examinations in the English subject are conducted, and why they are so polarizing. With regards to VO, Haugset et. al. (2014) found in their study that the school principals list the examination as the biggest obstacle facing VO, and the English written examination was especially worrisome. This opinion was shared by the teachers in my interviews.

Ole, Kari, and Per were unhappy with the examination tasks. They felt that the tasks given in the examination did not adequately give VET students an opportunity to display their knowledge and abilities. Instead the examination focused on tasks which were unconnected to material previously covered by VET students, such as VO. This was especially visible when the examination drew close and the students became focused on examination preparation. For the teachers, it was understandably more important to adapt the teaching to focus on examination preparation, as the students wanted than to force VO upon them.

The teachers' notion that the examination favors GS is supported by Müller (2015). She found that the preparatory texts for the English examination favor general studies and that the examination measured few of the competence aims for VO. Since the examination favors GS-typical topics, it puts the VET students at a disadvantage and forces the teachers to take additional time away from VO in order to sufficiently prepare the VET students for the examination.

The teachers in my study felt that they have an obligation to make sure their students pass and to help them achieve the grade they want. Currently, including VO in their teaching does not help students achieve their desired grades; rather the opposite. Due to the examination's central organization, and its partiality towards GS subjects, the examination lacks VO content, making the inclusion of VO in teaching difficult to justify. It is obvious that no teacher wants to do VO if it is at the expense of the examination results. In this manner, the examination determines the focus of the English subject and how competence aims are interpreted. When seen in the light of the examination requirements, VO becomes merely an additional burden, with little real relevance to the examination.

Indeed, the teachers' view of the examination as a negative factor for VO corresponds with the findings of Hiim (2014) and Haugset et al (2014). Hiim (2014) points to the centrally-given examinations and the fact that different education programs have an identical curriculum, as factors that reduce the focus on VO. The conflicting goals of the VET goal triangle offer similar results; see figure 3.1. This means that if the FYR-project is to succeed in its goal, in my opinion, one of two things has to change. Either the examination must change to better fit the VET education, as argued by Ruud (2015) and Hiim (2014), or the focus of the FYR-project should change from VO towards improving relevance to better be able to reduce dropouts, as argued by Wendelborg et al. (2014).

To sum up what has been covered so far, to increase the relevance of the teaching is it important to adjust the teaching to fit the needs of the students, regardless of wider political goals. Sometimes increase the relevance can be done by using VO, however, at other times, one has to adapt the teaching to suit what is currently relevant to the students. The written examination is a good example of this. By making an effort to meet students' current and future needs is it necessary to give less weight to VO. If one does not, the relevance of VO will be lost.

6.2.2 What are the students' expectations of VO in VET, and how are they fulfilled?

No matter how easy or difficult the implementation of VO is, in the end, it all comes down to the students. VO is meant to support the students and prepare them for working life, but it is crucial that the students perceive that VO is useful for them. In previous studies (Olsen & Reegård, 2013; Hiim, 2014; Storevik, 2015), the main finding when exploring students' expectations of VO has been that students overall are very positive about VO, with the majority of students finding VO useful and relevant. However, there are differences within VET. As pointed out in Chapter 3, VET is a highly diverse program and it is difficult to look at vocational students as a homogeneous group. Two student groups, in particular, viewed VO unfavorably; students who plan to take supplementary studies in order to qualify for higher education, and students from female-dominated education programs (Wendelborg et al., 2014 and Befring, 2015). Neither of these groups, however, is represented in this study.

What are the students' expectations of VO in VET?

My study shows that all the students were very positive to VO. They had already chosen their profession and wanted to learn English for the purpose of developing the communication skills needed in their preferred profession. The students' expectations of VO were amplified by the fact that they felt they were already competent English speakers and therefore did not need to learn any more non-vocational English.

My results and previous studies (Befring, 2015; Olsen & Reegård, 2013; Storevik, 2015) show that the students' expectations of VO in VET are in-line with the goal of creating a more robust workforce, see figure 3.1. This approach to VET and VO requires the common

core subjects to incorporate practical and theoretical vocational elements to better correspond with the students' specializations, as argued by Hiim (2014).

In VET today, there is a gap between the content of the vocational education and the governmental goal of a robust workforce. Currently, the aims of VET require VO to teach general vocational competence, instead of a VO specific to each profession (Hiim, 2014). This general vocational competence is, according to Hiim (2014), not relevant to the students. To counteract this Hiim (2014) calls for VO that is specialized to fit each profession. However, the goal triangle of VET is a major obstacle for the implementation of a more specialized VO.

One such obstacle is the textbook problem revealed in my results, see section 5.1.6. The more the textbook is tailored to the vocational program, the more it diverges from the GS and the centrally given examination. Therefore, many schools compromise by using textbooks adapted to the educational program and not to the specializations. However, these textbooks fail to make texts and tasks relevant to the students' because they are too general and not relevant to the students' specialization. In this way, the current implementation of VO fails to meet the students' expectations and is not relevant because of the conflicting goals of VO and GS.

In sum, we see that the students' expectations of VO in VET correspond greatly with the VET goal of a robust workforce. Yet, the teachers still feel that they are unable to teach VO effectively because of other conflict goals inherent in VET (Haugset et al. 2014; Hiim, 2014). These conflicting goals force VO to focus on a more general vocational competence, instead of allowing tailoring to each profession. This type of VO is not relevant for the students, as argued by Hiim (2014) and as seen in my results. To meet the FYR goal of increasing motivation it is very important that the VO is relevant to the students; VO should not just be done for its own sake, which can lead to the opposite result, decreasing student motivation.

To what extent are the students' expectations of VO in VET fulfilled?

In my study, the students' experience with VO varied from class to class. Overall, the results show that only one of the three teachers frequently used VO. In the two other classes, the students had only had a few instances of VO in the last semester, far less than they had

expected. However, this did not seem to affect their satisfaction with the VO sessions they had had.

Table 6.1: Overview of students' experience with VO

	Content with VO	More than 5 instances of VO	The VO was relevant
Car Mechanics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Building and Construction	Yes	No	Yes
Service and Transportation	No	No	No

As the table suggests, there are reasons to believe that student satisfaction with VO is related to its relevance. This indicates that it is the use of VO that matters, not VO in itself, as suggested in the previous section. The students in the class where VO was used unsuccessfully, expressed that they would rather have general English, than more VO. They did not see any relevance in their task and found the teacher was unable to make it relevant for them. This corresponds with the findings of Hiim (2014); she points out that VO must be oriented towards each specific profession and only used when it really is relevant to the future profession. This requires teachers with high vocational competence. In other words, it is important to remember that VO is just a tool. As with all tools, if the teacher is unable to use it properly, it will not be motivating for the students.

Wendelborg et al. (2014) highlight this distinction between VO and relevance. In their observations, it was the authenticity and relevance of the teaching that affected the students' motivation, not the VO in itself. In Wendelborg et al. (2014), the students' level of satisfaction with VO depended on the teachers' ability to make VO relevant, a finding that the present study supports. If VO was not perceived as relevant the students were unhappy with it and it failed to meet their expectations.

As we see, an important factor with regard to meeting students' expectations in VO is teacher competence. That is not to say that teacher competence does not have any significance in other subjects, but its importance is perhaps more clearly visible in VO. VO is not a part of English teacher education and, as seen in my results, it is not given sufficient support at schools either. Since VO largely depends on the individual teacher's style and method, the consequence is that many teachers, lacking competence, are unable to make the VO relevant. In this way, VO can have a negative impact on the students' motivation, as was the case in my own and other studies (Wendelborg et al. 2014; Martinsen, 2014).

As argued throughout this chapter, it would seem that relevance is more important than VO to increase motivation. The results of this study and the studies by Haugset et al (2014), Olsen and Reegård (2013), Befring (2015), and Storevik (2015) show students want VO, however, their experience with it differs depending on whether it is made relevant or not. A greater amount of VO does not increase motivation among VET students if it is not relevant. Indeed, the students express that the quality of VO is more important than quantity. If the VO were not authentic the students expressed they would rather have general English teaching. From this it is reasonable to assume that to meet students' expectations of VO, it is not enough just to do VO; it must be made relevant for it to have a positive effect on motivation.

6.3 How do vocational students and teachers in upper secondary perceive vocational orientation in English teaching?

According to Dörnyei (2005) how something is perceived crucial for its relevance. The student and teacher perceptions of VO in English teaching are mainly based on two factors, their positive expectations to VO and their dissatisfying experience with it. In sum, these produce a nuanced perception of VO.

The students were very positive towards VO. In fact, they wanted the English teaching to be exclusively vocationally oriented. The students expected that VO would give them specialized English training towards their chosen profession. This expectation and the broader political goal of a robust workforce are perfectly aligned and are a good fundament for VO to be implemented on. However, their perception of VO was tainted because the English teaching was not made relevant for them. Instead of being tailored to suit each profession, the VO

focus on a general vocational competence because of the conflict between goals in VET. In turn, this made the students more nuanced towards VO in the English teaching.

In the same way as the students, the teachers were also positive towards to the idea of VO in English but experienced that their VO lacked relevance. The teachers' low vocational competence and the written examination proved to make the implementation of VO a burden. This, in turn, affected the teachers' perception of VO negatively.

As argued throughout this chapter, when using VO in English is it important to let VO be a tool that is used if it suits the teaching situation. If it is not, it can be a burden for the teachers and the students. In this way, the current implementation of VO affects the perception of it negatively. Therefore, if VO is to have a positive impact on the students' motivation is it necessary to move away from the FYR-definition of VO. Instead, the focus of the teaching should be on relevance. This way is it possible to make sure that VO is not a burden in the teaching, and ensure that the teaching is relevant and motivating for the students no matter the goals of VET.

It is important to note that the argument proposed in this chapter, of a shift from a focus on VO to a focus on relevance in the FYR-project is a suboptimal solution. The shift of focus is only meant to address the current issue with the implementation of VO in the English subject. Today's use of VO misses the very students it is meant to help. With a shift towards relevance, I believe more students will benefit from the FYR-project. However, this shift of focus does not fix the bigger problems with English in VET that are experienced by the teachers and students in this study.

In sum, VO is not always relevant for either the students or the teachers in the current state of English in VET. Both the students and teacher perceptions of VO as useful are based on a perception of vocational education as more specialized than it currently is. To meet the expectations of the students, the teachers and the political goal of a robust workforce, the English subject must be more specialized towards the students' specialization, as argued by Hiim (2014). This means English teachers with better vocational competence, purposeful VO and an examination that has VO as an integral part. Currently, VO in the English subject suffers from not being used to its full potential. Therefore, the students' highly positive expectations are not matched by how they experience VO in the English subject.

6.4 Transferability

This study has used a qualitative approach and the data was collected through observations and semi-structured interviews. It is crucial to highlight that this study's purpose was to explore, there are no attempts to establish and causal relations, and the discussion is therefore about trying to understand the participants at the school, as well as placing their statements in a larger context. Still, there are many limitations to this study, most notably, the small scale of the study, reactivity and observer bias.

First, I have had the sole responsibility for the analysis, interviews, and observations. During this process, I have been susceptible to observer bias. I have tried to counteract this through reflectivity and making myself aware of my own bias. It would have been preferable to have had at least one additional person conducting the study; however, this was not possible within the limitations of the study.

Second, reactivity. It is difficult to estimate the effect of the researcher on the participants studied. Given my results and the theme of the study, I have no reason to suspect that any of the participants were affected by reactivity to a large degree. Both the students and the teachers were willing to give honest answers that admitted personal flaws, such as low vocational competence or under-average grades, for example.

Third and most important is the sample size. There were only twelve participants in the study, three teachers, and nine students from one school. Given the small scale of this sample it is impossible to generalize any of its findings; however, my results are reflected in many previous reports and studies, which support this study's transferability. Still, any generalization outside this study, the receivers must judge for themselves if my findings are relevant – and transferable to other and similar contexts.

7 Conclusion

The final chapter discusses the implications of the present study, makes suggestions for further research and ends with a few conclusive remarks.

In the present study, the aim has been to explore how vocational students and teachers perceive VO in the English subject. This explorative study has revealed several features of VO, both positive and negative. We found that students and teachers perceived VO as a useful element in VET, and wanted it to be an integral part of the English subject. However, there were also several factors that made their perception of VO more complex.

The students found that situations with a lack of authenticity in the VO made it lose its relevance, something the teachers agreed with. The teachers felt they were at times unable to successfully create authentic vocational learning situations due to their low vocational competence. Consequently, VO could at times lead to decreased student motivation.

A second problem was the VET goal triangle, which places emphasis on the need to implement VO, while also stressing examination preparation, leading to a conflict of interest as the focus on examination preparation meant less time for VO. While conflicting goals are not unique to VET, they are more visible because the student group is more diverse. The choice between either adapting the teaching to reduce the number of dropouts or adapting it to prepare students for the written examination, can result in much more polarizing results for VET than it would in GS, where the teaching content is already in line with examination content. In addition, the academic content of the written examination made the teaching give less focus to vocational topics and decreased VO's relevance.

In summary, VO does not necessarily increase the relevance of the teaching. The study's findings indicate that the current use of VO is not in line with the aims of the FYR-project to increase motivation and reduce the number of students dropping out. To meet these goals it is currently more important to ensure that the teaching is relevant to the students than to implement VO. That is to say that when the examination draw near, teaching must be made relevant to the students by focusing on examination preparations instead of on VO. However, such a shift of focus only addresses the current issues with the implementation of VO in the English subject. It does not fix the bigger problems with English in VET experienced by the

teachers and students in this study. Consequently, the VO requires a number of changes before VO can be successfully implemented.

7.1 Implications of the findings

First, it is necessary to tailor VO to the different professions. Currently, instead of VO being specialized to each profession, the conflicting goals forced VO to focus on a more general vocational competence, which decreases relevance for the students. In other words, for VO to have any effect it must be adjusted to the given specialization – demonstrating only slight vocational relevance is not enough.

Second, teachers' vocational competence needs to be improved, and they should be given time to build confidence and knowledge by teaching the same specialization over several years. Improving vocational competence also implies encouraging interdisciplinary work and removing the barriers between program subject and common core teachers.

Third, it is important that VO is made into a more integral part of the written examination. By including VO in the examination, VO's relevance is ensured throughout the whole semester. It will also reduce the academic focus of the English subject and, in this way, benefit the students who choose VET to get away from academic requirements.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

As previously mentioned, the transferability of the study is limited because of its small sample size. I have observed three vocational English classes, interviewed three English teachers and nine vocational students, all from one school. To examine whether the findings from this study are representative, a larger and more carefully designed study, preferably representative sample of students would be beneficial. In particular, it is necessary to include the two student groups who did not enjoy VO but were not represented in this study. These are students who plan to take supplementary studies that qualify for higher education, and students from the female-dominated vocational education programs.

Further, the aim of this study has been to explore the implementation of VO by looking at how students and teachers perceive it. I have found several factors that made the implementation of VO difficult. However, a more immediately relevant study would involve

investigating how to implement VO successfully. In this study, I have suggested several changes; better vocational competence, more cooperation and less polarizing goals, but I do not know how these suggested changes can be implemented. To have a study that investigates what characterizes good use of VO would provide more explicit guidance for schools and teachers, guidance which I find to be lacking at present.

7.3 Concluding remarks

To round off, my initial optimism about VO was called into question by the practical problems revealed in this study. These problems need to be solved. The current structure, goals and curriculum of VET produces a system that works against VO. Considering that VO is a tool with the purpose of making teaching more suited for VET students; it is worrying that the teachers instead find VO to be a burden.

In spite of all this, the positive effects we see when VO is successful are very encouraging. With authentic VO, students and teachers are satisfied with the outcome of the teaching. The teachers were happy teaching content they knew had relevance for the students' future and felt that VO made the students' "real" English proficiency visible. On their part, the students felt they learned what they were supposed to learn in VET, both in terms of relevance for their future and getting away from more academic tasks. In addition, successfully-implemented VO helps meet the goal of developing a more robust workforce. In conclusion, while I believe that VO is an important goal for VET, making it a compulsory requirement without sufficient support and preparation will risk doing more harm than good.

Literature

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Basit, T. N. (2010). *Conducting research in educational contexts*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Becker, H. S. (1970). *Sociological work: Method and substance*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.
- Befring, K. (2015). "It was fun to have something different... more geared towards my interest". *Students' and apprentices' experiences with vocational English at school and in apprenticeships* (Master's thesis). Østfold University College, Halden.
- Blåsmo, T. (2016, 10. February). Kun to av ti elever velger yrkesfag. *budstikka.no*. Retrieved from <https://www.budstikka.no/skolevalg/rosenvilde-videregaende-skole/skole/kun-to-av-ti-elever-velger-yrkesfag/s/5-55-265342>.
- Borojevic, M. (2016). *Yrkesretting av fellesfag i videregående skole. Engelsklæreres syn på yrkesretting av engelskfaget* (Master's thesis). The University of Bergen, Bergen.
- Breilid, N. & Sørensen, P. M. (2012). Skole og læringsbetingelser for ungdom i risiko. In Edvard Befring & Reidun Tangen (Eds.), *Spesialpedagogikk* (pp. 627 – 644). Oslo: Cappelen Damm.
- Breit, K. (2007, 16. February) Engelsk og yrkesfag. *Utdanningsnytt.no*. Retrieved from <https://www.uttanningsnytt.no/debatt/2007/april/engelsk-og-yrkesfag/>.
- Brevik, L. M. (2016a). Tre myter om engelsk på yrkesfag. Betydningen av å se elevenes helhetlige kompetanse. *Bedre Skole*, 2, 82-88.
- Brevik, L. M. (2016b). Strategies and shoes: Can we ever have enough? Teaching and using reading comprehension strategies in general and vocational programmes. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 61(1), 76-94.
- Cappelen, Å., Gjefsen, H., Gjelsvik, M., & Stølen N. (2013). *Forecasting demand and supply of labour by education*. (Reports 2013: 48). Oslo: Statistics Norway.
- Christiansen, L.L. & Fjeld, S.E. (2016). FYR-samarbeid for bedre læring på yrkesfag. *Bedre Skole* 4, 27-31.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*

- approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Di Napoli, R., King & Polezzi, L. (2001). *Fuzzy Boundaries? Reflections on Modern Languages and the Humanities*. London: Sage Publications.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005) *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Egloff, G. & Fitzpatrick, A. (1997). *Languages for work and life: The Council of Europe and vocationally oriented language learning*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Falch, T., Borge, L. E., Lujala, P., Nyhus, P. O. & Strøm, B. (2010). *Årsaker til og konsekvenser av manglende fullføring av videregående opplæring*. (Senter for Økonomisk Forskning 2010: 3). Oslo: Kopinor.
- Flemmen, M. (2014). Overklassens sosiale strukturer. In O. N. H. Korsnes & Hjellbrekke, J. (Eds.), *Elite og klasse i et egalitært samfunn* (pp. 93-105). Oslo: The University Press.
- Frymier, A. B. & Shulman, G. M. (1995). "What's in it for me?": Increasing content relevance to enhance students' motivation. *Communication Education*, 44, 40-50.
- Graddol, D. (1997). *The future of English*. London: The British council.
- Halcomb, E. J. & Davidson, P. M. (2006). Is verbatim transcription of interview data always necessary? *Applied Nursing Research*, 19(1), 38-42.
- Hanauer, D. I. (2012). Meaningful literacy: Writing poetry in the language classroom. *Language Teaching*, 45(01), 105-115.
- Hauglie, A. (2014, 20. September). Yrkesfag er status her og nå. *Morgenbladet.no*. Retrieved from https://morgenbladet.no/debatt/2014/yrkesfag_er_status_her_og_na .
- Haugset, A. S., Iversen, J. M. A. & Wendelborg, C. (2014). *Skoleledelsens tilrettelegging for yrkesretting og relevans i fellesfagene* (Yrkesretting og relevans i fellesfagene 2014: 79). Steinkjær: Trondheim Forskning og Utvikling AS.
- Haugset, A. S., Iversen, J. M. A., Wendelborg C. & Stene, M. (2014). *Yrkesretting og relevans i fellesfagene. Hovedrapport med sammenstilling og analyser*. (Mangfold og inkludering 2014: 16). Trondheim: NTNU trykk.
- Haugset, A. S. & Stene, M. (2016). Hvordan yrkesretting og relevans praktiseres i fellesfagene. *Bedre skole*, 4, 27-31.
- Hegna, K., Dæhlen, M., Smette, I. & Wollscheid, S. (2012) «For mye teori» i fag- og – et spørsmål om målsettinger i konflikt? – Europeiske utdanningsregimer og den norske modellen. *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 53, 217-232.
- Henriksen, A. H. (2007, 8. February) Engelsklærere slår alarm. *Utdanningsnytt.no*. Retrieved

- from <https://www.utdanningsnytt.no/debatt/2007/februar/engelsklarere-slar-alarm/>.
- Hernes, G. (2010). *Gull av gråstein: tiltak for å redusere frafall i videregående opplæring*. (Fafo-rapport 2010: 3). Retrieved from <https://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/upload/Fylkeslag/Vest-Agder/Pdf-dokument/2010/20147%20Fafo%20rapport.pdf>.
- Hiim, H. (2015). Kvalitet i yrkesutdanningen-Resultater fra et aksjonsforskningsprosjekt om yrkesforankring av innholdet i yrkesutdanningen. *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift*, 99(02), 136-148.
- Houtte, M. V., Demanet, J. & Stevens, P.A. (2012). Self-esteem of academic and vocational students: Does within-school tracking sharpen the difference? *Acta Sociologica*, 55(1), 73-89.
- Hua, T. L. & Beverton, S. (2013). General or vocational English courses for Taiwanese students in vocational high schools? Students' perceptions of their English courses and their relevance to their future career. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 12(2): 101-120.
- Hutchinson, T. & A. Waters (1987). *English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Kaarbø, R. (2010, 14. October) For mye teori på yrkesfagene. *Aftenposten.no*. Retrieved from <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/article3604800.ece>.
- Keller, J. (1983). Motivational design of instruction. In Reigeluth., C. M. (Ed.), *Instructional design theories and models: An overview of their current status* (pp. 383–434). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kolaas, L. A. (2013). *Yrkesretting: et verktøy for dannelse? Fellesfag i yrkesfag i videregående skole* (Master's thesis). Telemark University College, Porsgrunn.
- Kornmo, E. (2016, 16. February). At dere ber norsk ungdom satse på yrkesfag, er faktisk utrolig råttent. *Aftenposten.no*. Retrieved from http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/At-dere-ber-norsk-ungdom-satse-pa-yrkesfag_-er-faktisk-utrolig-rattent--Eirik-Kornmo-11051b.html.
- Kuppens, A. H. (2010). Incidental foreign language acquisition from media exposure. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 35(1), 65-85.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S.(2015). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervjuet*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Lee, R. N., & Bathmaker, A. M. (2007). The use of English textbooks for teaching English to

- 'vocational' students in Singapore secondary schools: A survey of teachers' Beliefs. *RELC Journal*, 38(3), 350-374.
- Legutke, M., Thomas, H., & Candlin, C. N. (2014). *Process and experience in the language classroom*. London: Routledge.
- Lillejord, S., Halvorsrud, K., Ruud, E., Morgan, K., Freyr, T., Fischer-Griffiths, P., Eikeland, O. J., Hauge, T. E., Homme, A. D., & Manger, T. (2015). *Frafall i videregående opplæring. En systematisk kunnskapsoversikt*. Oslo: Kunnskapssenteret for utdanning.
- Littlewood, W. (2014). Communication-oriented language teaching: Where are we now? Where do we go from here? *Language Teaching*, 2014. 47(3), 349-362.
- Lombardi, M. M. (2007). Authentic learning for the 21st century: An overview. *Educause learning initiative*, 1, 1-12.
- Lødding, B. (2001). *Norske frå liksom førsterett. Om tilgang til opplæring i bedrifter for ungdom med innvandrerbakgrunn*. (NIFU-rapport 2001: 1). Oslo: GCS AS
- Maley, A. & Duff, A. (1982). *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Markussen, E. (2010). Frafall i videregående opplæring i Norge: Forskning, omfang, hva kan gjøre og hva virker? In Markussen, E. (Ed.), *Frafall i utdanning for 16–20 åringer i Norden* (pp. 16-20). Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Martinsen, A. (2014). *En yrkesrettet og relevant fellesfagopplæring for elever på yrkesfag: et tiltak som kan bremse frafallsutviklingen?* (Master's thesis). Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim.
- Martinsen, A., Wendelborg, C., & Røe, M. (2014). Yrkesretting og relevans i praksis - En kvalitativ studie om tilpasning av fellesfag til yrkesfaglige studieprogram. (Mangfold og inkludering 3: 2014). Trondheim: NTNU Samfunnsforskning AS.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. London: Sage Publications.
- Mellingsæter, H. (2016, 30. November). I høst begynte 1334 elever på yrkesfag i Oslo. Kun 84 er fra skoler på vestkanten. *Aftenposten.no*. Retrieved from <http://www.aftenposten.no/osloby/I-host-begynte-1334-elever-pa-yrkesfag-i-Oslo-Kun-84-er-fra-skoler-pa-vestkanten-609741b.html>.
- Ministry of Education and Research. (2008-2009). *Education strategy*. (White paper report No. 44 2008-2009). Retrieved from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-44-2008-2009-/id565231/>.

- Ministry of Education and Research. (2014, 28. December). *Yrkesfagløftet*. Retrieved from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/om-regjeringa/solberg/Regjeringens-satsingsomrader/Regjeringens-satsingsomrader/kunnskap-gir-muligheter-for-alle1/Yrkesfagløftet/id753135/>.
- Mürer, H. C. K. (2015). *Valid and Reliable? A Critical Analysis of the Final Written Exam in English in the Upper Secondary School* (Master's thesis). The University of Bergen, Bergen.
- Nordahl, T. (2014) *Foreldrenes deltagelse og involvering i elevenes skolegang*. Hedmark University College, Elverum. Retrieved from <http://hihm.no/om-hoegskolen/nyheter/eldre-nyheter/2014/foreldrenes-deltagelse-og-involvering-i-elevenes-skolegang>.
- Nordli Oppegaard, G. (2014, 19. September). Yrkesfagstandarden må heves! *Morgenbladet.no*. Retrieved from https://morgenbladet.no/debatt/2014/yrkesfagstandarden_ma_heves.
- Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2013a). *English subject curriculum*. Retrieved from <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/?lplang=eng>.
- Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2013b). *Framework for basic skills*. Retrieved from http://www.udir.no/Stottemeny/English/Curriculum-in-English/_english/Framework-for-Basic-Skills/.
- Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2013c). *Reviderte læreplaner*. Retrieved from <http://www.udir.no/Lareplaner/Finn-lareplan/endringer/Revidertelareplaner/?WT.ac=reviderteLP&boks=1#engelsk>.
- Nyen, T., Skålholt, A., & Tønder, A. H. (2013). Overgangen fra fagopplæring til arbeidsmarkedet og videre utdanning. In Høst, H.(Ed.), *Kvalitet i fag-og yrkesopplæringen. Fokus på skoleopplæringen* (pp. 159-202). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/280431>.
- Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon. (2015, 16. June). *Flere foreldre er nå positive til yrkesfag*. Retrieved from <https://www.nho.no/Politikk-og-analyse/Kompetanse-og-utdanning/flere-foreldre-er-na-positiv-til-yrkesfag/>.
- Official Norwegian Reports 2008: 18 (2008). *Fagopplæring for framtida*. Retrieved from <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Innstillinger/Stortinget/2008-2009/inns-200809-212/2/>.
- Olsen, O. J., & Reegård, K. (2013). Læringsmiljø og gjennomføring i lærer-og elevperspektiv

- i tre yrkesfaglige opplæringsløp. In Høst., H (Ed.), *Kvalitet i fag-og yrkesopplæringen. Fokus på skoleopplæringen* (pp. 17-71). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/280431>.
- Oxford, R., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language learning motivation: Expanding the theoretical framework. *The modern language journal*, 78(1), 12-28.
- Poland, B. D. (1995). Transcription quality as an aspect of rigor in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), 290-310.
- Reksten, V. (2011, 21. Juli). Hva er galt med yrkesfag? *Aftenposten.no*. Retrieved from <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/Hva-er-galt-med-yrkesfag-181582b.html>.
- Ruud, M. (2016, 10. May). Felles engelskeksamen på tross av yrkesretting. *Utdanningsnytt.no*. Retrieved from <https://www.utdanningsnytt.no/nyheter/2016/mai/det-er-felles-engelskeksamen-i-videregaende-pa-tross-av-yrkesretting/>.
- Sanbonmatsu, D. M., Shavitt, S., & Sherman, S. J. (1991). The role of personal relevance in the formation of distinctiveness-based illusory correlations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(2), 124-132.
- Sandal, A. K., & Smith, K. (2012). Møte med yrkesfagleg utdanning i den norske videregående skulen. *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 2, 2-17
- Sass, E. J. (1989). "Motivation in the college classroom: What students tell us. *Teaching of psychology*, 16(2): 86-88.
- Sewell, C. (2004) Keynote discussion. In Sewell, C (Ed.) *Language Learning for Work in a Multilingual World* (pp. 3-12). London: The National Centre for Languages
- Simensen, A. M. (2010). English in Scandinavia: a success story. In Wyse, D., Andrews., R & Hoffman, J. (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of English, language and literacy teaching* (pp. 472-483). London: Routledge.
- Sleveland, T. (2014) *Fellesfag, yrkesretting og relevans, FYR - yrkesretting av engelsk på programfag for Teknikk og industri produksjon, TIP VG1.* (Master's thesis). University of Stavanger, Stavanger.
- Statistisk Sentralbyrå. (2014). *Videregående opplæring og annen videregående utdanning, 2014*. Retrieved from <https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/vgu>.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences*. London: Sage publications.
- Storevik, M. (2015). *A study of vocationalisation of English in Norwegian upper secondary*

- schools. "Why do I need Norwegian and English? I'm training to become a carpenter."* (Master's thesis). University of Bergen, Bergen.
- Støren, L. A. (2005), *Ungdom med innvandrerbakgrunn i norsk utdanning - ser vi en fremtidig suksesshistorie?* (Utdanning 2005: 1). Oslo: Statistics Norway.
- Sund, E. & Raaheim, A. (2009, 3. December) Praktisk løsning? – Det er korttenkt å møte skoletrøtte gutter med mindre teori. *Klassekampen*.
- Sundqvist, P., & Olin-Scheller, C. (2013). Classroom vs. extramural English: Teachers dealing with demotivation. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7(6), 329-338.
- Sundqvist, P. & Wikström, P. (2015). Out-of-school digital gameplay and in-school L2 English vocabulary outcomes. *System* 51, 65-76.
- The Office of the Prime Minister. (2013). *Political platform for a government formed by the Conservative Party and the Progress Party*. Retrieved from <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/political-platform/id743014/>.
- Vogt, K. C. (2017). Vår utålmodighet med ungdom. *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 58(1), 105-119.
- Vogt, K., & Kantelinen, R. (2012). Vocationally oriented language learning revisited. *ELT journal*, 67, 62-69.
- Weaver, R. L. & H. W. Cottrell (1988). Motivating students: Stimulating and sustaining student effort. *College Student Journal*, 22, 22-32.
- Wendelborg, C., Martinsen, A., & Røe, M. (2014). *Yrkesretting og relevans i praksis-En kvalitativ studie om tilpasning av fellesfag til yrkesfaglige studieprogram*. (Mangfold og inkludering: 2014) Trondheim: NTNU trykk.

Appendix

Appendix 1: The teacher interview guide

Lærerintervju

Samtykkeskjema og om intervjuet

Bakgrunn

- utdanning+fag+språkbakgrunn
- erfaring i YF-engelsk og generelt
- jobberfaring
- egen kompetanse i YF-engelsk

Hva synes du er viktigst i engelskfaget?

- hvorfor og hva håper du å oppnå
 - Hvordan til rette legger du for dette i timen
 - endrer dette seg for ulike elevgrupper
- (spørsmål avhenger veldig av tema)

Hvordan synes du det er å undervise yrkesfag elever i engelsk?

- trivsel i klassen
- erfaringer
- yrkesretting av engelsken
- yrkesretter læreren
- hva undervises det mest i
- spesielle utfordringer knyttet til YF
- elevers muligheter til å påvirke undervisningen
- bruk av lærebøker

-bruk av YF-engelsk på fritiden/lesing - > sammenheng med engelskfaget –
extramural i YF-engelsk

Hva synes du om bruk av yrkesretting i engelsk?

-gjør du det?

-relevans/nytte for skolehverdagen og fremtid

-pros/cons

-utfordringer

-noen suksesshistorier / dårlige opplevelser

Observasjon – hva var målet med denne timen?

-Relevans

-yrkesretning?

-normal time

-fungerte/problematisk

Er det noe viktig jeg ikke har spurt om?

Appendix 2: The student interview guide

Samtykkeskjema og om intervjuet

Bakgrunn

- interesse for linje (hvorfor han/hun valgte linjen)
- interesse for engelsk / extramural
- trivsel på skolen
- erfaring

Hvordan trives du med yrkesretningen din?

- trivsel
- framtidssikter
- interesse -> på skolen og fritiden?
- Utfordringer og mestringer

Hva synes du om engelskfaget?

- bruk av engelsk
- opplevelse av egen kompetanse
- mål for faget/forventninger-> skolens/elevens syn
- innholdet i faget – elevens faktiske opplevelse
- lesing i «lesetiden»
- relevans for eleven
- Tema som er vært gode/opplevelse av mestring/utfordringer
- opplevelse av innvirkning på timen

Hva synes du om bruk av yrkesretningen din i engelsk?

- har du opplevd yrkesrettet engelsk?
- relevans/nytte for skolehverdagen og fremtid
- egen kompetanse i YF-engelsk
- om språk på fremtidig arbeidsplass/jobbs i internasjonalt miljø

-motivasjon (ytre/indre)

-(?)opplevelse av mestring i arbeid med YF-engelsk

Spørsmål fra en eventuell time

Er det noe jeg ikke har spurt om du synes er viktig?

Appendix 3: The follow-up interview guide

Intro:

Kort de synes noe har endret seg siden forrige gang:

Om engelskfaget:

-hvor mye de deltar i undervisningen

-hvor de føler de har lært mest engelsk

Spm til yrkesretting:

Har du opplevd yrkesrettede timer, kan du gi eksempler?

-Hva synes du om bruk av yrkesretningen din i engelsk

-relevans/nytte for skolehverdagen og fremtid

-egen kompetanse i YF-engelsk

-motivasjon (ytre/indre)

-(?)opplevelse av mestring i arbeid med YF-engelsk

-hvor mye de utfordres av undervisningen

Appendix 4: Erklæring ved tilgang til Vogue

UiO : Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleforskning
Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet

Erklæring ved deltakelse i prosjekt: *Vocational students' Use of English (VOGUE)* ved prosjektleder Lisbeth M Brevik, 2016/17.

Sturla Sagli er tatt opp i prosjektet i forbindelse med arbeid med masteroppgave i Lektorprogrammet. Forskningsprosjektet VOGUE er forpliktet til å følge personopplysningslovens retningslinjer ved all registrering, lagring og bruk av innsamlende datamateriale. Ved deltakelse i prosjektet er masterstudenten forpliktet til å gjøre seg kjent med og følge disse retningslinjene (se: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2000-04-14-31>). Datamaterialet skal ikke deles med en tredjepart eller fremvises til andre.

Alle data som innhentes i prosjektet, eies av VOGUE (ved prosjektleder Lisbeth M Brevik), og kan brukes av prosjektet i videre forskning. Det betyr at innsamlet data til masteroppgaven ikke eies av studenten, men av prosjektet. Studenten har tilgang til dataene så lenge arbeidet med masteroppgaven pågår, innenfor veiledningsavtalens periode.

Jeg bekrefter herved at jeg er innforstått med avtalens innhold, har gjort meg kjent med personopplysningslovens retningslinjer, og forplikter meg til å følge disse i mitt arbeid med datamaterialet tilhørende forskningsprosjektet VOGUE.

Jeg plikter også å referere eksplisitt til VOGUE prosjektet (ved prosjektleder Lisbeth M Brevik) i min masteroppgave, jf. Forskningsetiske komiteens krav til god forskningspraksis/henvisningselikk (<http://www.etikkom.no/Forskningsetikk/God-forskningspraksis>). Enhver situasjon der datamateriale som tilhører VOGUE benyttes i analyser i publikasjoner, skal være kjent for prosjektleder Lisbeth M Brevik før publisering.

Sted: Blindern, 9. mai 2017

Sturla Sagli

Student

Lisbeth M Brevik

Prosjektleder



Postadresse: Postboks 1099 Blindern, 0317 Oslo
E-post: ils-kontakt@ils.uio.no
Telefon: 22 85 50 70
www.uio.no