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PhD revisited: Approaches to English as a foreign language (EFL) reading instruction in Norwegian primary schools¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Charboneau, 2016) that investigated the use of four approaches to EFL reading instruction in Norwegian 4th–5th grades. The study used a mixed-methods approach comprising a questionnaire sent to teachers throughout Norway and a case study of four schools. The results suggest it was challenging to provide differentiated teaching to meet students' abilities and needs. The chapter discusses implications for EFL reading instruction, and suggestions for future research.

KEYWORDS Reading instruction | materials | practices | differentiation | interaction

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1. The chapter presents the overall results of a doctoral study, *Approaches to English as a foreign language (EFL) reading instruction in Norwegian primary schools* (Charboneau, 2016) from the University of Stavanger, focusing specifically on its practical implications for the teaching of English in Norway. The doctoral thesis in its entirety can be found here: <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/2578213>

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this doctoral study was to investigate the teaching of reading among English foreign language (EFL) learners in the 4th and 5th grades in Norway, specifically the use of different reading approaches for EFL reading instruction. These grades cover the important transition from basic primary (4th grade) to the intermediate (5th grade) levels. It was a descriptive mixed-methods study combining quantitative and qualitative research data sources: a teacher questionnaire, student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations.

Despite great emphasis on reading and writing skills in *L97* and *LK06*, many English primary teachers have no subject-specific training in English (Drew, Oostdam, & van Toorenburg, 2007). The need for increased competence and pre-service education of language teachers is widely acknowledged (Drew et al., 2007; Hasselgreen, 2005; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research [KD], 2007b). The demands on qualified teachers are great, since *LK06* refrains from mentioning teaching methods or approaches, placing the responsibility on teachers to use appropriate methods and approaches to help students attain the competence aims (Hasselgreen, 2005). Additionally, reports have questioned whether students have the necessary EFL skills to succeed in higher education given the current English demands (Hellekjær, 2005; KD, 2007a). As few studies have explored EFL practices in primary schools, especially the development of reading skills, it is important to study how reading skills are taught in primary classrooms.

This doctoral study aims to increase knowledge about teacher competence and instruction, in this case EFL reading at the primary level. The overarching research question for this study is:

How is reading taught in Norwegian 4th and 5th grade EFL classes?

This overarching question is divided into four sub-questions:

RQ1. What materials, activities, and instructional practices do 4th and 5th grade teachers use to teach English reading?

RQ2. To what extent do the reading approaches enable differentiation in reading instruction?

RQ3. What differences are there in the reading interaction between teachers and students in the different reading approaches?

RQ4. What are teachers' perceptions of their English reading instruction and best practice?

THEORY

First, in the context of this study, reading is understood as engaging with and creating meaning from texts in order to understand, find, interpret, reflect on, assess, and acquire insight and knowledge from them. Reading, according to Coltheart (2005), is “information-processing: transforming print to speech, or print to meaning” (p. 6). Reading comprehension, as defined by the RAND Reading Study Group (RAND, 2002) is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Comprehension has these elements: the reader, the text, and the activity, or purpose for reading” (p. xi). Intensive reading is reading with a focus on details of language in short texts used to exemplify specific aspects of the language or for targeted reading strategy use (Nation, 2009). Extensive reading, in contrast, is reading for comprehension with few or no specific language tasks to perform (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989), and reading for pleasure usually associated with reading for longer periods of time and often longer texts (Day & Bamford, 1998). A large body of research has shown the benefits of extensive reading for developing language skills (reviews by Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen 2004) and the importance of time spent reading (Taylor et al., 2000).

Additionally, learners are expected to develop the use of reading strategies. The aim is for the reader to choose appropriate strategies depending on the reading aim and purpose (Grabe, 2009). In order for students to improve their reading skills, they should be reading at their instructional reading level (texts where 90–95% of vocabulary is known when reading with support) (Nation, 2009).

Second, differentiation is defined as adaptations made to reading instruction (including practices and materials) for groups or individual students (Arends & Kilcher, 2010) – for example, grouping arrangements during reading instruction, including whole-class, small group, and individualized instruction (Taylor, Peterson, Rodriguez, & Pearson, 2002). Third, interaction is defined as the communicative exchanges in the classroom. Generally, this applies to interactions between teacher and students while working with texts or talking about reading, or student interactions, in group work.

Finally, teachers’ beliefs have shown a relationship between classroom practice and language teacher cognition, defined as “what teachers believe, know, and think” (Borg, 2006, p. 81). Within the current study, the following aspects of teachers’ perceptions of reading instruction are explored: priorities related to teaching, policy statements regarding teacher qualifications, EFL reading practices, and factors that influence their teaching.

REVIEW

Reports claim little is known about English instruction in the early school grades in Norway (KD, 2007b). Results of a 2003 questionnaire among primary EFL teachers showed that almost 60% of teachers either had little or no formal English education (Drew, 2009).

Previous research on EFL teaching practices at the primary level (Drew et al., 2007) found that schools primarily use textbooks and “traditional” teaching practices (e.g., grammar translation and direct methods). These include reading in unison, teachers reading aloud, and use of translation and assessment based on texts, especially vocabulary and comprehension testing based on recall questions. A few studies (Drew et al., 2007; Hellekjær, 2005) found that when teaching reading and working with texts, teachers primarily adhere to intensive reading.

Studies have found most classroom interaction to be between teachers and students, both in L1 contexts (Littleton & Mercer, 2013; Taylor et al., 2002) and foreign-language contexts (Moon, 2005). Educational studies have found a typical teacher-led pattern to classroom interaction: often teacher-initiated, followed by student response, and responded to by teacher feedback (Littleton & Mercer, 2013), commonly referred to as IRE/F. This is often manifested as a “recitation script”, where teachers ask closed questions, followed by brief student answers where students are expected to report others’ thinking rather than thinking for themselves (Hardman, 2008).

The results of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) project on effective reading instruction in elementary schools indicated a clear difference between teachers with a strong teacher-directed stance and those with a student-support stance (Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2005; Taylor et al., 2002). Overall, teaching practices that have been found to be effective include teachers who engaged students in on-task behaviors, who modeled for students, and used a student-support stance. This allows for a participatory approach to engaging with text, where students actively interact with a text, which may in turn trigger reading strategy use (RAND, 2002).

Research has shown that comprehension skills and strategies are important in reading instruction (Goldenberg, 2011). Reading strategies can be taught effectively, strategy instruction can improve reading comprehension, and should be included in reading comprehension instruction (Grabe, 2009). Teaching reading strategies in the students’ L1 and helping them apply these to their L2 is an effective instructional practice (Goldenburg, 2011). Within this field of research, the distinction between reading skills and strategies is made, allowing the researcher to distinguish between teaching a strategy and teaching or applying comprehension skills to a specific text (Taylor et al., 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The data from this study was collected from October 2010 until June 2011. Due to the complexity of teaching, classroom context, and classroom research, a mixed-methods approach was adopted in order to strengthen the validity of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). The data collection proceeded in two stages. First, a national questionnaire was created and disseminated among 4th and 5th grade teachers (quantitative data, autumn 2010). Second, based on the questionnaire findings, four case study schools were selected for lesson observations based on variation in reading approaches, and interviews with teachers and students were conducted during a six-month period in 2011 (qualitative data).

RESEARCH DESIGN

For the purposes of this study, I have defined a reading approach as the core materials used by teachers, their practices related to the development of reading ability, and reading-related activities. Reading approaches are categorized as those that use one of the following:

- ▶ a textbook-based approach
- ▶ a combination of textbook-based approach and the use of graded readers (leveled texts, often short books in a series)
- ▶ primarily extensive reading through the use of graded readers
- ▶ an approach adapted from an Australian/New Zealand literacy program, for example the Early Years Literacy Program (EYLP)
- ▶ other approaches

The reading approach categories were derived deductively based on theory and the literature review concerning the use of reading materials and practices used in Norway. These approaches were the categories used for the teacher questionnaire. As a mixed-methods study, the research questions are addressed using a combination of different research methods and data sources.

SAMPLE

The target population was defined as 4th and/or 5th grade English teachers. Schools meeting certain criteria were excluded (special schools, medical institutes, schools without students in these grades); 583 schools were excluded, with 2,572 schools remaining. Three stratification variables were chosen to aid in selecting a nationally representative sample: geographic location, school type, and number of students. A

questionnaire was sent electronically to 1000 randomly selected schools, with 370 responses from 4th and 5th grade teachers at 310 schools.

Potential schools for the case study sample were contacted based on the following criteria:

1. Follow-up from the questionnaire
2. Invitation letter to local schools
3. Reading approach used by one or more teachers at the school
4. Geographic location and size of school

Four schools were selected for the *case study*, representing various reading approaches: textbook-based approach (School 1); combination of textbook-based and graded readers (Schools 2 and 3); and EYLP approach (School 4). Two schools were located in Oslo and two in Rogaland. At each school, one teacher was recruited in the 4th and 5th grades respectively, totaling eight teachers. The backgrounds and experiences of these teachers varied. The teachers ranged in age (23–56), teaching experience (1–20 years), and English teaching qualifications (0–60 study points, i.e., a year of full-time study). Two teachers taught both 4th and 5th grade English, three only 4th grade, and three only 5th grade. In addition, several students were interviewed from each class (a convenience sample of students recommended by the teachers; see Table 11.2).

TABLE 11.1. An overview of the data and analyses used in the doctoral study.

Quantitative data			Qualitative data		
Data	Analysis	Research question	Data	Analysis	Research question
Questionnaire N = 370	Descriptive and inductive statistics	RQ1 RQ2 RQ3 RQ4	Classroom observations of reading instruction 4 schools; 2 classes at each school	Coding for classroom observation analysis of frequencies of observation coding	RQ1 RQ2 RQ3
			Teacher interviews (12 formal interviews, average length 45 min, additional informal interviews)	Transcription of recordings; Content analysis	RQ1 RQ2 RQ3 RQ4
			Student interviews (37 interviews, average length 4 min)	Transcription of recordings; Content analysis	RQ2 RQ3

QUESTIONNAIRE

The teacher questionnaire contained 48 questions; 46 closed and 2 open ones. It was divided into three main sections: (a) teachers' background, educational qualifications, and school information, (b) the teachers' practices in EFL reading instruction, and (c) teachers' perceptions of EFL reading instruction and language learning. The questionnaire data was analyzed using PASW Statistics 18.0. Procedures were performed to compute descriptive (means, percentages) and inductive statistics (Chi-square) for data regarding teachers' qualifications, reading approach, materials, and practices used in English instruction.

TABLE 11.2. Summary of research participants' data.

Case study schools and teachers		Visits	Lessons observed in 4 th grade	Lessons observed in 5 th grade	Formal teacher interviews	Informal teacher interviews	Student interview	Additional data sources
School 1 (textbook)	Teacher 1	5	5	5	2	2	7	E-mails
School 2 (combination)	Teacher 2	5	5	–	2	3	8	E-mails
	Teacher 3	5	–	5	2	1	1	E-mails
School 3 (combination)	Teacher 4	5	5	5	2	4	5	E-mails Teaching materials
School 4 (EYLP)	Teacher 5	1	–	2	1	–	–	E-mails
	Teacher 6	1	2	–	–	1	8	
	Teacher 7	2	4	–	1	–	8	
	Teacher 8	3	–	7.3	2	2	–	E-mails Student work

OBSERVATION

Data was collected from the following sources at the case study schools:

1. Observation of lessons ($n = 45.3$ class hours)
2. Interview with teachers ($n = 12$ formal, 13 informal)

3. Interview with students ($n = 37$)
4. Texts used during reading activities and instruction in the lessons

An observation coding system, CIERA (Taylor et al., 2002, 2005; Taylor, 2004), was used to support the collection of consistent data from the case study schools during the classroom observations. The system had the following areas of focus for data collection: (1) who led the instruction, (2) grouping, (3) general focus and (4) specific focus of literacy events or activities, (5) material, (6) teacher interaction styles, and (7) expected student responses to literacy events (Table 11.3). During the observations, two types of data were collected: qualitative note-taking (a narrative of what was said and done in five-minute increments), and quantitatively oriented coding based on the previously mentioned categories. As it was possible for more than one code to be observed in a five-minute segment, some increments were coded more than once at the same level within the same segment. After the observation, the codings were tabulated and entered into a coding tally sheet. The possibility of multiple coding within a segment level consequently meant that the coding tabulations could also equal more than 100% within each level.

TABLE 11.3. Codes for classroom observation.

Level 1 – Who led instruction		
Classroom teacher (C)	Special education	Reading specialist
No one	Other specialist	Other
Not applicable		
Level 2 – Grouping		
Whole class/large group	Small group	Pairs
Individual	Other	Not applicable
Level 3 – General focus of literacy event or activity		
Reading	Composition/writing	Other language
Other	Not applicable	
Level 4 – Specific focus of literacy event or activity		
Reading connected text	Listening to connected text	Vocabulary
Sight words	Word recognition strategies	Comprehension skill
Comprehension strategy	Writing	Word identification

Meaning of text, lower m1 for talk m2 for writing	Meaning of text, higher m1 for talk m2 for writing	Phonics P1= letter sound P2=letter by letter P3=onset/rime P4=multisyllabic
Phonemic awareness	Letter identification	Spelling
Other	Not applicable	
Level 5 – Material		
Narrative	Informational	Student writing
Board/Chart	Worksheet	Other
Not applicable		
Level 6 – Teacher interaction		
Telling	Modeling	Recitation
Coaching/scaffolding	Listening/watching	Reading aloud
Assessment	Discussion	Other
Not applicable		
Level 7 – Expected student response		
Reading	Reading turn-taking	Orally responding
Oral turn-taking	Listening	Writing
Manipulating	Other	Not applicable

In addition to notes taken during the observations, the lessons were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The coding was also analyzed for inter-rater reliability with an external coder who was trained in the coding system (one observation from each school). Inter-rater reliability was calculated using percentage of agreement and Cohen's kappa (Posner, Sampson, Caplan, Ward, & Cheney, 1990), with an overall initial inter-rater reliability of 88% and a kappa score of .66.

INTERVIEWS

During the case study period, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and a small selection of students (Table 11.2). During the formal interviews, which were conducted before the first observed lesson and following the final observed lesson, the teachers were asked about their reading approach,

materials used, how these were used, types of reading assessment, and their opinion regarding certain language policies, such as the national test in English. Informal interviews were used to follow up after some observed lessons. Semi-structured interviews with students addressed their exposure to various texts and teaching methods, and how these affected their motivation and learning outcomes of the lessons.

The interview data was transcribed and processed using qualitative content analysis. During the transcription process, content categories were created based on the questionnaire categories (which were based on relevant topics from theory and the Norwegian EFL context) related to the topics covered in the interviews: their reading approach, teaching, materials, differentiation, reading levels, reading assessment, lesson aims, curriculum aims, and the national test. The interviews were coded and summarized within these categories.

RESULTS

Overall, the results showed that most teachers used a textbook as their primary reading material, and many teachers had few other reading materials available. Teachers generally did not use differentiated reading material or allow students choice of what to read. However, most teachers felt differentiated materials were important and differentiating teaching was difficult.

READING INSTRUCTION RESULTS FROM THE NATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

First, 48.3% of the teachers did not have *English teaching qualifications* (30 ECTS is the minimum level for teaching in primary school; KD, 2009). However, higher education in English did not appear to be significantly associated with a particular reading approach, $\chi^2(4, 357) = 8.498, p = 0.75$. This means that the teachers' English teaching qualification was not reflected in their choice of reading approach.

Regarding *reading approaches*, the questionnaire found that 62% of teachers used a textbook as the basis of English reading instruction, whereas a combination approach was used by 30%, and 8% used graded readers or the EYLP. Only half as many teachers used a textbook in their Norwegian reading instruction ($n = 102$) compared to English ($n = 212$); over half of the teachers reported using a combination of textbook-based and graded readers in Norwegian ($n = 199$) compared to a third in English ($n = 103$), yet most of them used the graded readers and EYLP infrequently both in Norwegian ($n = 42$) and English ($n = 28$). However, there was

a significant relationship between the languages; namely, when the teacher used one approach in Norwegian they were likely to use the same approach in English ($\chi^2(4, 343) = 83.599, p < .001$). This is an important finding related to the potential for transfer of reading practices and skills from one language to another.

TABLE 11.4. Crosstable showing reading approaches of teachers in Norwegian and English classes (actual numbers, expected numbers, adjusted residual).

Norwegian reading approach	English reading approach			
		Textbook (<i>n</i> = 212)	Combination (<i>n</i> = 103)	Graded readers/ EYLP (<i>n</i> = 28)
Textbook (<i>n</i> = 102)	Actual	97	4	1
	Expected	63	30.6	8.3
	Adj. res.	8.3***	-6.9	-3.2
Combination (<i>n</i> = 199)	Actual	98	85	16
	Expected	123	59.8	16.2
	Adj. res.	-5.6	6***	-1
Graded reader/EYLP (<i>n</i> = 42)	Actual	17	14	11
	Expected	26	12.6	3.4
	Adj. res.	-3	.5	4.6***

Note. ***= significance level 0.1%. Expected numbers are calculated using probability theory.

Regarding *reading materials*, 47% of the teachers had no other English books than the textbook in their classrooms, and 21% had no English books in their library. There appeared to be a lack of information available to teachers as to how they could best work with different text genres, texts at different comprehension and ability levels, reading for different purposes, and incorporating reading strategies into their teaching.

Concerning *teaching practices*, the majority of teachers most often used a whole-class teacher-led reading session where all students read the same text. The most common reading practices were reading aloud by the teacher (64% three or more times per month), chorally by the class (53%), or students reading aloud individually to the class (56%). Students reading in groups (23%) or individually (28%) were not commonly applied.

Concerning how they *differentiated* and incorporated learner autonomy into text choice, 63% did not allow students to choose which text to read, 59% used

differentiated texts fewer than three times per month, 52% never organized students in ability groups, 48% did not enable students to use English reading computer programs, and 86% did not enable students to use online books.

Regarding their *collaboration* on reading instruction with other English and Norwegian teachers, it tended to either be frequent (weekly: 44% grade 4; 24% grade 5), or almost never (35% grade 4; 51% grade 5). Similarly, a majority never (50%) or almost never (53%) collaborated with other English teachers regarding reading instruction.

Related to teachers' perceptions of *teaching EFL reading*, feeling prepared to teach English reading was related to whether teachers had English teaching qualifications, $\chi^2(10, 347) = 89.551, p < .001$. In addition, the majority of teachers felt that mixed-ability classes were the greatest challenge to an English teacher (56%), but only a quarter of them felt they were able to provide differentiated instruction to all students.

Related to teachers' *perspectives on reading materials and their use*, nearly all reported being strongly in favor of differentiated reading materials (96%), yet few actually had their students read level-differentiated texts on a regular basis (18%). More teachers reported a paucity of teaching hours as influencing their reading teaching (45%), compared to a paucity of materials (20%). However, satisfaction with reading materials was related to the quantity available (classrooms $\chi^2(6, 360) = 26.426, p < .001$, school libraries $\chi^2(6, 360) = 25.172, p < .001$). Thus, those with fewer materials felt this influenced their teaching more than other factors. Some teachers felt that their schools were unwilling to invest in reading materials (37%).

READING APPROACHES AT THE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

Although the teachers using the combination and EYLP approaches appeared to be more satisfied with their reading approach because they were able to choose from both the textbook and other reading materials, as well as a variety of teaching practices, the teachers from all three approaches saw room for improvement. Observations found that although there was some focus on reading strategies in the EYLP approach, none of the approaches had an explicit focus on transference of strategies from L1 to L2.

Textbook-based approach (School 1)

The textbook-based approach appeared predictable and easy for the teacher and students; providing topics, written language input, and structure for the EFL

teaching, in addition to support from the teacher's guide, including curriculum aims. However, the teacher supplemented the textbook, most commonly with YouTube videos and music. This school practiced differentiation by grouping students into two groups; lower-level students reading the simplest texts, and the remaining students reading all of the texts in class, only differing texts for homework. Students were not given choices among other types of texts or books to read.

The predominance of whole-class teacher-led instruction, broken up with short episodes of pairs of students reading aloud or translating texts, meant that the majority of the students were often passive in class with only a few participating by speaking or reading aloud. The teacher primarily interacted with the students through telling and recitation in 4th grade, but telling, listening/watching, and giving feedback in 5th grade. The aim of the lessons often appeared to be getting through the text and learning vocabulary, rather than interaction or discussion of the text, content, or theme. One exception was one 4th grade lesson focusing on the English national test (which tests English reading comprehension), where the teacher modeled reading strategies and thought processes as she answered the reading comprehension questions. Reading comprehension strategies were addressed in one lesson only, separate from their class reading texts, and not addressed in any other observed lessons in 4th or 5th grade.

Combination approach (Schools 2 and 3)

The combination approach schools used a variety of reading materials for independent reading, but primarily the textbook for whole-class interactions and activities. There were differences between the schools concerning quantity and access to other books. The School 2 teachers purchased books themselves or ordered them from the library. Therefore, there were more authentic children's books than graded readers. In contrast, School 3 had invested in graded readers and authentic children's books. The 4th grade teacher at School 2 (who attended an in-service course) occasionally read authentic children's literature aloud. The School 3 teacher designed a book project using *Fantastic Mr. Fox* by Roald Dahl. The students at both schools appeared to benefit from these experiences, in terms of reading engagement and reported reading motivation. At these schools, differentiation was addressed both through materials for individual reading, and through a combination of whole-class and pair work.

When working with textbook texts, there was a predominance of teacher-led instruction, in the form of choral reading or students taking turns reading aloud, which led to lower student activity and incorporated fewer other activities.

The most common types of teacher interaction were telling and recitation at School 2, and telling and listening/watching at School 3. Modeling and coaching (i.e., the teacher prompting or providing support that would transfer to other situations as students attempted to perform a strategy to answer a question) were rarely employed, except the 4th-grade teacher at School 2 who used coaching once or twice in most lessons.

In 5th grade, the use of comprehension skills and strategies was not common, except at School 3. In 4th grade, the teachers mentioned and used comprehension strategies occasionally, and occasionally modeled comprehension skills, without any explicit expectation that the students use these in subsequent reading.

Early Years Literacy Program approach (School 4)

At the EYLP school, students worked at stations, in ability groups. The school primarily used graded readers at the teacher station, and a combination of graded readers and other children's literature at the individual reading stations. At the individual reading station, students chose books and read extensively, focusing on comprehension. At the teacher station, they read intensively, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and translation into Norwegian. There was also a focus on comprehension and discussion of the text, but this supplemented the intensive reading and did not constitute extensive reading.

In the 4th grade class there was no strategy modeling. However, on two occasions the teacher reminded the students to use the comprehension skills they had learned, namely looking in the text for answers and using pictures for comprehension support. In 5th grade, the teacher expected the students to explain their thinking based on evidence in the text or pictures, which was unique among the four schools. At the teacher station in 5th grade, comprehension skills were used during 40% of the reading segments, whereas comprehension strategies were presented to the students during nearly 15% of the segments. At this school there was a strong focus on translation of the texts read at the teacher station. This was not only time-consuming, but also appeared to be challenging for the students, who usually spent more time translating than reading the original English text. The teachers primarily used recitation at the teacher station to initiate conversation about the texts. Modeling was infrequent, but coaching occurred in 28% of the 5th grade teaching segments, which was more frequent than at the other schools. For example, the teacher coached the students in the use of comprehension skills and reminded them about appropriate reading aloud behavior, including taking pauses and using intonation.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

This has been a large-scale doctoral study of EFL reading in Norwegian 4th and 5th grades where four different approaches to reading instruction have been identified to analyze teaching materials, practices, interactions, and differentiation.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The focus on comparing different approaches to EFL reading instruction has contributed to new knowledge regarding teachers' practices and the use of various reading materials. This has helped to create a more complete understanding of current EFL reading instruction at the primary level and to highlight the use of research-supported practices (e.g., greater use of a wide range of materials and grouping differentiation) and areas where there is need for improvement (e.g., teacher modeling reading strategies for students). Furthermore, this research has included an understanding of how the EYLP approach is both similar to and different from other approaches being used by EFL teachers.

The questionnaire findings confirmed that the majority of teachers used a textbook as the primary *reading material* in their English lessons. Additionally, 47% of the teachers had no English books other than the textbooks in their classroom, and 20% had none in their library. These findings indicate a lack of reading materials available to support differentiated reading instruction.

Regarding class *practices*, the case study data shows a predominance of teacher-led, whole-class instruction, with the exception of the EYLP approach school. Most of the classroom interaction was between the teacher and the students. Teacher recitation (Hardman, 2008; Taylor et al., 2002, 2005) was used frequently at all of the case study schools, as was teacher telling. Additionally, reading interactions at these schools were predominantly teacher-initiated and teacher-dominated, with few examples of students asking questions (Van der Meij, 1993). In contrast to recitation, coaching was infrequently employed at all of the schools. However, this did not mean that the teachers did not support students and employ interaction techniques such as elicitation, but rather that these occurred infrequently.

This study has found that intensive reading is the most common practice in Norwegian schools, normally using textbook texts. Although the questionnaire data revealed that the teacher reading aloud was still a common practice, it was nevertheless an uncommon practice among the case study teachers. The frequent use of student translation of texts, repeated choral reading, and taking turns reading aloud, which were practices found in the case study schools (and to some extent among the questionnaire respondents), were somewhat disappointing findings.

Although these practices had previously been common in EFL instruction, they are generally associated with more traditional methods of instruction compared to a more recent focus on communicative language learning. However, how this was conducted varied by approach. Generally, when students take turns reading aloud, most of the class is passive. In contrast, when interaction takes place in small groups, students are usually more active, such as at the EYLP approach school where students interacted with the teacher at the teacher station (guided reading) or with other students at the other stations.

Another reading practice, individual silent reading, although not a common practice in the questionnaire answers, was used at three of the four case study schools (occasionally by the two combination approach schools and regularly by the EYLP approach school). Individual extensive reading has a strong basis in reading and language learning research and was thus considered a strength of these two approaches.

Comprehension skills and strategies was an area in which there were differences among the reading approaches in the case study schools. Among the 5th grade classes, the teachers in the EYLP school used and talked about comprehension strategies and skills more than the other approaches. The comprehension strategies included using pictures, applying background knowledge, using contextual clues to guess unknown words, and using a dictionary; some of these strategies were also used at the other case study schools. Generally, there is greater focus on comprehension strategies and applying higher-level comprehension skills² in guided reading, which is used in the EYLP approach.

Although presented as a specific reading approach, the combination approach is just that, the use of a combination of different reading materials, and in this case reading practices. The teachers at the two case study schools could have chosen to add more differentiated interaction or focus on reading skills and strategies. However, the strength of their implementation was in the greater use of individual reading, even if it was more intensive in approach at School 3 and extensive at School 2. Thus, although this approach incorporated a greater use of differentiated materials, primarily through graded readers, there was still room for improvement, especially in terms of greater differentiated interaction between the teacher and students and more focus on reading skills and strategies.

The EYLP approach appears to have many advantages. For example, the extent of differentiated interaction between the teacher and students at the teacher station

2. Higher-level comprehension skills are defined as comprehension that is at a high-level of text interpretation or goes beyond the text, such as with generalization, application, evaluation, and aesthetic responses (Taylor, Peterson, Rodriguez, & Pearson, 2002).

meant the teacher had fewer students to interact with at any one time. Other advantages were the differentiated materials for extensive reading, both graded readers and children's literature, and the overall focus on reading skills and development of strategies through guided reading at the teacher station. However, although this may be considered an ideal program from the perspective of reading development, from an EFL perspective, one drawback is its lack of focus on oral communication skills. Oral communication could be featured at the other stations besides the teacher station, although there is no specific station intended for this purpose. This is because the EYLP program was taken from an L1 reading and writing program, which, accordingly, did not require a component focused on oral language development. This is one area in which the EYLP program in Norwegian schools may not have been adapted well enough for EFL learning, and therefore it could be further developed.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The study presented here has contributed to EFL research through a mixed-methods study of teaching and learning in 4th and 5th grades. The application of mixed methods was comprised of quantitative and qualitative data from two primary sources: a national questionnaire sent to teachers and a case study of four schools.

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher specifically to address teachers' reading practices, use of materials, and their perceptions of reading instruction and best practice. In terms of a research instrument, the questionnaire could be further developed and used in other countries as a means of international comparison.

Related to the qualitative data collection at the case study schools, the mixed-methods approach allowed first for systematic observation, which could be tabulated and compared. This research has shown that the observation coding scheme developed by Taylor et al. (2000) for L1 reading instruction can also be applied to an L2 context with minor adaptations. This can be an effective tool for evaluating and tracking changes in reading instruction. Second, the mixed-methods approach has also enabled the researcher to view EFL reading instruction from multiple perspectives, (e.g., both teacher and student perspectives on reading instruction).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

Based on the results and discussions of the current research, three main implications appear to emerge from this study. First, there is a need for a greater focus on

reading skills, purpose, and strategies within EFL reading instruction in 4th and 5th grades. This includes helping to raise students' and teachers' awareness of transferring reading skills from Norwegian to English. Second, there is a need for greater use of differentiation and different types of differentiation to support reading development. Finally, there is a need for more teacher professional development.

Reading skills, purposes, and strategies

Reading skills in all subjects are a focus in the *LK06* curriculum. Additionally, further clarification of the reading construct is addressed in the Framework for Basic Skills. These documents specify that students need to develop lower- and higher-level comprehension skills, reading strategies, and knowledge of how and when to apply these skills and strategies. Since students are introduced to English reading and writing early in their school careers, it could be beneficial to view Norwegian and English reading development as complementary rather than supplementary. For example, the frequent focus on comprehension skills and strategies in the EYLP approach school is likely to have benefited the students' reading development (Taylor et al., 2000), despite less focus on transfer of L1 strategies.

There was little indication, based on the case study data, that teachers actively promoted the use of knowledge and strategies from the Norwegian subject in English reading instruction, even though most also acknowledged the connection between reading abilities in the two languages. Collaboration among English and Norwegian teachers is important because, although research has shown that L1 reading strategies can be transferred to L2 reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002), teachers need to actively support students in practicing transference of the strategies (Goldenberg, 2011). Since both lack of time and difficult transitions between grades were mentioned as a problem by teachers in the questionnaire, greater focus on time to discuss English teaching content, how to improve transitions between grades, and the transfer of skills from L1 to L2, would be beneficial for both generalist and specialist teachers in planning and promoting English development.

Differentiation

The need for increased differentiation related to materials, practices, interaction, and teacher expectations for students is a second implication of the study.

The research implications on extensive reading, and its ability to differentiate reading, is that one needs to reassess the popular approaches to EFL reading instruction that rely heavily on textbook use and traditional teacher-led methods of reading instruction (Drew, 2004). Since differentiated reading instruction depends on teachers having materials appropriate to the different needs of their students, this is an important issue.

Although research has found teacher recitation to be a common type of teacher interaction, it is limiting for student learning because of its focus on display of knowledge and teacher evaluation rather than opportunities for knowledge building, engagement, and dialogue (Littleton & Mercer, 2013). The interaction at the teacher station at the EYLP school, namely reading in small groups using guided reading, came closest to a balance of recitation and dialogic discourse (cf.).

Although the three teaching approaches studied in the current case study research appeared to be teacher-dependent, the EYLP approach may be considered even more so than the others, partially because some of the greatest benefits of the program come through the scaffolded and guided interactions at the teacher station. This is where the teacher can best support individual students' reading development. A teacher who is less aware of differentiation, or how best to model and provide scaffolding for using reading strategies, will be less effective in this setting.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous benefits of the EYLP approach (Drew, 2009). In the opinion of this researcher, it is possible to take some of the positive aspects of the EYLP approach and combine them with other approaches, such as the combination approach. Increasing the amount of time students work in smaller, level-differentiated reading groups with the teacher, focusing on comprehension skills and strategies development, and creating opportunities for extensive reading, especially of level-differentiated texts at home, could arguably lead to improvements in students' reading motivation and development.

Teacher professional development

The need for increased qualifications and training for language teachers in Norway has been widely acknowledged (Drew & Vigrestad, 2008; Hasselgreen, 2005; KD, 2007a). The findings from the questionnaire confirmed that almost half of 4th and 5th grade EFL teachers have no formal qualifications to teach English. Thus, there is a continuing need for more support for teachers through English planning teams, professional development, and in-service and further education courses. These findings indicate a gap in what teachers perceive as challenging, namely

differentiating for the wide range of ability levels among primary school students, and what they feel they can manage in their teaching. It is therefore important that this gap is addressed, for example through in-service training and additional materials and teaching methods that support teachers in differentiating English lessons, especially when teaching reading. Additionally, it could promote a greater degree of teacher collaboration between Norwegian and English teachers and among English teachers to support the transfer of and better progression of reading skills.

Reading approaches

Some final words about the approaches studied. First, the use of the EYLP in EFL education is innovative in its focus on reading development and differentiation. As far as this researcher is aware, Norway is the only country that uses this program for L2/FL teaching. Its use has increased in the past decade and it should thus receive more attention in future research. However, although interest is growing, it is still only used in a small percentage of schools. It is important to consider that the actual implementation of the EYLP approach will always be teacher-dependent and influenced by the skills and focus of the individual teachers. Second, the combination approach, as described in this research, offers a middle way for teachers to incorporate aspects of various materials and practices. This has real potential given that nearly a third of the teachers describe their teaching as using a combination approach. However, even within this approach there is room for improvement in how teachers can differentiate practices and reading aims, and how they can interact with the students. This is an area that, if given priority in future teacher training or in supportive materials for teachers, could potentially have a large impact on current EFL practices. Finally, there is large untapped potential in helping the nearly two-thirds of teachers who use a textbook-based approach to move towards a more varied and differentiated way of teaching. This is important in order to create discussion and meaningful interactions with texts, which are both included in the curriculum definition of reading (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013).

In conclusion, a focus on reading skills, greater understanding of the possibilities for differentiation, and teacher training and collaboration, would greatly enhance the state of EFL primary education in Norway.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In terms of future research, this doctoral study has indicated numerous areas for follow-up. First, a more thorough analysis of the interaction patterns used while

reading texts in class could yield interesting data about how differentiation is implemented, and the extent to which students are active in English lessons. As there is evidence that much EFL instruction is still teacher-led, it would be useful to look into effective ways to increase teacher modeling and scaffolding, rather than primarily teacher recitation and telling types of interactions.

Second, collaboration between language teachers, whether L1, L2, or other languages, is important for students to apply language learning skills and other skills in multiple languages. Therefore, a study of practice among teachers who have been actively supporting students in applying cross-linguistic reading and language strategies could support language teachers.

A third potential area for research is how to train and inform teachers about how to implement research-supported practices into their teaching. Specifically, it would be interesting to compare the guided reading instruction students at EYLP schools receive in their L1 and how, if at all, this is used to support L2 reading. It would also be interesting to investigate to what extent L1 graded readers written for L2 students are more or less supportive for language learning.

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