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## Norwegian and South African Teachers' Use of Songs in the ESL/EFL Classroom

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## Samandrag

Denne bacheloroppgåva tek føre seg lærarar sin bruk av songar i engelskundervisinga, og belyser fylgjande problemstilling: Brukar lærarar på barneskular i Noreg og Sør-Afrika engelske songar som undervisningsmateriale når dei skal hjelpe elevar til å utvikle eit breiare ordforråd og meir grammatikkunnskap? Viss ja, korleis?

Ei kvalitativ tilnærming i form av spørjeskjema har blitt brukt for å finne svar på problemstillinga. Åtte barneskulelærarar i Noreg og seks i Sør-Afrika har fylt ut eit semistrukturert spørjeskjema beståande av oppgitte svaralternativ, i tillegg til spørsmål som krev utfyllande svar. Spørjeskjemaa har blitt diskutert, samanlikna og sett opp mot teori.

Funna i spørjeskjemaa tyda på at alle informantane brukar eller har brukt songar i engelskundervisinga. I tillegg har nesten alle informantane svart at songar har blitt brukt til å anten undervise grammatikk eller vokabular, eller begge deler. Vidare forklarar informantane korleis dette blir gjort, og det viser seg at det er svært små skilnadar på undervisningsmetodane i dei to ulike landa. Det er faktisk like store skilnadar på undervisningsmetodane mellom lærarane innan kvart land, som det er mellom lærarane i dei to ulike landa.

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of songs in the ESL/EFL classroom in primary schools in Norway and South Africa. In South Africa, English is a second language, while in Norway it is a foreign language. This study is based on qualitative research, discussing questionnaires that have been handed out to English teachers in one primary school in Norway and one in South Africa.

The teachers in both South Africa and Norway have to follow a national curriculum that indicates a content to be covered in each subject within a given timeframe. The national curriculum in South Africa includes a teaching plan in each subject that indicates the minimum content to be covered every two weeks per term (Department of Basic Education, 2011), while the teachers in Norway have to follow a curriculum that indicates what the pupils should know after year 2, 4, 7 and 10 in each subject (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013). The current subject curriculum of English in Norway do not prescribe or suggest specific learning materials, meaning teachers can use texts and tasks from any imaginable source to support learning (Fenner & Ørevik, 2018, pp. 333-334). In South Africa the teachers should design their work schedules using the teaching plans, their text books and other resources to teach the content (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

In both countries the teachers have the opportunity to choose which teaching material they want to use in the ESL/EFL classroom and this study will focus on the use of songs. The use of songs is a teaching resource that has a great potential in English lessons, and this study aims to investigate if teachers in primary schools in Norway and South Africa are realizing this potential, despite the fact that they have to follow a national curriculum.

### 1.1 Research question

Do teachers in primary schools in Norway and South Africa use songs as a learning device to develop pupils' grammar and vocabulary acquisition in the ESL/EFL classroom and if so, how?

The first concern is whether songs are used to teach grammar and vocabulary in the ESL/EFL classroom at all. The second concern assumes that they in fact do, and deals with how teachers report their use of songs to develop pupils' grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

## 2. Theory

### 2.1 English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL)

Cambridge Dictionary defines “English as a foreign language” (EFL) as “English as taught to people whose main language is not English and who live in a country where English is not the official or main language” (Cambridge University Press, 2019). This definition fits English learning in Norway since the main language is Norwegian, and English is not an official language. However, this definition does not fit in South Africa since English is one of the official languages. The term “English as a second language” (ESL) is more suitable in South Africa. Cambridge Dictionary defines ESL like this: “English as taught to people whose main language is not English and who live in a country where English is an official or main language” (ibid). South Africa has many official languages, and only ten percent of the population speaks English as their first language. Nevertheless, English is widely used as a second language and common language of communication, mainly in the cities (South Africa Gateway, n.d.). In light of this, one can argue that English is a main language in South Africa, and therefore it is suitable to use the term “English as a second language” about the English learning.

Further in this paper, the term EFL will be used when discussing the English learning in Norway, and ESL will be used when discussing the English learning in South Africa. ESL/EFL will be used when discussing both of them.

### 2.2 Songs as a learning device

Songs and rhymes are excellent tools when pupils are learning a second language. According to musicologist Kulset, many children tend to learn how to sing a new language before they can speak it (2015, p. 58). Children mimic the sounds and are able to use the language without knowing the meaning of the words. Since the lyrics are always the same, it is easier for the brain to memorize phrases and phonology. The tongue and the oral cavity have to physically learn the language, and this happens when the pupils are singing. “It is as if we are sneaking the language into the brain” declares Kulset (2015, p. 57, my translation). Normally in songs, there is a rhyming word in the end of each line, the most important words are emphasized, and some words and phrases are often repeated. These factors help us to memorize linguistic features such as pronunciation, phrases, syntax and meaning (ibid., p. 59).

Some songs can be used with body movements to strengthen the pupils’ mastery of a new language and satisfy their need for physical exercise. Singing songs is a matter-of-fact

activity for children, and English sounds, intonation, phrases, grammar and words are thus acquired subconsciously without any ado (Birketveit & Williams, 2013, p. 66). Slowly, the teacher can start drawing attention to the meaning of individual words in the songs and, for instance, let the children compile lists of different words beginning with certain letters, color words, happy words and so on. Poetry in the form of songs should be put into a context to linger in the minds of the pupils, and it should be a natural part of their daily routines (ibid).

One can also simply let children listen to a song as background music while they carry out activities that do not require their full concentration. With young children, language learning is, to a large degree, a subconscious process anyway, and we should grab every opportunity to feed them the language (Munden & Myhre, 2015, p. 86)

### 2.3 Motivation

Motivation is one of the most important factors determining success in learning a second language. Motivation to learn a foreign language in the classroom often depends on the way the language is taught (Drew & Sørheim, 2016, p. 21). Teachers can make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn if classrooms are places pupils enjoy coming to because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, the learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear, and the atmosphere is supportive (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 88).

Learning material influences the way in which students encounter the subject (Fenner & Ørevik, 2018, p. 347). Songs and music can be entertaining and represent a welcoming diversion from the rest of the school work. If the teacher chooses songs that the pupils find relevant and catchy, this could increase the interest and engagement in the lessons. Through the use of musical activities, the pupils develop in various ways such as emotionally, motorically, socially, aesthetically and cognitively (Høigård, 2013, p. 35).

Teachers should have a purpose for teaching a specific activity, but young pupils do not require this awareness. Young children learn best when their focus is on a motivating activity, when they are *not* thinking about what they are supposed to be learning (Munden & Myhre, 2015, p. 42). Nevertheless, it is appropriate to focus on learning outcomes with older pupils. A meta-study by John Hattie concludes that “the more transparent the teacher makes the learning goals, the more likely the student is to engage in the work needed to meet the goal” (2011, p. 46). He emphasizes that pupils' involvement is the key to successful learning.

Motivation also plays part in how well we learn and remember vocabulary, primarily because it affects the quality of our attention and the amount of time we spend on learning. One reason for some learners doing better than others in the second language classroom is undoubtedly because they are better motivated (Cook, 2008, p. 136).

#### 2.4 Multiple intelligences

When learning by heart, chanting together is a traditional and successful learning strategy. There are many songs and rhymes that combine everyday language with actions that the pupils carry out during the singing or chanting. This allows them both to learn by doing and to learn by playing (Munden & Myhre, 2015, p. 94). Pupils have different ways of learning and different intelligences they use in their everyday life. In *The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner, 1993) seven types of intelligences are described: Musical Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence and Spatial Intelligence. Gardner proposes that individuals have multiple intelligences and that traditional IQ tests have assessed only a limited range of abilities. While all people possess some level of each intelligence, most will experience more dominant intelligences which impact the way they learn and interact with the world around them (Herndon, 2018).

If a teacher is having difficulty reaching a student in the more traditional linguistic or logical ways of instruction, the theory of multiple intelligences suggests several other ways in which the material might be presented to facilitate effective learning. One way to present content to students is through the use of songs. Songs can appeal to several of the intelligences: the musical, bodily-kinesthetic and spatial (and sometimes others). Having an understanding of different teaching approaches from which we all can learn, as well as a toolbox with a variety of ways to present content to pupils, is valuable for increasing the accessibility of learning experiences for all pupils (Herndon, 2018).

#### 2.5 The importance of listening.

In order to speak any language, including our first language, we first need to spend time listening to it (Drew & Sørheim, 2016, p. 50). It is equally important for pupils at intermediate and lower secondary levels to listen to as much English as possible as in the lower grades. By listening to natural samples of the target language, children will develop a feel for the sound system (ibid., p. 51). Language is like music. The foundation of a language is based upon

basic musical elements such as rhythm, movement and sound. Such elements are found in songs, poems, rhymes and in language games. Children are easily engaged when it comes to musical activities, and they do not have to be able to speak the language in order to participate (Høigård, 2013, p. 232).

## 2.6 Rhymes and rhythm

It is easier to remember language if it has rhythm, rhyme and melody. When children hear such language over and over again, they do not experience this as a mechanical language drill, but as language used in a meaningful context. They concentrate on the content and the fun of it, which is the ideal learning situation (Munden & Myhre, 2015, p. 85). English language is a rhythmical language in the sense that the time span between stressed syllables is of about the same length, no matter how many unstressed syllables there are between them. Children's rhymes often reflect this rhythmical pattern. Another good reason for using rhymes is that they are adaptable. There is almost always one that will fit the topic that the pupils are working with (ibid).

## 2.7 Vocabulary acquisition

The acquisition of vocabulary at first seems straightforward; we all know you need a large number of words to speak a language. Just how many is anybody's guess: one estimate claims 20,000 word 'families', that is, counting related words as one word – 'teacher' / 'teaches' / 'teaching' / 'taught', and so on. But there is a lot more to acquiring language than the acquisition of words (Cook, 2008, p. 46). Second language learning of vocabulary is not just learning a word but learning the range of information that goes with it. It is unlikely that every aspects of a word are learned simultaneously; we might not know its spelling; we might be missing some of the components of its meaning: we certainly will not know all the word combinations in which it can occur. The problems associated with going from the first language to the second are not just the transfer of the actual words, but also the relationships and overtones they carry out in the first language. Teachers cannot ignore the fact that the pupils have to learn not just the meaning and pronunciation of each word, but how to use it. One simple way of doing this is the traditional task of getting the students to make up sentences using particular words (ibid., p. 63).

According to Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 60), vocabulary has become one of the most active areas in second language acquisition research, and for most people, the



importance of vocabulary seems very clear. Acquiring a basic vocabulary is a significant accomplishment for a second language learner. Lightbown and Spada assert the following: “We can communicate by using words that are not placed in the proper order, pronounced perfectly, or marked with the proper grammatical morphemes, but communication often breaks down if we do not use the correct word” (ibid).

When we first encounter a new word or chunk, we hold it in our short-term memory for just a second or two, long enough to say it aloud (Munden, 2014, p. 121). We do not learn things in one go, we need to practice what we have learnt. It is especially important to remember this general principle when it comes to learning a new language. First, we learn what a new word or phrase means, then we need to work at remembering this new word or phrase, and finally we need to revisit it at a later stage, quite simple to practice remembering it. We need to meet and use the same language again and again, in a variety of contexts. Otherwise we do not really know it well enough to be able to use it when we need it (Munden & Myhre, 2015, p. 37).

Sometimes pupils should be encouraged to choose for themselves which words and chunks they want to learn. This is more motivating and more effective than being given a list by the teacher. Not all the items should be completely new to them, some they should recognize but do not yet use themselves. In this way these words and chunks can become part of the pupils’ productive vocabulary (Munden, 2014, p. 114).

## 2.8 Grammar acquisition

“Grammar is the business of taking a language to pieces, to see how it works,” according to grammarian David Crystal (cited in Dypedahl, 2012, p. 11). The problem of taking something to pieces, however, is that it will probably stop working. Thus, when we have learnt about the form and function of all the pieces, we also need to be able to put everything back together again (ibid).

The debate on how, and indeed whether, to teach grammar has raged among linguists, methodologists and teachers for centuries and has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some believe that it is not necessary to teach grammar in the classroom at all because learners will acquire grammar “naturalistically” by interacting with language and other language users. Many, however, hold the view that acquisition processes can be accelerated and optimized by means of appropriate pedagogy (Newby, 2018, p. 189).

Krashen and Terrell (1983) championed the idea that exposing learners to lots of English is far more effective than teaching them language explicitly. “Language acquisition can take place only when people understand messages in the target language... We acquire when we focus on what is being said, rather than how it is said” (ibid., p. 19). They argued that grammar rules should only be used to monitor and correct what we write and say; they do not help us produce language.

Richard Schmidt (in Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 115) proposes the *noticing hypothesis*, suggesting that nothing is learned unless it has been ‘noticed’. Noticing does not itself result in acquisition, but it is the essential starting point. From this perspective, comprehensible input does not lead to growth in language knowledge unless the learner becomes aware of a particular language feature. Schmidt hypothesized that second language learners could not begin to acquire a language feature until they had become aware of it in the input. The question of whether learners must be *aware* that they are ‘noticing’ something in the input is an object of considerable debate. According to information processing theories, anything that uses up our mental ‘processing space’, even if we are not aware of it or attending to it intentionally, can contribute to learning. From a usage-based perspective, the likelihood of acquisition is best predicted by the frequency with which something is available for processing, not by the learner’s awareness of something in the input (ibid).

### 3. Method

The term *methodology* refers to the way in which we approach problems and seek answers. Our assumptions, interests, and purposes shape which methodology we choose (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015, p. 3). The phrase *qualitative methodology* refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data – people’s own written or spoken words and observable behavior (ibid., p. 7). The qualitative researcher is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants views of the situation being studied (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38).

Although qualitative data is not gathered with the purpose of being directly counted or measured in an objective way, subsequent analysis can define categories through which certain aspects of qualitative data can be quantified. The common objective of all the different types of qualitative methods is to make sense of a set of (personal or cultural) meanings in the observed phenomenon and it is indispensable that the data should capture rich and complex details. Therefore, in order to achieve such a ‘thick’ description, almost any relevant information can be admitted as qualitative data (ibid).

A qualitative research method was selected for this study since it is desirable to get descriptive data from each informant. Teachers from various schools, of different ages, from two countries have been asked to fill out a questionnaire. By asking questions that require specific answers, the informants were encouraged to elaborate. This way we can get to know different experiences and opinions regarding the topic of this paper.

#### 3.1 Survey

“Surveys produce information to describe, compare, and predict attitudes, opinions, values, and behavior based on what people say or see” (Fink, 1995, p. 14). The survey in this study aims to compare and describe different attitudes amongst teachers towards the use of songs in English lessons. The survey includes a semi structured questionnaire that contains both questions where the alternative answers are already given and questions that encourage the informant to elaborate.

The questionnaire was developed in cooperation with another student who also writes a thesis about the use of songs in English lessons but has a different research question with focus on pronunciation among other things. I did my teaching practice in South Africa, while the other student did hers in Norway. The questionnaire was handed out to teachers in the practice schools of the two countries. After the teaching practice, the completed

questionnaires were shared between us. Some of the questions are more relevant to this thesis, and some are more relevant to the thesis of the other student. A few questions about pronunciation will thus not be discussed in this thesis.

The first page of the questionnaire consists of yes/no questions. In addition, there is an area where the informants got a chance to add extra comments to the yes/no questions. The answers to these questions give an idea of the teachers' experiences with use of songs in their English lessons.

In the following section we get more information about the informants' experience as English teachers, their reasons to use songs in the ESL/EFL classroom, what types of songs they use and how often they do this. In this section, the alternative answers are already given but the informants got a chance to make extra comments.

Finally, the informants answered to how they use songs to teach grammar and vocabulary. Here they got the chance to elaborate. These questions were asked in order to get examples on how songs can be used to develop pupils' vocabulary and grammar acquisition, and to find out whether there are differences between the informants in Norway and South Africa. The findings will be discussed in light of relevant theory, the ones discussed in the previous section, in order to find out if the informants realize the potential that songs can offer.

### 3.2 Informants

Fourteen teachers have completed the questionnaire for this study. Six of them work in a South African school, and eight in a Norwegian school. In order to differentiate between the informants throughout this paper, the South African informants will be referred to as SA1 – SA6, while the Norwegian informants will be referred to as N1 – N8. The South African informants teach in the province KwaZulu-Natal, where most people speak Isi-Zulu as their first language. Nevertheless, English is spoken in all lessons in the school mentioned in this paper. Already in grade R the pupils have to learn English. Grade R is the “reception class” that the pupils attend to before starting in grade 1. The pupils start in grade R when they are 5/6 years old, the same as grade 1 in Norway. In the practice school in South Africa there were both girls and boys in grade R to grade 3, while in grade 4 to 7 there were only girls.

Eight informants work in a primary school in Norway. This school participate in the program “singing school” which has the purpose of giving song a stronger position in Norwegian schools. The teachers in such schools get access to a lot of learning material that

can give them inspiration and training on how songs can become a part of their lessons (Syngende skole, n.d).

The biggest difference between language learning in the South African and Norwegian schools, is that English is spoken in all lessons in South Africa. In Norway, English is mostly spoken only in the English lessons (if that) even though some teachers tend to incorporate a bit of English into other subjects as well.

Having informants of two different nationalities can be beneficial to this study. These teachers have different backgrounds, cultures, norms, teaching experiences and education, which are factors that could have a great impact on their teaching. Informant N5, N6 and N7 completed the questionnaire in Norwegian, and their statements will thus be translated into English in this paper. When presenting these statements, I will indicate that they have in fact been translated. The rest of the informants answered in English, and their statements will be presented without mentioning that they are original.

### 3.3 Reliability

Dealing with the reliability of a study, we have to look at the accuracy of the data that is used, how the data is collected and how it has been processed (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 23). All the informants are English teachers in primary schools and their answers should thus be reliable. The questionnaire was handed out on paper by the researcher. Before the informants completed the questionnaire, they got information about this thesis and its topic. They were told to skip the questions that were not relevant to them, and that it was more important that they wrote down honest answers than answers that they thought would be beneficial for the study.

In order to not rush through the questions, the informants got a few days to fill out the questionnaire. The researcher was present in their school during these days, the informants had thus the opportunity to ask in case any questions were unclear. Nevertheless, no questions were asked, which hopefully means that the questions were clear and comprehensible. The fact that the informants had enough time to fill out the questionnaire and that they understood the questions, does most likely lead to more reliable answers. After collecting the questionnaires, the researcher could start to analyze and compare the answers.

### 3.3.1 How to analyze the data

A phenomenological approach is used to analyze the data in this thesis. In a qualitative design, a phenomenological approach is the research and description of people and their experiences and understandings of a phenomenon. The researcher tries to understand the meaning of a phenomenon through the eyes of a selected group of people (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 99). The researcher has to formulate a research question that can explore the meaning of the phenomenon to be studied, and then collect data from individuals that have experience and knowledge about this phenomenon (ibid., p. 100). In this paper, the phenomenon that has been studied is the use of songs in the ESL/EFL classroom, and the individuals that have experience about this are teachers in primary schools.

After collecting the data, the researcher looks at the content of it in order to find the material that is most relevant to the research question. The material is reviewed systematically while the most significant content is marked out and put into different categories. This process of giving categories to different parts of the content is called coding. Coding is a tool that is used to detect meaningful information, which also allows you to delete information that does not make sense (ibid., s. 101).

The next phase of the analysis is to look at the significant material that is picked out and see if there are statements that can illustrate a special meaning within the different categories. In this phase it is important to get the message of what the informants have said without changing the meaning of the original material. After this process, the researcher can start looking for patterns, connections and processes that can give a greater description of the theme (ibid., p. 105).

When coding the material, I developed four questions that are similar to the research questions of this paper and looked for answers to these in the material. The main categories in the analysis are thus the answers to the following questions: *1. Do teachers use songs at all in their lessons? 2. Why do teachers use songs? 3. How do teachers use songs to expand pupils' vocabulary? 4. How can songs be used to teach grammar?*

When looking for answers to the four questions, I went through the material systematically. Firstly, I made a table that represented all the informants and their answers to the yes/no questions in the first part of the questionnaire. If the informants wrote an extra comment to the yes/no questions, I wrote down the comment under the table together with their code names (N1-N8, or SA1-SA6). Some of these comments were used as answers to question 2-4. In this way it was easy to get an overview of how many that answered yes or no to each question. Secondly, I made a similar table when answering question 2, using different

numbers to represent each of their reasons to use songs in their lessons. In this part I also wrote down their comments along with their code names under the table.

Finally, I found answers to question 3 and 4 by looking at the comments the informants made to the yes/no question, in addition to their answers to question number 7 and 8 in the questionnaire (see appendix 7.1).

### 3.4 Validity

Data is not the reality, but a representation of it. When collecting data, it is important to consider how valid or relevant the material is, and how representative it is to the phenomenon that is studied (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 24). Critically analyzing the validity of the data in this thesis, a few questions appear: Is the data representative of all English teachers? The answer to this question is most likely no. Even though we tried to approach teachers of different ages, from different schools that teach different levels, there is not enough information to claim that this is representative for all English teachers. Through this study, we can get information that is representative for the informants. The study can just give us an idea of how some teachers like to teach and which material they prefer to include in their lessons. Nevertheless, the study can give a brief idea of the informants' use of songs in English lessons. We can find out if they use songs as a learning device at all, and from the ones that do use songs in the ESL/EFL classroom, we can learn about their experiences, and how they realize the potential that songs can offer. Moreover, we can get examples of how songs can be used to teach grammar and vocabulary.

Another question that appears when dealing with the validity of the survey is if the answers could have been better if another method was used, such as interview. In a questionnaire there are limits to what people can wish or write, the qualitative data one gets from them can therefore be limited and superficial (Lambert, 2012, p. 103). Furthermore, if the informant mentions something interesting, the researcher does not have the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. The informant may thus have experiences that the researcher does not get to know. Nevertheless, when using a questionnaire, there was time to approach a larger number of respondents, which is beneficial when dealing with the research questions in this thesis; *Do teachers in primary schools in Norway and South Africa use songs as a learning device to develop pupils' grammar and vocabulary acquisition in the ESL/EFL classroom and if so, how?*

### 3.5 Ethics

The informants got information about this thesis and the purpose of the survey when the questionnaire was handed out, which gave them an understanding of the investigation. After this, they could choose if they wanted to participate or not. This process of consent is called *active consent*. Active consent is where a participant actively agrees to take part. They tell you directly or they sign a consent form (Lambert, 2012, p. 141). In this case the participants told the researcher directly.

The questionnaire does not contain any personal questions and it was thus not necessary to sign a consent form or to contact NSD. The questionnaires were handed out in person in order to avoid email addresses, which count as personal data. All the participants had a few days to fill out the questionnaire and they could withdraw their consent at any time.



## 4. Results and discussion

This section will present the most significant findings of how the informants described their use of songs in English lessons. The findings are divided into four main categories consisting of answers to each of the following questions: *1. Do teachers use songs at all in their lessons? 2. Why do teachers use songs? 3. How do teachers use songs to expand pupils' vocabulary? 4. How can songs be used to teach grammar?* While presenting the results, some observations and interpretations will be made, and some of the most significant findings within each category will be discussed in light of theory. It will for the most part be used theory from the theory chapter, combined with some additional theory where this is relevant, serving as support for the discussion of results. After discussing the findings within each category, we will examine if there are differences between the use of songs in the ESL classroom in South Africa and the EFL classroom in Norway.

### 4.1. Do teachers use songs at all in their lessons?

The purpose of the first part of the questionnaire was to get an overview of whether teachers use songs or not in their English lessons, and in which contexts songs are used. One of the first questions that were asked was: Do you use English songs in your English lessons? All the informants, except SA2, responded that they do use songs in their English lessons. However, SA2 commented that s/he used to use songs when teaching in foundation phase, which is from grade R to grade 3. This means that all the informants do use or have used songs in their English lessons.

As mentioned in the validity section, the results in this study cannot be representable for other teachers than the ones that completed the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the fact that all the informants, some in a larger extent than others, reported that they indeed use or have used songs in the ESL/EFL classroom gives a favorable impression. Hence, one can presume that there is a large number of other teachers around the world who do the same.

The fact that all the informants reported that they use or have used songs in the ESL/EFL classroom, is a remarkable finding considering the importance of songs. For instance, musicologist Kulset (2015, p. 58) asserts that many young pupils tend to learn how to sing a new language before they can speak it. In addition, Høigård (2013, p. 232) states that the foundation of a language is based upon basic musical elements such as rhythm, movement and sound. In the light of this, one should not underestimate songs' impact on language acquisition in the ESL/EFL classroom.

Regarding the research question, this study does not just aim to discover whether the informants use songs in their ESL/EFL classroom or not, it aims to explore if they use songs specifically to teach grammar or/and vocabulary. We will now look at the number of informants who reported that songs are used to teach grammar and/or vocabulary, while section 4.3 and 4.4 will focus on how this is done.

To the yes/no questions in the questionnaire, twelve informants replied that they use songs to expand pupils' vocabulary. N2 answered "no" to this question, but later in the questionnaire s/he reported the following: "songs are used to teach new words, because pupils remember words better when they find them outside the textbook as well". This statement could signify that even though N2 has not used songs consciously to expand pupils' vocabulary, s/he finds songs beneficial when pupils are learning new words.

Eleven informants reported that they use songs to teach grammar, and five of these stated that they have used songs specifically to search for word classes.

Concerning the fact that completed questionnaires are collected from teachers in both South Africa and Norway did not have any impact on this part of the survey. One informant from each country reported that songs are not used to teach vocabulary. One informant from South Africa and two from Norway reported that songs are not used to teach grammar. There were not any significant differences between the number of informants who use songs in the ESL/EFL classroom in the two countries. In the last section we will explore if there are differences in their ways of teaching.

#### 4.2. Why do teachers use songs in their English lessons?

The teachers reported different reasons for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom. Some teachers use songs to teach grammar or vocabulary, some do it for amusement and others use songs to fit with different themes they teach. In this section we are not going to focus on the use of songs as a teaching resource when teaching grammar and vocabulary, since this will be discussed in section 4.3 and 4.4. Instead, we will look at other reasons for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom.

The importance of amusement in the ESL/EFL classroom is emphasized by the informants, and eleven of them stated that they use songs for motivation/fun. N1 pointed out: "The class loves to sing and have been singing English songs almost daily since 1<sup>st</sup> grade". SA2 stated that s/he used songs in foundation phase "to create a fun and calm learning environment and a positive atmosphere", which means that songs have been used for

entertainment in his/her lessons as well. There are thus twelve informants that use or have used songs for motivation/fun in their English lessons.

Two informants reported that they do not use songs for the sake of motivation, which is a bit unfortunate considering the importance of motivation in the ESL/EFL classroom. According to Drew & Sørheim (2016, p. 21) motivation is one of the most important factors determining success in a second language, and motivation often depends on the way the language is taught. Learning material influences the way in which the pupils encounter the subject (Fenner & Ørevik, 2018, p. 347), and one should thus sometimes choose material that amuse the pupils. Høigård (2013, p. 35) asserts that songs and music can be entertaining and represent a welcoming diversion from other school work, and if the teacher chooses songs that the pupils find relevant and catchy, this could increase the interest and engagement in the lessons. In the light of this, one can argue that the informants should not ignore the importance of motivation in the ESL/EFL classroom. Despite this, one can assume that many of the pupils of the two informants have most likely been motivated in one way or another, for instance because they enjoy singing or listening to songs in the lessons, even though this was not the intention of the teacher.

One of the alternatives to the question about why teachers use songs in their lessons was “other”, and the informants could add other reasons for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom. SA1 stated that songs are used “to add to a theme we might be teaching”, and N5 explained that songs can be used as “a break from the work”, or as an “introduction to a theme” (my translation). Both of the informants pointed out that they use songs when teaching within a specific theme, and we can assume that this could increase the engagement amongst the pupils in the lessons. As already mentioned, Høigård (2013, p. 35) claims that music and songs can represent a welcoming diversion from the rest of the school work, and that catchy songs can increase the engagement in the lessons. Based on this statement, we can presume that songs can increase the motivation and participation in the classroom, which can lead to acquisition of both language and the content within the themes.

SA2 stated that songs were used in foundation phase (grade R-3) to create a fun and calm learning environment and a positive atmosphere. S/he used to play music while the learners did their work and found that they enjoyed listening and working at the same time. In this situation it could seem like informant SA2 has not considered that s/he is exposing the pupils to the language when they listen to music in the classroom. The pupils are in fact not just enjoying themselves in this situation, they are also acquiring language. According to Munden & Myhre (2015, p. 86), this is a good opportunity to feed the pupils the language.

When young pupils are listening to a song as background music while they carry out activities that do not require their full attention, they are acquiring the language subconsciously (ibid).

In the two following sections we will look at how some teachers report their use of songs to expand pupils' grammar and vocabulary acquisition in the ESL/EFL classroom. As mentioned in the chapter about the validity of this study, there are some limitations in regard to what people can write in a questionnaire, and the results can therefore be limited and superficial. To some of the answers in the next sections it would be useful to ask follow-up questions, considering some of the answers are a bit limited. Nevertheless, the benefits of using a questionnaire is that we have many informants, and we will now look at how they describe their use of songs to expand pupils' grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

#### 4.3. How and why do teachers use songs to expand pupils' vocabulary?

Initially, the purpose of this section was to explore how teachers use songs to expand their pupils' vocabulary in the ESL/EFL classroom. In the questionnaire the informants were asked if they had experienced that songs had helped expanding their pupils' vocabulary. If they had, they could elaborate on how. When analyzing the questionnaire, I observed that many of the informants explained *why* songs expand their pupils' vocabulary and not *how* they do it. This is not necessarily a wrong answer to the question, but perhaps a different way to approach it. Thus, in the following sections we will first look at *how* some teachers use songs to expand pupils' vocabulary, and secondly, we will look at *why* some teachers do it.

##### 4.3.1. How do teachers use songs to expand pupils' vocabulary?

Several informants emphasize the importance of using songs when teaching vocabulary within different themes in the ESL/EFL classroom. SA4 explained: "Young learners learn the names for body parts, different kinds of weather, seasons, words for emotions and just about any theme, using songs for repetition (repeated exposure to a word is necessary to learn new vocabulary)". Informant N6 share the same view and stated the following: "We use songs to practice new words within different themes, like different kinds of weather, the days, seasons, numbers, things to do etc. I have experienced that my pupils find this helpful" (my translation). It could seem like informant N6 have experienced that the pupils learn new words from songs, but that s/he did not know the exact reason for this. The reason could probably be the same as the one mentioned by informant SA4; because the pupils are

repeatedly exposed to the new words, which is essential to learn new vocabulary. Munden and Myhre (2015, p. 37) adapt a similar stance and agree that we need to practice what we have learnt. When we learn the meaning of a new word, we must work at remembering this. We must also meet and use the same language again and again, in a variety of contexts. When the informants use songs in their lessons, the pupils are given the opportunity to repeat the words again and again. This provides a good starting point for the pupils to learn the words and use them later on.

Some informants reported that they find corresponding movements useful when singing in the ESL/EFL classroom. Informant SA6 stated the following: “One can teach about body parts through a song and let the learners touch these parts to make it easier to remember them and the difference between them”. In this way SA6 uses demonstration to teach the new language. This is also something SA5 does in the classroom and s/he reported the following: “A teacher has to demonstrate when teaching, by touching or pointing to each word the pupils are going to learn”. Both of the informants agree that it is important to make corresponding movements while they sing in the language classroom. When the pupils get the opportunity to move in the classroom while they sing, they activate intelligences that are not used otherwise, such as the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. As the *Theory of multiple intelligences* (Gardner, 1993) purposes, we have different ways of learning and different intelligences we use in our everyday life. Everyone possesses some level of each intelligence and most people will experience that some intelligences have more impact on the way they learn (Herndon, 2018). Therefore, according to this theory it is reasonable to claim that the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence has more impact on some pupils’ way of learning, and these pupils will thus most likely learn more when they get the opportunity to move in the ESL/EFL classroom.

#### 4.3.2. Why do teachers use songs to expand pupils’ vocabulary?

“Some pupils are interested in learning and understanding the meaning of songs, and actively ask for the meaning of words and phrases” reported informant N1. Various teachers use songs when teaching vocabulary because they find that the pupils enjoy it. SA3 expressed that songs do “most definitely” expand pupils vocabulary since “Children learn best when they are enjoying themselves”. S/he explained that children have fun with songs and that their vocabulary improves as they learn new words through the use of songs. Munden (2014, p. 121) supports the notion of pupils having fun with songs and that they find it motivating, but in order to keep the pupils motivated when using songs in the classroom, it is important to choose songs that the pupils find relevant and catchy. Informant SA3 claimed that pupils’

vocabulary is expanded when songs are used in the classroom, because they enjoy it. However, if the pupils are actually going to enjoy themselves, the teacher have to choose a fetching song that is relevant for the content and suitable for their age.

A good reason for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom is, according to some informants, that pupils learn better when they meet the language in a context. N2 stated the following: “They get to understand popular songs in new ways and remember words better when they find them outside the textbook as well”. This statement was supported by N3 who expressed: “By listening to or sing songs, the pupils learn new words and new ways to use them in a context”. Both informants claimed that by using songs in any way in the language classroom, the pupils get to expand their vocabulary and learn how to use new words in a context. Munden and Myhre (2015, p. 85) assert that it is important to listen to songs when learning vocabulary since it is easier to remember language if it has rhythm, rhyme and melody. They declare that if children hear such language over and over, they do not experience this as a mechanical language drill, but as language used in a meaningful context. Once again, if the teacher chooses songs that the learners find relevant, this could lead to more learning.

One informant reported another important reason for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom when teaching vocabulary. N7 expressed the following: “Pupils understand more when they listen to songs and are thereafter able to use more of the language” (my translation). This informant does not point out why pupils should sing songs, but why it is important to listen to them. S/he claims that listening to songs will lead to more understanding and the pupils will thus be able to speak more. According to Drew & Sørheim (2016, p. 50) we need to spend time listening to a language in order to speak it. Having this in mind, it is reasonable to claim that pupils acquire new vocabulary, not just by singing songs, but by listening to them as well.

#### 4.4. How can songs be used to teach grammar?

In this last section we are going to look at how some teachers explained their use of songs when teaching grammar. As mentioned in section 4.1, eleven of the informants reported that they use songs as a teaching resource to teach grammar. Nevertheless, not all these informants answered to the question of how this is done. The reason for this is uncertain. It could be that some informants knew that they have used songs to teach grammar earlier, but did not remember how, or could not think of an example. Another reason could be that it was too

much to explain, and hence, they chose to not answer the question. This is one of the disadvantages of using a questionnaire, since the informants would probably give more information if they were interviewed. Despite this, many of the informants did explain how they use songs to develop their pupils' grammar acquisition. Most of them informed that they focus on the lyrics.

Both informant SA1 and N2 claimed that songs tend to use grammar incorrectly, and that this is discussed in class. N2 stated the following: "it is helpful to use examples from songs with incorrections when going through different grammar topics, such as "you was"". Informant SA1 had a similar statement: "Songs are not used specifically to teach grammar, although "bad grammar" is discussed in a song. I have pointed out incorrect use of language in a song". Concerning these statements, one could discuss if these grammatical features, that the informants regard as "incorrections", indeed are incorrections. There is a great number of English accents and dialects around the world, which means that some language features are not necessarily "incorrect" even though they differ from standard written English. Flognfeldt and Lund (2016, p. 267) point out that at first, it is always difficult to decode language that differs only just a little from what you are used to, but all it takes, however, is exposure to and insight into the characteristics of the variety. Some English dialects, for instance in the southeast of England, use the singular form of the verb *to be* for all persons: I was, you was, he, she and it was, we was, you was and they was (ibid., p. 277). Hence, according to this theory one can claim that some of the features that the informants regard as "incorrections" may not be wrong use of language, but rather dialects. Nevertheless, the songs could be used to point out these language features for the pupils in order to give them insight into the characteristics of some dialects. In addition, the teachers could explain that it is not necessarily wrong to say "you was" and that such language features will be found in various lyrics since some singers use dialect, but that one should not write it in other contexts. Moreover, the teachers can provide examples from their own language and dialect and point out how some words/phrases can be spoken but should not be written.

While some teachers use songs to point out "incorrections", other teachers use songs to point out the correct use of language. Both N3 and N5 reported that they use songs to recognize different aspects of English. N3 pointed out that there are "lots of grammar in songs" and gives an example of how to bring it out: "Listen. They sing she runs – why not she run?" Getting this question, the pupils start to think about the use of English in the lyric. N5 adds the following example of how songs can be used to teach grammar: "Listen, sing, stop and refer to how we use it. The effect of recognition" (my translation). These informants also

try to make the pupils aware of different aspect of the language. Again, the informants want to differentiate between correct and incorrect use of language, but in this case, they point out the correct use and discuss what could be “incorrect”. It could be useful to inform the pupils about different dialects in these cases as well. Nevertheless, the teachers intend to make their pupils aware of different aspects of the language by providing examples and help them to notice the features. In Schmidt’s *noticing hypothesis* (in Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 115), he proposes that second language learners cannot begin to acquire a language feature until they have become aware of it in the input. He claims that comprehensible input does not lead to growth in language knowledge unless the learner becomes aware of a particular language feature. In another perspective, the likelihood of acquisition is best predicted by the frequency with which something is available for processing, not by the learner’s awareness of something in the input (ibid). It seems like the informants are teaching in a way that occur between these two perspectives. In one way, it appears that they intend to develop their pupils’ grammar acquisition by letting them listen and sing songs, without being *aware* that they are noticing something. In another way, after listening and singing a song, the teachers try to make the pupils aware of different language features.

In the didactics book *English Teaching Strategies*, the authors Drew and Sørheim (2016) discuss how one can teach within different themes in the English subject and mention different approaches to songs when teaching grammar. The teacher can for instance, delete words from a song text, which pupils are asked to fill in as they listen. Answers can be checked either in plenary sessions or in pair/groups (ibid., p. 55). Some informants in this study also have a similar approach to songs when teaching grammar. Informant SA3 mentioned one approach: “Listen to the song and focus on a particular verb tense or aspect of grammar”. It is unclear what SA4 meant by “focus on” in this statement, and it would be useful to ask follow-up questions since the answer is a bit limited. This is one of the disadvantages of using questionnaires that was mentioned in the validity section 3.4. The same issue occurs when discovering the answer of informant N1 who stated the following: “Identifying different word classes in the song. Remove verbs/nouns from the lyrics and let the pupils fill in the missing words”. This explanation is clearer than the previous one, but it is still unclear how N1 “identify” the different word classes. Does s/he or the pupils identify them? Maybe they do it together? It would be possible to ask these questions if another research method was chosen for this study, and I would probably get more detailed answers from the informants. Despite this, the informants’ answers are useful after all since they provide examples of how songs can be used to teach grammar.



The last teaching method that will be presented is one stated by SA4, which is to “highlight for instance action words in a song”. It is not explained any further why or how this is done. Nevertheless, one can assume that s/he has highlighted action words (verbs) in a song in order to help the pupils to notice this particular word class. This teaching method can be seen in the light of the *noticing hypothesis* proposed by Richard Schmidt (in Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 115) which suggest that nothing is learned unless it has been ‘noticed’. The fact that SA4 highlights word classes in a song, can be a good starting point for the pupils. When the pupils have noticed a particular word class, they can start understanding what this particular word class contains and thereafter explore other word classes.

#### 4.5 Differences between Norway and South Africa

As mentioned in section 4.1, there were no significant differences between Norway and South Africa regarding the number of informants who use songs to develop pupils’ grammar and vocabulary acquisition. Concerning their teaching methods and reasons for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom there were no significant differences either. One could assume that the fact that the teachers have different backgrounds, cultures, teaching experiences etc. would result in a big difference between their teaching strategies but in this study, it did not. There are as much differences between the teachers of the two different countries as there are between the teachers within each country. After looking at the utterances of the informants regarding the use of songs to develop pupils’ grammar and vocabulary acquisition, I discovered that there in fact are various similarities between Norway and South Africa. The informants of the two different countries have mentioned several almost identical approaches to songs in the ESL/EFL classroom.

As explained in the introduction, the teachers in both South Africa and Norway have to follow a national curriculum that indicates a content to be covered in each subject within a given timeframe. The timeframes in South Africa (every two weeks) is much smaller than in Norway (after year 2, 4, 7 and 10), which could have an impact on the teachers’ choice of teaching material and teaching methods. This study did not reveal if the teachers in South Africa were more ‘stressed’ because of the short timeframes, but it revealed that the informants have chosen to use songs in their lessons. As we have seen, the informants have mentioned several reasons for why it is beneficial to use songs in the ESL classroom, and it could seem like the informants try to realize this potential. Songs are not just entertaining, but they are also useful when teaching various contents to the pupils.

In Norway the teachers have bigger time frames and are thus more able to distribute their time in the way that they want to, as long as they cover the content that is indicated in the national curriculum. The results in this study revealed that the informants in Norway do also find songs useful in the EFL classroom, and that songs are used as a teaching material when covering the content in the subject curriculum of English. As a result of this, it could seem like the use of songs is not affected by the time frames that the teachers of the two countries have to follow. As a matter of fact, it seems like songs are actively used as a resource when covering the content within the national curriculum in each country.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine teachers' use of songs in the ESL/EFL classroom in Norway and South Africa, putting emphasis on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. The thesis aimed to answer the following research questions: *Do teachers in primary schools in Norway and South Africa use English songs as a learning device to develop pupils' grammar and vocabulary acquisition in the ESL/EFL classroom and if so, how?* Questionnaires have been handed out to English teachers in primary schools in Norway and South Africa as a tool to answer the research question.

When analyzing the questionnaires, it was developed four main categories consisting of the answers to the following questions: *1. Do teachers use songs at all in their lessons? 2. Why do teachers use songs? 3. How do teachers use songs to expand pupils' vocabulary? 4. How can songs be used to teach grammar?* These questions are quite similar to the ones in the research question, which is why they were developed. To answer the questions, I looked at the informants' answers in the questionnaire and discussed this in light of relevant theory.

After exploring the findings in category 4.1, we can conclude that all the informants do use or have used songs in the ESL/EFL classroom and that most of them have used songs specifically to develop pupils' vocabulary and grammar acquisition. As mentioned in the validity chapter, this finding cannot be representable for all English teachers, but it can give an impression. These findings give the impression that many teachers do use songs to develop pupils' vocabulary and grammar acquisition in the ESL/EFL classroom.

Section 4.3 and 4.4 were developed in order to answer the last part of the research question, which concerns how teachers use songs to develop pupils' vocabulary and grammar acquisition. The findings in section 4.3 revealed that several informants explained *why* they use songs in the ESL/EFL classroom rather than *how* they do it. Most of the informants that explained *why* they used songs to expand their pupils' vocabulary mentioned that they do it for the sake of motivation. Some of those who explained *how* they use songs to expand their pupils' vocabulary mentioned that songs are useful when learning new words within different themes in the ESL/EFL classroom. Two other informants claimed it is useful to make corresponding movements while they sing because it makes it easier for the pupils to remember new words. This claim is supported by Gardner's theory of *multiple intelligences*.

Section 4.4 presented the informants' explanations of how songs can be used as a learning device when teaching grammar in the ESL/EFL classroom. In this section some disadvantages of questionnaires were discovered. For instance, some of the answers were a bit

limited and it would most likely be beneficial to ask follow-up questions to some of the responders. Despite this, various examples of how to use songs when teaching grammar were presented and could be seen in light of relevant theory.

## 6. Literature

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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1 Questionnaire

#### **Teacher survey**

We are two students that are giving this questionnaire to teachers in primary schools in Norway and South Africa in order to get answers that can help us in our work with our bachelor theses. The focus will be on the use of songs in English lessons.

In the first part of the questionnaire we are looking for primarily yes/no answers. If you have something to add beyond yes/no please elaborate in the comment section. In the second part you may skip the questions that are not relevant for you. This survey is anonymous, so please do not write your name.

Question	Yes	No	Comment
1. Do you have the required credit points in English to teach it as a school subject?			
2. Do you use English songs in your English lessons?			
3. Do you deliberately choose songs that work with the theme you are teaching?			
4. Do you read through the lyrics with your pupils before you sing a song?			
5. Do you focus on pronunciation or spelling when reading through a song lyric?			
6. Have you used songs to teach grammar?			
7. Have you used songs specifically to search for word classes?			

8. Have you used songs to expand pupils' vocabulary?			
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1. How many years have you taught English for? \_\_\_\_\_ years

2. In what grade(s) do you teach English? (you may choose more than one answer)

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. How often do you use songs in your English lessons?

- Very often     
 Often     
 Sometimes     
 Rarely     
 Never

4. Why do you use songs in your lessons? (you may choose more than one answer)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> To teach new words     | <input type="checkbox"/> To teach grammar   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To teach pronunciation | <input type="checkbox"/> For fun/motivation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No reason              | <input type="checkbox"/> Other              |

If other, please elaborate:

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5. Do you decide the songs to be used in the lesson in your planning, or do the pupils get to decide? Why so?

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6. What kinds of songs do you use?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's songs | <input type="checkbox"/> Songs from TV-shows     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pop-music        | <input type="checkbox"/> Songs from the textbook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-made        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                   |

If other, please elaborate \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Have you experienced that songs have helped expand your pupils' vocabulary? If yes, in what way?

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8. If you have used songs to teach grammar, how have you done this?

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9. If you have used songs to teach pronunciation, how have you done this?

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