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MASTER'S THESIS

Preparing Students for Reading in an Image-Based World: Insights from EFL Teachers

Vidar Amdal

MGUEN550 Master's in Education with English Didactics

Faculty of Education, Arts and Sports

Supervisor: Jena Lee Habegger-Conti

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Jeg bekrefter at arbeidet er selvstendig utarbeidet, og at referanser/kildehenvisninger til alle kilder som er brukt i arbeidet er oppgitt, jf. Forskrift om studium og eksamen ved Høgskulen på Vestlandet, § 12-1

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It is a strange sensation to write the final words of this thesis. The process of going from a student fresh out of upper secondary school to completing a master's thesis has been long and interesting. I have met a lot of great friends along the way and through these friends, found support and strength for both educational and personal matters. Thank you for every laugh along the way.

I am now looking forward to a new journey as this has been a good one. By having a masters' thesis related to visual literacy, I hope to contribute to a shared knowledge of teaching images alongside other teachers. This journey will certainly be an interesting one as working as a teacher brings both challenges and joys in a hectic everyday life.

The process of writing has been long and difficult, to begin with it seemed to be in no way possible, and for a few moments I may have believed this. Through hard work and great support, it has been made possible and the result is finally here. I hope that this thesis may bring insight and be a factor towards a better understanding of how to use images and multimodal texts.

Bergen 14th May 2023

Vidar Amdal

Abstract

Images are more and more prominent in contemporary society, with social media being a big contributor. As the education at school should reflect today's society, the increase in use of images should also be evident in classes. The new definition of text found in the curriculum, was expanded in 2012 to include images and other modes of communication as part of the term text. The English curriculum states that multimodal texts shall be used in the English classes, however, it is uncertain how this works in practice. I have therefore investigated how teachers of the Norwegian EFL classroom both understand and use text.

The data material for this thesis has been collected by conducting a small-scale interview study, featuring a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to interview four English teachers at primary and lower secondary school. These interviews bring insight in how the teachers use multimodal texts and work with the new definition of text. By analysing the data, uncovering theoretical knowledge, didactic practices and challenges have helped create insight into how the current EFL teachers work with text.

While all the teachers are aware of the expanded text term, there is still little use of images in today's classrooms. It seems that written text is favoured, and textbooks are used extensively, while composite or multimodal texts, although specified in the curriculum, are used superficially. The teachers present several challenges, such as the current text culture, familiarity, time management and structure of the curriculum. These challenges affect different aspects, where familiarity and time relate to the students and the didactic practices, whilst the text culture and curriculum comes from the guidance documents and general perception of text.

The teachers in this study display a theoretical awareness of how to use images, but have rarely used images as the main teaching material. To address the issues, teachers need more guidance and examples to better integrate multimodal texts in their lessons. There also needs to be more emphasis on teaching images and multimodal texts in the teacher education, as well as a disruption of the current written text culture which limits teachers in terms of methods.

Sammendrag

Bilder blir mer og mer fremtredende i dagens samfunn, hvor sosiale medier er en stor bidragsyter. Ettersom skolen burde gjenspeiles i dagens samfunn, vil økningen i bildebruk også burde finnes i klasserommet. Den nye definisjonen av tekst fra læreplanverket ble utvidet i 2012 til å inkludere bilder og andre midler som bidrar til å kommunisere som del av tekstbegrepet. Læreplanen for engelskfaget viser til at sammensatte tekster skal bli brukt i timene, men det er derimot usikkert hvordan dette skjer i praksis. Jeg har derfor undersøkt hvordan norske engelsklærere både forstår begrepet og bruker tekst.

Datamaterialet for denne oppgaven er innsamlet ved hjelp av en kvalitativ intervjustudie i småskala. Fire engelsklærere som underviser på barne- og ungdomsskolen ble intervjuet der intervjuene var delvis strukturerte. Disse intervjuene førte til innsikt i hvordan lærere bruker multimodale tekster og hvordan de arbeider med den nye definisjonen av tekst. Gjennom å analysere dataen ble teoretisk kunnskap, didaktisk praksis og utfordringer fremhevet. Dette førte til bedre innsikt i hvordan de nåværende engelsklærerne jobber med tekst.

Til tross for at alle lærerne viste bevissthet og refleksjoner rundt det utvidede tekstbegrepet, er det likevel lite bruk av bilder i dagens engelsktimer. Det ser ut som at skriftbaserte tekster er fremhevet og at det er omfattende bruk av lærebøker. Selv om sammensatte eller multimodale tekster er fremhevet i læreplanen, er de brukt på en overfladisk måte. Lærerne viser til ulike utfordringer knyttet til å bruke bilder i timene sine, slik som den nåværende tekstkulturen, vaner og kjennskap, tidsbruk og læreplanen. Disse utfordringene er tilknyttet forskjellige aspekter, hvor vaner og kjennskap og tidsbruk er tilknyttet elever og didaktiske aspekter, og utfordringer med tekstkulturen og læreplanen er tilknyttet sentrale styringsdokumenter og den generelle oppfatningen av tekst.

Lærerne i denne studien viser en teoretisk bevissthet for hvordan man kan bruke bilder, men har sjeldent brukt bilder som eneste undervisningsmateriale. For å ta hånd om problemene som er nevnt, må lærere få bedre veiledning og eksempler på hvordan man kan integrere multimodale tekster i timene sine. Det er også et behov i lærerutdanningene med mer fokus på å undervise hvordan man kan bruke bilder og multimodale tekster i undervisning, samt for å bryte opp den etablerte tekstkulturen som forhindrer videreutviklingen av læreres didaktiske praksis knyttet til multimodale tekster.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Research Questions	4
1.3	The Curriculum	4
1.4	Previous Research	6
1.5	Structure of the Thesis.....	7
2	Theoretical Considerations	8
2.1	Literacy.....	8
2.2	Visual Literacy	10
2.3	Critical Visual Literacy	12
2.4	Multimodality.....	13
2.5	Reading.....	17
2.6	Text.....	18
2.7	Communication	19
3	Methodology.....	21
3.1	Qualitative Research.....	22
3.2	Informant Sample	22
3.3	Interview Type.....	23
3.4	Interview Guide	25
3.5	Data Analysis.....	30
3.6	Codes	32
3.6.1	Education.....	32
3.6.2	Enjoyment	33
3.6.3	Multimodality.....	33
3.6.4	Pictures as Complementary	33
3.6.5	Problems with Teaching Multimodal Texts.....	34
3.6.6	Text Culture.....	34
3.6.7	Teacher Awareness	34
3.6.8	Social Media	35
3.7	Validity and Reliability	35
3.8	Research Ethics	36
3.9	Limitations.....	37

3.10	Chapter Summary	38
4	Findings and Discussion	39
4.1	Personal Description of Each Teacher.....	39
4.1.1	Informant 1, Mari.....	39
4.1.2	Informant 2, Thomas.....	40
4.1.3	Informant 3, Matias.....	40
4.1.4	Informant 4, Kristin	41
4.2	Discussing Coded Responses	41
4.2.1	Enjoyment	41
4.2.2	Multimodality.....	44
4.2.3	Pictures as Complementary	47
4.2.4	Problems with Teaching Multimodal Texts.....	50
4.2.5	Text Culture.....	54
4.2.6	Teacher Awareness	58
4.2.7	Social Media	62
4.3	Chapter Summary	63
5.	Conclusion	67
	References.....	70
	Appendices.....	75
	Appendix 1.....	75
	Appendix 2.....	78
	Appendix 3 (<i>given in a separate document</i>)	

1 Introduction

“Why do we have such powerful responses towards the images and pictures we see in everyday life?” (Mitchell, 2005, inside cover)

1.1 Background

I chose to work with visual literacy in my master’s thesis due to my own experiences with visual literacy in my education at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL). I find working with written texts and reading books interesting and entertaining, but images have expanded my interest. While written text, such as books, can be entertaining to work with, working with images and visual literacy was more interesting to me. Working with images is something that made me become more aware of how certain issues can be enforced in images. In the courses on critical and multimodal literacy, we discussed positioning, power, representation, and didactic tasks such as re-design. This made me aware of how little I knew about these themes beforehand. Based on my own ignorance, I started to wonder how aware current teachers are of these themes and decided I wanted to find out more about the current situation of visual literacy in the English classroom.

Images have always been an important part of our world, but there has been a change of role between images and written text over the last years. While books are still relevant and important, images have become more and more prominent in society. Multimodal media such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat have become more important for the children of this generation compared to previous generations. Most social media feature content from the global English-speaking world. This is the dominant hegemony of most social media platforms and is the decider for what is trendy and important. Hollywood has been an intense contributor to spreading pro-American culture, while social media today spreads all kinds of cultures and mindsets. The dominant cultures within social media are the ones with the highest impact. This has created the need for a different type of reading. The reading and the grammar of images need to be taught to ensure that students can read critically in the world they grow up in.

Frank Serafini (2014) states: “In today’s world, visual images play a role in most everything we do” (p. 1). This statement raises the issue of visual literacy being a necessity in normal everyday life, but other scholars as well have stated similar ideas. For example, a similar statement is made by Carmen Herrero in the foreword in the book by Elena Dominguez Romero, Jelena Bobkina and Svetlana Stefanova (2019): “As technological innovation evolves,

multimodal communication is more and more present in our daily life” (p. xvii). The sheer amount of visual images surrounding us becomes overwhelming, and people go about their daily lives without fully understanding how and what images communicate. This is contrary to language learning, where exposure to a language will help one acquire it. According to William John Thomas Mitchell (2007), there was a massive increase of attention towards images from 1980 to 2007, and Serafini (2014) states that this development is still ongoing. As 2014 is nine years ago, the children born that year are attending school and experiencing this development as natives to the digital and visual age (Serafini, 2014, p. 99). This means they were born into an image-based society and have always been surrounded by images and technology. This shows that it is increasingly important that the children are taught how to be critical when consuming visual media, as this awareness is not a skill that is learned passively.

Students are online at an early age and are often given access to smartphones or other digital tools that they can use to participate in social arenas (Medietilsynet, 2022, p. 8). The lower secondary students today grew up with technology from a very young age, causing them to have different thoughts and ideas of how the world works as a result. On the other hand, I went to school in the years 2005-2018 and saw an increase in digital tools in the schools I attended. Yet, I did not see the focus on digital creation, until my final two years where one specific English teacher had a passion for using multimodal media. Nowadays, the students are creating visual and multimodal texts with ease on social media platforms, but must write texts consisting of only written text in the classroom. It seems that the main purpose of an image is to help students understand the written part of a multimodal text. My impression is that written text is often found to be the main focus, while images are complementary and subordinated to the written text, and that digital visual aspects of text are undermined by other topics in English lessons. As a result, the students are not educated within the field of visual literacy that the basic skills from the curriculum imply they should master.

Mitchell (2007) suggests that images can be dangerous for a nation if the people are uneducated, as the images could tell a wrongful story. Images can be manipulated to convey a meaning different to what was intended. This is the fear of non-fact checked media, such as the fast pace social media platforms people use today. Medietilsynet (2022) semi-annually research what media children in Norway use, and TikTok is one of the most prominent media. 73% of the children use TikTok according to the research published in September 2022. Comparing the use of TikTok and the image-based media Snapchat, TikTok is used by 40% whereas Snapchat is used by 24% of the children of ages 9-11. The number of children of ages 12-18

that use Snapchat is higher compared to TikTok, peaking at 94% (ages 17-18), showing that Snapchat becomes dominant at later ages. Compared to the survey from two years prior, the trend shows a declining use of Snapchat and increasing use of TikTok (Medietilsynet, 2022). As the majority of children use multimodal media in their daily life, this shows the importance of teaching them about critical visual literacy.

In my impression, students are not critical when reading images. Compared to how one reads and understands written text, the students, when dealing with images, operate on a very basic level in terms of reading comprehension. Based on the table of reading proficiency provided in the curriculum by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir.), students are able to understand the information most explicitly stated and central in a text (Udir., 2012, p. 9). For instance, when reading the word “candle”, the students only see the word candle as a rod of wax with a flame atop, and are not thinking of the connotative aspects. Examples of connotative aspects could be fire-hazard, cabin or religion, but students are not proficient enough in their reading comprehension to draw these parallels. This is an issue that becomes even more important with images, as students may recognise some of the denotative aspects of an image but not be critical to the text-makers choices. This relates to how students use images in the classrooms and can be a challenge in teaching the students about multimodal texts.

The term English as Foreign Language (EFL) is used in this thesis, as the English language is not an official language in Norway, but is still seen as an important skill and is mandatory in education. As Ulrikke Rindal (2020) argues, the situation of English in a Norwegian context is complex. The status of English does not yet fit the category of English as a Second Language (ESL), leading to a situation where the language is seen as being in a transitional state from EFL to ESL (Brevik & Rindal, 2020, p. 38). As this transition is not yet complete, this justifies the use of the EFL term.

The goal of this thesis is to find out the current situation of how teachers use text in the EFL classroom, and how they prepare their students for reading in an image-based world. The aim is not to uncover what the teachers are doing “wrong” (wrong is in quotation marks, as saying something is wrong is a highly individual opinion). The emphasis is rather to uncover if the teachers are aware of how one can use multimodal texts, and if they convey this awareness to their students. It is also important to uncover if the teachers are aware of how images communicate and can teach visual literacy. For this purpose, it is critical that the teachers see visual literacy as a method for teaching other skills instead of emphasising visual literacy as a

topic. The situation of the Norwegian EFL classroom will be explored through interviews of four teachers who teach English in Norway, and by answering several research questions.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research question was chosen for this thesis:

- To what extent are teachers of Norwegian EFL preparing their students for reading in an image-based world?

This question will be answered and elaborated on through a small-scale study in which four teachers were interviewed to answer the following sub-questions:

- How do the teachers work with the new definition of text?
- How do teachers describe their students' use of images?
- How do teachers describe their own practices with teaching images?
- What challenges to teaching images do teachers identify?

My intention is not to portray the specific teachers a certain way, but rather see if a selection of current teachers is aware of and ready to take on the challenges that children will face today and in the future. If the teachers are new to the topic of multimodal literacy, how can the children become aware of how images communicate and can be a tool for power? If the children are mindless consumers, and the teachers do not have the tools to challenge this view, how can we expect the children to become critical and challenge this view when they grow up? This shows the importance of this thesis and the need of investigating multimodal literacy in today's English classrooms.

The extent to which teachers can prepare their students will naturally vary between teachers and between students. This will be analysed through the thoughts and reflections the teachers have on their own work. By sorting and coding the interview transcriptions through thematic analysis, the teachers' attitudes, insights and experiences with teaching multimodal text will be uncovered. A qualitative approach is best suited for this thesis, as the research questions look into personal experience and reflections from the teachers.

1.3 The Curriculum

The curriculum for education in Norway is a central guidance document for the personnel working at schools. The curriculum is revised periodically and for this section, the curriculums from 1997, 2006 and 2020 will be briefly discussed and compared in relation to multimodal

texts. These documents consist of specific subject curriculums and other important aspects related to education in Norway. For the newer curriculum, an emphasised part known as the core curriculum is particularly important (Ministry of Education, 2017). Aspects included in this part are for example, the aim of the education, core values and the societal purpose of school. Within this core curriculum, the basic skills are brought up as a central part of the education that should be integrated into each lesson. A more detailed description of the curriculum is provided by Udir. (2017a). The basic skills have been given an elevated status and in the framework for basic skills, these five skills are reading, writing, numeracy, digital skills and oral skills (Udir., 2017b). In this thesis, reading as a basic skill is important and will be further discussed later. It is important to note that the English subject is taught only for two hours a week and as a result, spending this time efficient is critical in terms of teaching the students what is required in the curriculum (Udir., 2022).

In the 1997 curriculum (L97), text is not mentioned in the general part of the curriculum, but in relation to language and for the English subject (Det kongelige kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1996). It is emphasised that the students should create their own written texts and should read written texts. The curriculum gives specific examples of books to use and how the students should have a wide range of text, but only written text works are mentioned. Multimodal texts are only stated briefly at the end of the paragraphs in relation to what texts to use and what is expected from students at the end of fifth grade. While the curriculum gives room for students to use different aids in language learning, the examples given are computer-based aids and a written dictionary. At the eighth grade, students are asked to express themselves through different means, which is more in line with the expected multimodal approach (Det kongelige kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1996, p. 223-233).

The LK06 curriculum is newer and features a definition of the basic skills related to each subject. The structure of this curriculum differs from L97 and is more similar to the structure in the current curriculum. One of the largest changes from L97 is the shift from the more direct format to a more general approach. The LK06 curriculum does not feature direct input on methods or what works should be used to achieve the specific goals of the subject, which is a direct contrast with L97. LK06 is in this aspect a much more open and general curriculum.

An important aspect of the LK20 compared to the previous curriculum is that in LK20, the teachers are free to decide how to reach the aims. This freedom leads to classrooms becoming

shaped by individual teacher's preferences. On the other hand, unlike L97, there are no examples and suggestions added, meaning that teachers need to rely on themselves for helping students reach the aims. There is however an added emphasis on going in-depth on what students are to learn (Udir., 2019a). This entails that students are to spend time working with multiple aims and basic skills spanning across multiple lessons with the aim of researching a topic independently. The basic skills from 2012, which were revised in 2017, were used as a baseline for the development of LK20 and became part of the core curriculum (Udir., 2017a). Within the basic skill of reading, there is a lot of emphasis on aspects that can be understood as visual literacy, as everything that can signify a meaning is part of the term text. Contradictorily, for higher levels of proficiency, the skills related to working with texts are mostly based on making sense of and understanding written text (Udir., 2017b). Through not mentioning multimodal texts, the document presents written text as the preferred mode of communication. Simultaneously, the English subject curriculum in LK20 requires teachers to present different text types to students and emphasise composite or multimodal texts in the EFL classroom (Udir., 2019b, p. 4).

The subject curriculum brings forth reading multimodal texts as being a requirement for learning, yet the framework for basic skills mention reading texts, and does not explicitly state multimodal aspects (Udir., 2019, Udir., 2017b). The framework highlights texts as being everything that can make meaning in media, but the matrix of proficiency regarding reading only mentions the word text in a context that connote to written text. This leads to the subject specific basic skills and the general basic skills to be in conflict, as they emphasise different aspects of reading. This creates a situation in which written text is presented as a more valued form of text in the framework of basic skills, while the multimodal aspects are only part of the subject specific curriculum. The curriculum and the framework for basic skills could lead to misunderstandings, and do not facilitate multimodal literacy or visual literacy through the vagueness and lack of examples of implementing multimodal texts.

1.4 Previous Research

Regarding previous research, visual literacy is the focus of a lot of current research in education in Norway, but a lot of the projects related to visual literacy are based upon picturebooks and didactic approaches to teaching culture and visual literacy. One example of this is the master's thesis by Eline Asheim, who used a picturebook for the purpose of teaching visual literacy (Asheim, 2022). The master's thesis by Maren Christine Fredriksen six years prior also featured

an emphasis on visual literacy, but with graphic novels as the focus (Fredriksen, 2016). Considering research related to EFL teachers, it has been explored how teachers use digital tools in the tenth grade EFL classroom (Haga, 2022). There has also been an earlier study in what cognitions and motivations teachers have in L2 learning (Helle, 2017). The emphasis on didactics and how to use different picturebooks or graphic novels is an improvement for visual literacy and will be beneficial if the students who write these theses become teachers and teach more visual literacy. This also applies to the students that write theses on visual literacy. It would also be beneficial if teachers spent time reading these studies to get ideas of how to teach visual literacy. However, in the busy life of a teacher, I believe they have little free time to keep up-to-date with current academic literature, such as master's theses.

This previous research indicates a research gap in uncovering what teachers in Norway think of visual literacy and what teachers do in terms of didactics related to visual literacy. There has been little work investigating how current and experienced teachers work with visual literacy and texts. As the studies often feature children or students as the informants, they tend to fall short in terms of uncovering teachers' current practices. I wish to fill that research gap with this thesis. My thesis differs from previous theses, as I want to see how teachers themselves discuss teaching visual literacy and teaching images specifically. By looking at their understanding of text, images and how text communicates, I can see if the teachers really have the understanding that the curriculum suggests they should have.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one in this thesis includes an introduction discussing the background information regarding multimodal texts in the EFL classroom, before presenting the research questions and the English curriculum. The introduction also states the previous research and research gap in this field, highlighting the relevance of this thesis as part of the wider context. Next, the theoretical considerations and framework needed for this thesis are presented in chapter two. This chapter explains the relevant literature related to this thesis, such as literacy and multimodality. Chapter three discusses the methods used to answer the research questions and to perform interviews, including reasoning for the chosen methods. The different codes used to analyse the interview results are presented in the data analysis section within this chapter. Chapter four includes the findings from the interviews related to the research questions, with subsequent discussions related to these findings. This chapter will also draw parallels to the literature from the theory chapter. Finally, chapter five includes a conclusion of the thesis.

2 Theoretical Considerations

In this chapter, the theoretical frameworks that form the foundations of this thesis are discussed. This thesis will focus on visual literacy as well as multimodal literacy. As mentioned, the curriculum emphasises the importance of these skills through the demands found in the framework for basic skills (Udir., 2017b). Students must thus learn to be aware of how different communicative modes communicate a message and how the students can use them for their own purposes. Len Unsworth (2008) mentions in his book, *New Literacies and the English Curriculum*, that:

There seems to be broad agreement that literacy can no longer be thought of as involving language alone and that images, in paper media texts, and also sound, movement and gesture in digital multimedia texts, need to be considered along with language as fundamental meaning making resources in constructing text. (p. 3).

This statement is one of many statements that signal a change from literacy being mainly a term connected to written text and language to encompassing a wider range of communicative modes. This change is a result of years of academic discussions about the term literacy.

2.1 Literacy

The New London Group, a group of highly respected scholars within the fields of pedagogy, literacy and language learning, defined the term multiliteracies, which is a “new approach to literacy pedagogy” (Cazden et al., 1996). This term is more adapted to contemporary society than the previous language-based term of literacy, and is related to how globalisation and digitalisation creates a need for a broader view of the term literacy. The New London Group argue that: “Multiliteracies, according to the authors, overcomes the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of students.” (Cazden et al., 1996). This view of how literacy encompasses more than traditional reading and writing is a prerequisite of allowing a plethora of other literacies to surface. Further, the view acknowledges communication as more than written text, and as such emphasises the need for assessing reading as a skill encompassing more than understanding written text (Ørevik, 2020, p. 144). This broad definition of literacy is a more open definition and is adapted to the context of multimodal texts.

A more traditional view of literacy is defined by United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2004:

the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. (Cited in de Silva Joyce & Feez, 2016, p. 5).

Helen de Silva Joyce and Susan Feez (2016) discuss how this definition of literacy has been expanded by the idea of multiliteracies, no longer seeing this term in relation to the limited modes of written text and reading, but including multimodal, social and cultural aspects as well (Cazden et al., 1996). Today, the term has evolved a lot from the basic start of suggesting proficiency in reading and writing skills.

Serafini (2014) highlights the importance of having a definition of literacy as a prerequisite for discussing visual literacy (p. 19). Continuing, Serafini (2014) presents the traditional view of literacy as being “a set of cognitive skills that individuals acquire to function in society” (p. 19). This definition is seen as too narrow and outdated by today’s standards, where literacy is seen as a more social skill. Katherine H. Au (1993) asserts that “literacy is the ability and willingness to use reading and writing to construct meaning from the printed text in ways that meet the requirements of a particular social context.” (as cited in Serafini, 2014, p.19). As Au highlights the social dimension of literacy, it is made clear that meaning making is affected by contextual relevance. This definition is in line with what Stuart Hall (2007) brings up as a key element in communication, in that the encoding and decoding processes can be influenced by social and cultural dimensions. Literacy thus becomes important in decoding a text to understand a message, as the willingness and ability are highlighted as a prerequisite for making sense of texts. Furthering the emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of literacy, Jay L. Lemke (1998) states that defining literacy should be “a set of cultural competencies for making socially recognizable meanings by the use of particular material technologies” (as cited in Serafini, 2014, p.19. Original bold text removed). This highlights the need for an understanding of how the social dimension of the term literacy is important.

The pictorial turn, as mentioned by Mitchell (1994), is the idea that philosophically and theoretically ideas and themes come in waves. He argues that from 1987 to 1994, there has been a drastic development in the world of images. This development is still ongoing in

contemporary society. This can be seen in, for example, the definition of literacy provided by Unsworth (2008). At a less academic level, there is an observed increase in visual media available and students' interests are driven more towards multimodal media (Medietilsynet, 2022). The media that students use is to a large degree consisting of multimodal content, showing the importance of teaching the students multimodal literacy.

Literacy is more comprehensive than solely being able to read and write. It has a plethora of different subcategories and is thus an important term that incorporates different skills. Literacy also connects to social life and Serafini (2014) defines it as: “being literate requires one to be able to use the various modes of representation to make sense of the world and convey meanings in particular social contexts for particular social purposes.” (p. 20). This definition indicates that literacy is connected to meaning making and the creation and decoding of different texts. The term no longer signifies the skills of reading and writing individually, but is also connected to social life. Literacy is undeniably connected to reading, but also encompasses more than what reading is traditionally understood as.

2.2 Visual Literacy

Visual literacy incorporates different definitions, and is a vast field of knowledge with a multitude of definitions and scholars researching it. Building upon the definition of literacy from earlier, understanding visual literacy adds emphasis on the visual aspects of the literacy term. This signifies that scholars can have different understandings of literacy that could change their view of visual literacy. John L. Debes coined the term visual literacy in 1969, and through further efforts to define this term, Debes and Roger B. Fransecky (1972) stated that visual literacy can be defined as “the group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences.” (p. 7). Serafini (2014) comments that this definition from Debes and Fransecky (1972) sees the vision competencies as “individually developed cognitive abilities that were used for understanding visual images regardless of the contexts of their production, reception and dissemination.” (p. 21). The perspective presented from Serafini, is that the 1972 definition is highly individual and does not explore the social aspect, nor the importance of context in communication.

Eva Brumberger (2019) emphasises how visual literacy has been difficult to define in simple terms. She brings up multiple acknowledged scholars who through different lenses define the term differently. Although the term was coined in 1969, scholars have yet to come to agreement on a common definition, showing how widespread this topic can be understood. In this thesis,

visual literacy will be defined in relation to an educational context. Within the educational context, there are different definitions worth discussing and comparing as they give insightful differences on priorities and other aspects. This thesis will use the definition offered by the 2011 visual literacy standards:

Visual literacy is a set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use and create images and visual media. Visual literacy skills equip a learner to understand and analyze the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components, involved in the production and use of visual materials. A visual literate individual is both a critical consumer of visual media and a competent contributor to a body of shared knowledge and culture (Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), 2011).

This definition is found in the document ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2011). The definition given by ACRL indicates that to become a visual literate individual, one needs a deeper understanding of what visual literacy is, as well as how visual literacy can be learned. In addition, the definition goes beyond the denotative components to include larger themes, such as being a critical consumer of visual media. This implies that the visually literate person will have a variety of tools available for approaching images and other things related to visual media. Furthermore, being a visual literate individual also requires an understanding of the cultural connotations and what metaphors and symbolical significance is found in the works. This is a broad area of expertise, and it requires a lot of training and knowledge to become a visual literate person. However, the demand of visual literate people is increasing as the world is becoming more and more image-based.

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2020), the authors of *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, states that images have developed more and more. Today, digital productions can be so realistic that they can be taken for being real (p. 177). This emphasises the need for visual literacy. Children today must be taught the tools to become visual literate individuals. The authors also argue that we live in the age of as-if real, suggesting that digital text productions today may be presented as factual but are fake. The issue is that the productions can be so realistic that it may be very difficult to separate real from fake. This highlights the need for critical visual literacy.

2.3 Critical Visual Literacy

Students use social media multiple hours every day (Bakken, 2021, p. 30). Some of the content found on social media is unfiltered and not appropriate for children. This calls for the need of teaching critical visual literacy. In critical literacy or critical visual literacy, the word critical signifies an analysis of power, identity and access (Janks et al., 2014, p. 83). Texts are judged in terms of how their representations and positions affect relations of power both globally and locally. If students are proficient in critical visual literacy, they will have better possibilities of thinking more critically to the content in social media instead of being mindless consumers.

One of the key points in Hilary Janks et al. (2014), who is highly influential in the field of critical literacy, is that no text is neutral. This is due to how the text-makers' choices affect how the text is created, and due to how a text only offers a part of the story instead of the whole picture, causing the text to be partial (Janks et al., 2014, p.2). In critical visual literacy, one of the most important aspects is looking at the choices of the text-maker. In text creation, the text-maker is making choices both consciously and unconsciously. For example, in written texts, these choices can be using specific terms, idioms and gendered language. In images, these choices can be certain angles, lighting, colours and facial expressions. All of the aforementioned examples carry certain meanings and can position a reader regarding the text (Janks et al., 2014, p. 19).

The choices from text-makers will affect how one can interpret the text and will alter the structure of power. Another important aspect of critical visual literacy is what is present in an image or text, and what is not. This, alongside text-makers choices, can signify or imply power. Power in this context can be understood through different means, and demonstrates agency through the ability to influence others (Janks et al., 2014). Power is not limited to people, as an image or a text could have power. When being critical, one analyses who or what has power and how this power is used. This analysis may uncover agendas of different text-makers, news outlets and media. The agenda can both be obvious to the consumer, or difficult to uncover. There may also not be a specific conscious agenda from a text-maker perspective, but the consumer of the text may find one (Hall, 2007, p. 61).

In critical visual literacy, it is important to analyse who benefits from a text, how the reader is positioned in relation to the text-maker and who presents the text. As mentioned, this can become apparent when analysing text-maker choices and can be related to power. Analysing a text with a close reading strategy would involve looking more detailed at different aspects of

the text that carry meaning. Looking through the lens of critical visual literacy, we analyse what the text “really says” (Habegger-Conti, 2015, p. 115). What a text “really says” will depend on who is looking and what they are looking for. In terms of reading proficiency, this is a skill that requires practice as well as an awareness of how texts could enforce problematic language and representations, which is a step towards creating critical readers. Teaching critical visual literacy is therefore important as students are expected to become critical thinkers and able to critically assess the texts they read. The demands from contemporary society create a stronger need for critical visual literacy. To make the students aware of how text-maker choices affect a message, it is crucial that teachers are aware of how texts communicate. It thus becomes a prerequisite that teachers can critically read and analyse the texts they work with.

Being a critical reader in today’s society means that the students are capable of seeing the different issues of how text-makers choices can impact the meaning of texts. There are multiple ways of helping students become critical readers. As mentioned, using reading strategies for the purpose of analysing texts could help foster this awareness. Cecilie Wallaan Brown and Jena Habegger-Conti (2022) present information on how to teach images in their article. Here, the emphasis is on using images to challenge the stereotypical views students may have and present good didactic examples of intercultural education (p. 63). Another way to improve students’ abilities of being critical is by making students aware of their own position when creating texts. The goal of the school-system should not be to create robots, nor create conspiracy theorists, but to create visual literate people with their own ideas and thoughts.

2.4 Multimodality

The name multimodality implies that a text communicates using more than one mode simultaneously. A mode is defined by Kress (2010) as “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for meaning making” (as cited in Skulstad, 2020, p. 261). Everyone communicates through different modes on a daily basis. For example, a video uses both sound and visual aspects to communicate. Furthermore, the name multimodality cannot be defined through its antonym, monomodality, as nothing is truly monomodal according to Aud Solbjørg Skulstad (2020, p. 261). Even a still image is limited by a border on its physical or digital copy. This border can signify the importance of items or people in the image, as well as the insignificance of what is outside the border. As a result, the image communicates through both what is present and what is not present in the image (Janks et al., 2014). Regarding written text, choices such as specific words, fonts and text size can all be seen as a mode of communication.

As the definition from Kress (2010) implies, these modes all have their own grammar and social rules as they are socially shaped. Gestures, references, jokes, comments, and digital media, such as videos, images, and songs, all fall under the category of modes and are also multimodal. All of these will be modes in which the students make meaning in one way or another. A joke, for example, could have a punchline requiring a certain movement from the presenter of the joke. The tools for both creating and understanding these expressions will be connected to literacy. Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) recognise that today's society requires more emphasis on visual and digital literacy. This could be implemented through more emphasis on visual and multimodal text creation, as suggested by Skulstad (2020).

In Skulstad's chapter *Multimodality from 2020* in *Teaching English in the 21st Century: Central Issues in English Didactics*, multimodal literacy is introduced as a term: "multimodal literacy is the ability to interpret and use multimodal semiotic resources and multimodal genres in a successful way." (p. 267). This definition puts emphasis on multimodal texts being used in a way that allows the different modes to be an active part of the communication. For example, a written text with an image next to it is multimodal, but if the image does not communicate a message related to the written text, there is no reason to include the image. Further, Skulstad (2020) shows that in the 2006-2008 EFL classroom, multimodal tasks are typically trivial tasks included for aesthetic purposes, rather than for communicative purposes (p. 278). While it is beneficial that students are presented with entertaining tasks to learn how to use multimodal texts, these texts are generally used superficially. This is an issue, as it signifies that the teachers do not have the tools necessary to teach images in a good way, nor that they prioritise how texts can communicate through different modes. In this sense, the term tool refers to didactic knowledge and knowledge with digital and analogue ways of presenting images and analysing them. If there is to be an emphasis on multimodal texts, there is a prerequisite that teachers are proficient in multimodal literacy. To include multimodal literacy in the EFL classrooms, the tasks related to multimodal texts need to emphasise the multimodal modes of communication to a larger degree.

Hege Emma Rimmereide (2020) presents didactic approaches to teaching multimodal texts and discusses the relevance to the current curriculum, as well as how specific didactic practices can be applied to the Norwegian EFL classrooms. She argues that multimodal texts are not something new, but have existed for a long time in both society and classrooms. There are, according to Rimmereide (2020), multiple benefits in teaching multimodal texts, and the

development of students' critical literacy skills are highlighted (p.195). To develop these critical literacy skills, the teacher needs to be able to use these multimodal texts in a way that creates this understanding. Janks et al. (2014) presents different possibilities for implementing multimodal texts for the process of developing students' critical literacy skills. She presents suggestions and methods for teachers to use to help raise the students' awareness of how texts communicate. An example used in *Doing Critical Literacy: Texts and Activities for Students and Teachers* (Janks et al., 2014), is *The Blind Men and the Elephant* by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887). Described briefly, six blind men approach an elephant and start to discuss what animal an elephant is. In the image, the students will see the six men standing at different places around the elephant. Each man touches the elephant and argues for what an elephant is, based on what is in front of them. As they have different parts of the animal in front of them, they all argue differently. Through the perspective of each man, they are all completely right, but are also incorrect in relation to the others (Janks et al., 2014, p. 16). By working with this example, students may become aware of their own perspective in relation to the texts they face.

The previous use of multimodal texts presented by Skulstad (2020) demonstrates an issue in how texts have been used in Norwegian EFL classrooms. This issue presents a situation of how teachers seem to lack an understanding of how to implement multimodal resources according to the suggestions by Janks et al. (2014) and Rimmereide (2020). According to Grit Alter (2018), teachers do not necessarily use multimodal texts in ways that make the text communicate through different modes, but rather adapt the new media to the old methods (p. 158). This creates a situation in which written text is the dominant mode of communication in multimodal texts, while the other modes of communication are partly ignored or used superficially, which could be due to teachers being familiar with the methods that are more suited for older media.

Familiarity is discussed by Jessica Macaluso, Ramya Beuford and Scott Fraundorf in their article from 2022. In this article, they argue that: "In general, familiarity is likely to affect how well learners believe they are learning information; people tend to favour information, habits, or things that are familiar to them" (Metcalf et al., 1993, as cited in Macaluso et al., 2022). This claim originates from the field of metacognition, but is adapted to an educational context in this article. The implications found in this article are that students and teachers gravitate towards familiar methods and can possibly see a method as more efficient due to familiarity. The familiarity issue may lead to a disregard of theoretically more efficient methods. This

causes the written text to be emphasised, regardless of the modes found in a multimodal text. As a result, contemporary society creates a demand for multimodal literacy, yet the EFL classroom does not adapt to the students' needs, but rather enforce a view of written text being the preferred mode of communication.

In relation to the use of the term multimodality, this thesis will focus mainly on multimodal texts. However, it is important to highlight that "The term multimodality is not used only when describing texts. It may also be used in connection with learning." (Skulstad, 2020, p. 261). Implementing multiple modes into the learning process is not limited to language learning, but can be connected to various subjects. Written text is the favoured mode of communication in higher education and as such, is often what students are prepared for in the primary and lower and upper secondary education (Macken-Horarik, 2008 in Ørevik, 2020). In the social context, written text is no longer as dominant in the social life of students compared to multimodal media (Habegger-Conti, 2015, p. 108). This leads to a contradiction between what the school demands from the students and what the students need in their everyday life. It has been researched that implementing multimodal media that students are proficient in could contribute to their eagerness in the EFL classroom (Brevik et al, 2020, p. 191). Their proficiency in those tools could thus be more seamlessly adapted to learning in schools as well as help students see the relevance of what they learn at school in their everyday life.

The use of multimodal texts is widespread. An example of a multimodal media is TikTok, which is one of the leading social media amongst Norwegian youth (Medietilsynet, 2022). Students today have more tools and are more proficient in creating multimodal texts than previous generations. They create videos on TikTok and other social media regularly, where they often combine visual and audio elements. As a result, students are more accustomed to use multimodal texts in their social life. There are a lot of different ways to implement multimodal elements and students may use popular filters, sounds or songs for their own productions. In the text-creation process, the students may partake in popular trends, where these trends may be heavily influenced by specific contexts. Problematic content may be glorified in specific songs and young students select them for the purpose of popularity. When students are not critical of what criteria they should have for selecting these songs, they may unknowingly promote this problematic content. Although the children are surrounded by multimodal media, they do not necessarily become aware of how these multimodal media communicate.

2.5 Reading

Reading is part of the basic skills found in LK20 (Udir., 2017b) and is part of the human rights of good education, as stated by the United Nations (United Nations, 1948). Reading can be more nuanced than solely understanding letters and reading words, and is a term with many connotations and different distinctions both found in education and in social life. It includes strategies for reading, reading images, reading emotions, and reading rooms in social contexts. This thesis will use the term for reading provided by Udir., where reading is seen as an analytical tool for making sense of symbols, icons, images, and words (Udir., 2017b). These distinctions are not strictly necessary, as the term text incorporates all of these modes of communication. Reading, as the ability to make sense of and decode the messages in texts, is a critical skill for life regardless of career choice and education.

In an educational context, reading is an important activity in the English classroom, and an activity and skill that is taken for granted, according to Sigrid Ørevik in chapter six of Skulstad and Anne-Brit Fenner's *Teaching English in the 21st Century* (Ørevik, 2020, p. 141). Ørevik (2020) argues that "as reading is such a large part of what goes on in the English classroom, an aim is that every student should be able to make the most of reading as a route to learning." (p. 142). Developing strategies for meaning making will be an important step in this process and something students should be encouraged and taught the means of doing. Reading strategies can include a variety of approaches to text, and students should become proficient readers of different text types. Although different text types are emphasised, written text is the communicative mode in focus for educational purposes, whilst also being the "most highly valued form for literacy" (Macken-Horarik, 2008, cited in Ørevik, 2020, p. 145). As such, reading written text is and will be a crucial skill for students, their educational careers and, most likely, working careers as well.

Habegger-Conti (2015) discusses that the ability of students to read longer texts seems to be on a decline and that reading as a pastime activity is being challenged by other, newer forms of media (p. 108). This creates a situation in which the field of education teaches a skill that is critical for life, but that students are not practicing actively in their everyday life. This could lead to a situation where students do not develop a proficiency outside of school and deem reading as not being important. The type of reading used in school differs from the reading found in an everyday context. In the language subjects for school, Fenner and Ørevik (2020) mention how textbooks are frequently used due to the benefits for the teacher (p. 338). These

benefits may be the cause of negative aspects, as teachers do not need to select the teaching material as the textbooks provide it. Yet, the books will present the views of the author and contain a lot of text-maker choices which could be subjective (p. 339). The books are often developed for the purpose of language learning, but will not be perfect. They can be easily relied upon and facilitate reading proficiency, but, although they are multimodal due to the inclusion of images, they are often heavily written text-based. This leads to a situation where students are presented with written text as the purpose of reading, disregarding the multimodal aspects of text and the importance of being able to read multimodal texts.

Compared to the requirements of the frameworks for the basic skills (Udir., 2017b), reading is divided into levels of proficiency ranging from one to five. The most basic level is the ability to “recognize explicitly expressed information centrally placed in simple texts” (Udir., 2012, p. 9). To increase the students’ reading proficiency from the basic level, introducing them to different text types is mandatory. However, developing the reading skills further should include an understanding of the multimodal texts found in contemporary society.

Text culture signifies what texts are preferred in different settings. For an educational context, written text has been the centre of attention, as mentioned by Macken-Horarik (2008, in Ørevik, 2020). In Fenner’s chapter, *Learner Autonomy and Learning Strategies*, in Skulstad and Fenner (2020), she states that “the teacher guides and facilitates the students’ learning processes” (p. 305). As such, the teachers have the task of providing students with the tools to succeed in achieving the long term aims of the curriculum. If teachers believe written text is a more valid mode of communication than multimodal texts, they might enforce this view into their classrooms (Pajares, 1992). This might become problematic, as the teachers have the power to choose what should be presented to their students. If teachers emphasise creating written text and reading written text, they will enforce this text culture and may not present students with a variety of text types to read. This limits their proficiency with reading multimodal texts.

2.6 Text

Serafini (2014) expresses how the definition of text has changed throughout the years: “What constitutes a text, whether in print or digital format, has changed drastically since humans first pressed ink to paper” (p. 2). This expression indicates an evolution of text, and in contemporary society, much of the text is connected to digital modes of expression. Furthermore, he defines texts as: “Texts, once dominated by written language, are now experienced as multimodal ensembles that utilize visual images, design elements, and typographical features to

communicate and represent ideas.” (Serafini, 2014, p. 2). This definition coincides with the definition of text by Udir. Teachers in Norway are expected to work with this expanded definition of text. In this thesis, the definition of text is thus the definition given by Serafini (2014), which also coincides with the definition by Udir.

2.7 Communication

The theoretical considerations of Stuart Hall (2007) are useful for understanding how social media communicates. In the article, Hall (2007) describes three hypothetical positions that a reader of media can take: the dominant-hegemonic position, negotiated position and oppositional position. The dominant-hegemonic position is what Hall (2007) describes as the “preferred reading” (p. 57). Here, the reader or consumer takes the message of the media they consume and decode it with the same reference codes as the message was encoded with. This is seen as the “perfectly transparent communication - or as close as we are likely to come to it ‘for all practical purposes’.” (Hall, 2007, p. 59). This means that the decoded message is not questioned or debated, but accepted without conflict or compromise. The dominant-hegemonic position is relevant as it “take ‘large views’ of issues: they relate events to the ‘national interest’ or to the level of geo-politics, even if they make these connections in truncated, inverted or mystified ways.” (Hall, 2007, p. 60). A message is thus seen through what benefits a dominant social group, and the positive or beneficial messages are highlighted as the significant message, while any negative aspects are disregarded.

The dominant-hegemonic position differs from the negotiated position in which the reader is aware of the dominant position and might approve of parts of the message, but also questions some aspects. An example Hall (2007) brings forth, is how a worker might agree partly to the arguments of an “industrial relations bill, limiting the right to strike or to arguments for a wage freeze. At the level of ‘national interest’ economic debate the decoder may adopt the hegemonic definition” (p. 60). At the same time, the same worker might be indifferent regarding their “willingness to go on strike for better pay and conditions or to oppose the Industrial Relations Bill at the level of shopfloor or union organisation” (p. 60-61). The worker from the example sees the issue for the national concern, but at the same time is motivated to go against this request for personal reasons.

The final way to decode a message is taking the oppositional position. In this position, “It is possible for a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way” (Hall, 2007, p. 61).

This is not entirely negative as it could challenge the established views, which can be healthy for a society. Hall (2007) mentions an example where “the viewer who listens to a debate on the need to limit wages but ‘reads’ every mention of the ‘national interest’ as ‘class interest’.” (p. 61). The viewer understands the issue and is aware of what is meant by national interest, but chooses to see it as something different and takes an oppositional stance to the message. The reason for taking an oppositional stance could be, for example, for the purpose of a political debate, where the political parties disagree on different political cases.

Janks et al. (2014) and Hall (2007) both agree that no text is neutral. In Janks et al. (2014), this lack of neutrality is the result of the text-maker choices and what goes into the creation of the text. The text-maker must decide who will benefit from the text, and even being “neutral” is a choice. In the context of Hall (2007), the text is encoded with a certain code in mind by the text producer. To decode the message as “perfectly transparent communication” (p. 59), it needs to be decoded by using the same codes (p. 54). As signified in the context of the dominant hegemonic position, this could be extremely difficult as the position of the text producer and the audience could be vastly different. In mass communication, such as social media, a text producer could send a message to a lot of people. The receivers of the message may process and decode this message differently based on their own positions. Hall (2007) states that the processes of encoding and decoding do not need to be symmetrical, as the encoder and decoder may have different positions of power and cultures. This creates an asymmetry between what is encoded into the message and what is decoded by the audience. In the decoding moment, differences in the codes from the encoder and the decoder may result in misunderstandings. Factors such as age, societal belonging, culture, and gender can determine how the message is decoded. As a result, a message can be interpreted individually even when the sender or encoder of the message had a clear vision of how it should be interpreted, as the decoding is out of the text creators’ control.

Janks et al. (2014) writes about how language can be used to deceive the readers, and presents an example of “using figures of speech to disguise a situation or present it in a particular light” (p. 29). By presenting a problem in a specific way, this problem appears less significant. This is typically used by politicians when asked critical questions. Janks et al. (2014) highlights a general example of using language to downplay a situation, for example by using the term “‘Collateral damage’ for the killing of innocent civilians in a bombing raid” (p. 29). By making deliberate choices in how to present information, the information provided may dampen the public opinion about this topic.

3 Methodology

This chapter covers the methodological aspects of this thesis. As the research for this thesis was a small-scale study involving interviewing teachers, a qualitative approach was chosen to gain more in-depth understanding of the research question: To what extent are teachers of Norwegian EFL preparing their students for reading in an image-based world? This research question will be answered by these four sub-questions:

- How do teachers work with the new definition of text?
- How do teachers describe their students' use of images?
- How do teachers describe their own practices with teaching images?
- What challenges to teaching images do teachers identify?

Teachers' ideas and approaches to text was looked at to answer these questions. As the research sub-questions feature subjective aspects, such as how they work with text and what they think of the term text, the qualitative research method is a good way to answer this. The data collection process consisted of four different semi-structured interviews, which were afterwards transcribed. Through the semi-structured interviews, the teachers' attitudes towards text as well as didactic practices can be uncovered and analysed by using a thematic analysis approach. In the interviews, personal information was collected, including the teachers' age, what subjects they teach and any formal training in teaching images. Therefore, the thesis needed to be approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS (NSD). An approval by the NSD means that the researcher must follow specific rules to ensure that the data is collected in an ethical way, and that the handling of information secures the informant's anonymity. The NSD approval was granted on October 11th 2022, whilst the research collection began in February 2023. The data collection process was finished on February 17th and the transcriptions were finished approximately two weeks after this. The data analysis process started as soon as the transcriptions were finished.

The first section in this chapter will cover qualitative research, including a reasoning of using this method as the approach for this thesis. After this, the informant sample is discussed, before explaining the type of interview and the interview guide in separate sections. Next, the data analysis process will be explained, followed by an introduction to each of the codes used in this thesis. The next section will cover the validity and reliability of both the data collection and the data analysis process, followed by the ethical considerations in research. Limitations

of the data sample and analysis will also be covered. Lastly, a chapter summary will briefly recap the main aspects of the Methods chapter.

3.1 Qualitative Research

The research conducted in this project is qualitative. Alison Mackey and Susan M. Gass (2015) define what qualitative research is: “Briefly defined, the term qualitative research can be taken to refer to research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures.” (p. 215). The take-away from this is that the research is based on descriptive data. In the more detailed descriptions, they present key characteristics, such as how qualitative research has fewer participants but features more detailed responses and questions. This is suitable for this thesis, as the research questions are related to the attitudes and perceptions teachers have of text as well as their experiences with text in their classrooms. Another characteristic that Mackey and Gass (2015) highlight is the open-ended nature of qualitative research. This nature allows the researcher to follow digressions and ask for more elaboration on interesting themes as they come up during the interview (p. 216).

I believe it is more effective to ask how teachers communicate and teach multimodal literacy rather than asking students. While the teachers accumulate experience in teaching the subject, possibly in multiple classes over several years, the students have little experience and are dependent on their teachers for acquiring the skills and knowledge of multimodal literacy. Also, the teachers are required to adapt to the curriculum and the changes in curriculum over the years, while students usually attend each grade once during their lifetime, and only experience the contemporary curriculum. Teachers have a better basis to understand questions, and interviewing students will be more difficult as the setting may be perceived as threatening which affects the responses. Students may feel that an unknown young adult that asks questions of topics they might not understand is somewhat scary or strange. Interviewing teachers will more easily uncover what they teach in the subject to help their students work with visual literacy. This could also give insight to how good their student’s visual literacy skills are from an educated, mature perspective.

3.2 Informant Sample

The teachers are chosen based on two conditions: firstly, they must be teaching English as a subject and secondly, they must be teaching at the one-to-seven or eight-to-ten school level in Norway. These criteria allow the project to reach a broad scope of teachers as there are no required specifics related to age, sexual orientation, gender, experience, or background.

Another reason for these two requirements is that this is the same level that I will be teaching personally. This allows me to discuss their responses during the interviews based on my own experiences from teaching practice and working as a substitute teacher. This may create a comfortable atmosphere for the discussion as both me and the informant can bring up experiences and theoretical considerations regarding teaching images. As an interviewer, sharing information might help the informants feel more welcome as they do not end up sharing their own personal experiences and getting nothing in return, as emphasised by Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale (2018, p. 62). This helps avoid an uneven power structure between the interviewer and informant.

As the thesis is using a qualitative approach, there are no specific requirements for how many informants, allowing me to choose what the group of informants should consist of. Alan Bryman (2016) mentions how different researchers call for a variation between one and three hundred respondents, depending on the research, and that everything in between can be sufficient. This led me to ultimately decide that the informant group would consist of the four teachers that are part of this informant sample. The sample of informants was chosen amongst the personal contacts of me and my supervisor, by sending an email either directly to each teacher, or to different schools and seeing if any teachers were interested in being an informant for the thesis. In total, four responses were received that fit the criteria for this thesis.

The teachers in this study were selected with the intent of having an evenly gendered sample of informants, resulting in the teachers representing a broad spectre of the Norwegian school. The informant group consists of four teachers selected from different schools within the Bergen area, and with different backgrounds as well as experience. They were chosen as they represented both young, new teachers and older, more experienced teachers. Two of the teachers are similar, in that they are both twenty-seven years old and have master's degrees in the English subject. The other two teachers are aged forty-four and fifty-five and are, as a result, more experienced in the role of being teachers. This age gap can affect the teachers' perspectives of text, such that their answers and reflections may differ between the young and the more experienced teachers. A more detailed personal description for each informant is found in the Findings and Discussion chapter.

3.3 Interview Type

The interviews are semi-structured as the emphasis is to have an open discussion of the term text and teaching images. This structure is beneficial, as it does not require rigorous structure

and allows for more elaboration of the topics. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), a semi-structured interview allows for more freedom as “the guide will include an outline of topics to be covered, with suggested questions.” (p. 63). A more rigid interview guide with more emphasis on the specific order and level of detail in the questions could be possible for this thesis, but for a small-scale study the semi-structured interview structure is more suitable. Additionally, this approach had the benefit of allowing me, being new to the craft of interviewing, to be more comfortable and less pressured to rigorously follow the interview guide. As the interviews are more of a conversation or discussion, they will allow for more in-depth answers from the teachers. There is a possibility for the teachers to elaborate due to the open-ended questions, which hopefully allows the teachers to go into detail about their experiences and thoughts. These open-ended questions also allow for a dialogue between the researcher and informant. This allows the informants and researchers to discuss more themes and topics and use the interview guide as more of a framework for a dialogue, rather than a recipe to be followed precisely.

An issue with the qualitative small-scale study is that it becomes difficult to compare each answer to the others to see if there are similarities or differences, creating an issue with making a general statement. This is because each interview, although with the same interview guide and researcher, will be innately different. Informants may have different expectations and the order of questions and themes may vary. Different themes might be brought up later or earlier in each interview, depending on the conversation and natural points to change topic. This makes it difficult to argue for similarities or differences and make a general statement. Thus, the focus should rather be the process and discussion of the questions.

After the interviews, the transcription process began. The transcription process varied in difficulty and time consumption. This was a result of informants speaking in a varied degree of clearness as well as dialect impacting their way of speaking. The process consisted of listening to the audio recording of the interviews that were stored on my personal phone. Once an interview was fully transcribed, the audio recording was removed from my personal phone and deleted. The transcription process consisted of me listening to everything that was said and writing it down. While it originally contained everything that was said and uttered to create a detailed and accurate impression of the interviews, for this thesis, these details were not relevant for answering the research questions. As a result, these details were cut from the transcriptions. This includes items such as participants coughing or clearing their throats. The

transcriptions were sent to the participants to allow them to gain insight into what would be used. The participants stood free to comment on things they wanted to be removed or changed.

3.4 Interview Guide

In the following I will discuss and explain the interview guide used for this thesis. The full interview guide with the Norwegian translations for each question is Appendix 1. The interview guide is directed towards teachers' attitudes towards images and using images in the classroom. The interview guide was sent for approval by the NSD and approved shortly after. Each question also has a Norwegian translation to make sure that the translations are correct, should the interviews be held in Norwegian. This is done to avoid different translations for different interviews as this affects the validity of the answers. However, this leads to the issue of having to create a loyal translation of informants' responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

At the start of the interviews, I asked general questions about the teachers, such as their experience, educational background, and the age group they teach. These responses were coded into the education section for the purpose of presenting each teacher. These questions were not part of the interview guide, but rather general questions used to create a comfortable setting for the informants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 62). For the interview guide, most of the questions are open-ended questions in that they require the informant to elaborate their answers and provide more detailed responses. In the interview guide structure, the follow-up questions, as well as my own personal notes, are in italics, as they were not necessarily asked during the interviews. My personal notes were added to more easily explain the questions. The first question begins by discussing the term text.

- The term text was expanded in 2012/2013 to include writing, images, sounds, graphs, numbers and other modes of expression put together to highlight and express a message. Do you have any thoughts regarding this?

This question begins with a statement from Udir., regarding how the term text encompasses more than only written text (Udir., 2017b). The explanation of the term is rather long, which could be problematic as the informants need to listen to the explanation before stating an answer. Having long questions or explanations could be a negative influence, as it may cause informants to miss or forget information, due to the question or explanation being too long (Bryman, 2016, p. 253). I was indeed aware of this, yet the term proved difficult to make more concise and as a result is in the format found in the interview guide. Asking if they have any thoughts on the term had the purpose of having the informants reflect on their own practices,

attitudes and connotations towards the term text. This definition of text, as it is found in the central guidance documents for Norwegian schools, should be familiar for the teachers. This also helps prime the informants to think about the term text and images as part of this term (Bryman, 2016, p. 479).

- Have you worked with teaching images in your classrooms? *How they communicate, how to analyse etc? Do you enjoy working with images? Is it a positive experience in the classroom?*
- Do you give your students tasks related to image-based learning material? *Do your students enjoy working with images?*
- How prepared do you feel when it comes to using texts as in pictures and sounds in the classroom?

These three questions are more thematically connected to didactics and allow the teachers to show insight in their knowledge and practices of using images. This also allows teachers to comment on their students' use of images. The secondary questions are meant to be suggested follow-up questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 68), and can be asked depending on the answers of the informants. The suggested follow-up questions were asked where they fit naturally to not disturb the flow of the conversation. The first of the three questions was asked to gain insight in how teachers work with images. Depending on the response of the teachers on the question of their use of images, the suggested follow-up questions would be asked to uncover why or why not, and have the teachers elaborate further on their experience. For the next question, if the teachers provide students with image-based tasks, the follow-up question is related to enjoyment, which was to create a positive setting and have the teachers reflect upon positive experiences. This could help the informants reflect on their experiences with images to provide more fulfilling answers later in the interview. The third question relates to how the teachers experience their own proficiency, and was added to uncover the teachers' individual reflections related to using multimodal texts. If teachers feel prepared for teaching multimodal texts, it should be reflected in their practices. This also applies if teachers do not feel prepared, as this could help explain why they do not teach multimodal texts.

- Have you ever had any formal instruction in how to teach images or other visual tools?
- Have you ever had any formal instruction in critical literacy regarding the expanded term text?

These two questions relate to the educational background of the teachers specifically directed towards images and multimodal texts. The aim was to uncover how current EFL teachers are being prepared to teach visual and critical visual literacy. For the Norwegian translation, the term critical literacy was not used as it is difficult to translate, and was therefore altered slightly to avoid technical terms as this should be avoided (Bryman, 2016, p. 255). If there is a gap between what the teachers are expected to teach and their given formal instruction, there will be a dissonance between the expectations and practice. To investigate if this gap exists, it is useful to ask how teachers are formally prepared to work with written text.

- How are students in your classroom using images in their projects? – *Do you provide guidelines or instructions regarding choosing images? Do the images have a clear function/convey meaning? aesthetical only? Or are the images not connected to what the project is about?*
- Do you feel that your students are critical readers of images? – *To what extent are they aware of what images communicate? Awareness regarding: sender, message, receiver, purpose, visual effects/techniques, specific wording, more? – Is this something you feel you should teach in your English lessons?*

These questions are what Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) refer to as direct questions (p.63). Both questions relate to students' use of images. As the questions require more elaboration to properly be answered, there are a few follow-up questions and notes as a support for the researcher to elaborate on, should the informants not understand the question or know how to answer at first. These questions are based on the research sub-question of how teachers describe their students' practices. The aim is to gain insight in how students use images, as the proficiency of their students will signal if the teachers have covered the topic of teaching images. There is, however, room for interpretation here, as the teachers are the ones that present this insight. As such, they could believe that their students are proficient in their use of images, whilst they might not be from another perspective. It is thus important to uncover the teacher's awareness in advance of this question, explaining the positions of the previous questions.

- What are your thoughts about reading images versus reading books in the English classroom?
- What are your thoughts regarding how one can teach the students to be critical readers of images in EFL?

These two questions are quite direct questions and do not feature any written follow-up questions or support. This is intentional to avoid having a bias towards what to follow-up with. Answers to these questions will be hard to compare as the answers will be highly individual. The first question is related to the teachers' definition and use of texts alongside their didactic approaches to text and textbooks. The second question is meant to give teachers an opportunity to bring forth didactic experiences and specific examples. The purpose of this is to get some insight in how teachers work with the new definition of text and how they work towards students' reading proficiency.

- Do you feel that teaching images and images with sound is important in the English subject? Why/Why not?

This question consists of two parts as the first part could be answered with a simple yes or no. To gain more insight in how the teachers think, the follow-up of "why/why not?" is important. Without adding emphasis on the follow-up, this could be a leading or very general question, which is deemed as undesirable (Bryman, 2016, p. 253, 476). However, with the follow-up question, the first part act more as a primer for allowing the informant to reflect on their own attitudes to text. This is beneficial as the informant will have to provide a more nuanced answer when presented with the follow-up question.

- Do you ever use social media as learning material in your classroom? – *Tell me about your experience with using it, was it challenging, giving, positive, negative?– Did the students like it? – Do you think the learning aims this lesson were met?*
- Do you feel that your students are critical when it comes to images and information in social media?
- Do you feel that the school is up to date when it comes to critical thinking and students' social media usage?

These three questions all relate to social media and are therefore grouped together. However, they facilitate different answers from the teachers as they are quite different. The first question covers the didactic aspects from the teachers' perspective, allowing the teacher to elaborate on using social media as educational material. The follow-up questions relate to how this approach was perceived by students and the teacher themselves. It also includes the learning aims, as connecting multimodal texts to the curriculum can be seen as challenging. The second question is less concise and requires more reflection from the teacher. The purpose is to gain insight in how students use social media. The final question is about how teachers perceive their own

practices and the school system. Note that the question does not ask about particular schools but rather school as an institution across Norway. Related to answering the research questions, these three questions are used to uncover didactic approaches to multimodal texts, students' use of images and teachers' perspective of the current text culture seen in relation to what contemporary society requires.

- It is said that we live in an age where things are presented as “as good as real” and that technology has come so far that it can be difficult to separate fake and real images. What are your thoughts on the statement “we live in the age of “as-if-real””?
- Have you experienced a situation where your students show a lack of critical thinking when it comes to altered images, fake news, conspiracy theories or similar? – *If yes, what was it and how did you address this?*

While these questions are not directly related to the research questions, they are indicative of how teachers view the technological development that surrounds students. These two questions relate to Kress and Van Leeuwen's statement from their book *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2020). The authors explain how the “digital manipulation of images have the effect of accelerating this trend, blurring and unmaking the formerly seemingly reliable boundaries around notions such as ‘the real’, ‘truth’ and so on.” (p. 29). As a result, today's society requires more awareness of how digital tools can alter images. The first question begins with an explanation of what Kress and van Leeuwen mean with the age of as-if-real. As mentioned, having long questions could be a negative aspect of a study (Bryman, 2016, p. 255). This statement was difficult to make more concise and is therefore in the format found in the guide. After this explanation, the teachers are asked to express their thoughts on the subject. Getting insight in what contemporary teachers think of this development and asking how this may affect students in school will relate to how teachers work with texts and describe students' understanding of text. The second question is asked to see if teachers have a specific example they can provide as opposed to giving a general answer to the statement and not elaborating before moving on.

- What do you think is the most important aspect of the English subject in the Norwegian classroom context?
- Do you have anything more you want to add or say?

These are the final two questions in the interview guide. These questions feature no suggestions to follow-ups or notes as they are very open for the informants to answer how they like.

Positioning the first question so late in the interview guide was a conscious decision. This position was chosen so it did not follow a question regarding the position of images in the subject to prevent the respondents from answering something they think I want to hear, rather than their own opinion. This is a source of validity conflict as respondents could see the emphasis on images in the interview as a prompt to answer a response related to using images (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 166). To avoid validity conflicts, and as it is a natural point to end the discussion on, this question was placed in the penultimate position of the interview guide. Finally, the ultimate question of the interview opens for the informants to present some final thoughts, mention something they feel they did not respond clearly to or add some final comments (Brinkmann & Kvale, p. 59).

The positions of the questions found in the interview guide was carefully decided through theoretical considerations, such as Bryman (2016), Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) and Mackey and Gass (2015), conversations with my supervisor and ultimately, through testing the interview guide on a fellow student. This was to gain insight in how the questions were thematically perceived and to uncover if certain terms were difficult to understand. This test interview was useful for training to present the questions and trying the recording equipment. The result is that the questions are mostly thematically sorted, featuring topics that are related in succession. However, as the interviews are semi-structured, there is no requirement to follow the guide as rigid and it allows for the structure to be slightly altered based on responses and natural leads in the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 60). This has the benefit that there is room for respondents to digress and to present didactic examples without concern for the interview guide. As the point of the interview was to create a conversational setting as opposed to a setting in which the informant feels interrogated, the emphasis on discussion is important. In the interview, this was tried to some degree through discussing examples and through the interviewer mentioning personal examples as well.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis will consist of looking at the answers provided by the teachers, and based on this see what the attitudes and perceptions of Norwegian English teachers are, regarding images and their role in the EFL classroom. For the data analysis, I have decided to use the thematic analysis (TA) approach. To begin with, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2022) define TA: “at a very basic level, TA is a method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset, which involves systematic processes of data coding to develop themes.”

(p. 4). Braun and Clarke argue that TA encompasses more than a method but not as complete as methodology. The difference is, according to Braun and Clarke, that “A method is a process or tool used as part of (qualitative) research – commonly to analyse or collect data.” (p. 4), whilst methodology is defined as “Methodology refers to a package of theory, method and other design elements for doing research.” (p. 4). TA has a lot of different variations, making it difficult to say that TA is simply a method. For my thesis, TA is the main approach for sorting and analysing my dataset. The dataset in this thesis consists of four transcriptions from the four semi-structured interviews I conducted.

The reflexive TA (RTA) is emphasised as particularly important by Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 5). In RTA, having a critical approach of the researcher’s subjective ideas and the role of the researcher is emphasised as an important factor for coding and uncover themes. The acknowledgement of the subjective ideas of the researcher will impact how the themes found in the data are formed and what is emphasised. To code responses is a subjective matter, as it relies on my interpretation of their answers and my own assessment of how awareness is defined. As a result, the data analysis section could be a possible area of conflict in relation to validity and my impression of the interviews may affect how awareness is defined. The interview transcriptions will only present the sentences through a denotative lens, and there is therefore room for error in this interpretation.

An important aspect of TA is coding the data. Coding is a process in which the researcher marks data to explore and discuss an interesting find in the dataset. The codes are then used as sorting mechanisms for the dataset. Note that this thesis features an inductive orientation, meaning that the analysis and coding process is data driven (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 56). For a thesis to be inductive, it uses the data as the focus for meaning making. In projects where the researcher or theory is the focus, Braun and Clarke (2022) use the term deductive orientation. A project does not have to be only inductive or deductive, as the two words are not dichotomies but more of a spectrum (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 56). Relevant information found in the dataset is marked and sorted as a code within a code label, and all information found and marked is a code item. In this thesis, the dataset is analysed and sorted into the different codes by using NVIVO as a tool. The interesting finds in the dataset are marked and sorted into a code label, which is called a code for short. Some code items can be part of multiple labels, as they are thematically connected to more than just one code label. It is drawn forth by Braun and Clarke (2022) that “codes are not themes, and so you’re trying to capture a singular or particular idea through coding, not a multi-faceted one.” (p. 54). This creates situations in

which some coded items are marked for multiple codes, as each code only looks for a specific part, and a response could be relevant for many codes. As a result, looking at an interesting response through different codes will shift the focus of what is highlighted. These codes will allow the researcher to look through a lot of the different findings and analyse the responses to search for patterns. These patterns are what ends up forming a theme.

A topic summary would in RTA not count as a theme but is rather the sum of all responses (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 77). The codes in this thesis are created to contain all responses related to the specific topic. The topic of teacher awareness, for example, is a code where everything that is related to the teacher's awareness and use of images is included. This can be aspects such as didactic practices, expressing positive or negative remarks in terms of teaching images. The code thus becomes a storage for responses connected to the topic of multimodal awareness. By having all responses connected to this topic added to the same code, it is easier to analyse across interviews with the larger themes. It is also a much larger data collection, making it easier to highlight crossover responses that are relevant for multiple codes. However, it does not count as a theme as it is too broad to draw a conclusion from, and needs to be further narrowed down to conclude the findings.

3.6 Codes

The codes used in this thesis are inductive and applied to answer the research question and sub-questions. The created codes are Education, Enjoyment, Multimodality, Pictures as Complementary, Problems with Teaching Multimodal Text, Text Culture, Teacher Awareness, and Social Media. A distinction between the codes Pictures as Complementary and Multimodality is necessary as the first code looks more specifically at the relation between pictures and written text, while the second code is broader and encompasses more.

3.6.1 Education

The first code I chose is education. The purpose of this code was to uncover what educational background each teacher had, which subjects they teach and how long they have been teaching. This code, while not directly related to the research question, helped create a personal background of each teacher. However, findings related to the teachers' reflections about the current teacher education are also included in this code as it regards education.

3.6.2 Enjoyment

This code was chosen to find out if students and teachers enjoy working with multimodal text. This was to see what the teachers have to say about enjoyment and if it is a positive or negative experience in their classrooms. For example, if a teacher says they enjoy working with multimodal media, the next step would be to uncover why, such as images being fun or easy to understand. The code encompasses statements about students' enjoyment as well.

3.6.3 Multimodality

This code encompasses everything connected to multimodality. The purpose of this code is to have an overview of what thoughts, attitudes and ideas the different teachers had related to teaching, understanding, and students' experiences with multimodal texts and media. The code further relates to their understanding of text and use of more than just written text. There is an emphasis on multimodal texts found in the curriculum that would suggest that multimodal texts are used in the EFL classroom. This code is different from the Teacher Awareness code as it encompasses more than awareness and cover more didactic aspects. By design, this code is very broad and there are a lot of things that can be related to this code. This is a result of how multimodality is a broad field, and the aim of this code is to collect all responses related to multimodality for further distinction.

3.6.4 Pictures as Complementary

This code investigates how images and pictures serve to be a supplement for written text. This code was created because I have the impression that pictures are not prioritised in the classroom. This impression comes from my previous experiences in teaching practice as well as my experiences as a substitute teacher. Pictures, as I have experienced, are a supplement for written text to help motivate students. There is little to no emphasis on what images can communicate on its own and how one can use images in the classroom as the main focus of a lesson. To find out if this impression has some truth to it, this code is created. All items that are part of this code are also coded into multimodality. This is due to the code of multimodality working as a larger category and the use of written text with pictures will count as a multimodal text. As a result it is part of both codes.

3.6.5 Problems with Teaching Multimodal Texts

This code relates to what the teachers find to be difficult or an issue in teaching multimodal text. It will also point out teachers' statements where they mention that teaching images or multimodal text is not a challenge or problem. The background of this code is my assumption that teachers do not have the tools to use multimodal texts to their full potential. I believe that written text will be the dominant mode of communication in the multimodal texts that are used and that teachers do not think twice about this. It is therefore important to see how teachers work with multimodal texts and what challenges they present.

3.6.6 Text Culture

This code relates to what the teachers say about how text culture affects their methods and approaches to teaching. This is uncovered through both implicit and explicit discussions about text culture, methods, team development work, and their ideas of text. This code is part of the thesis due to my suspicion that text culture is one of the main hindrances for teachers when it comes to teaching images. I believe that teachers are affected by the people and co-workers around them. In terms of text, this could be a collective of teachers that believe presentations are great and as a result use this frequently. This is what is meant by a text culture. From a different perspective, it could create text cultures in which written text is emphasised as the most important form of text. This has been mentioned by Macken-Horarik (2008, in Ørevik, 2020) in terms of text in higher education.

3.6.7 Teacher Awareness

This code investigates how the teachers show awareness to teaching visual literacy and multimodality and/or lack of awareness related to this. My expected findings are that teachers are aware of and have reflections about how to use images and how images communicate. As the goal of the code is to uncover their awareness of how images can communicate and that the term text includes more than written text, the code is a collection of multiple answers from the teachers. It is, alongside the multimodality code, very broad and contains a lot of different responses. As stated in the section 3.5 Data Analysis, this allows findings that are added to multiple codes to be analysed through the lens of different perspectives.

3.6.8 Social Media

This code includes every remark related to social media. I was interested in investigating if the teachers of this study use social media as a tool for learning and as a method for teaching visual literacy. Social media can be used as a method for teaching visual literacy and to showcase that grammar and the awareness of what and how images communicate is part of the students' everyday life. However, from a more critical perspective, social media is very connected to problems with bullying. The national statistics presents an increased number of students being bullied, both digitally and in general (Udir., 2021). As social media is very important for students' everyday life, it is interesting to see if teachers implement this into their classrooms.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity is an important aspect to discuss when doing research. The interview setting might affect how questions are perceived, according to Mackey and Gass (2015). The teachers were given the choice of deciding where the interview should be held to negate the influence location can have. Three out of four teachers in this study opted to have the interviews at the school they worked at. The final interview was held at HVL in a small meeting room. There is no guarantee that a researcher gets neither the information that was originally wanted, nor the expected information. There is a possibility that informants misunderstand questions and answer something they believe is correct but in reality, is not connected to the question. Another issue is if informants want to give the researcher the answer they believe is wanted and not answer truthfully (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 226). This is particularly relevant if the researcher asks leading questions, which might direct the participant towards a specific answer, and affect the validity of the study. This is different from prompting, which involves the researcher to gently guide the interviewee to reflect more on the questions to formulate an answer (Bryman, 2016, p. 479).

An issue that concerns both validity and reliability is the issue of translation. As the interviews were held in Norwegian, any quotes from the informants must be translated to English for the thesis. Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) states: "there is also the question of whether a transcribed text is loyal to the interviewee's oral statements" (p. 29). The original quote refers to the issue of staying true to the original oral expression when transcribing, but by having the interviews in the informants L1, the issue is further complicated by the inclusion of a translation as well. A wrongful translation is both unethical and negatively affects validity. Other issues with translation such as text-makers choices and defining what terms to use also create issues in

replicating the study, as it allows for the researcher's subjectivity to affect the resulting translation. In terms of reliability, this study will also be hard to replicate due to the small informant sample and open-ended interview guide. There is no guarantee that the questions are understood in the same manner if the study was to be replicated and each interview is innately different.

3.8 Research Ethics

The information gathered has been anonymised to follow the NSD guidelines for the thesis. This means that no personal information or identifying details are present in the transcriptions and thesis. To make the informants feel more welcome and to help avoid a threatening suspense, the informants were given the choice between English and Norwegian for the language of the interview. All of the interviews ended up being held in Norwegian, and as a result, the transcriptions are in Norwegian. There are benefits and disadvantages in having the interviews in Norwegian. As a benefit it will most likely be easier for the informants to fully understand and answer the questions more accurately in their first language. This has advantages that Mackey and Gass (2015) comment on: "interviews can also be conducted in the learner's L1, thus removing concerns about the proficiency of the learners impacting the quality and quantity of the data provided" (p .225). This allows responders to feel freer as they are more comfortable in their preferred language, allowing them to avoid feeling inadequate in terms of language proficiency. Another benefit is that informants will not have to translate their thoughts and ideas, allowing for a more natural flow in the interview.

There are, however, also negative aspects of translating the transcriptions. For example, a disadvantage is that I had to translate both the questions and answers as neutral and accurate as possible such that the meanings of the answers remained true to what the informant meant. This affects both the validity and the ethical aspect of the thesis, as a wrongful translation or a translation that slightly shifts the message would ruin the integrity of the thesis. This is not an easy task, as transcribing and translating idioms and oral expressions could be complicated. This has been taken into consideration when creating the interview guide as it also includes a translation to prevent slight alterations when asking the questions during the interviews. The questions have first been written down in English, then been translated carefully to ensure that the same themes and topics are prominent. The original text in Norwegian is also added in parentheses behind the translation.

The informants were given informed consent and no information was used or gathered without explicit consent through a written form. This form states what the information would be used for and when the personal information would be deleted. Consent, according to Cohen (2018), “concerns autonomy, and it arises from the participant’s right to freedom and self-determination” (p. 122). As a result, it is important to state that participants are free to withdraw this consent whenever they would feel the urge to do so. To ensure this has been explicitly stated, each interview recording starts with the participant stating that they have signed the consent form and have the option to withdraw from the thesis at any time. This would have no consequences for the informant and all personal information, transcription, audio recording and other information would be deleted. To notify me about this, the informant would send an email or a message, irrespective of the formality of the message.

3.9 Limitations

This section discusses the limitations of this thesis. The informant group of this thesis consists of only four teachers from the Bergen area. It should, however, be brought up that the group consists of a wide spectrum of teachers, being two newer and two experienced teachers as well as two men and two women. As this thesis is based on qualitative research, the highlighted and discussed attitudes and reflections of the teachers are highly individual. Following this, the responses do not represent all Norwegian EFL classrooms, but rather a small portion. A result of this is that there is no case for creating a general statement. It is also a limitation that the topic of visual literacy is not emphasised clearly in the curriculum by more than implicit means, such as in the basic skills (Udir., 2017b).

Related to limitations, the critique of qualitative research is natural to mention. As Bryman (2016) argues, one of the chief critiques of the qualitative approach is that “qualitative research is too subjective” (p. 398). This critique often comes from the criteria of quantitative research and is valid for this small-scale study. It is true that it is subjective work, and my own position of being interested in the field, will affect what I look for and how I code the data. This makes a lot of the information gathered subjective. I will naturally try to have an objective approach to the interviews, as well as a critical approach to my own position, to mitigate the issue of subjectivity. Other critiques of qualitative research compared to quantitative research according to Bryman (2016), are issues such as being “difficult to replicate” (p. 398) and “problems of generalization” (p. 399). Both issues are highly relevant for this thesis as the

sample size is small and the interview is qualitative and open-ended. This creates a lot of factors which may reduce reliability.

The issue of making a general statement, as Bryman (2016) argues, is one of the critiques of qualitative research: “How can just one or two cases be representative for all cases?” (p. 399). The short answer is that they cannot, but that does not mean that the research is not important. Concerning this thesis, the informant sample provides a broad spectrum of teachers, but is not enough for the purpose of creating a general statement as it is still only four specific individuals. The aim of this thesis is not to create a general statement however, but to uncover how the informant sample teaches images and how they work with text. The purpose is to research how teachers work with text and how they prepare students for reading. These four teachers will demonstrate awareness in explaining how they teach and understand multimodal texts and as such give insight to what challenges are present when working with multimodal texts. It is not a general statement, but an example of how teachers may be prepared for the challenges of teaching multimodal texts. It is difficult to know if more teachers agree or disagree with these claims which is a limitation of this thesis.

3.10 Chapter Summary

To answer the research questions, this thesis consists of a qualitative approach. This was selected due to the benefits, such as the option of having a small sample size and semi-structured interviews. This approach is the most suited to explore the attitudes and perceptions of teachers as it allows for more detailed answers. By discussing the informant sample and interview guide, both limitations and benefits regarding this has been presented. The inductive codes that were used to sort the data to analyse the responses and uncover themes were also discussed. To assess the validity in this thesis, research ethics and limitations have been considered. In the following chapter, each informant is presented in more detail.

4 Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I will be presenting the findings from the interviews as well as discuss them. To begin with, I wish to present each teacher with a personal description containing some of the information gathered from the interviews. I will then present the interview responses which will be analysed across interviews and codes. In this chapter, the findings will be connected to relevant theory.

4.1 Personal Description of Each Teacher

For this thesis, four teachers have been interviewed to get a better insight in how teachers use text in the current EFL classroom in Norway. As required by NSD regarding the privacy of informants, the teachers are given anonymous names. The informants will therefore be referred to as Mari, Thomas, Matias, and Kristin. This section includes information about the background of each teacher, including the grade they teach and their level of experience. Further, their thoughts about the current teacher education and their own experiences as students are also covered for all teachers other than Mari.

The teachers' backgrounds are important as they may give an indication on the relationship between their own education and how prepared they are in teaching images. For example, if their education did not cover teaching images, they would have to learn this on their own in order to meet the requirements of the new curriculum. If the teacher education did cover teaching images and allowed the teachers to develop some didactic tools for teaching images, I would expect them to try to include this in their classes. All four teachers state that they feel prepared to teach images and multimodal texts in today's English classes, however, the extent and practice of this varies between the teachers. My question is therefore how and to what extent do they teach images and multimodal texts?

4.1.1 Informant 1, Mari

Mari is fifty-five years old and has twenty-five years of experience as a teacher. She currently works as a teacher in the eighth grade, and has a lot of experience in both teaching and having students in teaching practice. In addition to English, she teaches Selection of Education and Social Science, and works as a student advisor at the school. My impression is that Mari is calm and collected in the classroom even in hectic situations and seemed comfortable during the interview. The interview with Mari was the shortest in both time and number of words after transcribing. However, this is not necessarily negative. This is rather a result of her taking time

to think about the questions to formulate a well-thought-out answer, rather than saying the first thought that comes to mind. This yielded more answers that were directly connected to the questions asked, which eases the coding process and provides a clearer image of what her thoughts regarding the questions.

4.1.2 Informant 2, Thomas

Thomas is forty-four years old and has a master's degree in one of his subjects. The subject was not specified. While he only recently started working as an English teacher, he has been teaching other subjects like Spanish, Physical Education, and Food and Health since he became a teacher in 2007. He is the most unorthodox teacher of the four that were interviewed. An example of this is that he simply does not care for grammar and does not spend time on teaching grammar in class. Instead, he believes that his students should have an opinion or idea, and his main priority as a teacher is to help them express this. This was justified as students nowadays have tools that correct grammar in almost every situation where they write. This teaching style differs from the rest of the teachers, as they do not explicitly share this approach to language learning. Thomas also contradicts himself multiple times during the interview, but this seems to be one of his traits. This does not remove the validity of his opinions, but instead highlights his views on different aspects of teaching images. He gives the impression of being quite straightforward when it comes to speaking his mind, and was very direct in his responses in the interview. As a result, he had a tendency to answer something with his exact thought at the time I asked the question before reflecting upon the answer and elaborating more, possibly contradicting what he initially said. However, this often displayed an awareness through him presenting different viewpoints and difficulties as well as strengths with teaching multimodality.

4.1.3 Informant 3, Matias

Matias is twenty-seven years old and has a master's degree in the English subject. As he has worked for his current school for only about a year, he is somewhat fresh as a teacher. In addition to teaching English, he also teaches other subjects such as Music, Physical Education, Stage Production and Selection of Education. Matias recently taught tenth grade and is now teaching eighth grade. The difference in grades affects both what topics he wants to teach and how he wants to teach these topics, and his priorities are currently to familiarise his students with the routines of lower secondary school. He seemed laid back and easy to talk to, and was friendly and calm during the interview. One of his motivations in teaching English is to make

the students more comfortable in speaking the language, as this has been important for him personally when travelling. A key element in his practices is teaching multimodal texts and using images for the purpose of teaching intercultural competence.

4.1.4 Informant 4, Kristin

Kristin is twenty-seven years old and has a master's degree in the English subject. She has worked as a teacher for three years and currently teaches English in the fourth grade, as well as having previous experience in teaching English in the eighth grade. In addition to teaching English, she also teaches Arts and Crafts. Kristin demonstrated awareness of what visual literacy is and how it can be taught to students. In the interview it was brought up that visual literacy was taught during teacher education and was a field that interested her. During the interview, she highlights the issue of the student's use of social media. Even though her students are under ten years old, they are active users of TikTok and other social media. She believes that this causes a lot of challenges, as the students are not prepared for how to deal with the content that they come across, as a lot of this content is unregulated and problematic for young people in their formative years. This was not intentionally a focus for this thesis, but as it was mentioned explicitly by multiple teachers, the issues of students' use of social media will be mentioned under subsection 4.2.5 Social Media.

4.2 Discussing Coded Responses

This section will present and discuss the results from the coded responses. Relevant theory is used to support the findings.

4.2.1 Enjoyment

This subsection studies how the teachers express enjoyment with working with images, and if their students enjoy working with images. Through the coding of the responses, teachers have expressed different positive and negative experiences and reflections regarding the use of multimodal texts in the Norwegian EFL classroom. Positive experiences of working with multimodal text often results in a wish to work more with this format. Therefore, enjoyment is closely related to how teachers work with the new definition of text, as well as how students use images in their texts. On the other hand, negative experiences with multimodal texts are often caused by challenges connected to teaching images and will discourage students and teachers from applying different methods for working with multimodal text.

Mari, Thomas, Matias and Kristin all agreed that teaching images is something positive for the classroom and that students enjoy working with images. For example, Matias states that “it is too boring without images” (da e for kjedelig uten bilde. - appendix 3, p. 72), and he notices how the images may be fun for students and be an important factor for enjoyment in the subject. Also, Mari draws forth the benefit of variation, in which images give students some breathing room in an otherwise very written text-focused everyday life. Mari also comments on how the students are a varied group with different interests and strengths, and as such, some students learn better with using images than written text, making images more enjoyable for those students. Kristin starts each day with presenting the “fun fact for the day” from an English website. She and her students then read the fact out loud together before they discuss an illustrative photo related to the fact. She mentions how her students express enjoyment related to this practice, and are highly invested in this routine and remind her if she forgets. This demonstrates how her students enjoy working with images, although, at their age of ten years, they need a lot of guidance with regards to selecting images for independent projects. Regardless of the need for guidance, she emphasises that her students find it motivating to have images as a support compared to working with written text only.

There are also negative aspects related to the enjoyment of working with imaging in today’s classes. For instance, if students have the impression that images are only part of being fun and a break from the more difficult written text, the images will be assumed to be less important. Mari mentions how her students, when presented with a text, tend to go directly to the written text part, while reading the image is the final activity. It is therefore important to also highlight how images communicate and that it is part of the term text during lessons that include images. Skulstad (2020) mentions how “in academia, for instance, it is usually still frowned upon by many professors if students include visual (except statistical information and subject-related models) in their master’s theses or doctoral dissertations” (p. 265). This view of multimodal texts from academia could be the root of how images are not seen as genuine communication in the lower education as well. This issue of text culture will be further elaborated upon in subsection 4.2.5 Text Culture.

Another negative aspect, which Thomas comments on, is the issue of familiarity as students are used to working with written text. This could lead to less enjoyment when using images, as the emphasis ends up being on the fact that it is new or different. According to Thomas, using images as the main teaching aid can be demanding for both students and teachers as they are

not familiar with the format. As a result, there may be less enjoyment of working with the images due to possible frustration of not understanding how to use the available tools. This issue is mostly related to familiarity. As students are presented with written text every day, they become familiar with the format and how to communicate through written text. When asked to communicate with different tools and media, students will first have to learn how the media works and later decide what message the media is the most suited for. This is a time-consuming task and can result in a trial-and-error process, which is something that students might find frustrating. Also, if the task is graded, this pressure will add stress as a component, which could further impact the enjoyment.

Thomas mentions an example of the issue of familiarity, which is his own experience of using podcasts in one of his classes. According to him, his students did not enjoy working with podcasts. Using podcasts to express oneself is a media that, whilst not being part of the visual or image-based communication, is part of a digital and multimodal approach. Additionally, it is highly relevant as an example of media used in contemporary society. As Thomas states, the students did not like this format because of the lack of time to edit the podcasts. Instead, the students enjoyed the slow pace of text as they had a lot more time to formulate and edit their work. Having a project where students need to learn how to record, edit and create a script for a podcast should in theory be more adapted to contemporary society, as opposed to using written text to convey the same message. However, in practice, the lack of familiarity causes frustration when having to learn a new tool, and results in a less enjoyable experience for the students. This incentivises the teachers to avoid multimodal or unfamiliar methods as the negativity from the students may influence the teacher.

The issue of familiarity becomes more apparent in independent learning contexts. This is due to the demand of self-regulated learning and that learning gradually becomes a more individual focused task. Habits make up how students are used to working with the subjects they are presented with, and if the habits consist of working with written text, the students will gravitate towards this approach. Macaluso et al. (2022) discuss how familiarity and educational habits affect students and learning processes in their article: “Learners could rely on existing study habits, even when they are not optimal for learning, simply because they are habitual” (section 1.4, Habits and Familiarity in Self-Regulated Learning). This correlates well with how Thomas’ students gravitate towards familiarity when given the choice. Students might see the methods they are comfortable with as the most suited method for working with a task. The

students' perception of most effective method may conflict what the task at hand require. This lack of awareness due to familiarity is also an issue when working with multimodal texts as they might prioritise what they are familiar with such as the written text, neglecting the unfamiliar aspects of the text. The issues of familiarity and time consumption will be further explored in subsection 4.2.4 Problems with Teaching Multimodal Texts.

Students and teachers enjoy working with tools and methods they feel proficient in. Kristin's example of starting the day with an image is a good way to incorporate images as a fun activity. Over time, the students will become familiar with this and be able to discuss the images and fun facts in a more fulfilling way. An issue with this is how in terms of communication, images could be seen as less important due how to the students will associate images with the fun facts as compared to written text which is associated with serious communication. The teachers comment on how they enjoy working with multimodal text and that students also enjoy working with texts. Yet, when presented with multimodal media that is not familiar to students and teachers, it is often regarded as difficult and often results in negative experiences. This could discourage teachers from trying different multimodal media approaches, leading to a more written text-based classroom.

4.2.2 Multimodality

This subsection relates to all of the research questions, as all research questions are related to the multiple aspects of multimodality. Multimodality includes both how the teachers and students work with text and their challenges connected to this, see section 2.4 Multimodality for elaboration. My assumption is that even though the need for multimodal literacy is emphasised in the curriculum through the expansion of the term text (Udir., 2012) and the subject specific curriculum (Udir., 2019b), multimodal literacy is still lacking in today's classes. This code will see if the teachers interviewed in this thesis display an awareness of the need for multimodal literacy and how they work with multimodal texts.

Mari states that teachers nowadays are expected to use multimodal texts in their teaching. Her comment does not directly indicate that she uses multimodal text herself, but rather shows an awareness of what is expected of teachers. Even though she does not state how often she uses multimodal texts, she answers honestly that she has only used images as the main focus on rare occasions. She does remember situations where images have been in the centre of teaching, but this has been for specific purposes, such as an anti-bullying campaign, and not of her own

volition. In this campaign, the students watched a video where they could only see part of a student on the screen, and their task was to analyse the video to uncover the message. This is an example of a task that is directly connected to using visual literacy to teach understanding of what and how images communicate. For example, Janks et al. (2014) mention foregrounding and backgrounding as a demonstration of how the position or emphasis on the objects in the text can change the message. The example from Mari clearly demonstrates this and requires students to see for themselves how the text-makers choice is connected to what message is portrayed. By portraying the student in the video with only parts of their face visible, the students are asked to question this choice and uncover why this choice was made.

Even though there has been little focus on using images as the main tool during one of her classes, Mari is open to this idea, stating that “it is certainly possible” (Det lar seg jo fint gjøre. - appendix 3, p. 7). to teach images as the main focus. The question therefore became why this had not yet been done. However, later in the interview, she mentions that they had in fact worked with images as the main tool for learning, during a class about grammar. By using an image that pictured many different items, the students worked on their vocabulary and learned different nouns. This type of task lays its emphasis on the denotative parts of the image, as the aim of the lesson was not what students associated with the items, but the items themselves. This is a good example of how one can integrate images as a communicative tool as an equal to written text and is in line with the curricular aims (Udir., 2019b) and basic skills (Udir., 2017b). This approach can also be further explored through working with the connotations of the items found in the image, and how we interpret them allowing for a more in-depth analysis of how text can be interpreted subjectively.

One of the interesting aspects from the interview with Kristin is her thoughts regarding images' place in the English subject. When asked about the comfort of teaching images, she mentions that she feels the structure of the curriculum and the use of textbooks do not facilitate the use of images. She experiences that images are something a teacher needs to take initiative to use themselves, and expresses that teaching images is seen as thinking outside the box. Her experience may relate to how written text is the dominant form of text found in a typical classroom. As three out of the four interviewed teachers mentioned that the textbooks are used a lot in the subject, it is an issue that Kristin feels that these textbooks do not facilitate the use of images.

The textbooks are referred to several times when discussing the use of images in the classroom.

As mentioned, Kristin feels that the textbooks do not facilitate the use of images, but are used a lot. Thomas finds the methods and media used in the textbooks provided for the curriculum to be outdated. He states that while the textbooks are not necessarily outdated in terms of content and topics, they are outdated in terms of methods and media to teach these topics. These are important statements, as the textbooks are often used by teachers and are a tool that both the students and the teachers recognize and are familiar with. The textbooks are easy to use in lessons, as the textbook cover the topics in the curriculum. Matias mentions how the modern textbooks have become quite good. He shows an awareness of how to use multimodal texts, but also comments on how some images could have negative cultural associations. While the newer books are better, negative cultural representations have especially been an issue in previous textbooks. For example, older textbooks have been criticised for how indigenous people have been portrayed. Teaching the students more about what we see in the images, by asking critical questions of how the people are presented, is a way to combat this (Brown & Habegger-Conti, 2022).

An issue Matias raises is that teachers have little time to teach all the topics they want to, as well as discussing how to teach the different topics. This may lead to reprioritising or the abandonment of some methods and topics. Matias uses an example from his own experience, as he would want to work more with images and discuss this with the other teachers. However, available time becomes an issue and the priorities might change as: “there are a thousand other things and then the others are not as focused, so it is forgotten” (men så e det tusen andre ting også e ikkje dei andre like fokuserte elle, på det, så då forsvinne det litt fort. - appendix 3, p. 63). This is an example of a challenge the teachers identify in relation to teaching images. If this statement from Matias is the reality for a lot of teachers, the end result is that students are not presented with a variety of methods.

Kristin experiences how both stronger and weaker readers benefit from working with images in the class. Even though they rarely work with images in the classroom, Kristin notices how this is a positive experience in her classroom. She notes that the stronger readers get both motivation and more understanding from images, while at the same time the weaker readers can get the support they need to create texts and complete comprehension tasks where the image is also present. This goes into the notion that images are subordinated written texts, yet shows insight in how they can be implemented to do more than just look pretty. Strong readers can get motivation when working with images and weaker readers can draw on denotations

and concrete examples in the images. In my opinion, this is the old way of teaching images. This approach to multimodal texts shows the old text culture where the written text is in focus and other forms of texts are supplements.

4.2.3 Pictures as Complementary

This subsection is separated from the Multimodality subsection as it narrows down the use of images as being complementary for written texts. When teachers are working with multimodal texts, the written text is often regarded as the important part of the text. Using pictures as a supplement to written text is not necessarily negative. Pictures can serve as a way to more visually enforce a message in written texts that is otherwise difficult to comprehend. Multiple teachers interviewed in this thesis express this as well. However, the issue arises when written text is presented as more important than the complementary image, and the latter is instead used as a typical bonus task. As stated in the introduction, my assumption is that most teachers use text in this way. For example, this issue is evident in typical tasks found in the Norwegian EFL classes. These tasks often follow a specific structure. First, the students read a written text to answer a few comprehension questions. Next, the students answer slightly longer and more challenging questions about the text. Finally, the last tasks are usually bonus tasks, such as drawing an image related to the text. When images are included in the final tasks, they are usually implemented with no emphasis on how images can communicate. They often feature less demanding work such as free drawing or as a relaxing reward for being finished with the other questions. As mentioned, this is not solely a negative thing, as it helps with images being a fun thing for the classroom, but it undermines the images' status as being part of the text definition. This subsection will explore how teachers teach images in their classrooms and as a result relates to all the research sub-questions.

Matias points out that images are often used for smaller, extra tasks that students are asked to do after they are done with the written text-based tasks. Matias also discusses what the reasons for this may be. One of his theories is that a lot of people still think of text as written text and do not think of images as part of this term. Specifically for the subjects of Norwegian and English, teachers may think that the goal of the subject is that students are able to read and write, but fail to consider reading images as a form of text reading. This issue of text culture will be discussed later in the thesis, under subsection 4.2.5 Text Culture.

Kristin mentions that everything can be adapted to lower levels, which is an interesting point. This was brought up in relation to discussing how images can communicate. She, along with

the other teachers, discusses how images can be a good support for both strong and weak readers. The teachers include general examples of how images as a support can be motivating for stronger readers, while regarding the weaker readers, Kristin presents concrete examples of how images are beneficial in their learning. One of her examples concerns students working with a multimodal text featuring written text alongside an image. If the weaker readers do not understand the written text, they can use the images for support. For example, if a student does not understand the word dragon, but can see that there is a dragon in the illustration, they can possibly use their knowledge of Norwegian to connect the word dragon to the illustration.

Even though images can be a good support for weaker readers in the classroom, this also presents an issue where images are used as subordinated to written text. In this way, the image is simply complementary to the written text. It is added for the purpose of students being able to use the image as a denotative support with no regards to how images can communicate independently. An image can have a lot of potential for communicating in a text, but is instead solely used for superficial denotative means to help students better understand the written text. On the other hand, if the image behaves as a support for students that need extra assistance when dealing with written text, it is great that they can use images to understand the written text and have a positive experience with the text as a result. While teachers have a positive experience with using images as a support for weaker readers, it is also important to highlight how images can communicate as a standalone text. Based on the interviews, my impression is that the teachers, even if aware of how images communicate, do not teach this to their students to a fulfilling degree.

The number of images present in the text can be related to the level of formality of the text in focus, which can further be connected to the exams in the tenth grade. Thomas discusses this by stating: “the more formal the text is, the less the image has something to do there.” (jo mere formell teksten e jo mindre har det bildet i den teksten å gjøre. - appendix 3, p. 20). This statement highlights the current view of images, which is being something fun and not a serious mode for communication. This is likely true for a lot of texts that the students in the lower secondary school create, as they are directing more and more attention towards the possible exam in the tenth grade. This exam, according to Thomas, does not feature images and is almost purely written text-based. It is a common notion that students want to work with what they are going to be tested in. This means that images, as they are not part of the exam, are potentially pushed aside in favour of written text. When the students are approaching the exam, it may be more important to prepare the students for the exam format, than teaching them how images

communicate. Ideally, the students are taught how images communicate in advance of the exam focus, to avoid a situation where one aspect of lifelong learning must be pushed aside for the benefit of preparing for an exam.

Pictures are often used in student presentations without regarding what the image can communicate. All of the teachers mention how students mostly use images for decorative purposes. Thomas also mentions that images are almost never in focus. Instead, the written text is emphasised most of the time. He states that his students want to use images, but the images are used almost purely for decorative purposes with no regards to what the image communicates. Further, the students do not comment on what the image can contribute to the presentations or texts, and the image is simply there without purpose, as Thomas states “it is just pretty to look at” (det bare e fint å se på. - appendix 3, p. 22). This indicates that the main motivation for using images may be for entertainment and as a break from the more serious work of creating written text. Thomas mentions how the images should be a good tool for students when they communicate orally, however, his students do not use images to the potential that images possess. Another teacher who discusses the same issue is Matias. Just like Thomas discussed, Matias’ students also use images almost purely for decorative purposes. Even though he advises them to be aware of what the images communicate and comment on what one can see in the image, he acknowledges that he would be impressed if they actually showed this type of awareness. This comment indicates that such an awareness of how images communicate is not expected of students at a young age. Although Matias emphasises that his students should use images for communicative purposes, it seems they do not see images as anything other than decorations with the purpose of being a break from the text. This is a recurring theme amongst the teachers when discussing how students use images.

Interestingly, all of the teachers comment that their students use images poorly, where the students use images only for decorative purposes for the presentations. According to the teachers, the students neither comment on why they have chosen the images in their presentations, nor express an awareness of what the images communicate. While the teachers tell their students to think about what images to use and not use the first image they see, they do not teach them how to use the images for communicating. The issue with teaching how to use images is that the instructions are simple, yet not nearly as descriptive enough for younger learners. From my own experience, which matches with what Mari mentions, when introducing a new method or tool, the students need the instructions constantly repeated as they tend to forget them. For example, if the students are told to not choose the first image they see, they

will commonly choose the second option instead, missing the point that they should be critical in what image they should choose. As the students are presented with new projects later on, the same message needs to be repeated to avoid the same situation an additional time.

Even though the students use images poorly, they have not been taught the considerations to make when selecting an image. Thomas believes therefore that it becomes unfair to evaluate the students on their selection of images, stating that “and then we are not aware enough of their choice of images for me to criticise them for it” (og då e isje vi bevisst nok rundt bildevalget til at eg kan kritisere de for det. - appendix 3, p. 50). This indicates that he knows the students are oblivious to what the images really say, but thinks it is unfair towards the students to evaluate their use of images as they do not have the tools to critically assess what image to use. He raises a valid point, and to prevent this situation, one should help students develop an awareness of what images communicate. Through developing this awareness, students can be questioned in their choice and use of images. Having students reflect upon their choice and use of images can help develop their visual and critical visual skills (Janks et al., 2014).

Comparing the various responses and situations regarding using images, it becomes apparent that the teachers are not detailed enough when showing their students how to use images for more than décor. This becomes a further issue, as the teachers cannot criticise them for not using images to a fulfilling degree when the students have not been given the tools to use images as such. This signals that teachers are aware of the issue, but do not act on it in their lessons. In general, my impression is that one of the reasons why images are viewed as secondary to written text is the current practices in school, where teaching how to use images is often ignored. The teachers mention that students should take care of making sure the image communicates what they want, but they do not explain how to do so or demonstrate how to use the image actively in their presentations. As a result, images stay in the position they currently are in, being subordinated to the written text and students are not being trained in critical visual literacy.

4.2.4 Problems with Teaching Multimodal Texts

This subsection discusses the responses of what the teachers find to be difficult and the issues in teaching multimodal text, which relates to the research sub-question about challenges. Aspects where teachers mention that teaching images or multimodal texts is not challenging or problematic will also be highlighted. All of the teachers mention that teaching images is

important and raise issues to reasons why they do not teach images. I hold the impression that most of the teachers do teach multimodal texts, both because they are expected to do so, as Mari points out, and because the multimodal texts that are taught are centred around written text. This can prevent a proper foundation for students to become visually literate individuals. According to the definition of visual literacy from the ACRL (2011), the competences required to be a visually literate individual, feature a list of specific skills and awareness. Compared to these requirements, the students are not given the tools and understanding required to become a visually literate individual.

One problem with using multimodal text is that images are often used for decorative purposes without regards to how they communicate, which is often related to the maturity of students. For instance, Mari discusses this problem in relation to student presentations. When working on presentations, her students often add finishing touches through the use of emojis, and use images only for decorative purposes. This problem is something all the interviewed teachers have experienced. Students find it amusing to add images to their presentations, but do not consider what the images communicate. Rather, they add the first image they find or believe is related to the topic. For example, when presenting a country or nation, students often use the flag corresponding to that country, and then reuse the same image multiple times, or find slightly different images of the flag. This problem is generally most apparent amongst younger students, as when they mature, they realise that they need to be more formal in their presentations. This view of images as something only meant for comedic effect is however problematic, and undermines images as a communicative tool. Students are inadvertently contributing to the issue of text culture through a lack of maturity. Maturity is thus one of the problems when teaching multimodal texts.

The structure of the curriculum plays a role in what the students are taught. According to Matias, at the time of the interview, his school was currently working on organising the plan for the coming year. This process is necessary, as the teachers need to plan how to cover the aims they did not manage to cover the previous year. The aims are structured in such a way that they do not cover each year separately, but are general aims that the students are expected to be able to do or be aware of when they are finished with the lower secondary school (Udir., 2019b). Therefore, it is up to each teacher to decide how this should be accomplished, as the curriculum only covers what should be done throughout the whole lower secondary school, with no specific requirements for when the students are expected to know specific topics. If

certain topics take longer time than expected, or if one of the lessons has to be moved, the teachers may need to skip some aspects of one topic in favour of another topic. This evaluation is necessary for each individual teacher, as there are no guidelines on what to prioritise if things do not go according to plan. Because there are only two hours of English per week (Udir. 2022), this can mean that missing out on multiple lessons could be detrimental for the students. It may also create situations where the students who miss class need to work more individually to reach the same proficiency as their peers.

Time management is another factor that can cause an issue in teaching multimodal texts. As Matias teaches the eighth grade, the emphasis in class at the start of the semester is on getting started, where the shift from seventh to eighth grade is significant for the students. The issue of time is therefore present in his teaching. Having the students adapt to the shift from the upper primary school to the lower secondary takes time and effort, and according to Matias, affects what subjects are taught and how. During the school year, there is a constant fast pace of various subjects, where the students could be introduced to vastly different methods and approaches. This might lead to a lack of learning how to use each method properly, and results in a more superficial and general understanding of each approach. To combat this, the current curriculum, whilst still presenting a lot of topics, has an emphasis on going in-depth on certain topics (Udir., 2019a). This could further impact the issue of time management, as it is required that students spend multiple lessons going in-depth on a certain topic. As a whole, the issue with time management is brought up as a major problem for teaching multimodal texts. If students are introduced to a new method to work with, they end up spending more time trying to understand the more practical aspects of the lesson than to understand the topic or theme.

The freedom of methods for achieving the aims of the curriculum can also cause problems with using images in classes. For instance, Kristin finds the curriculum to be vague and very broad. It covers a lot of different aspects of each subject, and as a result, each teacher can freely choose how to achieve the aims in the curriculum. This can be an issue, as the freedom of choice may cause the teacher to be overwhelmed by the different options and therefore ends up choosing a familiar option. In this context, the familiar option is using written text and the textbooks provided by the schools to teach the subject. This is regarded as comfortable as both the students and the teachers are familiar with how the books work, and they are created based on the curriculum. However, exploring other methods is advised by the curriculum, as the freedom of choice serves no purpose if it is not used. There should therefore be a discussion on what

topics to include and methods to use in order to achieve the different teaching aims. Naturally, to cover the teaching aims related to written text, one uses written text. However, considering all the other teaching aims, there are no reasons to not use images or multimodal texts as a method for covering different subjects. Based on the interviews, my impression is that there is no incentive for teachers to use formats students are not already proficient in, as it causes an issue regarding enjoyment or time. This could lead to the issue of familiar methods being used to an exhaustive degree.

Based on the responses from Thomas, my impression is that both familiarity for his students and time management are important issues in terms of teaching multimodal texts. As Thomas prioritises teaching the students to have a message independently of the medium they use, he would in theory have a good baseline for testing different tools used in text-creation. He states that he tries to introduce various methods in his classes, and does not limit the communicative modes the students can use. He comments that, depending on the message, using images or multimodal approaches may be the most appropriate media. However, when given the freedom of choosing whatever text format his students want to, they still gravitate towards written text. According to Thomas, the first step is teaching his students how to create a message. However, he experiences that this is a process that takes a lot of time. The next step for the students is learning how they can express this message by using other media as well as written text, which is also a time-consuming process. He further mentions that there are different types of texts one can use, but that it is easy to fall back to the familiar written text, and his students also gravitate towards familiarity. Consequently, the issues with time and familiarity keep the students from exploring how to communicate through other means than written text. This enforces the view that written text is more important than other forms of communication, and is a good example of how habits and familiarity impacts the learning process in multiple ways.

Two of the main recurring issues related to multimodal texts are the issues of familiarity and of time. These two issues are closely connected. If students lack the familiarity in using a digital tool, or are introduced to a new way of analysing a text, they will have to spend some time on becoming familiar with the new methods before they can use them independently. In learning new methods, repetition is brought up as a prerequisite for independent learning. From the interview with Mari, it is mentioned that “you have to repeat it, constantly, right?” (du må jo gjenta det, hele veien sant?. - appendix 3, p. 5). This repetition is perceived as tiring, and results in a preference of choosing the familiar option. Therefore, there will be a constant issue of

familiarity, resulting in an issue with time, as the time spent on learning how to analyse a text can take an equal amount of time as the analysis process itself. Naturally, the students should have some time to learn the methods they are using, but if this takes longer than expected, as in the case with Thomas's students, there may be insufficient time each week to cover all relevant topics. Instead of learning the topics, the time is spent on learning the methods with the purpose of becoming proficient enough with the tools to be able to use them. This leads to the issue of not having enough time to try different methods which leads to the statement from Thomas, "We are used to text so it is very easy to fall back to it" (vi e jo vant til tekst så det e veldig enkelt å falle tilbake på det. - appendix 3, p. 19). As students grow older, they become more autonomous and can learn more independently, but as mentioned, they may gravitate towards familiar methods, spending time using an inefficient method.

Even though the teachers interviewed are very different, they raise some of the same problems and reasons for why they do not teach images and multimodal media as much as they would like to. An issue they raise is time-management, which is closely related to familiarity. The curriculum is also mentioned as a vague guidance document that does not demonstrate how they should work towards the aims. Further, all the teachers show an interest in teaching an image on its own, however, my impression from the interviews is that the written text is still dominant in their classrooms. This signifies that there needs to be an increased attention in using images and multimodal texts in the classroom, and resolving some of these issues may facilitate a disruption of the current text culture.

4.2.5 Text Culture

This subsection relates to the research questions of how the teachers both define and work with text and what challenges the teachers can identify in teaching multimodal text. All the teachers agree that including different modes of communications as well as written text is a positive addition to the definition of the term text. They also show an awareness of how the different types of texts can communicate. However, three of the teachers mention that they have not used images or multiple modes for communication while excluding written text. My impression is that written text is still the main focus of the classroom leading to a text culture in which written text is heavily favoured. This creates a dissonance between the social text culture and the educational text culture. This can be seen as a challenge for teaching images and as such, this subsection is related to the research sub-question regarding challenges as well as how teachers work with text.

The dominance of written text in the Norwegian EFL classroom shows that written text is given a position of superiority compared to multimodal texts. The way multimodal texts are used implies that this form of communication is supplementary with the purpose of supporting the written text. Contradictory, as Mari mentions, teachers today are expected to work with multimodal texts, yet the established text culture seems to favour written text. Mary Macken-Horarik (2008 as cited in Ørevik, 2020) brings up this issue and, as mentioned earlier, states that “the ability to interact with written texts is the most highly valued form of literacy in educational contexts” (p. 144-145). This signals that the text culture of the contemporary society of 2008 featured an emphasis on written text. Through the responses of the teachers in the interviews, my impression is that this text culture of written text being dominant and preferred still remains. This leads to a paradox in which the expectations of the teacher and demands of the curriculum do not reflect the practice of the classroom. Teachers are expected to work with multimodal texts, yet all teachers say they do not use images as more than a simple supplement to written text. This is further explained by Kristin as she feels that teaching images is “you have to maybe think of it yourself, or it is like thinking outside the box” (man må kanskje på en måte, komme på det sjøl, eller det blir litt utenfor boksen. - appendix 3, p. 89). The fact that Kristin recently finished her education and is more acquainted with using images, yet feels discouraged to implement it, signals how the text culture creates a dissonance between curricular expectations and classroom practices.

A reason why written text is the dominant text format in the classroom may be how teachers in general view the term text. Kristin believes that several language teachers may see the term text only as written text, and she appreciates that text is defined as a broader term than the previous definition. She states that “I believe there are a lot of people that associate text with words put together, I was about to say, that one does not think of text as an expanded term.” (eg tror det e mange som assosierer tekst med, ord, satt sammen holdt eg på å si, at det isje man tenker med en gang i utvidet form. - appendix 3, p. 88). If her assumption is correct, this could be one of the reasons for written text being dominant in the classroom. Matias also comments on this, stating that it is easy to think that the goal is for students to be able to read and write text in the language subjects. This is therefore what teachers prepare the students for, meaning written text readily becomes the main focus: “... reading could be to interpret an image, but one does not think of this, and then you think that the most important is for students to read written text and this in a way becomes the main focus” (... at å lese, kan jo være å tolke et bilde men det tenke ikkje man over, osså tenke en at, det viktigaste e at elevane lese t- eh skrift, og at det

på en måte blir et hovedfokus da. - appendix 3, p. 83). Reading is a critical skill for the Norwegian EFL classroom, and at the core of the subject. However, two of the interviewed teachers mention how they assume other teachers might not consider reading images as part of the reading term.

The little use of multimodal texts may be partly attributed to the lack of discussion of multimodality amongst the teachers. Thomas comments that teaching images and visual literacy is not discussed in the teacher team and adds that “No, it is not prioritised in any way” (Neii, det e isje prioritert på noen som helst måte. - appendix 3, p. 24). According to him, they do not receive any training in using images and it is up to each teacher individually. This is an issue, as it may further enforce the dominance of written text. The lack of discussion of using visual literacy in the teacher team is also a subject in the interview with Kristin. She states that regarding discussing visual literacy, “it has never really been brought up as a topic in, team development work, it is rather something I carry with me” (Det har vel egentlig aldri kompt opp eh i team, i teamarbeid, det e mer sånn at det e noe eg har med meg. - appendix, 3, p. 90). She expresses that the topic of visual literacy is more connected to her education and as a form of general knowledge, than from discussions with her peers. However, all the teachers at the end of their interviews briefly commented that the short discussion from the interview had already opened up their minds to how one can use visual literacy. This demonstrates that spending more time discussing visual literacy could help increase the use of visual literacy in the Norwegian EFL classroom.

In relation to reading and working with written text, Mari hopes her students are able to use all of the information that they receive. She explains that her students often go directly to the main part of the written text and do not pay attention to headlines, chapter headings, images, or other aspects of the texts they read. While she would want her students to pay attention to the whole text, the images often end up last in their reading process. To break this trend amongst students of jumping straight to the written text and leaving images to the end, it is important to teach the students to also consider images as part of the term text. Mari mentions a good example of how to foster this awareness. As previously mentioned under subsection 4.2.2 Multimodality, she used an image as the main focus when teaching vocabulary in one of her lessons. Using the image as a didactic tool is a good way of incorporating images as a form of text, as it becomes natural for students to look into the denotative aspects of the image. By choosing an image instead of a written text with a story that features nouns, she uses visual literacy as a method

for teaching vocabulary and the grammar of images. This will help decrease the current dominant written-text culture by showing students how to use images for the purpose of communication as well as the importance of being attentive towards every aspect of a text.

Another key issue of how the text culture is upheld and maintained is the exam format. Written text is given a lot of attention in the lower secondary school through classroom tasks, graded papers, and the exam for the final year. In addition, Thomas mentions that the exam for English in the final year has almost no emphasis on images. It is reasonable that the teachers want their students to practise for the format of the exam, but this results in a very written text-based classroom. To disrupt this text culture, there needs to be a change from multiple actors. More specifically, if the exam carries a lot of weight regarding what the students are being prepared for, changing the exam format could end up with a vastly different dominant text culture within teaching. However, the issue is that the current version of both higher education and upper secondary education also feature a written text-based exam. As this is the main focus for the later education, lower secondary education needs to follow the same structure. It would be highly problematic if the lower secondary education featured an exam format that did not resemble the exams found at later educational stages. Ideally, the exams in both lower and upper secondary education should include multimodal texts to a larger degree, to better represent the needs created by contemporary society.

Thomas discusses that he finds the current teacher education, or higher education as a whole, to be old-fashioned and very written text-based. According to him, having different media involved in the education, resulting in more images and a less written text-based format, could be more challenging for lecturers to assess. At the same time, if images or multimodal texts are used more frequently, this challenge will resolve itself over time, as it is mainly an issue of familiarity and knowledge of the media. If the lecturers, teachers, and as a result students, grow more proficient with the multimodal tools, this could induce a gradual change, causing a shift from a written text-based school system to a school system that acknowledges text as a broad term both in theory and in practice. Using multimodal media students recognize and use in their everyday life may improve enjoyment for students in the EFL classroom (Brevik et al, 2020). Aiming for a more enjoyable and multimodal classroom would be a positive change, as the education will in larger degree mirror the media used in the leisure time of the students.

4.2.6 Teacher Awareness

The research questions are connected to how teachers understand the term text and work with text. This subsection relates to different aspects of how teachers display an awareness or lack of awareness of how to teach multimodal texts and visual literacy. This subsection can therefore be linked to all of the research questions.

An important aspect of teacher awareness is to be aware of how images communicate, including a cultural awareness of images. Matias points out that culture is a field where the choice of image can be an intricate matter. Especially when representing cultures, stereotypical depictions and problematic images exist and should be avoided. The current curriculum features an explicit aim related to intercultural education, as it is expected that students are able to “explore and describe ways of living, ways of thinking, communication patterns and diversity in the English-speaking world” (Udir., 2019b). Brown and Habegger-Conti (2022) discuss how using images can foster intercultural competence without enforcing discriminatory views and emphasising differences. Brown and Habegger-Conti (2022, p. 57) present different examples such as what they refer to as a “blindfold task”. In this task students are asked to imagine what a group of people may look like. The idea is to present images of the people in situations that are in conflict with what students have thought of. Then comes a discussion with the students of what they imagined compared to what was presented. This discussion allows students to develop self-awareness around what possible prejudices they may implicitly have. Matias demonstrates that he is trained in this field through his awareness, and states that he would want to work with intercultural competence. He acknowledges that a multimodal approach is suitable for teaching intercultural competence. However, he states that there have been images in previous textbooks that have been problematic in what they represent, but that the newer textbooks are an improvement in regards to this. Implementing intercultural competence through visual literacy may be a good way of teaching the students how to be critical and gain insight in different cultures. Using images in accordance with the suggestions from Brown and Habegger-Conti (2022) could be a good approach to implement both visual literacy and intercultural competence in the classroom.

Both Matias and Kristin show awareness of how images, like all text, can be heavily influenced by text-makers choices. Students need to be aware of what and how images can communicate, and that the text-maker choices can influence how situations are portrayed. My impression is that Kristin and Matias acknowledge the idea that “texts are not neutral”, as stated by Janks et

al. (2014, p.2). Whilst their understanding is good, they do not seem to work towards creating an understanding for their students as of now. They both argue that their students are too young to understand these themes, stating that the students are very young and will not necessarily understand what is problematic. However, Kristin comments that everything can be adapted to younger students, and both wish to work with image awareness, and are planning this in later time. Matias plans on teaching his students this understanding when they are working with the “English speaking world”, including different cultures, as it would be natural to discuss the issue of representation when working with these topics.

Thomas proposes a good example that highlights how communication through images differs from text. This example is a didactic approach, where he would present a side-by-side comparison of a situation, one portrayed in image format and one described with text. The point is to discuss how one can read these two descriptions differently. This approach is a good method to demonstrate how images communicate, but it is flawed in the sense that neither of the two versions will explain the full picture. Instead, the text-maker choices will always portray someone or something in a certain light. Janks et al. (2014) features a detailed guide of how one could use this approach in *Doing Critical Literacy: Texts and Activities for Students and Teachers* (p. 16). In this book, there are also other examples of how one could go into detail on what is not present in an image, and how changing words to synonyms could change the text. A lot of various small changes can portray the situation differently. Highlighting this to the students may increase students’ awareness of how images and text can be altered or portrayed in a specific way to achieve a specific message.

A contradiction in the interview with Thomas is his statement that humans are visual beings and that teaching images is more demanding than written text. If we are visual beings that seek out visual stimuli, why would it be more of a challenge to teach different topics by using images? This is not the only contradiction that Thomas mentions. However, as stated in the personal description of him, I believe this is one of his characteristics and is not an issue for the validity of his statements. It is interesting that he shows an awareness of how we are visual beings, but are more familiar with text and, as a result, text is easier to fall back to. This displays how even though we are visual beings, the text culture and familiarity with written text becomes the easier mode of communication. Familiarity is brought up as a major influence on students' habits of learning and, as written text is preferred (Macken-Horarik, 2008, in Ørevik, 2020, p. 144-145), the habits that are reinforced are the familiar approaches to learning written text (Macaluso et al., 2022). I get the impression that Thomas finds images to be an easier mode of

communication than written text, and at the same time more fun or intuitive. Yet, he contradicts himself by saying that teaching images demands more of both teacher and students. He mostly relates this to the issue of familiarity, but it is nonetheless an interesting remark.

Thomas and Matias agree that neither them nor the school system in general have an emphasis on images, making the remarks that “I think there is too little emphasis on images” (eg syns det e for lite fokus på eh på bilde.- appendix 3, p. 38) and “in general, perhaps we do not work enough with images” (vi jobbe generelt kanskje for lite spesifikt med bilde.- appendix 3, p. 82), respectively. Both discuss that society is filled with images, and that the way students work with images at school does not reflect how images affect their everyday life. They implicitly state a view that images are not given enough space in the classroom, and that there is a lot of uncertainty related to making time for teaching images. This indicates a need for a restructure in how the subject is conceptualised. Regarding higher education, Thomas mentions that “but it is [explicative] old-fashioned that you are supposed to write everything.” (men det e [explicative] gammeldags at du bare ska skrive alt. - appendix 3, p. 46). Also, Thomas believes that teaching images is not prioritised in neither team development time nor the professional environment of teachers. It is merely an interest for those who want to. Matias mentions that he would want to teach more images, but brings up the issue of how they may lose an hour of English during one week, such as due to school assembly, field excursion, or other time-consuming projects related to other subjects. This leads to a time management issue, as the students are supposed to cover a lot of different topics, causing the teachers to deprioritize images in their teaching.

There are differences between the four teachers in their willingness to work more with images in their team development time. Thomas and Mari do not mention that they would like to work more with images in team development work, which differs from Matias and Kristin. Thomas states that it is not prioritised at all, while Mari mentions team development time and other topics that are not as related to the topic of images. On the other hand, both Matias and Kristin mention that they would like to or could have more emphasis on images, if they could decide. Being younger teachers may be a benefit, in that they could come in with a more critical viewpoint of how more experienced teachers work with text. My impression is that the younger teachers have a different understanding of how images communicate and see the need for this type of literacy. On the other hand, the more experienced teachers, while they do show an awareness and openness to teaching multimodal texts, they do not express this as detailed as the younger teachers.

While Thomas allows his students to freely choose the media for presenting a message, he appreciates that some media are better suited for conveying particular messages. As different media could be more suited for specific messages, understanding when to choose each media is a critical skill for students. This is related to the idea of dominant culture stated by Hall (2007), as dominant culture will affect how the message is interpreted. For example, if the media format is understood as a hostile format, this media format will make the message more hostile. Thomas mentions how for an image to communicate a specific message clearly, it needs to be interpreted in a specific way. This relates to how messages can be encoded into a text and need to be decoded with the same common referent for a message to be clearly stated. The statement “we know what we see” (vi vet ka vi ser. - appendix 3, p. 24) from Thomas completely disregards the need for a common referent to decode a message in an image, yet he displays awareness of how different media can more clearly present a message. In terms of critical visual literacy, this statement is problematic as it only relates to the denotative aspects. The statement disregards the encoder’s context, as the emphasis is that our own position reads the preferred message without considering the text-makers’ choices (Janks et al., 2014, p. 18). Having an interpretation of an image can be a subjective and heavily biased idea, and the remark “we know what we see” goes against the idea that we need to interpret and see if it aligns with what we think. It is a superficial perception of what and how images communicate.

All of the teachers show awareness regarding how to use multimodal texts and regarding the present issues. For example, they all discuss how text-makers’ choices can influence a text and how this can present an issue. The younger teachers present more awareness of how cultures can be presented in the textbooks and how to combat negative stereotypes in the classroom by using images. The four teachers seem aware of how the current EFL classroom does not feature a lot of images. They also present an awareness of how this is not just an issue on an individual level, but a result of how schools as a whole work with text and emphasise written text. An important issue with teaching visual literacy is that visual literacy is seen as something that needs to be taught like a topic and not as a method. The teachers seem to understand how one can use images, but seem to present it in a way one would present a topic. An example is having a PowerPoint presentation explaining how to use images for communication, as opposed to having the image itself and discussing what it communicates. This presents a situation where the teachers that use multimodal texts to a more fulfilling degree and have more emphasis on images need to fight an uphill battle as the current text culture is favouring written text.

4.2.7 Social Media

The aim was to see how social media, a multimodal media that students are familiar with, could be used as a didactic tool for teaching visual literacy. The results showed that the teachers had a lot of input on why social media is an issue related to bullying and that this issue is complicated. This was not the expected findings, but deserves to be mentioned briefly. It clearly shows that the teachers find this issue to be important, and it is also an important topic within Udir., which keeps track of bullying and publishes annual reports regarding this. The report for 2020 shows an increasing number of students being bullied digitally (Udir., 2021). Mari, Matias, and Kristin discuss this topic when asked about social media. However, to relate this subsection to the research questions, the emphasis will be on how the teachers can use social media as a didactic tool to connect what students learn in school to the visual literacy skills required in their everyday life.

While Thomas has not used social media as a didactic tool, he acknowledges that it is a good idea to use media, such as Instagram and Twitter, in his teaching. One example he mentions is to take an Instagram photo and write a complementary story using few words to present what the photo depicts. This is a way to train the students how to write short and concise stories and use the image for communicative purposes. Another method for writing short stories can be through twitter, as twitter posts have a maximum word count. This requires the students to be concise and clear to the point when presenting their message. The ability to clearly express a message is something that Thomas states as being the main aim of the lower secondary school and as such, these two techniques could contribute to reaching this aim.

Considering didactic practices, Matias has used social media as a didactic tool other than specifically directed towards bullying. His objective is to teach students that skills in writing and reading can be applied to their everyday life. The skills the students use in social media are similar to some of the skills they learn at school. In addition, Matias discusses the issue of lack of scepticism from his students, as they often take the information and images they come across on social media for granted. This is problematic as the students are very vulnerable in their formative years. The images that students come across can be altered or taken with the intention of fronting a perfect life. When students consume this content without thinking critically, it may lead to unrealistic expectations of their own lives and self-image. These expectations can further lead to severe issues, such as depression.

According to Matias, the unrealistic expectations amongst the students become apparent in the physical education for the students. He notices a lot more focus amongst the students on having a specific physique and exercising for this purpose. Matias believes this is a result of social media and, more specifically, the type of content that students are exposed to and consume. The students' lack of training in visual literacy and digital literacy makes them less aware of this issue, but does not stop them from consuming from social media. This lack of awareness is difficult for teachers to do something about, as it is up to each student individually how they use social media and what content they consume. A problem related to this is that the content is not necessarily up to the students, as the dominant culture will decide what is popular. If the dominant culture has problematic views, for example regarding content on social media, then this issue is not easily solved.

4.3 Chapter Summary

In this section I will summarise and connect the findings to the relevant research sub-questions. All of the teachers seemed to agree on the new definition of text from 2012 and that multimodal texts are important for the classroom. However, often the multimodal texts are written text-based and the images are presented in a superficial way. The teachers did not seem to teach images as an independent mode of communication, but rather used images as supplement for the written text. On the other hand, they presented an awareness of how images can communicate independently. This shows a dissonance between teacher awareness and classroom practices.

EFL teachers nowadays are required to work with multimodal text (Udir., 2019b). A traditional way to teach the language subjects has been to rely on textbooks (Fenner, 2020). This is due to the textbooks being easy to use and familiar for students and teachers. The issue is that the textbooks provided for the curriculum are often used extensively in the classroom, which is commented on by several of the informants. As, according to three of the teachers, the textbooks provided have become quite good, the teachers might use the textbooks more, and as a result have less time to try more interesting or less written text-based approaches. As mentioned by Fenner (2020), the ease of not having to choose texts and tasks for a classroom is comfortable and a possible reason as of why textbooks are used extensively (p. 338). The result is that the multimodal texts that teachers typically use in the Norwegian EFL classroom, is written text in a textbook, with a complementary image. This is per definition a multimodal text, but is a written text-based approach to multimodality and the tasks related to images are

often simple with emphasis on denotative aspects. This indicates an issue as teachers use the textbooks and thus in practice do not work with the new definition of text.

A recurring theme when the teachers discuss how their students use images independently is that students choose images purely for decorative purposes, with no regard to what the image communicates. The teachers in this study describe their students' use of images as superficial. This issue is presented when the teachers discuss student presentations, which is another common multimodal text. However, teachers often give this task with little concern or emphasis on how students should use images. The teachers give a verbal message that the students should try to think of what images they use, but do not demonstrate this practically or in detail. Thomas believes that it is unfair to evaluate the students on their selection of images, as the students have not been taught what considerations to make when selecting images. Further, as students typically model their teachers, if the teachers do not demonstrate how to use images, students do not learn to do this either. While the teachers show an awareness of how to use images both implicitly and explicitly, they have yet to convey this awareness to their students.

Teachers work extensively with texts in their classrooms. This includes both reading and creating text. The four informants show different approaches to language learning and methods for fostering language skills and awareness for their students. Their approaches to text differ individually, but all teachers display an awareness of the importance of using multimodal texts. However, based on the interviews, there is a difference between what the teachers express that they want to do and their actual practices. The teachers in this study say they want to use images more frequently and that images are a valid mode of communication, but their practices gravitate towards written text. The teachers do not seem to explicitly teach their students an awareness of how images are an independent mode of communication, and it seems that visual literacy is not given much room in the current EFL classroom. Despite this, the current curriculum emphasises the use of multimodal texts for the English subject (Udir., 2019b). This demonstrates that the teachers, whilst they have the theoretical awareness, have yet to fully integrate multimodal texts into their classrooms.

The teachers in this study describe their own practices regarding images in different ways. In terms of media and text type, Thomas describes his own practices as being open to different media. He emphasises that although he allows students to use whatever media they find suitable, a lot of students gravitate towards written text as it is familiar. This coincides with the

article from Macaluso et al. (2022). Matias mentions that he finds the textbooks to be quite good and that in the textbooks the tasks related to images are often small and subordinated the written text. The emphasis is on written text and the images are only used as bonus tasks. Mari states that teachers are expected to use multimodal texts, yet their practices may not facilitate this. She, alongside the other teachers in this study, admits that she only rarely has used images as the main emphasis of a lesson. Kristin finds teaching images to deviate from the norm in terms of the language subject, as the curriculum in her opinion is quite vague and the textbooks do not facilitate images. This comment on vagueness in the curriculum is justified as the framework for basic skills does not coincide with the English subject's curriculum aims. In the framework the term text regarding reading is not elaborated upon, but for the curriculum aims it is specified that reading texts should include multimodal texts (Udir., 2017b, 2019b). As such it becomes a matter of interpretation for teachers to decide what is important in terms of reading.

When asking teachers how they work with images, almost every teacher mentions something related to weaker readers and dyslexic students. They make a point out of how it is a great tool for specifically students that struggle with reading or dyslexia. The teachers are also quick to mention how images can be positive for stronger readers as well, but fail to present didactic ways to support this claim. They provide multiple examples for weaker readers in a snap, but zero for how stronger readers can use images, other than as motivation to work with the texts. This is a very superficial way of working with images and does not give justice to how images can be used as a communicative tool. In relation to the research question of how teachers work with text, my impression from the interviews is that teachers use texts in a way that emphasise written text and feature images as a reward or bonus activity after the more important written text has been prioritised.

The teachers in this study identify several challenges in teaching images in the contemporary classroom. For example, three of the teachers mention how they feel images are seen as less important than written text. As written text is prioritised in higher education and has traditionally been prioritised in lower education, this view has been maintained (Macken-Horarik, 2008, in Ørevik, 2020). Some of the teachers in this study believe that other teachers may consider written text to be more important than images, and prefer using the familiar practices rather than challenge this written-text culture. The result is a text culture that is based on written text. While the curriculum states that teachers should use multimodal texts in their classes, the development is slow as the textbooks are multimodal, yet still written text-based.

It is difficult to challenge an established text culture, as it requires the teachers to present views that may contradict more established ideas.

Two important issues regarding teaching images are the issues of familiarity and time-management. A lack of familiarity with the text type results in less enjoyment when working with the text. One example of this is when Thomas included podcasts in his lessons. While this task was meant to be enjoyable and relevant to contemporary media use, the students spent a lot of time learning how to work with podcasts, which resulted in the project being less enjoyable. By spending time learning a new media and method, there is less time to work with the content, resulting in the issue of time management. The issue of time can be connected to both time in the class, as well as time for the teacher to prepare their classes. It takes time for the teachers to prepare and learn new methods for lessons, thus leading to less attention toward using multimodal texts compared to the familiar textbooks. Both Thomas and Matias discussed the issues of familiarity and time and brought up parallels between the two issues.

Challenges to teaching images can be both related to the individual teacher and to the content and structure of the curriculum and education. Most of the lower secondary school is spent preparing for the exam in the tenth grade. As this exam is mainly written text-based, the preferred way to prepare for the exam is by practising reading and writing skills. Although the needs of contemporary society call for more visual literacy, the exam format is still heavily written text-based. This indicates that images are not given enough space in the classroom, and that there may be a need to include more multimodal aspects in the exam. As there are so few lessons in the subject (Udir., 2022), spending a lot of time learning methods that will only be used for a couple of lessons does not coincide with preparing for a potential exam.

Three of the teachers in this study comments on the teacher education and its relevance for their practices. Kristin states that she feels the teacher education is good at the aspects of teaching images. Matias mentions how teaching images was not emphasised in the education, but was rather something he himself chose to focus on. Despite this focus, he does not feel that he has lots of experience and competence regarding teaching images. Thomas experiences that the education does not reflect the needs of the lower secondary school, and emphasises how five credits directed to teaching images should be a priority. The differences between the teachers could be a result of individual differences or it could be because of their different approaches to the teacher profession.

5. Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to uncover how teachers prepare their students for reading in an image-based world. The main research question was: To what extent are teachers of Norwegian EFL preparing their students for reading in an image-based world? To answer this question, a qualitative small-scale study consisting of four semi-structured interviews were conducted. By sorting the findings into different codes, teachers' use and awareness of images were studied to answer the sub-questions related to the main research question.

The first sub-question relates to how teachers work with the new definition of text. Through the interviews, it has become apparent that teachers often use the textbooks provided for the subject. Their awareness is not reflected in their didactic practices. The teachers present good arguments and ideas for using multimodal texts, but in practice rely on textbooks or do not teach images as a mode of communication. This demonstrates that the didactic training related to teaching images and multimodal texts is not sufficient and that teachers today mainly work with written text.

Regarding the second sub-question, teachers describe the students' use of images as poor. They state that their students mostly use images as decoration and disregard what an image can communicate. Teachers might tell students to consider what images to use, but do not show in detail what students should consider or how they should use the images. As a result, one cannot blame the students for a poor use of images, as they model their teachers. If the teachers do not use images for communicative purposes, it is not natural for students to learn it on their own.

The third sub-question relates to how teachers describe their own practices with teaching images. All teachers were honest and admitted they did rarely use image as the main emphasis in their lessons. This surprised me as I thought images were better integrated into the curriculum than it seemingly is. Even the two newer teachers felt that images were not incentivised, and that written text is still the focus of the English subject. The practices the teachers described were mainly written text focused and images were rather used as a support for weaker readers and as something fun.

Lastly, the fourth sub-question studies the challenges that teachers identify to teaching images. The interviews yielded a lot of input for this research question. Through both implicit and explicit answers, challenges for teaching images were made clear. Four challenges stood out as more relevant: Familiarity, time, the curriculum and text culture. From the students'

perspective, familiarity is related to not knowing how to use the methods for understanding a multimodal text. As such, this takes time to learn and understand, which leads to the issue of time. Further, the teachers of this study do not feel that multimodal texts are presented in the curriculum other than being stated as mandatory, leading to individual differences and interpretations. The lack of didactic examples proves to be negative for teachers as they do not necessarily learn the tools to implement multimodal texts from the teacher education. Finally, text culture is brought up as an issue as the teachers in this study feel that written text is emphasised in the classroom through the textbooks, exam and curriculum. The issue of how images are positioned in the current EFL classroom is therefore multifaceted.

The sum of responses from the four sub-questions brings insight in how teachers prepare their students for reading in an image-based world. While the teachers prepare their students for reading written text, the students are not prepared for reading images or multimodal texts to a degree in which they fully acknowledge the different modes as communication. The skills students use in their everyday life are not reflected in the classroom and there is a clear dissonance between the reading in school and the reading found in the everyday life of students. Students are presented with written text every day in school, but mainly read multimodal texts in their everyday life. In terms of visual literacy, teachers seem unsure of how to implement this into their classrooms. Multimodal texts are drawn forth as important and mandatory, but it seems that the multimodal texts are written text-based with a complementary image which is given little to no attention. Thus, they are in reality an extension of written text.

My original assumption was that images were used as supplementary for written text. This appears to be correct and is negative in terms of the students' visual literacy skills. I was, however, surprised of how the teachers' awareness can be connected to this issue. They show a good understanding, mention good ideas and generally seem equipped to use multimodal texts to a larger degree. This surprised me when compared to what their practices encompass.

The most surprising factor and key issue in my opinion is how little this is discussed amongst teachers. All the teachers in this study mentioned that they do not discuss images with their peers. This is something I thought teachers did more of. I believed teachers discussed how to teach certain aspects and use different tools for achieving the aims of the curriculum, but it seems that in terms of discussing images, this is simply not happening. This is even more interesting when compared to what multiple of the teachers commented at the end of the interview. Three of the teachers commented that the short discussion in the interview helped

them realise how they could incorporate images more and that they indeed are aware enough to use images for their lessons. If they could simply discuss this amongst their peers as well, the situation of images' position in the EFL classroom might be improved gradually through a shared increase in didactic knowledge.

My impression is that the challenges brought forth by the teachers can all be fixed, yet not necessarily overnight. The established text culture present in the general school system and in the curriculum is one of the major key issues presented by the teachers in this study. The exam format, curriculum and higher education all contribute to a dominance of written text. To change this dominance, and have an education more closely connected to the multimodal world we live in, an added emphasis on multimodal texts is necessary. Increased attention to multimodal texts in the exam and in the higher education could be ways to gradually move away from the written text-based education we currently see.

The curriculum is in no way facilitating multimodality as it currently stands. The framework for basic skills seems to favour written text as the term multimodal is not mentioned in the proficiency matrix. Compared to the subject specific curriculum which specifies multimodal texts, there is a lack of correspondence. As a result, the central guidance documents seem to highlight different aspects. It thus becomes the job of the teachers to interpret what reading encompasses, both for the general and subject specific basic skills. Further, the curriculum only mentions that multimodal texts should be used, not how it can be used. This creates a situation in which the central guidance documents presents a problem, but no tools to solve the problem.

It seems teachers are not prepared for teaching students visual literacy skills in contemporary education. Every social media is multimodal or image-based and every aspect of life is digital, yet written text remains as the core of education. Visual literacy is not a topic that is discussed amongst different teachers and as a result, is something vague and diffuse. Why are multimodal texts and images, as they are so ever-present in society, not better integrated into the educational sphere? This situation calls for further exploration as a dissonance between school and society is undesirable. If the current teachers do not possess the tools to make students visually literate, a further development of the framework for basic skills in the light of visual literacy is due. This also goes for the current team development time of teachers. Discussing the issues is one of the keys to solving them. As a result, having more discussions of how to teach multimodal texts could be a simple yet effective way of improving the teachers' knowledge regarding visual literacy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview guide

The term text was expanded in 2012/2013 to include writing, images, sound, drawings, graphs, numbers and other modes of expression put together to highlight and express a message. Do you have any thoughts regarding this?

- Tekstbegrepet har blitt utvidet i 2012/2013 til å inkludere skrift, bilder, lyd, tegninger, grafer, tall og andre uttrykksformer som er satt sammen for å understreke og formidle et budskap. Har du noen tanker om dette?

Have you worked with teaching images in your classroom? *How they communicate, how to analyse etc? Do you enjoy working with images? Is it a positive experience in the classroom?*

- Har du jobbet med å undervise bilder i klasserommet før? *Hvordan de kommuniserer, hvordan man kan analysere det osv? Føler du det er en positiv opplevelse i klasserommet?*

Do you give your students tasks related to image-based learning material? *Do your students enjoy working with images?*

- Gir du noen ganger oppgaver til elevene dine hvor bilder eller videoer er hovedfokus?– *dvs videoer, bilder med lyd, bilder med tekst, bilder? Liker elevene dine å arbeide med bilder?*

How prepared do you feel when it comes to using texts as in pictures and sounds in the classroom?

- Hvor forberedt føler du deg når det kommer til å bruke tekst som i bilder og sammensatte/multimodale tekster i klasserommet?

Have you ever had any formal instruction in how to teach images or other visual tools?

- Har du formell utdanning eller kursing i hvordan man skal undervise bilder og andre visuelle verktøy?

Have you ever had any formal instruction in critical literacy regarding the expanded term text?

- Har du formell utdanning eller kursing i hvordan man underviser i kritisk tenking/analyse knyttet til det utvidete tekstbegrepet?

How are students in your classroom using images in their projects? – *Do you provide guidelines or instructions regarding choosing images? Do the images have a clear function/convey meaning? aesthetical only? Or are the images not connected to what the project is about?*

- Hvordan bruker elevene i klasserommet ditt vanligvis bilder i prosjektene sine? *Gir du instruksjoner eller retningslinjer til elevene om valg av bilder? Har bildene en tydelig funksjon, er det kun til pynt, bruker de bilder helt uavhengig av hva de skriver om?*

Do you feel that your students are critical readers of images? – *To what extent are they aware of what images communicate? Awareness regarding: sender, message, receiver, purpose, visual effects/techniques, specific wording, more? – Is this something you feel you should teach in your English lessons?*

- Føler du elevene dine er kritiske lesere når det kommer til bilder? – *I hvilken grad er de bevisste over hva bildene kommuniserer? bevissthet angående: avsender, budskap, målgruppe, formål, visuelle virkemidler, spesifikk ordbruk osv? – Er dette noe underviser elevene dine i? er det behovsrettet eller systematisk?*

What are your thoughts about reading images versus reading books in the English classroom?

- Hva er tankene dine angående å arbeide med bilder satt opp mot det å lese bøker i Engelsktimene?

What are your thoughts regarding how one can teach the students to be critical readers of images in EFL?

- Hvordan tenker du man kan lære elever å tenke kritisk i møte med bilder i engelskfaget?

Do you feel that teaching images and images with sound is important in the English subject? Why/Why not?

- Føler du at å undervise i bilder og bilder med lyd er viktig i engelskfaget? – Hvorfor/Hvorfor ikke?

Do you ever use social media as learning material in your classroom? – *Tell me about your experience with using it, was it challenging, giving, positive, negative?– Did the students like it? – Do you think the learning aims this lesson were met?*

- Bruker du noen gang sosiale media som undervisnings materiale i klasserommet? *Hva var din opplevelse med å bruke det, positivt, negativt, var det vanskelig, enkelt? – Likte elevene det? –Tror du at du klarte å nå læreplanmålene fra timen?*

Do you feel that your students are critical when it comes to images and information in social media?

- Føler du elevene dine er kritiske til informasjon og bilder de møter på sosiale media?

Do you feel that the school is up to date when it comes to critical thinking and students' social media usage?

- Føler du at skolen (som helhet) er oppdatert når det kommer til kritisk tenkning og elevers bruk av sosiale media?

It is said that we live in an age where things are presented as “as good as real” and that technology has come so far that it can be difficult to separate fake and real images. What are your thoughts on the statement “we live in the age of “as-if-real””?

- Det sies at vi lever i en alder hvor ting er «så godt som ekte» - dvs en tidsalder hvor bilder og videoer kan manipuleres og fremstilles som ekte og teknologien er kommet såpass langt at det kan være veldig vanskelig å skille mellom falske bilder og ekte bilder. Hva tenker du om påstanden «vi lever i en tidsalder hvor ting er «så godt som ekte»

Have you experienced a situation where your students show a lack of critical thinking when it comes to altered images, fake news, conspiracy theories or similar? – *If yes, what was it and how did you address this?*

- Har du opplevd en situasjon hvor elevene dine har vist en mangel på kritisk tenking i møte med manipulerte bilder, «fake news», konspirasjonsteorier eller lignende? – *Hvis ja, hva var det og hvordan adresserte du det*

What do you think is the most important aspect of the English subject in the Norwegian classroom context?

- Hva tenker du er det viktigste aspektet med engelskfaget i de norske engelskklasserom?

Do you have anything more you want to add or say?

- Har du noe mer du ønsker å kommentere eller legge til?

Appendix 2



[Meldeskjema](#) / [How are teachers in the EFL classroom in Norway preparing their pupil...](#) / Vurdering

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer

353449

Vurderingstype

Standard

Dato

11.10.2022

Prosjekttittel

How are teachers in the EFL classroom in Norway preparing their pupils for an image based world?

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Høgskulen på Vestlandet / Fakultet for lærerutdanning, kultur og idrett / Institutt for språk, litteratur, matematikk og tolkning

Prosjektansvarlig

Jena Lee Habegger-Conti

Student

Vidar Amdal

Prosjektperiode

22.09.2022 - 15.05.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 15.05.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#)

Kommentar**OM VURDERINGEN**

Personverntjenester har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

Personverntjenester har nå vurdert den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at behandlingen er lovlig, hvis den gjennomføres slik den er beskrevet i meldeskjemaet med dialog og vedlegg.

VIKTIG INFORMASJON TIL DEG

Du må lagre, sende og sikre dataene i tråd med retningslinjene til din institusjon. Dette betyr at du må bruke leverandører for spørreskjema, skylagring, videosamtale o.l. som institusjonen din har avtale med. Vi gir generelle råd rundt dette, men det er institusjonens egne retningslinjer for informasjonssikkerhet som gjelder.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til den datoen som er oppgitt i meldeskjemaet.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

Personverntjenester vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål

- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Personverntjenester vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Ved bruk av databehandler (spørreskjemaleverandør, skylagring eller videosamtale) må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. Bruk leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: <https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema>

Du må vente på svar fra oss før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

Personverntjenester vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!