Høgskulen på Vestlandet

Engelsk 3, emne 4 – Masteroppgave

MGBEN550-O-2024-VÅR2-FLOWassign

Predefinert informasjon

Startdato:	01-05-2024 09:00 CEST
Sluttdato:	15-05-2024 14:00 CEST
Eksamensform:	Masteroppgave
Termin:	2024 VÅR2
Vurderingsform:	Norsk 6-trinns skala (A-F)
Flowkode:	203 MGBEN550 1 O 2024 VÅR2
Intern sensor:	(Anonymisert)

Deltaker

Kandidatnr.:	106

Informasjon fra deltaker

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MASTER'S THESIS

An exploration of young Norwegian EFL learners' metatalk through translation tasks

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Master's in Education with English Didactics

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Submission Date: 15th May 2024

Abstract

Language awareness, or "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" (Association for Language Awareness, n.d), is found to be beneficial in the process of acquiring a new language (Angelsen & Hauge, 2020, p. 322). This study explores peer-peer interactions by young EFL learners in a Norwegian classroom. The goal of this thesis is to identify how young students verbalize their language awareness, as language awareness is widely deemed to have positive effects on the process of acquiring a language. The study also seeks to mitigate the negative reputation currently associated with the use of translation and encourage a more nuanced discussion of translation as a pedagogical tool.

A qualitative analysis was conducted to answer the research questions designed for this study. The participants in this study, 14 students in the 3rd grade (8-9 years old), were given the task of translating two separate texts from English to Norwegian and from Norwegian to English. Their collaborative discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed before a qualitative analysis was conducted. The inquiry investigated what elements of language the students focused on and what patterns of interaction were found in their discussions.

The findings in this study suggest that young learners verbalize their language awareness through metatalk and that collaboration is beneficial in the context of solving language tasks collaboratively. However, the findings also indicate that students must be taught how to effectively participate in group discussions to appropriately scaffold and facilitate language learning. Lastly, the study revealed that translation can be an efficient pedagogical tool that should be further integrated into EFL training.

Samandrag

Språkmedvit, eller «eksplisitt kunnskap om språk, og bevisst oppfatning og følsomheit i språklæring, språkundervisning og språkbruk» (Association for Language Awareness, u.å., eigen omsetting) utforskar samspel mellom unge elevar i eit norsk EFL-klasserom. Målet med denne oppgåva er å identifisere korleis unge elevar utrykk sin språkmedvit, ettersom det er vist at språkmedvit har positive effektar på språktileigningsprosessen. Studien siktar og på å minske det negative omdømmet som i dag er assosiert med omsetting, og oppmuntre til ein meir nyansert diskusjon om omsetting som eit pedagogisk verktøy.

Det vart utført ei kvalitativ analyse for å svare på forskingsspørsmåla som vart utforma for denne studien. Deltakarane i denne studien, 14 elevar på tredje trinn (8-9 år), fekk i oppgåve å omsette to ulike tekstar, ein frå engelsk til norsk og ein frå norsk til engelsk. Diskusjonane av samarbeidet deira blei tatt opp på lydopptak og transkribert, før ei kvalitativ innhaldsanalyse vart utført. Studien etterforska kva element ved språk elevane fokuserte på, og kva interaksjonsmønster som vart funne i diskusjonane deira.

Funna i denne studien indikerer at elevar uttrykker sin språkmedvit gjennom *metatalk*, som kan definerast som all snakk om språk (Swain, 1998, p.69, eigen omsetting). Funna indikerer også at samarbeid er fordelaktig i prosessen å tileigne seg språk, men at elevane må lære korleis ein skal delta i ein effektiv gruppediskusjon for å støtte kvarandre og legge til rette for språklæring. Studien fant også at omsetting kan vere eit effektiv pedagogisk verktøy som burde bli vidare integrert i engelskopplæringa.

Acknowledgments

The process of writing this MA thesis has truly been a roller coaster, and I am very proud that I have now finished my education and can call myself a teacher. These past five years have been enjoyable, challenging, and very rewarding, and have gone by surprisingly fast.

Many people deserve recognition for their contribution to this final product. First and foremost, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Monika Bader, whose insight and knowledge have been truly inspiring. I also want to thank her for allowing me to join the MetaLearn project. The audio recordings have given me many needed laughs in the transcribing process.

I am also immensely grateful for my friends and family and for their patience and motivating words throughout this year. You all have been indispensable. And to my fiancé, thank you for your continued support and encouragement and for making delicious dinners. I promise to stop ranting about the ups and downs of my thesis asap.

Lastly, I want to thank my fellow MA students for many needed breaks during long days at HVL this past year. I cannot believe we are actually teachers now, and I wish you all the best.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In recent decades, there has been an increased focus on the concept of language awareness (LA) and its beneficial effect on language acquisition (Angelsen & Hauge, 2020, p. 323). This heightened focus has led to the establishment of the Association for Language Awareness (1994), the creation of a research journal titled *Language Awareness,* and a plethora of research studies investigating LA as a general subject as well as its impact on language teaching and learning. A discussion of LA can be found in section 2.1, but in short, the main argument for LA is that a deepened awareness of language makes one a more successful language learner (Angelsen & Hauge, 2020, p. 322).

Amongst the positive effects of language awareness is its role in multilingualism. Cook (2007, p. 238) states that learning a new language can positively affect both the first language and the new language, causing a heightened sense of control and knowledge of both languages. As an extension of such knowledge, learners develop cross-linguistic awareness. This means that learners attain an awareness of both similarities and differences, as well as the links between the languages (Cenoz & Jessner, 2009, p. 127). To put it differently, learners can draw on one language to acquire the other and use the knowledge of their first language to further develop their proficiency in the new language. In the context of this thesis, this would mean that it is beneficial to draw on one's known languages, such as Norwegian, to aid the process of acquiring the English language.

This leads to the under-researched realm of using translation as a pedagogical tool in the English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) classroom. As scholars claim that drawing on one language is beneficial for learning a new one (Hall & Cook, 2012; Swain & Lapkin, 1998), such teaching approaches should be present in the teaching community. However, there is an apparent lack of studies investigating the incorporation of translation in the EFL context. As a consequence, translation as a pedagogical tool may fall victim to misconceptions or remain an underutilized resource. Further research into the role of translation in classrooms is thus warranted to reach better conclusions on the impacts of its use in EFL classrooms.

1.1 Research gaps addressed by the present study

This section will address research gaps identified in the process of phrasing this inquiry. Firstly, there is limited research exploring how language awareness affects young students learning a new language. To the best of my knowledge, most research thus far has been focused on students aged 12 and up (see Garcia Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2019; Storch, 2008; Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020). Younger students will inherently distinguish themselves from older learners due to their cognitive development and fewer years of schooling. These differences may impact their thinking and learning processes and the nature of the lessons they receive. The lack of research on young EFL students presents a significant research gap this study aims to help fill. The present study will thus gain insight into how young students talk about language, providing a valuable understanding of their language use and reflections about language.

As mentioned, a second aspect that has not received much research attention is the use of translation in EFL classrooms (Cook, 2007, p. 397). This is also the case for Norwegian EFL practices, which might be due to the longstanding notion that a new language is best learned monolingually (Hall & Cook, 2010, p. 271), in other words, through only the new language. This discourse has caused many teachers to limit their use of the students' own language(s) when teaching a new language. However, many Norwegian teachers still use Norwegian to scaffold their students or when introducing a specific task or a session (Brevik & Rindal, 2020, p. 934). Such use of Norwegian is a direct contradiction to the monolingual assumption, as Norwegian is also used to teach English. Nevertheless, the monolingual assumption is still present in Norwegian EFL classrooms, and it is therefore essential to investigate the possible implications and outcomes of the use of translation in foreign language acquisition to ensure high-quality education for learners.

1.2 The present study and its aims

The aims of this study are threefold. Primarily, it seeks to explore how young EFL learners verbalize their language awareness when working on translation tasks. This study will thus add to the already extensive insight available on language awareness while also contributing valuable information on young EFL learners. Young students' learning processes differ from older students as they have less training in learning, shorter attention spans, and might need more scaffolding. Given that students in elementary school thus learn inherently differently

than older students, it is vital to research younger students' learning processes to better plan and execute language teaching.

Secondly, because language awareness is a cognitive skill, it can be difficult for young students to verbalize their knowledge. This challenge to express knowledge can only be met by a solution where task formulation encourages learner discussion on topics that will reveal their awareness of language. The learner discussions must, in other words, provide opportunities for metatalk, or any talk about language (Swain, 1998, p.69). This study does exactly that, by analyzing audio-recordings of students working on translation tasks. One aim formulated for this thesis is thus to gain insight into the verbalization of a skill that is difficult for young students to verbalize.

Thirdly, this thesis aims to provide a more nuanced discussion of the use of translation in the EFL classroom, as it is presently associated with poor teaching and provokes feelings of guilt among teachers (Hall & Cook, 2010, p. 293). Based on my own experiences from teaching practice and conversations with working teachers, the same can be said for translation use in the Norwegian EFL context. Subsequently, this study hopes to help reverse the poor reputation currently associated with translation and encourage a better, more informed inclusion of translation in Norwegian EFL classrooms. The following thesis statement and research questions have been formulated to explore 3rd-grade students' discussions:

How do young EFL learners verbalize language awareness when discussing translation tasks?

    a) *Which elements of language do young learners focus on when discussing translation tasks?*
    b) *What patterns of interaction can be observed in their discussions?*

1.3 The relevance of the study in the Norwegian EFL context

As previously stated, this study aims to explore students' metatalk when translating from English to Norwegian and Norwegian to English. This study is relevant to the Norwegian EFL context for three key reasons. First, it explores the occurrences in a Norwegian EFL classroom, where both Norwegian and English are used. Second, metatalk and language awareness are central to EFL instruction. Language awareness is mentioned in the core elements of the English subject curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 2), and is a

crucial part of learning a new language because it lets learners reflect on the language they are learning and producing (Angelsen & Hauge, 2020, p. 322). Metatalk lets researchers investigate learners' language learning processes as it shows the students' own reflection and talk about language (Swain, 1998, p.69). In other words, metatalk facilitates the examination of learners' language awareness, thus identifying areas of improvement and determining the subsequent steps in each student's language acquisition.

Thirdly, translation can be a steppingstone for further language learning. There is rarely "just one correct translation" (Gnutzmann, 2009, s. 55), meaning that the act of translating "invite discussion about linguistic correctness, semantic equivalence, situational and stylistic adequacy" (Gnutzmann, 2009, s. 55). Translation can thus facilitate both comprehension and communication across the known languages. Moreover, it can aid in the development of language awareness as it directs attention to aspects such as situational adequacy. Teachers, therefore, need to be able to integrate translation into the classroom and acquaint students with translation as a method.

1.4 The study's design

The current thesis is a qualitative study exploring the discussions of eight student groups taking place in their intact classes. Fourteen students worked on two separate tasks; one task involved translating a text from Norwegian to English and the other task involved translating a text from English to Norwegian. The use of group discussions encouraged the verbalization of knowledge by the students, thus producing the dataset for analysis. A content analysis was conducted using the transcriptions of the discussions. By instructing students to translate, insight was gained into their language awareness, what elements of language they focus on, and how they collaborate.

The data used in this study was collected as part of the research project MetaLearn, a research project at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL). The MetaLearn project aims to gain insight into elementary school students' metalinguistic knowledge, and how to promote metalinguistic knowledge in the classroom. The data collection was complete by the time of my involvement, and I, therefore, played no part in the task planning or data collection. However, I was involved in transcribing audio recordings and double-checking transcriptions.

1.5 Central terms used in this thesis

Before moving on with the thesis, some terms must be clarified. There is some debate when it comes to the terms used for a speaker's known languages. Traditionally, the speaker's primary language has been referred to as mother tongue or first language (L1), and the subsequent languages have been referred to as L2. Based on this labeling, the participants in the present study have Norwegian as their supposed L1 and English as their L2 and, thus, the target language they try to acquire. This, however, fails to consider the fact that students may speak languages other than Norwegian at home, essentially having more than one language as their first language. The issue then lies in making assumptions about the speaker's linguistic repertoire without the needed information about a speaker's known languages.

Hall & Cook (2012) suggest the terms *new language* and *own language* for what is often referred to as *target language* and *first language*. The authors argue that students often speak more than one language, or a different language than the majority language spoken in the geographic area, at home (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 274). Subsequently, it is insufficient to assume that learners within the same context have the same first language. Likewise, in the context of this thesis, it is insufficient to assume that the current participants all have Norwegian as their L1. Following this idea, some students might already speak English at home before starting their school education, thus already being one of the speaker's own languages. This causes the term *new language* to be insufficient in describing that student's acquisition of the English language.

Hall & Cook note that there is some controversy related to using the term *target language* when referring to the language one is trying to acquire because it has "unfortunate military overtones" (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 274). Despite this controversy, this thesis still considers it the most accurate description of the language learning taking place and will thus opt for *target language* when referring to the students' use of English. Moreover, As Hall & Cook (2012) state, the term L1 is inadequate when describing the students' use of the society's majority language, in this case, Norwegian. This study will, therefore, use the term *school language* when describing the students' use of Norwegian to avoid making assumptions about the students' language background.

Learner/student

The terms *learner* and *student* will be used interchangeably, as they both refer to individuals engaged in a learning process in the current context.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Following this introduction, chapter two will be dedicated to theoretical considerations. This chapter will present key terms, significant concepts, and previous relevant research to this study. Chapter three delves into the methods and materials used to analyze the data. The data material used in this thesis are provided by MetaLearn and consist of audio recordings of 8 groups of 3rd-grade students working on two translation tasks. The results of the data analysis will be presented in chapter four, followed by a discussion of the findings in chapter five. Chapter six will include a conclusion as well as propositions for further research.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Considerations

This chapter will sketch this thesis's theoretical background and discuss the central terms and concepts in this context. Because the current thesis aims to explore students' language awareness through their metatalk, these terms will be defined and explained in subsections 2.1 and 2.2. Subsection 2.3 will address the use of translation in a language learning context, followed by an overview of children's peer interactions in subsection 2.4. The tool for analysis, language related episodes, will be presented in subsection 2.5. Lastly, relevant previous research will be presented in subsection 2.6.

2.1 Language Awareness

The overarching thesis statement focuses on understanding how young learners verbalize their language awareness. Consequently, this subsection will address the concept of LA, a significant term in language learning.

Language awareness, a term of considerable breadth, has faced persistent challenges in its definition (Cots & Garrett, 2017, p. 1). Donwall (cited in Cots & Garrett, 2017, p. 1) attributes to LA "the great advantage of being a cover term for almost anything related to language". However, in an attempt to provide a precise definition, this thesis prefers the following, provided by The Association for Language Awareness: "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" (Association for Language Awareness, n.d; see also Svalberg, 2007, p. 288). This rather comprehensive definition positions LA as a deliberate and conscious process in all language use, embodying a mindful awareness of its purpose.

The current investigation into young learners' language awareness stems from a desire to understand how students reflect on and demonstrate their understanding of language, without limiting the results to specific aspects such as metalinguistic awareness. The terms language awareness and metalinguistic awareness are often used interchangeably, but metalinguistic awareness is ultimately a subset of language awareness. Metalinguistic awareness, defined as the "ability to think *about* language, reflect on it and manipulate it for various purposes" (Krulatz et. al., 2018, p. 41), focuses on linguistic analysis and manipulation, and overlooks the necessity of a broadened understanding of language use, as highlighted in the definition of LA provided above. LA encompasses not only the ability to analyze language structures but

also the knowledge of how to use language effectively in different contexts. Notably, the students in this study are young learners, which may suggest that their heightened awareness of language use is still in a process of development. Nevertheless, the research questions aim to illuminate a broad awareness of language, facilitating the exploration of any awareness of language among these learners.

As underscored in the introductory chapter, language awareness is a cornerstone of the language learning process, empowering learners with the ability to reflect and acquire knowledge about the new language (Angelsen & Hauge, 2020, p. 323). This heightened comprehension equips the learner with the tools to learn specific language rules and structures, such as concord, grammar, and phonetics. The result is enhanced control and awareness of language, fostering more proficient and confident language users who can communicate effectively.

LA is not only beneficial in acquiring a new language but can also be positive in developing the languages one already knows. Researchers (Roehr-Brackin, 2018, p. 45; James & Garret, 1991) have argued that the core objective of LA in language learning is not merely to comprehend a new language but to bridge the gap between learner's L1 and L2. This speaks to the potential LA holds in continuously developing all the known languages by building on each other. In other words, by developing one's cross-linguistic awareness, one develops one's language awareness and thus deepens the ability to communicate in any of the given languages within a speaker's linguistic repertoire.

2.1.1 Language awareness in LK20

English is an obligatory subject every year throughout the Norwegian school system and plays a significant role in various ways. The English subject is "an important subject when it comes to cultural understanding, communication, all-round education, and identity development" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2). Further, the English subject shall prepare the students for "an education and societal and working life that requires English-language competence in reading, writing and oral communication" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2). These extracts emphasize the communication aspect of language learning, with the need for expressing oneself. English is the only foreign language introduced in primary school, which identifies its role as the main foreign language taught in Norway. The hours set aside for English are different depending on the grade. In elementary school,

there is a total of 366 hours allocated for English, with only 138 of these hours in the first four years.

The core elements of the English subject (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2) describe the development of language awareness as a key aspect of language learning and the acquisition of knowledge of English as a system. By gaining knowledge of English as a system, learners will not only understand the language better but also develop an ability to use and manipulate the rules of grammar, phonology, vocabulary, and discourse to enhance their communicative skills. Knowledge about language (KAL) is often used interchangeably with LA (Svalberg, 2017, p. 288). However, since LA serves as a comprehensive term encompassing all aspects of language, KAL should be seen as a subset falling under the LA umbrella. Language awareness thus differs from knowledge of English as a system in that LA encompasses a deeper, more reflective process, whereas KAL relies on conscious awareness of what we know. In other words, knowledge about a language is a product of explicit teaching and learning of specific linguistic features, such as grammar. In comparison, language awareness lets speakers apply grammar rules intuitively and spontaneously while also being sensitive to their use and significance.

Language awareness is also mentioned within the competence aims after each year, progressively increasing in difficulty regarding language awareness. After year 2, the competence aims are based on keywords such as recognize, associate, and listen to. These attributes articulate the students' ability to understand language, but not necessarily adapt and utilize English to a high degree. The competence aims after year 4 focus on exploring, using, and understanding different aspects of language. A notable example of language awareness in the competence aims after year 4 is formulated as "use a number of common small words, polite expressions and simple phrases and sentences to obtain help to understand and be understood" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 6). This aim encapsulates the need for sensitivity of language use stated in the definition mentioned earlier (subsection 2.1). After year 7, the competence aims build heavily on the learners' ability to utilize the language appropriately and convey the desired message. This can be seen in the following excerpts: "express oneself in an understandable way with a varied vocabulary and polite expressions (…)", "reflect on and talk about the role played by English in their own lives" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 7-8). Both these aims point to an awareness of language in terms of one's usage and learning.

2.2 Metatalk

Metatalk is an essential term in this context because language awareness is a competence that can be difficult to express for young learners. As mentioned, language awareness refers to conscious perception and knowledge about a language and can be a competence difficult to convey. This calls for a means of verbalizing knowledge. Metatalk fills this function because it is the "language learners use to reflect on language use" (Swain, 1998, p. 69). Swain points to the use of metatalk to solve linguistic problems, thus presenting opportunities for teachers and researchers to engage with and learn more about the students' language learning processes (Swain, 1998, p. 69). She also points to the fact that students use metatalk to test hypotheses about the target language (p.69), hence displaying their developing knowledge of the language. Following, students' metatalk in this case presents tangible information for analysis because it allows them to express their knowledge.

Swain (1998, p. 68) stresses that metatalk does not need to include explicit terminology to be categorized as metatalk. Metatalk can thus include both explicit and non-explicit language terminology and can be detected by learners simply discussing an aspect of language. Given the participants' young age in the current study, an expectation of an abundance of terminology might be misplaced. Examples of metatalk with non-explicit terminology could be students debating how to spell a particular word or whether to use a capital letter in a name. Metatalk, including terminology, could be discussions about how to write a word in the past tense or to determine the need for a potential article such as "the."

Organizing group work is an effective way to encourage metatalk, as the students engage in discussions regarding the task at hand, causing them to voice and argue for their own opinions. By participating in such discussions, they must explain their thought processes while simultaneously listening to others. These deliberations can enhance students' language learning because they may notice gaps (Storch, 2008, p. 96) in their knowledge of the new language, thus identifying a gap between what they wish to express, and the vocabulary needed to do so. The desire to fill this gap can lead to a search for a suitable solution, subsequently aiding language acquisition and enhancing communication skills. Such discoveries would not be as easily detected in individual work, given the reduced necessity for expressing one's thought by producing output.

There are some points to note regarding metatalk. It is argued to be beneficial for students to witness metatalk before engaging with it themselves, meaning that the teacher must model efficient production of metatalk. This will make it easier for students of all ages age to utilize it (Swain, 1998, p. 79), as they have specific references of how to produce metatalk. Next, metatalk is best used in a meaning-making process (Swain, 1998, p. 69), subsequently connecting the links between forms, meaning, and function. If not used to serve a communicative function, the metatalk will fail to foster a deeper understanding, and thus not serve its purpose.

2.2.1 Previous research on metatalk

The concept of metatalk stems from Swain (1998) and has been thoroughly researched since. Swain (1998) investigated how three different functions of output play a role when learning a second language, namely noticing, hypothesis formulation and testing, and metatalk. In short, noticing points to the act of consciously noticing a gap in one's own language which triggers cognitive processes that build knowledge. Hypothesis formulation and testing can thus be seen as the verbal production of the gap they noticed. Further, hypothesis formulation and testing are ways of seeing what does and does not work (Swain, 1998, p. 86). Metatalk, being the third function of output, encourages learners to make use of the language acquisition process (Swain, 1998, p. 69) by using the language and reflecting on what one knows and what one is learning. Swain's conclusion noted that collaborative work is beneficial for promoting output, but that metatalk must be modeled for the desired result. Metatalk production might be limited due to learners' proficiency or the group dynamic, and the teacher must thus model how to incorporate metatalk effectively.

Numerous other studies have since investigated metatalk. Özkan & Köymen (2023) discovered that children as young as three years old can produce metatalk. Myhill and Newmann (2016) and Myhill et al. (2016) investigated metatalk's impact on the writing process, finding that teacher facilitation of high-quality discussion about language is advantageous. Because "the demands of writing increase as writers' mastery of writing grows" (Myhill & Newmann, 2016, p. 1), writers need explicit instruction to develop their writing skills and must learn how language choices impact meaning. Similarly, Myhill et al. (2016) focused their inquiry on explicit attention to grammar and concluded that teachers' attention to vocabulary choices positively helps students understand how words create meaning within a text.

2.3 Translation as part of language teaching and learning

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the use of translation is expected in Norwegian EFL classrooms. Traditionally, translation has been implemented in Norwegian classrooms when students are asked to translate a word to identify its meaning or to translate a given instruction from English to Norwegian. Also, translation is often used when students encounter an English text. A common approach is then to have students read the text individually before collaboratively translating it to Norwegian with the entire class. Said use of translation is often a means of aiding students' understanding and ensuring that each student understands the message. Although currently less common, glossary tests have been another common way of implementing translation in Norwegian EFL classrooms. The challenge with these tests is that they often cause students to utilize memorization strategies (Bader, to appear, p. 1) instead of learning the words and their meanings. Such activities have been scrutinized as being ineffective in language learning contexts, thus contributing to a negative perception of translation use.

Even though language teaching has typically involved using both the target language and the school language, there was a longstanding belief that a language is best learned monolingually (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 271). The monolingual approach was based on the notion that a new language was best learned using only the target language, without interference from the learners' own language. Despite popular beliefs, Hall & Cook (2010, p. 293) argue that teachers still implemented a common language when instructing a class, which led to feelings of guilt and shortcomings. Thus, despite the monolingual assumption and its previous dominance in the language learning context, classrooms using more than one language are still common. Hall & Cook (2012) dismiss the efficiency of a monolingual approach and instead argue for using an own language in language teaching and learning. They also stress the potential benefits of using translation as a pedagogical tool.

By using translation in Norwegian EFL classrooms, the classrooms thus remain a "multilingual environment" (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 278) as multiple languages are being used. Notably, even though the term multilingual suggests that several languages are being utilized, it is often the case that only the school language and target language are incorporated. The potential home languages of students are thus not used or seen as a pedagogical resource, meaning that the class's entire language repertoire is not being integrated. The English subject curriculum states that learners should "experience that the ability to speak several languages is

an asset at school and in society in general" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 2), facilitating the incorporation of all of the students' spoken languages. The potential benefits of using all home languages could be an interesting aspect to investigate more thoroughly, but it did not fit the scope of the current study.

Incorporating translation into language learning offers several advantages, as highlighted by scholars in the field. According to Zojer (2009, p. 34-35), these advantages encompass several aspects. Firstly, using translation leads to a smaller chance of transferring structures from one language to another because it highlights the potential contrasts between languages. Secondly, it is considered an integrative activity due to its similarity to real-life language use. Thirdly, it forces the learners to expand their vocabulary as it excludes implementations of avoidance strategies. Lastly, it can cause an improvement in the learners' first language.

Further, translation requires the learner to produce output and not simply be subjected to language input, because they must identify a word in another language (Witte, Harden & Harden, 2009, p.3). Using a common language can thus help students see similarities and differences between their other known languages and the target language, developing their cross-linguistic awareness. It is, however, essential to note that using an own language and translation should not replace other communicative tasks in instructional settings but rather act as a complementary pedagogical tool.

Another advantage, formulated by Hall & Cook (2010, p.279), is that using a common language is beneficial when teaching and learning a new language because it creates a safer environment for the learners, generating space for them to contribute to the lesson. As expressed by Harmer (2001, in Karimian & Talebinejad, 2013, p. 605), there is no "doubt that students will use their L1 in class, whatever teachers say or do". Consequently, discomfort might be avoided by teacher-led incorporation of translation and a common language. Furthermore, switching to a common language "can underpin learners' sense of who they are" (Hall & Cook, 2010, p. 279), thus inviting a feeling of identity and sense of self into the learning of a new language. This correlates with the English subject curriculum, which states that "English is an important subject when it comes to (…) identity development" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2).

2.4 Young learners' collaboration

This subsection will discuss collaborative opportunities for young learners and some potential pitfalls associated with group work. This study also uses the phrase peer interactions to describe collaboration between learners.

As mentioned previously, one effective way of eliciting metatalk is through collaboration. Collaborating with others provides opportunities for discussing, verbalizing, and reflecting on one's own knowledge (Azkarai & Konpinska, 2020, p. 1). In other words, group work presents significant opportunities for producing metatalk within an interactional setting. The benefits of such interactions are directly transferrable to language learning, as output can facilitate the acquisition of an additional language. As a consequence, collaboration can accelerate the development of one's language awareness.

Collaboration can also benefit the students within the instructional setting of a classroom. It can play a part in developing students' identity and sense of community (Basturkmen & Philp, 2017, p. 290), facilitate more interaction with other learners, and allow for each student to produce output (Philp et al., 2013, p. 2). Consequently, collaboration can prompt talk about the language they are learning (Swain, 1998, p. 68), which can lead to further reflection and ultimately internalization of what they are learning. Additionally, the heightened sense of community may lead to students feeling more comfortable participating in discussions, which in turn can facilitate further language learning.

Another benefit of peer collaboration is the possibility to teach and learn from a peer. Learning from a peer is viewed as positive because it excludes the imbalance in power as demonstrated in an adult-student interaction because of their similarity in education, development, and knowledge (Philp et al., 2013, p. 86). This type of symmetric relationship can present opportunities for the learners to jointly develop knowledge and understanding based on their similar knowledge levels (Basturkmen & Philp, 2017, p. 291).
However, an expert-novice relationship can still exist within a peer interaction, meaning that one student has more knowledge than the other. Subsequently, the expert student takes the role of a teacher, communicating their knowledge in a manner that aids the novice student. This process, if executed suitably, causes the expert student to reflect on their language production while adapting it to the novice's needs, resulting in mutual learning. If the expert

student is not able to modify their support to match the needs of the novice, the desired development might be constrained (Storch, 2017, p. 71).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) (as described in Basturkmen & Philp, 2017, p. 291; Storch, 2017, p. 71) also describes learning within an expert-novice dynamic. The concept of ZDP is considered one of the foundational principles within sociocultural theory and encompasses the learning that can happen when a learner is appropriately scaffolded. In other words, a student facing a difficult task will be more likely to achieve the desired development with the help of a more knowledgeable individual. In peer interactions, this individual would be a fellow student. The expert student's knowledge can be reinforced and internalized further when teaching the novice, and the novice student may, in time, become more independent and require less scaffolding.

Working in groups also facilitates the negotiation of meaning (NoM), which builds on the "notion that knowledge of a second language is acquired through exposure to comprehensible input" (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 405). It is a common term in the field of second language acquisition, and its benefits are not exclusive to young learners. The concept of NoM is embedded in Long's interaction hypothesis (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p.), which suggests that learning occurs when learners engage in interactions aimed at overcoming comprehension obstacles. NoM can also be seen as "an activity that occurs when a listener signals to the speaker that the speaker's message is not clear and the speaker and the listener work linguistically to resolve this impasse" (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 404). The learners are then able to discuss an issue of disagreement and jointly decide on an understanding that is coherent and meaningful to them.

An important part of working collaboratively is knowing how to do so effectively (Pinter, 2007, p. 191). This entails the ability to communicate one's reflections, listen to others, and behave in a respective manner that ensures that each student participates in the discussion. Ineffective group work can lead to potential downfalls (Philp et al., 2013, p.85), such as inadequate or wrong corrections from peers in the group, losing focus, or simply feeling that one has nothing to offer. While such issues can be detrimental to the collaborative process, these challenges can be solved by having a teacher present and prepared to boost confidence or steer the focus back on track (Philp et al., 2013, p. 3).

2.5 Language related episodes

The tool of analysis in the present study is language related episodes (LREs). Because of the length of each group discussion (30 to 40 minutes), the metatalk needs to be divided into smaller units to be analyzed. Consequently, LREs, "which is any part of dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use or other- or self-correct" (Swain & Lapkin, 1996, cited in Swain, 1998, p. 70), is an appropriate tool for analysis. LREs will thus illustrate specific instances of the students engaging in metatalk, which will then be categorized based on their topic. Hence, the learners' issues and interests determine the topic or frequency of LREs in the data set.

Identifying LREs is also beneficial because it provides evidence for two constructs that facilitate language learning, namely attention and output (Collins & White, 2019, p.10). Because LREs display episodes or instances where learners deliberate on language, these LREs clearly show learners placing attention on the language they produce. Such attention is argued to facilitate language learning (Collins & White, 2019, s. 10). Output is claimed to be an essential step for learners to identify gaps in their knowledge as they discover discrepancies between what they want to say and how to say it. When learners address such gaps collaboratively, they initiate LREs. Thus, both attention and output are identifiable in the transcripts and will provide evidence of learners developing their language awareness.

2.6 Previous research

Numerous studies have investigated learner interactions, some of which will be presented below. The subsequent studies are concentrated on other aspects of language learning, namely the learners' attention and motivation. To the best of my knowledge, no studies investigate young learners' language awareness.

Garcia Mayo and Agirre (2019) examined the interactions of 11–12-year-old Spanish EFL learners while completing an oral task and an oral + written task. Their study was based on previous research showing that oral tasks elicit more attention to meaning, whereas tasks including written components elicit more attention to form. The students were assigned tasks based on relevant topics their school covered so that the formulation and content were familiar. In one task, they were asked to discuss in their target language; in the other, they were asked also to produce written answers. The findings indicated that the students devoted more attention to form in the tasks with both an oral and a written component, generating

more LREs. Although the applied tool for this study is, like my own, LREs, it is noteworthy that the findings were not statistically significant as the number of LREs was quite similar in both tasks.

Storch (2008) found that learners who collaborate on language tasks benefit from the opportunity to verbalize and deliberate about language. Engagement of language exposes learners to linguistic input, as well as positive and corrective feedback, and generates attention to language choices. The learners in this study, at the university level of intermediate language proficiency, were given a text in which they had to produce the missing words or find the correct lexical version of a given word. The group setting allowed for focused reflective discussion about language, making it easier to identify how and where the attention was focused. The findings showed that more attention was placed on grammar rather than on mechanics and lexis (Storch, 2008, p. 106).

The framework used in Storch's study has gained widespread usage for analyzing metatalk in collaborative work in a language-learning context. In her work, Storch uses the term level of engagement (LoE) as a description of the "quality of the learners' metatalk" (2008, p. 98) and has constructed three different categories within LoE. First, to describe a high quality of metatalk, Storch uses the term elaborate (E), which refers to segments where learners "deliberated over the language items, sought and provided confirmation and explanation, and alternatives" (Storch, 2008, p. 100). Next, low-quality metatalk is divided into a limited level of engagement by one student (L) and a limited level of engagement by both students (L+L). This distinction was deemed necessary because of the restricted interaction between the learners, which points to a difference between one student and both students attempting to move forward with the task.

Azkarai & Kopinska (2020) explored patterns of interaction and level of engagement in LREs in learners working in pairs on a dictogloss task. The study focuses on task motivation and the students' attitudes toward the tasks. The students worked in pairs, and their verbal discussion was audio recorded. This study's participants were 11-12 years old and began learning English at 4 years old. This differentiates them from the participants in the present study, who was 8-9 years old and started learning English at the age of 6. The students took notes while listening to a text, before recreating the text in pairs. The researchers mainly looked at their ability to use the suffix –s correctly in the third-person singular form. Because the study's

focus was the students' engagement level, the findings are categorized accordingly. The number of LREs was also counted. The study showed that most pairs displayed a cooperative and collaborative pattern of interaction and that those collaborative pairs produced the highest number of LREs.

Pinter (2007) explored young learners' peer-peer interactions when solving a spot-the-differences task in an EFL setting in Hungary. The study focused on what benefits is might pose to have two students work together. She found several indications that even young learners at a low level of competence can benefit from interacting with a peer. The data collection was done over three weeks, and specific improvements varied from increasing the pace in which they worked, less hesitation, and more appropriate responses to their partner. They also seemed to become more "confident and relaxed" (Pinter, 2007, p. 200) by the end of data collection. The author notes that the repetition involved in executing similar tasks over the course of a three-week period is an important facilitator in some of the benefits and suggests that such activities should be more present in the classroom.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will describe the methodology and materials used to investigate the study's research questions. Firstly, a description of the qualitative research method utilized will be provided, followed by a brief discussion of classroom-based research. Next, the present study will be presented, along with participants, procedural details. Then, the chapter describes the details of the data analysis before presenting potential limitations within this context. Lastly, this section addresses the ethical considerations in research and considers reliability and validity within this study.

3.1 Qualitative research

A qualitative data analysis was utilized to answer the thesis statement and the following research questions (see subsection 3.3). Mackey & Gass (2015, p. 216) note that qualitative research covers a wide range of methods but defines it as "research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures". The descriptive data used in this study is based on transcribed group discussions of students working on translation tasks. Ultimately, the goal of qualitative research is to present a coherent and defensible representation of the data and its meanings (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 644) without relying on statistics.

Cohen et al. (2017, p. 644) present some key elements of qualitative data analysis, most of which are present in this study. First, the data was prepared and organized by transcribing the audio recordings, thus preparing it for analysis. Second, the analysis was done by dividing the learners' metatalk into smaller chunks and categorizing it into pre-ordinate categories (see subsections 3.4.3 and 3.4.4). Next came the phase of interpreting the data and reporting on the findings, which can be found in Chapter 4. However, another key feature of qualitative data is the multitude of interpretations and meanings (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 644) constructed by participants, readers, and, importantly, the researcher. This means that the data analysis is not a purely objective process but one that is influenced by the researcher's own opinions and the expectations set beforehand. As a result, the analysis may not always align with the ideas and perceptions of the participants but may be interfered with by preconceived notions.

The rationale for utilizing a qualitative method for the present study is the desire to investigate the meaning created by the students based on their knowledge and explore the utterances and

discussions among the students. A quantitative approach would not provide the same insight because the results would be limited to frequencies and not present extensive opportunities for exploring and interpreting the data. This thesis is interested in how the students interact and talk about language, and a quantitative approach would not allow for enough interpretation and interaction with the data. A quantitative handling of the current data could draw conclusions on what aspects of language the participants focus on the most, whereas a qualitative analysis will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of what they are discussing. Both options are valid and would make positive contributions to the field of EFL, but in this case, the qualitative approach was deemed the most motivating as it allows for a deeper exploration of the utterances and meaning inherent in the participants' language use and interaction. Qualitative analysis is thus a better option in this context as it allows for a different engagement with the data, opening up for a deeper interpretation of what and how the students discuss. Additionally, the rather small participant number (14 students) would be insufficient for generalization and presentation in a statistical format. The data analysis will thus not rely on numbers or comparisons between incidents or frequencies but present a careful and comprehensive description of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 216).

3.1.1 Content Analysis

A common approach to qualitative data analysis is content analysis. The purpose of qualitative content analysis is to "move away from the original text to analyze the information extracted from it" (Gläser and Laudel, 2013, cited in Cohen et al., 2017, p. 674). Qualitative content analysis differentiates from quantitative content analysis in its handling of data. A qualitative content analysis describes and interprets the results, whereas quantitative content analysis counts the data and determines the frequencies of the occurrences of units (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 675). The analysis in the present study thus aims to describe and interpret the findings in a detailed manner, while exploring the students' utterances and attempting to identify patterns within the material.

An important part of content analysis is coding the data, which involves handing out labels on items of text that say the same thing or are about the same thing (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 668). The codes applied to a qualitative analysis can be both pre-ordinate and emergent from the data, and even a combination of both (Cohen, 2017, p. 644). In the context of this study, labels were assigned to items of text that focused on the same elements of language or denoted the same pattern of interaction. The labels regarding language focus were decided

beforehand, and were inspired by Storch (2008), who investigated metatalk in pair work activity. The applied codes were, therefore, also appropriate in the context of this study, which explores metatalk in a group work setting. The specific labels describing patterns of interaction were not decided beforehand, other than to explore how the students collaborated. In essence, the topic of interest was predetermined before commencing the data analysis, but specific codes regarding collaboration did emerge from the data. The codes will describe contrastive patterns of interactions with the aim to enlighten the potential outcomes of these patterns and will be presented in subsection 3.4.3.

3.2 Classroom-based research

To investigate second language acquisition, Mackey (2017, p. 541) argues that one needs to carry out research within instructional settings because of its authentic context. Mackey further stresses the importance of executing research in an instructional setting because real-world language learning occurs in contexts such as classrooms and natural teaching settings, as opposed to in more controlled situations such as laboratory research. On the other hand, laboratory-based research offers the advantage of a higher level of control for the researcher because researchers can affect the variables and execution more closely (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 239). This study seeks to explore which aspects of language students prioritize. Therefore, an instructional setting that offers a higher degree of spontaneous language production was deemed appropriate.

An instructional setting, such as an intact classroom, facilitates language production by the learners, which can be argued to be spontaneous or authentic language production. This means that the language the learners produce is constructed by themselves and, therefore, is not a product of the teacher's or researcher's aims or focus. Even though the tasks given in this context do point the students in a desired direction, the students' way of tackling the tasks is guided by their own inclinations. Furthermore, audio recordings of such language production provide the "closest approximation of what happens in the classrooms when no research is being conducted" (Williams, 2012, p.543). Audio recording can thus help capture language production with the least interference from outside variables.

Williams (2012, p.541) notes that the goal of classroom research is to find out "how instruction can be made more effective and more efficient". Mackey (2017, p.541) suggests that classroom research can examine interactional moves such as "language related episodes

by recording, transcribing, coding, and analyzing segments of classroom discourse". Because these elements are all central to my study, in addition to the research being executed in the students' intact classes, the transcripts will provide evidence of near-natural production of learner language. Furthermore, the study will offer valuable information on how to improve language teaching.

3.3 The present study and its research questions

This study should be perceived to provide new insight into how young learners think and deliberate about language. As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of research on young EFL students, and my study will hopefully add valuable insight and perspective to the field of EFL. The analysis of eight transcriptions of student discussions will thereby, hopefully, provide a more nuanced dialog surrounding young EFL students and their language production. The study was designed to explore the following thesis statement and research questions:

How do young EFL learners verbalize language awareness when discussing translation tasks?
   a) *Which elements of language do young learners focus on when discussing translation tasks?*
   b) *What patterns of interaction can be observed in their discussions?*

A qualitative investigation of the transcripts researched the understanding of the thesis statement. Question a) was researched through a qualitative content analysis of the focus of LREs produced by the learners (see section 3.4.3). Lastly, question b) was answered by identifying interesting patterns of interaction and discussing the ones most relevant in this context.

3.3.1 Participants
The participants in this study are 14 3rd-grade (8–9 years old) EFL learners from an elementary school in a Norwegian city. As my education prepares me for teaching in elementary school, participants at this age are highly relevant as it allows me to research a student group I will teach. Furthermore, it addresses the research gaps on younger students mentioned previously. The participants have participated in all obligatory English teaching in the Norwegian elementary school system, which at the point of data collection was about 3,5 years. I am aware of the names of both the school and the participants, but this limits my

knowledge of the contributors. I have no prior knowledge of the school and, therefore, no further knowledge of the teachers or students. Parental consent was obtained by the MetaLearn team before the project's start.

3.3.2 Procedure

The 14 students contributed by working on two given tasks in assigned groups. The students were organized into four distinct groups and tasked with translating a given text on two occasions. In one session, they translated a text from English to Norwegian; in the other, they translated from Norwegian to English. The assigned texts were developed for the MetaLearn project. All group discussions took place in their intact classes, in the presence of their teacher and two researchers. The data was collected by recording each student in the group while they were discussing the given task.

The tasks were executed identically on both occasions. First, the students were instructed to work independently for 10 minutes to translate the given text and write it down. Next, they were divided into predesigned groups of three or four and instructed to produce a shared translation collaboratively. Thirty minutes were allotted for this joint effort. Each group was assigned a designated writer and a "captain" by the teacher. The writer was responsible for writing down the agreed translation, and the captain was tasked with acting as a team leader or facilitator. Prior to commencing their work, it was made clear that students were to try their best and write the original word(s) if they could not provide a translated alternative. This was done to remove pressure and encourage the students to try their best.

Each student was given a handout with the assigned text. As the MetaLearn project is ongoing, these tasks cannot be reproduced in their full form due to potential copyright issues. Therefore, a detailed account of the tasks will be provided instead. In task one, where students translated from English to Norwegian, they were introduced to Abby Cadabby, who wrote them a letter telling them about herself. Abby has magical abilities and is in training to become a fairy. She writes about her skills, including floating and speaking multiple languages. She also loves writing letters. In task two, they were given a Norwegian text that provided a description of Kari, who was picking Beatrice up from the airport. This description involved details about Kari's appearance and how Beatrice could find Kari at the airport. Beatrice was traveling from a non-Norwegian-speaking country, which is why the writer, Oda, needed help translating the text from Norwegian to English.

3.4 Data analysis

This subsection delves into the phase of data analysis, which is integral to extracting meaningful insights from the gathered data. The first subsection explains the process of transcribing oral data before the focus of LREs will be explained and illustrated. Lastly, there will be a brief introduction of the categories aimed to answer the research question regarding patterns of interactions.

3.4.1 Transcribing oral data

Transcribing is used to facilitate the representation of oral data in a written format (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 113). According to Nilssen (2012, 47-48), some of the benefits of using transcribing in research are that the researchers get very familiar with the data, as well as being an essential part of the analysis process because it can lead to ideas regarding coding. The final transcription, or text, is thus produced by the researcher (Nilssen, 2012, p. 46). With it comes the risk of errors because it involves interpretation and a risk of mishearing what is said. In other words, this could compromise the study's validity, which will be addressed in section 3.6.

Because of the scope of the MetaLearn project and the present study, some limitations were made when transcribing. Only utterances relating to the task or utterances using the English language were included in the transcription. Thus, any talk about other topics was excluded. Furthermore, because the data was collected by use of audio recordings and not video recordings, body language is not possible to include in this context. Intonation was also generally disregarded for this project, as it can be challenging to judge what intonation implies without video recordings to illustrate the accompanying non-verbal cues. Consequently, any information on body language and intonation is excluded. Notably, this excludes any insight into the students' hesitation and gestures.

Eight audio recordings of four separate group discussions were transcribed for this study. All recordings were transcribed verbatim. Research assistants from the MetaLearn team transcribed two of the eight recordings before I double-checked the transcripts. I then transcribed four recordings myself before a research assistant double-checked them. The remaining two transcripts were both transcribed and double-checked by members of the MetaLearn team. Doublechecking ensures that all relevant learner talk is included in the written transcripts and provides an opportunity to correct any potential errors. As mentioned,

the students in the recordings are very young, and it is, therefore, natural that they sometimes speak simultaneously or go off-topic. Speech overlaps could be challenging to hear correctly, thus requiring a second set of ears to ensure that the transcribing was done accurately.

When I signed on to the project, I received guidelines for transcription from MetaLearn. In addition to written guidelines, each transcriber viewed footage constructed by an expert transcriber on the team, explaining the transcribing conventions and how to introduce a new group before starting transcribing. For example, all transcriptions started with a summary of who transcribed the recordings and who double-checked them at what times, as well as the codenames of all students present in the group. Both the written guidelines and video material were available throughout the whole process, meaning that transcribers were able to go back and rewatch if needed. Next, transcribers were able to communicate and cooperate when any issues or disagreements arose. These measures were taken to ensure that all transcribing is done accurately and that only the relevant information is included in the finished product.

For this project, certain alterations were made. Some of the transcribing conventions have been removed to increase readability, such as marking speech overlaps. The marking of English and Norwegian words has been changed from the original transcripts and is now indicated by using quotation marks around English words. Instances where the students trail off are marked (+…) as it gives information on the students thought processes. However, the transcribing of how the participants spell words is the same and is illustrated by separated capital letters such as A B B Y. Because the majority of discussions were conducted in Norwegian, and thus seemed to be the students' preferred language, the transcriptions reflect this. The examples used in this thesis will be translated into English and added in brackets underneath the original utterance.

3.4.2 Focus of LREs

In the present inquiry, I will analyze the transcripts for any LREs. Each LRE will contain a singular topic or linguistic problem. The students speak freely without interference or directions from researchers or teachers other than translating the given text. A LRE starts when a student raises a concern and ends when the group resolves the issue or moves on with the task.

To fully understand what aspects of language the students focused on, LREs were coded as form-focused (F-LRE), lexis-focused (L-LRE), or mechanical-focused (M-LRE) as done by Storch (2008, p. 100). F-LREs dealt with morphology and syntax, such as issues regarding concord or inflecting a verb. L-LREs dealt with word meanings, word choices, and use of prepositions. Many of the L-LREs in the dataset also dealt with simple translations, such as "what is fairy in Norwegian". M-LREs dealt with punctuation and spelling.

Examples will now be presented to demonstrate the different categories. The following excerpt is coded as form-focused because it illustrates an example of the students dealing with morphology. The students are translating the phrase "hun kommer til (…)". The English translation of the verb "å komme" is "to come", leading the students to apply the literal translation in this context. Learner 34 provides the option of using "come". Learner 26 suggests adding the suffix -s, likely as a result of remembering verb modification in the third person. The addition of the suffix also leads to the avoidance of a concord issue regarding the subject she. Learner 34 then agrees to the refined formulation.

<u>Excerpt 1</u>

L34: "come"

L26: "comes"

L34: ja? "comes" "comes"

L26: ja det er jo det

    (yes that is what it is)

The next excerpt shows the students discussing the translation for "tanten min". The second and third turn shows L34 exploring different options, likely drawing on their knowledge of the Norwegian language system, where the noun comes before the possessive pronoun. In English however, the possessive pronoun comes before the word it modifies. Learner 17 seems confident in their suggestion to use "my" by stating it twice. Learner 34 argues that "mine" is odd, which Learner 26 does not seem to mind.

<u>Excerpt 2</u>

L17: "my aunt"

L34: "aunt mine"

L34: tanten "mine"

    (aunt "mine")

L17: "my"

L34: "mine" det blir litt rart

("mine" that is a bit odd)

L26: rart då vi kan jo bare skrive det

 (odd then we can just write it)

Two excerpts will now be presented to display examples of M-LREs. The first one illustrates a common way the students dealt with spelling issues. One student asks how to spell it, and another student provides the solution.

Excerpt 3

L4: (em) "with"

L10: åssen skri+…

 (how do you spell+…)

L4: W H I T

L10: ja

 (yes)

Instances where the students focus their attention on punctuation, are also coded as mechanical-focused LREs. In the following example, the students are concerned with emulating the punctuation in the given text to their jointly produced text. Learner 4 backs up their claim by stating that an exclamation point is present in the original text, which seems to mean that it should be the same in their jointly produced text. Learners 10 and 11 both agree with Learner 4's comment.

Excerpt 4

L4: og så er det sånn der (em) utropstegn bak.

 (and then it is an exclamation point behind)

L10: ja.

 (yes)

L4: fordi det står det helt i teksten.

 (becuase it says it in the text)

L11: ja.

 (yes)

27

Lastly, two examples of lexis focused LREs will be presented. In the first example, the students are deliberating on the word "turn" in the context of "turning pumpkins into things." They discuss which of the verbs "lage" and "bytte" makes the most sense in the sentence, before they each state that they think it is "lage."

Excerpt 5

L18: hva er "turn"? lage?

    (what is "turn"? Make?)

L30: "turn" det er enten lage

    (turn is either make)

L18: det er lage.

    (its make)

L30: eller bytte.

    (or switch)

L18: det er lage.

    (its make)

L30: jeg tr+… jeg tror det er lage.

    (i think its make)

L18: lage

    (make)

In the next excerpt, they are searching for the Norwegian translation of "jeans". Learner 19 suggests that it is the same in English and Norwegian, meaning that they can use the same words in their translated text. Learner 20 also uses the name of Learner 19 to exemplify this, saying that the name is pronounced the same in both languages. Learners 19 and 20 thus display cross-linguistic awareness and are able to see similarities between the languages.

Excerpt 6

L20: eg lurer på ka er "jeans"? ka er "jeans"? er "jeans" bukse?

    (I wonder what is "jeans"? What is "jeans"? Is "jeans" pants?)

L19: ja "jeans" det er jo det samme egentlig … som+…? er ikke det både engelsk og norsk "jeans"?

    (yes "jeans" is the same as? Isn't it "jeans" in both English and Norwegian?

L20: jo. eg tror det.

    (yes. I think so)

L19: liksom du sier jeans på norsk men du sier også "jeans" på engelsk

   (like you say jeans in Norwegian but you also say "jeans" in English)

L20: ja

   (yes)

L19: så eg skrev jeans. "blue jeans"

   (so I wrote jeans. "Blue jeans")

L20: som man sier L19 på (eh) på norsk og L19 på engelsk

   (like you say L19 in Norwegian and L19 in English)

3.4.3 Patterns of interaction

The students' patterns of interaction will be analyzed to shed light on how they collaborate. As mentioned previously, each group was assigned the roles of a writer and a captain. These roles naturally affect the dynamics of the collaboration, as the captain takes a leading role in driving the conversation forward, and the writer often initiates the issues concerning spelling. Researching the students' patterns of interaction is important in this context because of the collaborative element of the tasks and because the successfulness of the collaboration determines the quantity and quality of metatalk. The tasks in this study are highly focused on collaboration as students are instructed to work together, and it is therefore important to know how students collaborate to best facilitate further language learning. The categories investigating patterns of interaction are addressed by emerging themes.

The labels in this category, *interacting with each other* and *individualistic responses,* were chosen based on their contrastive representations of collaboration. The former category will present excerpts from the transcripts that illustrate effective scaffolding or a higher level of engagement, showcasing instances where collaboration is successful. In contrast, the latter category will highlight instances that are more affected by individualistic utterances where the effectiveness of group work may suffer as a consequence. These categories will be presented and illustrated further in the findings.

3.5 Limitations of the present study

A limitation of this study was found in the process of analyzing the data. One of the key features of qualitative data is the multitude of interpretations and meanings (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 644) that are constructed by participants, readers, and, importantly, the researcher. This means that the data analysis is not a purely objective process but one that is influenced

by the researcher's own opinions and the expectations set beforehand. As a result, the analysis may not always align with the ideas and perceptions of the participants but may be interfered by preconceived notions. A measure that could overcome this limitation would be to install a second coder, but the context of a master thesis does not allow for such additional assistance.

As mentioned previously, the use of transcriptions presents some limitations. First, it limits the material to purely text and thus eliminates any information about the students' nonverbal communication. This is a limitation because it minimizes the insight available into the students' motivation and feelings about the task, which could potentially affect how they collaborate and contribute to the given tasks. Second, the finished transcription risks being impacted by interpretation, as it is occasionally hard to hear what is being said. As mentioned, the students often talked simultaneously, or mumbled, meaning that identifying certain words sometimes posed difficulties. Double-checking by other transcribers was installed to minimize said limitation, and often led to a more correct reproduction of the material.

3.6 Ethical considerations in research

Some ethical considerations present themselves when using human participants. An obvious ethical concern in this context is the students' privacy and anonymity because of the inclusion of their names and voices in the data gathering. It is an essential principle in research that all participants have the right to protection when participating in a study (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2022, p. 25). To ensure privacy, codenames were constructed for each student. Only one record of these codenames exists, securely stored in a locked room at HVL.

A second ethical consideration is consent. Research within the field of second language acquisition often requires learner or instructor participation, which demands approval from both participants and an institutional review board (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 30). In this study, the participants are underaged children, meaning consent had to be gathered from their parents. Because the MetaLearn project had already started at the time of my involvement, I did not need to seek approval from any review board. In other words, all approvals and consents had already been attained before my involvement.

Upon gaining access to the MetaLearn data, I signed an agreement with the head of the project. This agreement stipulated how the data would be handled and stored according to

HVL's ethical guidelines and MetaLearn's rights. This step was taken to ensure the project's integrity, as well as the participants' privacy.

3.7 Reliability and validity

Reliability in research refers to how reliable the sources are and if the results can be reproduced at another time (Postholm & Jacobsen. 2018, p. 223, own translation). In this thesis' case, it is possible to reproduce the results to a certain degree. The tasks used in the data collection are applicable in other settings, including other 3ʳᵈ grades with the same EFL training as the current participants. Consequently, the same procedure can be retested.

However, one must question the desire to be able to reproduce results. As previously mentioned, this thesis explores the utterances and the collaboration between a set of students, which will be affected by their own experiences and knowledge. This means that a similar inquiry might produce different results because of the context of its participants. This discrepancy might be perceived as unfortunate, as it conflicts with the notion of reality being conveyed in one specific way. On the other hand, a different result will also continue to add nuances to our understanding of how young EFL students think because it adds to the information available.

Nevertheless, the source reliability is increased by using multiple groups. That is, even though one group might lead us to a certain conclusion or theory, this result can be weakened or strengthened by the results produced by other groups. If one group places a heavy focus on one aspect of language, this can be unique for their group and thus be disputed by a different group. In other words, analyzing multiple group discussions leads to a more nuanced view of the students' production of language and, thus, a more nuanced result.

Another point to consider in the case of reliability is the classifications and categories used for coding. There is a risk of human error leading to inconsistency (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 684) in the coding process, specifically when determining the focus of LREs. Pinpointing the focus of LRE can pose difficulties because it may appear to encompass multiple focal points simultaneously. This is addressed by including a thorough explanation of the categories and what differentiates them. Examples will also be presented to display the distinctions.

Validity in qualitative research is "based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the researcher's standpoint" (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p. 213). In the context of this study, validity might be compromised in that language awareness is, as mentioned, a cognitive process and thus might be challenging to express for young learners. In other words, it may be difficult to know if the observed talk represents the knowledge the students actually possess, which might weaken the validity of the study. However, by incorporating group work the students were forced to discuss their thoughts, meaning that at least some of their knowledge is expressed. The students also had time before the group work to independently reflect on the task, essentially giving them time to gather their thoughts.

Furthermore, the use of audio recordings as a method of data collection meant that the inquiry could investigate naturally occurring practices happening in the students' intact classes (Collins & White, 2019, p. 9). This increases this study's validity because it confirms that the procedure investigates what actually happens in classrooms, thus making it representative of Norwegian EFL teaching.

The use of audio recordings also means that students were able to work independently, thus working predominantly without interference from researchers and teachers. The only exceptions were when the students themselves asked for assistance or the teacher saw that they needed help to regain focus. This independence can imply a smaller risk of succumbing to expectations set by the adults present in the classroom, as opposed to an interview setting where participants might generate answers to align with perceived researcher preferences. By not feeling influenced by the researchers' desires, students might produce more authentic language. Nevertheless, the possibility of students trying to conform to researchers' preferences persists within this context as they were aware that the researchers would review the audio recordings at a later time.

A third measure taken to ensure validity was double-checking. As mentioned, all transcripts were first written by one transcriber and then double-checked by a second transcriber. This ensured that all utterances were written down correctly and no information was lost. If anything was uncertain, other transcribers could be contacted to assist.

Chapter 4: Findings

The previous chapter described the methodology utilized in the current study. This chapter reports on the outcomes of the data-analysis phase. The data is analyzed to answer the overarching thesis statement and the following research questions:

How do young EFL learners verbalize language awareness when discussing translation tasks?

    a) *Which elements of language do young learners focus on when discussing translation tasks?*

    b) *What patterns of interaction can be observed in their discussions?*

The data will be presented as LREs extracted from the transcripts. As mentioned, the utterances from the transcriptions will be edited to increase readability, meaning that transcription conventions will be removed. However, instances where students pause (…) or trail off (+…) are kept as they display information on thinking and how the students communicate. When the students spell words, it is indicated in two ways. When they spell words by listing phonemes, it is spelled as B O O K. When they are sounding out a syllable, it is marked by an ampersand before the syllable, as in &blu&e. The alternations made will not affect the content of the utterances. When referring to a student, the pronoun "they" will be used.

4.1 Focus of LREs

The findings in this subsection aim to answer the research question: Which elements of language do young learners focus on when discussing translation tasks? This will be done by presenting each category, illustrated by LREs. Note that not all LREs from each category will be included, but they will represent the patterns observed.

4.1.1 Form-focused LREs

In the following excerpt from task 2, the students translate the phrase "Kari sa" and have identified that the English translation of the verb "å si" is "to say". Learner 33 first attempts to use the Norwegian inflection system, by adding the -ar ending, as pronounced in their dialect.

Learner 19 adds the suffix -s to the base form "say". Learner 33 then utters that they did know the English translation but lacked the knowledge of how to spell it and thus opted for the original Norwegian word. These three utterances, completely different and not related to one another, indicate that the students did not pay attention to each other's contributions, but rather were eager to communicate their own phrasings. Learners 19 and 20 concur that they wrote "say", and the discussion then moves on to spelling. The students did not identify the use of past tense in the given text and instead chose the first person singular in the simple present (say). This indicates that despite their knowledge of the base form, they lack the knowledge of how to modify the verb to match it with its subject.

Excerpt 7

L19: Kari … "say"?

L33: sayar (eng. with norw. verbending)

L19: "say" "says" "says" (retter på egen uttale) ka skrev du?

    ("say" "says" "says" (corrects own pronunciation) what did you write?)

L33: men eg visste at det het "say" men eg skrev sa på grunn av at eg ikke vet kordan det skrives

    (but I knew it was "say", but I wrote say because it don't know how to spell it)

L20: (em)

L19: Kari sa eg skrev "say".

    (Kari said I wrote "say")

L20: (ehm) eg skrev (ehm) "say have say blue"

    (ehm I wrote ehm "say have say blue")

L33: si?

L19: eg skrev (eh) "Kari say she coming"

    (I wrote "Kari say she coming")

L19: say (uttalt sai) S A I tror eg

    (say (pronounced sai) S A I, I think)

The following excerpt shows a discussion of concord. This excerpt is taken from task 2, and the sentence they are translating is "hun er veldig høy" or "she is very tall". They are discussing what verb to use to agree with the subject "she" and consider both "is" and "are". Learner 9 tests the hypothesis "she are", which Learner 18 disagrees with. Possibly, Learner 18 has acquired the phrase "she is", which may have been further supported by the knowledge

that they must use "is" when introducing themselves, as can be seen in the second turn. The challenge in this excerpt is that Learner 9 does not seem to agree with their collaborator but concludes that both verbs work. No new knowledge was thus acquired by Learner 9, but the end result is correct because Learner 18 was the assigned writer and knew the correct solution.

Excerpt 8

L9: are (pronounced are in Norwegian)

L18: ja men det er ikke "are" det er jo "is". for eksempel viss eg skal si det er L18, da må eg skrive "it is"

   (yes but its not "are" it is "is". For example if I say "it is L18" I have to write "it is")

L9: "she are". "she are very" høy. "She are very" høy. det passer jo det òg

   ("she are". "She are very" tall. "She are very" tall. That also works)

L18: ja men hør da. viss eg skal skrive det er L18 da kan eg ikke skrive "it is" nei "it are L18". da må eg skrive "it is L18". det må være "is" siden "is" er+...

   (yes but listen. If I am to write "it is L18" I cant write "it is" no "it are L18". Then I have to write "it is L18". It has to be "is" since "is" is+…)

L9: ja men begge deler passer så bare ta "is" du

    (yes but both work so just write "is")

L18 (writes): "is"

A different group faces the same issue, again deciding between the verbs "is" and "are" based on the phrase "hun er veldig høy" or "she is very tall" from task 2. The LRE is initiated by Learner 10, who suggests the phrase "she are". Learners 31 and 4 may have internalized the phrase "she is" and the pronunciation of the contracted form "she's" or might just repeat the wording from the text and test out a hypothesis. Neither of them explains why they would write "she is" instead of "she are". Nevertheless, Learner 10 accepts the suggestion and repeats "is" in the last turn to show agreement.

Excerpt 9

L10: "she" … ja (eh) "she are"

   ("she" … yes (ehm) she are)

L31: "she's" "she's"

L10: er det det? Eg har bare litt+...

   (is that it? I just have a little)

L4: "she" … is fordi hun er

   ("she" … is because she is)

L10: "she"

L4: "she is"

L10: "is"

Excerpt 10 displays a different discussion regarding subject-verb agreement, also from task 2. The sentence they are attempting to translate describes Kari's appearance and starts with "hun har kort hår," or "she has short hair". The subject in this context is thus Kari, which is the third person, meaning that the verb should be "has". The assigned writer is likely writing "she has", causing Learner 9 to express disagreement. Then, Learner 9 changes their mind and states that both options are correct. Most likely, the assigned writer decided which verb to write without informing the others.

Excerpt 10

L9: "has" du bare skriver "has" eg har "have"

   ("has". you just wrote "has", I have "have")

L18: åja

   (oh)

L9: har … "have" men du L18 begge deler er riktig så det er bare å skrive en av delene.

   (have … "have" but L18 both is correct so just write one of them)

4.1.2 Mechanical-focused LREs

M-LREs deal with spelling and punctuation.

The following excerpt displays a typical exchange where the students discuss spelling. One student raises the issue by asking how a word is spelled before another student provides the spelling. In this particular example, the group is translating the description of Kari in task 1, who has "short, blond hair (…)". The students identify that Learner 19's suggestion is wrong, thus warranting a second alternative provided by Learner 33. This interaction also demonstrates effective scaffolding, as Learner 19 accepted and agreed with the correction provided by Learner 33.

L5: "have short" kordan skrev vi "short"

　　("have short" how do we write "short")

L20: hæ?

　　(what)

L33: S H O R T

L19: S H J … O R T. ja

　　(S H J … O R T yes)

L33: (retter på L19) H. S H O R T tror eg

　　(corrects L19) H. S H O R T I think)

L19: ja tror det er det. &s H O R &t. "short "

　　(yes, I think that's it. S H O R &t "short")

The students also discussed how to spell certain Norwegian words when translating from English to Norwegian in task 1. In the following example, Learner 4 spells out the word "fe" (fairy) without anyone asking how it should be spelled. Their desire to spell out Norwegian words seems rather strong, as they feel the need to spell out a relatively easy word in their school language. The lack of further discussion suggests that the writer spelled the word as instructed by Learner 4.

<u>Excerpt 12</u>

L10: jeg trener til å bli … &ner til å &bl&I &en fe.

　　(Im training to become … &ner to &bl&I &en fairy)

L4: en fe. F E.

　　(A fairy. F E (fairy))

The following example also shows the learners' focus on correct punctuation. They are translating the last sentence from task 1, "I have a brother who always takes my wand without asking!". One learner is adamant that an exclamation point should be placed according to the original text, which Learner 10 does not seem to understand. By answering «What? Ok» it seems like the learner did not understand the reasoning but decided to fulfill their peer's wishes.

L4: men husk du måtte ta sånn utropstegn bak "asking".

   (but remember you had to put an exclamation point behind "asking")

L10: hæ? Okay spørre?

   (what? Ok ask?)

L4: det står i teksten.

   (it says so in the text)

L10: hæ? Greit.

   (what? Ok)

The following excerpt from task 2 also concerns the students matching their punctuation to the given text. The sentence they are writing translates to "My aunt, Kari, has short blond hair, like you" and they are emphasizing to the writer what punctuation to apply. They are meticulous about using the correct punctuation according to the given text and focus their attention on punctuation instead of searching for a translation of the Norwegian word "lyst" or "blond".

Excerpt 14

L28: "short"

L9: komma lyst

   (comma blond)

L18: hair

L9 : punktum

   (full stop)

L18: nei

   (no)

L9: nei komma. slik som you

   (no comma. Like you)

In the next LRE, the learners are trying to spell the word "coming," which leads to a discussion of whether it should be spelled with one or two M's. The excerpt is from task 2, and the students have translated the phrase "hun kommer til å ha på seg" or "she is going to

wear" to "she coming to wear", causing a discrepancy between the original text and their translated version. There are of course other possible translations of the Norwegian phrase,but "she is going to wear" was mentioned by other groups and is thus assumed to be within reasonable reach for this student group. They are arguing for their opinion by saying "I don't think so" or "I think so", and not elaborating futher on their thoughts. This leads to a rather lengthy discussion with limited learning as none of the students explain their reasoning. Learner 33 eventually changes their mind, potentially as a result of peer pressure or realizing that they were wrong.

Excerpt 15

L33: "I coming" men eg vet ikke hvordan man skriver "coming"

   ("I coming" but I dont know how to write "coming")

L19: eg skrev det vertfall sånn C O &m I N G

   (I wrote it like this C O &m I N G)

L33: hæ?

   (what?)

L19: C O M I N G. "Coming"

L19: C C O M I N G. … med C

   (C C O M I N G with a C)

L33: (writes) she com+…

L19 : det var riktig.

   (that was correct)

L33: nei. Det skulle vært to M-er

   (no. It should have been two M's)

L19: nei tror ikke det

   (no I dont think so)

L33: eg tror egentlig det

   (I think so)

L19: jeg tror ikke det. L20 ka tror du?

   (I dont think so. L20 what do you think?)

L20: hæ?

   (what)

L19: skal det vere to+…

   (should it be two+…)

L33: to m-er eller ikke?

(two M's or not?)

L20: (ehm) to m-er+… nei eg vet ikke liksom

(two M's +… no I dont know)

L33: okei tror det bare er en M

(ok I think its just one M)

L19: så vi skriver "coming". C O ja sånn ja.

(so we write "coming" C O yes like that

L20: skal vi bare ta en C O M I N G … C O M+…

(shall we just do one C O M I N G … C O M

L33: "coming" (uttalt soming) tenk om vi skrev Sonic.

("coming" (pronounced soming) what if we wrote Sonic)

In the next excerpt, the students are determining the spelling of Abby, in the sentence "my name is Abby", which is a part of the English text in task 1. Learner 4 states that the name is written the same in both Norwegian and English, indicating an awareness that names can often be used similarly in multiple languages. This illustrates cross-linguistic awareness.

Excerpt 16

L10: mitt navn

(my name)

L4: Abby. Og det skrives akkurat det samme sånn det er på engelsk tror jeg

(Abby. And its written the same as in English I think)

L11: Abby

In excerpt 17, the students are discussing how to spell "blue", in relation to Kari's blue jeans. Each suggestion is made by students sounding out syllables or letters, all using the Norwegian phonemes. Learner 20 spells it incorrectly in the first turn, excluding the letter E. Learner 33 then questions Learner 20's spelling, and Learner 19 corrects the spelling, adding the letter E. This, Learner 20 agrees with, and spell the word again, emphasizing the E. This can mean that they wanted to hide that they originally wrote it differently, or that they spelled it incorrectly the first time.

Excerpt 17

L20: "blue" B L U

L33: skriver man "blue" sånn?

    (is that how one writes "blue"?)

L19: B L U E tror eg man skriver

    (B L U E is how you write it I think)

L20: ja &blu&e

L19: &blu&e. har du skrevet det?

    (&blu&e did you write that?)

L20: ja.

    (yes)

L19: eg og

    (me too)

L33: &blu&e

L20: "blue jeans"

4.1.3 Lexis-focused LREs

L-LREs deal with instances where the students discuss word meaning, word choices, or prepositions.

In the following excerpt, they are translating a phrase from the description of Kari in task 2, "hun er ganske høy" or "she is quite tall". The learners are dealing with a vocabulary choice, discussing the correct translation of "høy" (tall), and choosing between "big" and "tall." Because they are laughing after Learner 20 says that they wrote "big," it is fair to assume that the students found the word choice amusing and might even know it was incorrect. Also, it might even mean that the students instantly associated the word "big" with "fat", as they reveal later in the excerpt. Two Norwegian alternatives are provided for the word "big", both of which refer to a heavier size, thus being inappropriate for the context. This leads to the disregard of the word "big", leaving the correct translation, "tall".

Excerpt 18

L19: ja okei også er det (em) hun er ganske høy og kommer nok til å hoppe rundt å vinke

    (yes ok then it is she is quite tall and is gonna jump around and wave)

L20: eg skrev hun er ganske "big" (elevene ler)

(I wrote she is quite "big") (the students laugh)

L19: eg skrev "she is very tall"

(I wrote "she is very tall")

L33: "tall"?

L19: ja "tall"

(yes "tall")

L20: å eg skrev "big" (ler)

(oh I wrote "big") (laughs)

L33: er ikke det "tall"?

(Isn't it "tall")

L19: nei "tall"

(no "tall")

L20: eg skrev ganske "big". "big"

(I wrote quite "big". "big")

L33: "big".

L19: "big" det er stor

("big" that is big)

L20: ja og her står det hun er ganske +…

(yes and here it says she is quite)

L33: ikke høy

(not tall)

L20: høy åja

(tall oh)

L33: ja det er tjukk.

(yes that is fat)

L19: så det+…

(so that+…)

L33: "big" er tjukk

("big" is fat)

L19: så "tall"

(so "tall")

L20: hun er ganske tjukk (ler)

(she is pretty fat) (laughs)

L33: (ler)

   (laughs)

L19: "she is very very tall". L33. "she is very very tall"

L20: "she's" ver+… ja

    ("she's" ver+… yes)

L19: "tall"

The following extract shows the students encounter a word whose meaning they are unfamiliar with. Abby has, in task 1, written that she can speak a language called "dragonfly". They speculate what function the word might have by asking if it is a language one speaks, meaning that they are attempting to discern its purpose. The negotiation for meaning leads to a clarification request ("can we speak dragefly?") and a hypothesis ("it's probably something like can speak dragon"), and ultimately, the students choose a literal translation of the English word and opts for "Dragefly".

Excerpt 19

L20: dragefly jeg vet ikke ka det betyr

   (dragonfly I dont know what that means)

L20: nei ikke jeg heller

    (no me neither)

L20: det var litt vanskelig

    (that was a bit difficult)

L33: kan vi snakke dragefly?

    (can we speak dragonfly?)

L20: nei jeg vet ikke hva det betyr så vi vet ikke

   (no I don't know what is means so we don't know)

L19: dragefly, dragefly

   (dragonfly, dragonfly)

L20: eller jeg vet ikke det er sikkert noe sånn snakke dragisk

    (or I dont know its probably something like can speak dragon)

L33: man hva er dragefly?

   (but what is dragonfly?)

L20: eg vet ikke

   (I dont know)

L33: "dragonfly"

L33: hva betyr dragonfly

   (what does dragefly mean?)

L20: eg skrev bare dragefly

   (I just wrote dragefly)

Many of the L-LREs in the transcripts illustrate a process of translating specific words or phrases. In the following example, they are struggling with the Norwegian word for "wand" from task 1. Abby has a wand, and she can do magic. They try to pronounce the word, which does not aid the process. The next sentence in the given text refers to the fairy's ability to do magic, leading the students to understand the word "wand" in the context of magic. This leads to the correct translation, "tryllestav" provided by Learner 19, and then repeated by Learner 5.

Excerpt 20

L20: "I have a wands"

L5: nei

   (no)

L20: (ehm) nei

   (ehm no)

L19: vet noen av dokkar hva "wand" betyr

   (does any of you know what "wand" means)

L33: hæ hva sa du? Hva sa du

   (what did you say? What did you say?

L19: hva betyr "wand". Siden eg eg fant ikke det ut

   (what does "wand" mean? Cause I didn't figure it out)

L20: "Wand", "wand", "wand", "want"

L33: heller ikke eg

   (me neither)

L19: Så kanskje tryllestav? Magi?

   (so maybe wand? Magic?

L33: først fant jeg ikke hva "wand" betydde heller

   (at first I didnt figure what "wand" meant either)

L5: jeg har en tryllestav

(I have a wand)

Excerpt 21 illustrates how most of the discussions concerning translation unfolded. One student reads a word or a phrase, and another provides a solution. In this case, Learner 20 reads a phrase from task 1, "I have a wand I can do magic". Learner 19 suggests a possible solution. Learner 5 then completes Learner 19' changing the verb in the second clause from the infinitive form to the finite form by adding the pronoun "I". This alternation might be a correction, or a completion, depending on Learner 19's intention when using the infinitive form "to have".

Excerpt 21

L20: der står det…je+… "I have went and I can do" magi, magi!

   (it says "I have a wand and I can do" magic, magic)

L19: okei, men jeg tror det betyr ... å ha en tryllestav og eg kan gjøre magi

   (ok but I think it means … to have a wand and I can do magic)

L5: jeg har en tryllestav

   (I have a wand)

L20: ja, noe sånt

   (yes something like that)

L5: skal vi bare skrive

   (should we just write)

L20: jeg har en tryllestav jeg kan gjøre magi

   (I have a wand and I can do magic)

In the following excerpt, the students try to identify the English equivalent of the Norwegian phrase "slik som deg" or "like you". They each state what they wrote, again not seeming to acknowledge each other's utterances. Learner 33 then draws on a previous association with the verb "like", crediting YouTube as its source, and seeks clarification as to what it can mean. Learner 19 is not able to provide a probable explanation, beyond repeating the phrasing, but Learner 33 accepts the suggestion.

Excerpt 22

L19: slik som deg … (mm)

   (like you … mm)

L33: eg skrev bare slik som "you"

    (I just wrote like "you")

L19: eg skrev "like you"

    (I wrote "like you")

L20: og eg skrev kort lyst hår slik som "you"

    (and I wrote short blond hair like "you")

L33: "like you". "like you". betyr ikke det likar deg?

    ("like you". "Like you". Doesn't that mean to like you?)

L19: nei likt deg liksom.

    (no kind of like similar to you)

L33: oki.

    (ok)

L19: det er på en måte+…

    (it's kind of)

L33: men "like" på YouTube det betyr jo at eg liker det

    (but "like" on YouTube means I like it)

L19: nei.

    (no)

L20: ja "like"

    (yes "like")

L19: men liksom "like you". det+… eg tror det er riktig. eg vetsje

    (but "like you". I think its correct. I don't know)

L33: oki.

    (ok)

4.2 patterns of interaction

The last section of this chapter aims to answer the last research question: *What patterns of interaction can be observed in their discussion?* This is interesting to investigate because the quality of the students' collaboration will affect the outcome of the task and, more importantly, the quality of metatalk. As metatalk is deemed important for developing language awareness, high-quality metatalk is desirable. The categories used in this section, which emerged from the data, will describe collaborative patterns that were considered the most interesting.

4.2.1 Interacting with each other

In the following excerpt, the students encounter an idiom from task 1: "pop out of thin air". Essentially, the original text communicates that the fairy, Abby, has the magical ability to appear out of nothing. The learners have different takes on the idiom, as can be seen in the first two turns. The last group member, Learner 18, has opted for a version where only the verb "to pop" has been translated into Norwegian, indicating a gap in their knowledge. This learner is, however, quick to support Learner 30's formulation, which could suggest a recognition of the phrasing chosen based on the noun "air". The phrasing of the equivalent Norwegian idiom is different, with the literal translation being to "appear out of nothing" (dukke opp av intet) or "to come out of the blue" (komme ut av det blå), but the meaning of the idiom is the same in both languages. In their discussion, they interact with each other by asking questions and listening to each other. The discussion thus becomes rather elaborate as they are trying to debunk the English idiom and is influenced by explanations, confirmation requests, and negotiation of meaning. They eventually agree to write the version based on the translation of the word "air", explained by a wish to choose Learner 9' suggestion this time. This could point to a democratic process where each student is heard, and the final phrasing wary to ensure the principle of utilizing each student's suggestions.

Excerpt 23

L9: (stille) poppe ut av luften.

    ((quitely) pop out of thin air)

L30: og jeg kan poppe ut av ingenting. … jeg kan poppe ut av ingenting.

    (and I can pop out of nothing … I can pop out of nothing)

L9: "I can pop", "I can pop out of thin air". det jeg har skrevet da, det er jeg kan poppe ut av luften.

    ("I can pop", "I can pop out of thin air". That's what I wrote, it's I can pop out of thin air)

L18: jeg har skrevet+…

    (I wrote+…)

L30: jeg kan poppe ut av ingenting.

    (I can pop out of nothing)

L18: jeg har skrevet jeg kan poppe "out of thin air" jeg tror faktisk det er L30 jeg kan poppe ut av ingenting.

    (I wrote I can pop "out of thin air" I actually think it is L30's I can pop out of nothing)

L9: ut av ingenting?

(out of nothing?)

L18: ja.

   (yes)

L30: ja.

   (yes)

L9: ja, men "air" det er luft. … "air"

  (yes but "air" is air … "air")

L30: ja.

   (yes)

L18: skal vi ta jeg pop+… jeg kan poppe ut av luften?

   (shall we do I pop … I can pop out of thin air?)

L30: men det er jo nesten som å poppe] ut av ingenting.

   (but that is almost like popping out of nothing)

L9: vi popper jo+… men hvordan popper man i luften?

  (we are popping … but how do you pop in the air?)

L18: jeg vet ikke hvordan vi popper i luften.

   (I dont know how to pop in the air)

L9: nei men hvordan popper vi ingenting da?

  (no but how do we pop nothing then?)

L30: vi liksom bare popper opp på et sted.

   (we kind of just pop up somewhere)

L18: vi popper ut av ingenting.

  (we pop out of nothing)

L30: ja?

   (yes?)

L9: ja?

  (yes?)

L18: vi går for L9 sin denne gangen.

  (let's go for L9's this time)

L9: okay. da skriver jeg det. jeg

  (ok then I'll write that. I)

L18: vi kan poppe ut av luften?

  (we can pop out of thin air?)

L9: ja.

(yes)

Similarly, in the next excerpt, students in a different group struggle with the same idiom from task 1. In this case, Learner 26 does not understand the meaning and explicitly asks for help, initiating the LRE. Learner 26 continues to ask questions to aid their own understanding and is scaffolded by Learner 34. Together they are able to agree that "air" is not sky as initially believed by Learner 26, leading them to the conclusion to go for the Norwegian translation "ut av tynn luft" (out of thin air). This group also opted for a literal translation and arguably found a better solution because of their cooperative interaction.

Excerpt 24

L26: ja men kan vi hjel+… kan dere hjelpe meg med ofthin ofthin.

    (yes but can we help … can you help me with ofthin ofthin?)

L34: hæ?

    (what?)

L26: of se da.

    (of look)

L34: "out of thin air"

L26: hva betyr det?

    (what does that mean?)

L34: åja ut av (eh) tynn luft.

    (oh out of (ehm) thin air)

L6: sikker?

    (are you sure?)

L26: ut av tynn luft?

    (out of thin air?)

L34: ja?

    (yes?)

L26: air er jo himmel.

    (air is sky)

L34: nei

    (no)

L26: hva er det?

    (what is it?)

L34: (leende) det er luft.

（((laughing) it is air)

L26: okay okay

（(ok ok)

In Excerpt 25, Learner 20 needs help translating the word "jeans". This specific LRE was also used to illustrate the category L-LREs, but can also illustrate a pattern of interaction. The text from task 2 says that Kari is going to wear blue jeans. Learner 19 responds to Learner 20's confirmation request by drawing on their cross-linguistic awareness and suggesting that "jeans" is the same in both languages. Learner 20 then agrees, probably prompted by the reminder that words can be transferred from Norwegian to English. Learner 20's cross-linguistic awareness is further verbalized when stating that one can pronounce the other group member's name the same in both Norwegian and English. This demonstrates an awareness that language is an interconnected system that can transcend languages.

<u>Excerpt 25</u>

L20: eg lurer på ka er "jeans"? ka er "jeans"? er "jeans" bukse?

（(I wonder what "jeans" is? What is "jeans"? Is "jeans" pants?)

L19: ja "jeans" det er jo det samme egentlig … som+…? er ikke det både engelsk og norsk "jeans"?

（(Yes, "jeans" is the same as ... isn't it "jeans" in both English and Norwegian?)

L20: jo. eg tror det.

（(yes.t I think so)

L19: liksom du sier jeans på norsk men du sier også "jeans" på engelsk

（(you say jeans in Norwegian but you also say "jeans" in English)

L20: ja

（(yes)

L19: så eg skrev "jeans". "blue jeans"

（(so I wrote "jeans". "Blue jeans")

L20: som man sier L19 på (eh) på norsk og L19 på engelsk

（ (as one says L19 in Norwegian and L19 in English)

In the next excerpt, the students are translating the phrase "slik som deg" or "like you" from task 2. Learner 6 is the assigned captain, clearly taking the lead in the discussion. In the first turn, the captain focuses the group and asks another group member what they wrote. The captain also closes the discussion by suggesting that they write "like you". The captain thus plays an essential role in driving the conversation forward and facilitates opportunities to participate.

Excerpt 26

L6: kom an no må vi fortsette … slik som deg ... (ehm) ka har du skrevet på slik som deg?

 (come on vi must continue … like you … (ehm) what did you write for like you?

L17: (ehm) slik som "you"?

  (ehm like "you"?)

L6: "you"? eg har skr+… eg har skrevet det på norsk eg siden eg ikke kom på noe

 ("you"? I wrote +…. I wrote in Norwegian because I couldn't think of anything)

L34: (ehm) "like you" "like you" "like you"

L17: «like you» koffor tenkte vi ikke det?

  («Like you» why didn't we think of that?)

L6: skal vi skrive «like you»?

 (shall we write "like you"?)

L17: ja

  (yes)

4.2.2 Individualistic responses

In the following excerpt, the student group is attempting to translate the phrase "I can float when I am happy", again describing Abby's magical abilities in task 1. Because of the excerpts' length, it can, at first glance, seem like a rather extensive interaction. However, when reading the utterances, it is evident that no information is being added after Learner 19's suggestion. The students are simply repeating words from the same phrase. Also, none of the students explained their thoughts or sought confirmation, leading to no further deliberation of the English translation.

Excerpt 27

L20: "i can float whe"+... "i am happy" "happy" vet alle glad

 ("i can float whe"+... "i am happy" "happy". Does everyone know happy?)

L20: "i am" gl+... "happy"

L20: "so I" ca+... så jeg kan

   ("so I" can … so I can)

L20: jeg tror det er noe sånn jeg kan

   (I think it's something like I can)

L19: ja, jeg kan flyte når eg er glad

   (Yes, i can float when I am happy)

L5: flyte

   (float)

L20: flyte

   (float)

L5: når eg er glad

   (when I am happy)

L20: jeg er glad... når jeg er glad

   (I am happy … when I am happy)

L19: ja, her.

   (yes, here)

L19 (eh) eg kan flyte når eg er glad

   ((ehm) I can float when I am happy)

The following excerpt discusses the phrase "Tanten min Kari har kort, lyst hår, slik som deg" or "My aunt Kari has short blond hair like you" from task 2. Learner 11 reads what they wrote, missing some translated words in their formulation. Learner 4 then provides a full translation, including the words Learner 11 lacked. If properly addressed, Learner 11 had the chance to fill a gap in their knowledge and learn the English words they did not know. However, the LRE stops after Learner 4's utterance, indicating that no further discussion was continued. There is, therefore, no way of knowing if Learner 11's knowledge gap was filled or why they moved on with the task.

Excerpt 28

L11: dette her har eg skrivet "my" tante Kari har kort lyst hår "like you"

   (this is what I wrote, "my" aunt Kari has short blond hair "like you")

L4: eg skrev "my aunt Kari has" kort "hair like you"

   (I wrote "my aunt Kari has" short "hair like you")

Chapter Five: Discussion of the findings

This chapter will discuss the findings in light of relevant theory. This study aimed to investigate how 3rd-grade students verbalize language awareness and gain insight into their patterns of interaction by exploring their discussions while working on translation tasks.

5.1 Summary of key findings

The findings suggest that the participants verbalize their language awareness through metatalk as it reveals their knowledge and reflections about language. The present study has identified instances of metatalk, operationalized as language related episodes. Within the metatalk identified, it is clear that students verbalize knowledge by presenting and discussing the language choices they made when executing the individual component of the task. Further, the findings suggest that the participants focus on all investigated elements of language. There is a consensus that task modality impacts learner focus, with written tasks causing more attention to form and oral tasks causing more attention to meaning (Garcia Mayo & Agirre, 2019, p.166). The findings in the present study further support this claim as the tasks include both a written and an oral component, and attention to both form and meaning is present. Attention to meaning is, in this study, categorized as lexis-focused LREs.

Lastly, the findings indicate that the groups in this study collaborated within the same interactional patterns. These patterns will be discussed further in section 5.3. The findings also suggest that students benefit from collaborating on tasks as it facilitates language learning and deliberation. This is consistent with those found by other researchers (Storch, 2010; Pinter, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

5.2 Verbalization of language awareness

This first subsection aims to answer the thesis statement *How do young EFL learners verbalize language awareness when discussing translation tasks?*

The findings in the current study suggest that students verbalize their language awareness through metatalk and without using explicit terminology. This correlates with the findings observed by Swain (1998, p. 68), who found that students often talked about language without using any explicit terminology. She notes that the lack of terminology does not diminish the

quality of the students' metatalk but rather points to the students engaging in a process of thinking and reflecting on the language they are learning and producing. Given the young age of the participants in the present study, the lack of terminology is expected.

The lack of terminology in young learners' metatalk should not be taken as a sign that they do not have well-developed language awareness or that teachers should not use and model metatalk with explicit terminology. In fact, Swain (1998, p. 79) encourages teachers to model metatalk, as it makes metatalk more accessible for learners. The choice then becomes whether or not to include explicit terminology, which is something the teacher must consider based on the goals of instruction and the students' proficiency. Specifically, modeling metatalk can articulate an expectation of the students to explain one's choices and to "expand and elaborate upon them" (Myhill et al., 2016, p. 38). It is found that young children are able to utilize metatalk advantageously (Özkan & Köymen, 2023), but Swain claims that teachers modeling metatalk leads to a higher degree of metatalk by learners. This indicates that it is highly beneficial for young students to observe the production of metatalk before being expected to engage in metatalk themselves.

When participating in metatalk, the students are able to discuss their language output and reflect on their joint language production. In other words, engaging in metatalk presents occasions for negotiating for meaning, which has been found to be beneficial for acquiring a new language. The key aspects of negotiating for meaning are the chance to modify one's message to the receiver's proficiency, to receive positive responses, and to receive corrective feedback (García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015, p. 40). When discussing in groups, the learners practice their ability to modify their output to suit the receivers' needs, thus developing their sensitivity to language use as described in the definition of LA (Association for Language Awareness, n.d.). Furthermore, negotiating for meaning can foster a reflective process of words' meanings or functions as the learners struggle to come to terms with a concept.

The findings also suggest that many of the participants in the present study draw on their knowledge of one language to find solutions in the other language. As mentioned in the first chapter, cross-linguistic awareness can be seen as a component of language awareness as it reflects knowledge of how a person's known languages are similar and different. Students' cross-linguistic awareness can be identified in all categories of LREs, indicating an ability to continuously see Norwegian as a resource when learning English.

A few translations particularly activated the students' cross-linguistic awareness. Those cases were present in the majority of the groups' discussions and concerned names and the translation of "jeans". As can be seen in Excerpt 17, one learner knows that names are spelled the same in both languages. Another learner explicitly states their cross-linguistic awareness in Excerpt 6, when arguing that their name is spelled the same both in Norwegian and English, meaning that the names used in the given text should be written the same.

As highlighted previously, it is stated in the English subject curriculum that students should "experience that the ability to speak several languages is an asset at school and in society in general" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2). This extract can be understood to inspire both the use of majority language, Norwegian, and also to inspire the use of all of one's own language(s) as a resource to acquire English. Notably, no evidence is found of students drawing on other languages than Norwegian and English in the present study, indicating that the inclusion of other languages may not have been highlighted within this student group. Alternatively, this could mean that Norwegian and English are the only known languages in this classroom or that the students simply did not manage to incorporate their other languages to tackle the task at hand.

The transcripts also show that students often discuss several possible translations for different phrases before deciding. This can imply an awareness of the context and formulating themselves in such a way that the phrasing is appropriate for how they wish it to be received. It also fosters an ability to consider how to accurately express the desired message, which may influence further language production. Moreover, considering multiple translations displays an awareness of language as an object, with grammatical and vocabulary choices that can be manipulated to convey the desired message. This implies that students are developing an awareness of language as not merely a tool for communication, but a system with rules that can be altered to suit the context. Further inclusion of tasks that encourage multiple solutions can thus greatly aid in nurturing the ability to adjust language based on how one intends it to be perceived.

Providing and discussing different solutions is also a criterion in Storch's elaborate level of engagement (2008, p. 100), which describes high quality of the metatalk observed. Storch (2008, p. 119) argues that elaborate LoE fosters a deeper level of understanding because the students combine their linguistic resources to find a solution. The findings in the present study further support this claim, as the jointly produced text often benefited from the collaborative

element. This was the case when dealing with issues such as spelling the word "short" (Excerpt 14), deciding what verbal goes with the subject "she" (excerpts 8 and 9), and identifying the correct translation of "høy" or "tall" (Excerpt 18). Specifically, in the last example, the exploration of different possibilities proved to enlighten one student's understanding of the nouns "big" and "tall" and what they may represent. This caused the student to internalize the meaning of the nouns and acquire new knowledge in this regard.

To summarize, young learners verbalize their language awareness through metatalk. This means that if teachers are interested in learning about their students' LA, they need to provide chances for metatalk. This will reveal insight into aspects such as cross-linguistic awareness and level of engagement, which can help identify the most efficient course of action to best teach one's students. Likewise, students can be taught to analyze their own production of metatalk to learn more about their knowledge and awareness of language. To foster independent and reflective language learners, it can be beneficial to teach them how to critically review their own knowledge of language (Swain, 1998, p. 69). This can also be transferred to other aspects of knowledge and foster learners who continuously reflect on what they know and what they want to learn more about.

5.3 Focus of LREs

This subsection discusses the research question: *Which elements of language do young learner focus on when working on translation tasks?* This will be done by discussing each category as presented in the findings.

5.3.1 Morphology and syntax

The participants in this study focused on form when executing the given task. The focus on form in this context may be caused by the production of a written translated text, as previous research has shown that tasks with a written component typically elicit more attention to form (Garcia Mayo & Agirre, 2019, p.166). However, it is important to note that this study did not investigate the frequencies of focus on each element of language and can thus not speak to whether more attention was placed on one element compared to another.

The F-LREs extracted from the two tasks often concerned issues with concord, which will be discussed below. Some groups also faced problems when modifying verbs to different tenses. One of those instances (Excerpt 7) involved a student applying the same rules for Norwegian

verb modification to inflect an English verb. This hypothesis testing resulted in an incorrect suggestion, which was quickly corrected by another student. This interaction, if properly internalized by the first student, is an example of successful peer scaffolding.

In terms of syntax, the majority of the groups faced challenges when translating the noun phrase "tanten min" or "my aunt." Multiple groups opted for the tactic of transferring the word order from their school language, Norwegian, thus considering "aunt mine" or "aunt my." While some students noticed something odd about this and rejected the suggestion (Excerpt 2), while others seemed to appreciate the similarity between Norwegian and English. None of the groups reflected on the potential discrepancy between English syntax and Norwegian syntax.

The concept of concord, or subject-verb agreement, might be easy to grasp in theory. However, the challenge arises when trying to automatically integrate it into language production (Flognfeldt & Lund, 2021, p. 104). Excerpts 8 and 9 show the participants searching for the correct verb to match the subject "she". In both cases, it seems like one student has acquired the knowledge of the connection between the third-person subject and the irregular verb form "is". In Excerpt 8, the group applied different verb forms to agree with the subject "she". Learner 9 makes an incorrect suggestion but then argues that both options ("is" and "are") are correct. As they fail to come to a spoken conclusion, it is likely that the assigned writer chose the verb form they saw as the most fitting. The discrepancy between the students' usage of the correct verb form of the verb "to be" and the incorrect application of the verb "to have" indicates that the students might be more familiar with the former and have internalized the modification of said verb.

5.3.2 Punctuation and spelling
As can be seen in the examples of M-LREs, the students focused on punctuation. This is typically done by one student asking how to spell a specific word, and another student providing the solution, as illustrated in Excerpt 3. As mentioned, every instance of a mechanical-focused LRE is not included in the findings, but the excerpts display the different ways the students raised such issues.

The students' attention is typically focused on matching the punctuation used in the given text, and it, therefore, seems very important for them to get their punctuation correct. On some occasions, the students seem to prioritize correct punctuation over identifying the translation

for a word. An example of this can be seen in Excerpt 14, where they are writing out a sentence with a mix of English and Norwegian words, and instead emphasize the use of a comma and not a full stop. Similarly, one group emphasized correct punctuation when translating from English to Norwegian in Excerpt 13.

Punctuation may demonstrate clear rules for its usage, meaning that it might be easier to tackle both for teachers and young learners. This specific mechanical aspect of language comes with comprehensible rules and guidelines, in comparison to issues regarding syntax. These easily approachable rules may present a beneficial introduction to the process of learning to write, leading to an increased emphasis on punctuation in classrooms. This leads to the possibility of the focus on punctuation coming from the assumption that students are familiar with the rules and, therefore, are more able to incorporate them into any given task intuitively.

Notably, the students always spelled out words using the Norwegian phonemes for each letter. Similarly, when pronouncing syllables to exemplify how to spell a word, the students would use the Norwegian sounds. This indicates that students might not be familiar enough with the English alphabet to adapt it to their speech, or they feel most confident using Norwegian to communicate their opinions clearly. The option of utilizing the English alphabet might also have caused confusion as some letters have rather similar phonemes as Norwegian letters (English E and Norwegian I), and it would then have taken additional time to ensure that the correct letters were written down. The reasoning for this language choice may also be that the students simply prefer the Norwegian letters, as Norwegian is the primary language used at school. Additionally, this choice may mirror how their teacher has modeled similar issues when teaching. If the teacher has prioritized Norwegian, students will likely emulate the example set for them. However, considering the young age of the students in this study, it is unsurprising that they have yet to fully incorporate the English alphabet into their vocabulary.

There can be several reasons for the focus on mechanical aspects. One possible reason is the heightened focus on basic punctuation in initial training (begynneropplæring) in the Norwegian subject in Norwegian elementary schools. The students' first interactions with writing are often heavily centered around the correct use of punctuation, such as full stops and question marks. Similarly, the introduction to reading often emphasizes punctuation to some extent, meaning that students are conscious of its role in written formats. This alertness for punctuation might be perceived by the students as overly important in the context of creating

a good text.

Similarly, the participants often place attention on the correct spelling of words. Even when resolving an issue regarding concord, such as in Excerpt 7, the discussion quickly moves to spelling. Mastering spelling is mentioned in the basic skills of the curriculum for the Norwegian subject, in the context of developing skilled writers (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 4). The explicit mention in the Basic Skills section may point to spelling as an ongoing aspect worthy of attention throughout the students' full education. It is, therefore, fair to assume that teachers may emphasize the role of spelling in the classrooms from the start. Corresponding to the heightened focus on punctuation, a desire to spell words correctly may influence the production of all written text across subjects. The desire to spell words correctly is reflected in excerpts 12 and 15. Excerpt 12 shows that the students' heightened focus on spelling also is present when writing Norwegian words, and Excerpt 15 shows the students engage in a rather extensive discussion to decide if the word "coming" has one or two M's. Despite receiving instruction that spelling is not the most important aspect in this context, they still chose to deliberate this issue thoroughly.

A possible reason for the participants' focus on spelling and punctuation is the desire to produce a well-crafted translated text, with these mechanical aspects being seemingly tangible and easily converted elements. The students might believe that all punctuation rules are directly transferable from Norwegian to English, making it a non-issue. Although full stops and commas typically can be used similarly in Norwegian and English, it is noteworthy that English utilizes commas differently than Norwegian. One specific example of this is that Norwegian requires a comma before the word "but", which is not the case in English. The frequency of commas is thus different in Norwegian and English (McGarrighan & Rugesæter, 2018, p. 127). This is, however, something that might not have been introduced to the learners in this study due to their young age.

When discussing the desire to produce correctly written texts, the issue of objective goals must be addressed. If the goal of language learning is to learn the ability to communicate with others (Hentschel, 2009, p. 15), should punctuation really be such an important element of written format? Naturally, correct punctuation and spelling increase readability, but the message may not be destroyed by incorrectness (Flognfeldt & Lund, 2021, p. 21), such as spelling errors or a missing comma. Arguably, this is the case in Excerpt 11, when one student thinks "short" is spelled as "shjort". A potential spelling error in this scale would not have led

to misinterpretation, as the reader is likely to have understood the message. Additionally, spelling and punctuation do not play an imperative role in verbal communication, as verbal communication rather places greater demand on pronunciation.

Nevertheless, suppose a context-specific goal is to write a letter or produce a written text. In that case, the mechanical aspect of language should be highlighted, as spelling errors can lead to misinterpretations and even affect the messenger's credibility. In other words, the teacher may then model correct punctuation and instruct the learners to incorporate this aspect in the given context. Teachers might solve the issue of spelling errors differently, but it should be reflected upon either way. Again, the importance of correctness depends on the circumstance, and young learners should not be prescribed the same expectations regarding correctly written texts as older students.

This does, however, present an opportunity for teaching students to be aware of the context in which they operate and adapt their language accordingly. Moving back to the definition of language awareness, provided by the Association for Language Awareness (n.d.), such sensitivity to language use is essential in the development of language awareness. Students need to learn that there is a clear difference between writing a text for one's friend and writing a job application, meaning that the phrasing must be intentional and well-planned. Similarly, the formality may also be different depending on the receiver's background and knowledge of the language in which they communicate. Being aware of the context is thus important to practice as learners develop their writing.

The participants' heightened focus on grammar and punctuation does not correlate with the English subject curriculum, which focuses on using English to learn about and communicate with others (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2). As mentioned, this might be a result of transferred focus from other subjects or perceived convertible knowledge of tangible rules of usage. A focus on mechanical aspects need not be perceived as negative but rather as a product of the education received by the participants. It is simply a matter of instructive focus installed by the teacher.

5.3.3 Lexicon

The findings indicate that L-LREs dealt with translating words or phrases. This is expected as the task revolved around translating, meaning that the students' primary goal was to translate the given text. Previous research has found that oral tasks typically elicit attention to meaning

(Garcia Mayo & Agirre, 2019, p.166), which can also be identified in the present study as it includes an oral discussion component. Methods used to solve issues included asking for and receiving the correct translation, and discussing the context to determine the solution. In Excerpt 18, they identify the context of the sentence to determine the eligibility of the words "big" and "tall". On some occasions, the students explored different alternatives to try and identify which word or phrase would be most suited.

In some cases, the students struggled to understand the meaning of a word, causing difficulties in the search for a translation. An example of this is seen in Excerpt 19, where the students are attempting to translate the name of a language referred to as "Dragonfly." This is a made-up language, and the students are thus not familiar with the word or what it represents. They clearly struggle with understanding what function the word serves but know from the context that it is a language. The hypotheses they formulate ("å snakke dragisk" or "to speak dragon") tell us that they know that they may have an awareness of the fact that languages have different names depending on which language one speaks, causing them to initially not consider using the English word as provided in the given text. They eventually decide to translate the word directly.

The struggle to determine a word's meaning can also lead to negotiation of meaning, which happens when learners collaborate linguistically to find the meaning of a word or a phrase (Foster & Ohta. 2005, p. 404). By negotiating for meaning, the students can acquire words or phrases originally beyond their knowledge of the target language because the context provides enough understandable input (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 404). In other words, if one student struggles with the meaning of a word, engaging in the active process of collaboratively refining their understanding of the word with other students can enhance language acquisition.

The students also encountered idioms in the given texts. These phrases often caused confusion as some of the students seemingly had yet to learn the English versions or their respective translations. As mentioned previously, the idiom "popping out of thin air" presented a challenge for many of the groups. These cases of confusion meant that the students had the chance to negotiate for meaning and receive enough scaffolding to acquire new knowledge. In the cases of idioms, students then encountered phrases that might symbolize one thing but translated to another thing entirely. The act of acquiring such knowledge can thus be seen as evidence of broadening one's view of what lexical meaning entails and learning that words can have multiple meanings.

Excerpt 23 is an example of LREs that could be placed into more than one category. In the findings, this LRE is placed in the collaboration section, but the content also demonstrates a discussion of lexical meaning. This particular excerpt will thus be discussed twice, highlighting different aspects. The learners in said excerpt have trouble deciding what the idiom "popping out of thin air" means and tackle this by listing what they each wrote while working individually. Learner 9 wrote "poppe ut av luften" and Learner 30 wrote "jeg kan poppe ut av ingenting" which technically both communicate the same message as the English idiom. The difference seems to be that Learner 9 chose a more literal translation, basing their formulation on the noun "air" (Norwegian = luft) in the English version, whereas Learner 30 understood the lexical meaning of the idiom, which was to appear out of nothing. This means that both translations communicate what was intended, but Learner 30's formulation demonstrated a better understanding of the intended meaning behind the English idiom.

Lexicon also poses issues when words have several meanings. An example of such an issue is found in Excerpt 15, where the students translate "Kari (…) kommer til å ha på seg blå jeans", which states that Kari is going to wear blue jeans. While the students focus on spelling in this excerpt, the word's meaning also captures attention. The students opt for the verb "to come", a direct translation of the Norwegian word, when the verbs "to go" or "to be" would make a clearer sentence in this context. Despite the fact that all three verbs are fitting possibilities of the Norwegian verb, the verb choice has the power to alter the meaning of the sentence. When using "to come", the message would convey that Kari comes to a location specifically to wear jeans, whereas "to be" or "to go" would describe what she is going to wear. A person who speaks Norwegian might be able to understand the message either way because of the knowledge of the phrase "hun kommer til" which can be translated literally to "she comes to". This is likely what influenced the students' word choice in this case. However, someone lacking the necessary linguistic background may not understand the message as formulated by the students, potentially resulting in a communication breakdown.

5.4 Patterns of interaction

This section discusses the research question: *What patterns of interaction can be observed in their discussions?* First, a general discussion of group work will be provided before looking more specifically at the categories presented in the findings.

As stated in the theory chapter, collaboration is widely found to be beneficial in the process of

acquiring a new language (Storch, 2010; Azkarai & Konpinska, 2020; Swain, 1998), and it is believed that learning takes place in interactional settings (ZPD). In such settings, learners are able to deliberate and reflect on what they are learning and experience scaffolding which will further enhance the learning situation. From the findings, it is clear that many students came to better conclusions by collaborating with other students by combining their linguistic resources.

Collaboration proves invaluable in this context, facilitating ample opportunities for verbalizing one's knowledge. The tasks encourage discussions and depend on the students co-creating a written product, thereby enhancing their participation. This leads to a higher level of engagement (Storch, 2008), where the students deliberate and try to reach a consensus. During these deliberations, students formulate arguments and seek clarification in order to facilitate a fruitful discussion, which makes their awareness and knowledge available for inspection. Of course, the challenge is then to ensure that the students actually reach a high level of engagement instead of falling into the trap of only denoting limited levels of engagement. This happens when the deliberations do not entail enough information, leading to potential discussions being disregarded. Consequently, teachers must emphasize the need for effective communication that communicates clearly what one wants to convey.

A cautionary note must be placed on installing students in groups without the necessary training. One recurring aspect found in the transcripts is the students claiming something without explaining their reasoning. This could lead to a short and unsatisfactory discussion where the students disagreed on an issue but never explained why. As a consequence, tension would arise, or they would resort to the original phrasing to continue with the task. In other words, the lack of discursive element caused the final product to suffer and be influenced by a higher percentage of un-translated words. On some occasions, this would force the teachers present to intervene and stress the need to explain one's thoughts and beliefs to best communicate within a group setting.

The challenge that is successful collaboration underscores the necessity for students to adapt the skills to appropriately act in group discussions to create an environment that aids learning while being respectful of others. As Philp et al. (2013, p. 85) note, downfalls can manifest themselves in different ways, from losing focus to inadequately scaffolding another group member. Such discussions may serve as important lessons in learning how to cooperate effectively but can also lead to frustration and refusal to participate further in the task. One

specific pitfall can be seen in Excerpt 17, where the group is spelling the word "blue". Learner 20 initially spells it incorrectly, prompting another student to question the suggestion. When the correct spelling is provided by another student, Learner 20 is quick to claim that they also wrote it the same way, indicating a reluctance to acknowledge their mistake. This behavior suggests that this student may experience feelings of embarrassment or frustration, which, if recurring frequently, can significantly dent their confidence and, subsequently, diminish their willingness to participate.

The findings show that the students' interaction patterns differ between elaborate discussions and discussions influenced by a lack of interaction. As can be seen in Excerpt 26, the assigned captain often took the lead in the discussion, asking questions like "what did you write" and "shall we write …". Those instances played a significant role in moving the discussion forward, as the students were able to engage more deeply with the task of translating the text. In other words, the students benefitted greatly from the assigned roles with concrete instruction on how to discuss issues. Nevertheless, as illustrated in Excerpt 28, the discussion that lacked the extra level of elaborate participation could lead to potential missed learning as the students might not pick up the new vocabulary being introduced.

The transcripts clearly show that the students continuously requested assistance from their peers. Typically, they would ask direct questions when noticing a gap in their knowledge, while other times, they would read a phrase aloud and wait for assistance. The other students in the group then proceeded to provide their suggestions in the form of whole phrases or just single words. Oftentimes, their interaction would thus represent effective scaffolding, where the student requesting assistance had the opportunity to learn from their peers. This represents occasions where one student managed, in collaboration with others, to find solutions they would not have found on their own.

However, there are also occasions where potential learning is lost because the students move on without deliberating. In some cases, these interactions represent instances where a solution is provided, but not discussed further. In Excerpt 27, the students are repeating fractions of the same phrase with no further deliberation, causing no added reasoning or explanation. As a consequence, the repeating of the phrase may just indicate that the students are memorizing the phrase instead of actually learning why it is correct. Alternatively, it can be seen as an attempt to try out the hypothesis (Swain, 1998, p. 68) by reproducing the output and learning new knowledge.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this closing chapter, the subsections are divided into three main parts. The first subsection briefly summarizes the present study before attempting to answer the thesis statements based on the findings that arose from the analysis. Next, practical implications of the findings will be presented, before the thesis is brought to a final close with suggestions for further research.

6.1 Summary and conclusion

The aims of this thesis have been to investigate how 3rd grade students verbalize their language awareness, and what elements of language they focus on. Additionally, the thesis aimed to investigate how the participants collaborated, and help reverse the poor reputation installed upon translation use in EFL training. To reach these aims, this thesis investigated transcripts of student discussions where they executed two given translation tasks. The analysis was qualitative and thus allowed for a detailed investigation of the students' discussions.

6.1.1 Conclusion from the research

The results from the data analysis have been presented and discussed in the previous two chapters. This subsection aims to draw the research's final conclusions.

This study has led to insight into young learners' language awareness. Firstly, the findings show that students verbalize their language awareness through metatalk, without using any explicit terminology. By analyzing the participants' metatalk, insight is gained into the students' ability to convey messages in another language by formulating themselves and choosing words appropriate for the setting. Secondly, recognizing that a deepened awareness of language can make learners better at learning language, further research is warranted into the practical integration of such teaching approaches in the EFL classroom. This research gap becomes more pronounced given that LA is mentioned in the curriculum as a key aspect of language learning. Consequently, clearer directives on the integration of LA should be formed, facilitating the active presence of LA in Norwegian EFL classrooms.

When it comes to what elements of language the students focus on, evidence was found of focus placed on all investigated elements. The focus on lexicon is expected, as the students are choosing words to convey the meaning and message from the original text in another

language. When translating, the goal is often to accurately convey the meaning of the original text in a different language. In other words, a translation task will naturally lead the learners' attention to the words' meaning. Next, the focus on punctuation and spelling may reflect the focus of the students' education thus far, which has likely emphasized mechanical aspects in the classroom. Lastly, the students also placed attention on form, likely prompted by the need to produce a written text.

Building upon the knowledge from the literature review and the findings from this study, it is also clear that translation deserves greater recognition in Norwegian EFL classrooms. The students' use of their school language caused higher levels of both engagement and participation and played a significant role in creating a space where students actively joined the ongoing discussion. Using translation should thus not cause teachers to feel insufficient in their language teaching but should rather be encouraged and utilized as a pedagogical tool.

Lastly, it is obvious from the findings that the students benefitted from collaborating. Collaboration presented ample opportunities to acquire new knowledge by receiving appropriate scaffolding and negotiating for meaning. Moreover, the findings suggested that the utilization of deliberations where alternatives and explanations are clearly present benefits further language acquisition. However, it also became clear that students need to learn how to collaborate in groups to gain all the potential advantages. Explicit instruction of group interactions can foster students who are able to appropriately scaffold and continuously facilitate language learning. The teacher's ability to model and stress the key elements of successful interactions can, therefore, be a crucial part of developing students' collaborative skills.

6.2 Pedagogical implications of the findings

The findings suggest that the teacher plays an imperative role in developing students' abilities to verbalize knowledge, assist other students appropriately, and effectively collaborate. Especially in terms of group work, teachers need to stress the importance of leading a fruitful discussion by providing explanations and alternatives instead of just stating one's beliefs. The act of being a good role model in such contexts encourages reflection and aids further development of language. This also extends to creating a group environment that facilitates participation and curiosity instead of frustration and disagreement. Additionally, enabling chances for deliberation is valuable for many reasons. As mentioned, it can foster new

knowledge within a group setting as it facilitates chances to explain, seek confirmation, and provide assistance. Furthermore, it can inspire students to reflect on the language they possess and, as a consequence, the language they wish to acquire in order to communicate desired messages.

Teachers must also be mindful of what is emphasized in the classroom, depending on what goals the teacher might possess. As stated in the English subject curriculum, one of the main goals of learning English is to gain the ability to communicate with others (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2). Consequently, focusing on lexical meaning might enable a broader vocabulary with more options within communication. Heavier attention on mechanic aspects might shift the focus to cultivating users of English who formulate grammatically correct written texts, which may be beneficial in written communication. This is to say, although teachers base their teaching on official guidelines, including the curriculum, they still retain some autonomy in how they choose to plan lessons. Consequently, it is essential to reflect on what one chooses to devote time to, as it may cause the students to adopt the same focus as demonstrated by their teacher.

It is also worth mentioning that developing clearer guidelines for teaching language awareness in EFL classrooms may be beneficial. Despite its renowned reputation in language teaching and learning, it may seem difficult to incorporate it into teaching given the rather broad nature of the term.

Lastly, teachers should not be afraid to incorporate translation and the use of one's own language into the context of teaching a new language. Provided that the use is carefully considered and does not hinder the main goal of learning English, the inclusion of Norwegian in Norwegian EFL classrooms should not be frowned upon.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

As previously stated, to my knowledge, there is scarce research on the use of translation in EFL classrooms and on young learners' verbalization of language awareness. Both these aspects would be interesting to investigate on a larger scale and in different grades of elementary school. One of the main findings in this inquiry was that young learners verbalize their language awareness without using explicit terminology, so it would be interesting to see how instruction and encouragement of explicit terminology would affect the verbalization of language awareness for students in both lower and higher grades. Furthermore, it could be

relevant to formulate clear aims for young learners' language awareness, both how to teach it and what the learners should accomplish within this field.

Another aspect that holds potential is that of the correctness of LREs. The scope of the present study did not allow for an investigation of whether the LREs were solved correctly, meaning that a number of the issues discussed may have resulted in incorrect solutions. This may weaken the learning process or even lead to misconceptions, as students tend to "stick with the knowledge" they have constructed collaboratively (Swain, 1998, p. 79).

Lastly, it would be interesting to investigate the concept of drawing on the full language repertoire within a class, which would empower the multilingual context in a classroom. As language awareness aids the acquisition of all languages, it would be interesting to see it implemented in a classroom where multiple languages are being used and spoken. Norwegian and English are typically the only languages included in the Norwegian EFL classroom, but it is fair to assume that students within a single classroom may speak many other languages. This was however beyond the scope of the current study.

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