Learner autonomy promotion

A qualitative document analysis of two Norwegian national curricula

Halvor Knaldre

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English

Department of foreign languages

University of Bergen

May 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Anne-Brit Fenner, without whose guidance this thesis could not have been written. Her expertise in the field, thorough and constructive comments on my work and kind words of encouragement have been invaluable to me in the process of writing this thesis.

I am very grateful for the valuable feedback I have received from my fellow MA students in English didactics, Malin Oshaug Stavik and Solfrid Elise Johansen.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my friends and peers at the Faculty of Humanities for keeping friendly company and conversation in the master's reading room.

Last, but not least: to my ever-supportive and patient family and friends - thank you.

Bergen, 15.05.2015

Halvor Knaldre

ABSTRACT (Norwegian)

Hensikten med denne masteroppgaven i engelskdidaktikk var å undersøke hvordan konseptet *elevautonomi* blir promotert i engelskfaget i to norske nasjonale læreplaner, L97 (Læreplanverket for den 10-årige grunnskolen) og LK06 (Kunnskapsløftet). Studien ble gjennomført ved hjelp av en kvalitativ dokumentanalyse som beskrevet av Bowen (2009). Den kvalitative studien av to læreplaner gjorde det mulig å analysere begge disse dokumentene i relativt stor detalj og sammenligne innholdet.

Elevautonomi forstås i denne oppgaven som en holdning eller filosofi innen fremmedspråklæring som fremhever elevers rettigheter til å lære i samsvar med individuelle behov og læringsstiler og til å utvikle deres evne til å ta kontroll over egen språklæring. På bakgrunn av det teoretiske rammeverket i oppgaven ble det foreslått at elevautonomi kan promoteres ved å fremheve viktige mål og hensikter med elevautonomi, som å utvikle evnen til å ta kontroll over egen språklæring, legge til rette for tilpasset opplæring og øke elevers motivasjon og mestringsforventning; men også ved å bygge språklæringen på viktige prinsipper for elevautonomi, som *elevstyring, elevrefleksjon, bruk av målspråket* og *interaksjon*.

Gjennom diskusjon av funnene ble det hevdet at L97 og LK06 gjennom den felles generelle læreplanen deler et elevsentrert og sosialkonstruktivistisk læringssyn som selve konseptet elevautonomi er bygd på. Allikevel promoterer læreplanene L97 og LK06 elevautonomi på vidt forskjellige vis. L97 inneholder omfattende fagbeskrivelser, metodiske retningslinjer og prossessorienterte læringsmål som i stor grad samsvarer med målene og prinsippene for elevautonomi. LK06 viste seg å bygge noe mindre på disse målene og prinsippene, hvilket må ses i sammenheng med at læreplanen er basert på metodefrihet og klare kompetansemål. Dette innebærer at lærerne blir pålagt mye av ansvaret for å legge til rette for elevautonomi i opplæringen. Promoteringen av elevautonomi fordrer dermed at lærerne er i stand til og villige til å påta seg dette ansvaret.

Videre ble det hevdet at innføringen av kompetansemål i LK06 fører til større fokus på summativ vurdering i utdanningen, og at dette igjen kan føre til prioritering av konkrete og vurderbare mål på bekostning av mer generelle mål som ikke lett lar seg vurdere, deriblant evnen til å lære seg språk. Det ble derfor antydet at kompetansemålene i LK06 kan bidra til å motvirke elevautonomi.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 2
ABSTRACT (Norwegian) 3
TABLE OF CONTENTS 4

1. Introduction 6
1.1 Aim and scope 6
1.2 Why learner autonomy? 7
1.3 Why study curricula? 8
1.4 Research question 8
1.5 Thesis outline 9

2. On learner autonomy: developments, definitions and principles 9
2.1 The rise of autonomy in foreign language learning 10
2.2 Defining learner autonomy 17
2.3 Principles of learner autonomy promotion 21
2.3.1 Aims of autonomous learning 22
2.3.2 Principles of autonomous learning 24
2.3.3 Implications for curricula research 27

3. The European initiative 28
3.1 The Common European Framework of References for Languages 29
3.2 The European Language Portfolio 32
3.3 Conclusion 35

4. Materials and method 37
4.1 The role of curricula 37
4.2 Materials for research 40
4.2.1 L97 40

4.2.2 LK06 41
4.3 Method of analysis and rationale 42

5. Findings and discussion 46
5.1 Learning view 47
5.2 Curriculum design 50
5.3 Aims of autonomous learning 54
5.3.1 Learning to learn 55
5.3.2 Learner autonomy for adaptive learning 57
5.3.3 Learner autonomy for motivation 59
5.4 Principles of autonomous learning 60
5.4.1 Learner empowerment and learner reflection 60
5.4.2 Target language use 70
5.4.3 Interaction 71

6. Conclusion 73
6.1 Summary 73
6.2 Further research 78

REFERENCES 79

1.

Introduction

1.1 Aim and scope

The aim of this master's thesis is to investigate how the concept of learner autonomy is promoted in the English subject of two Norwegian national curricula, with a focus on the 10-year compulsory school.

The research will be carried out by means of a qualitative document analysis, where the two Norwegian national curricula *The Curriculum for the 10-year Compulsory School in Norway*, (*L97*) a 1997 reform curriculum, and *The Knowledge Promotion* (*LK06*), the current curriculum of 2006, will be subject to study. The focus on researching two curricula qualitatively is set primarily in order to limit the scope of research, so that the documents in question may be analyzed in some detail. The reason for the choice of these two curricula is that, whereas LK06 is the national curriculum currently in use and therefore holds most relevance to Norwegian education at the present, L97 should be regarded as the first Norwegian national curriculum in which learner autonomy is a prominent concept.

Although the present thesis mainly focuses on English language learning, exploring the English subject curricula alone will not be sufficient to gain a proper understanding of how learner autonomy is promoted. Therefore the study will also include analysis of content from the *Core Curriculum*, which is a general framework for education that is featured both in L97 and LK06, as well as content from *The Principles and Guidelines for Compulsory Education* of L97 and *The Quality Framework* of LK06. The thesis will also briefly explore learner autonomy in two influential Council of Europe documents, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and the *European Language Portfolio*, in order to find points of reference for the curricular research and to view the promotion of learner autonomy in an international context.

1.2 Why learner autonomy?

The concept of learner autonomy is one that has truly been in vogue for some time among educational scholars, with a vast input of books, journals and articles having been published since its popularization in the mid-1970s. Since then, the term learner autonomy has as a result of its growing interest and research field come to be defined and viewed in a number of different ways (Benson 2006: 22). An important distinction must be made in that learner autonomy has been viewed both as a means of learning, i.e. a learning situation, and as an aim for learning in itself (Komorowska 2012: 56). The former aspect is a recognition of the fact that learners, much like individuals in our society in general, are different; for example, they respond differently to various methods of teaching and learning, they possess different learning styles and preferences and they display different degrees of interest and aptitude in the subject matter. The educational institutions of our time need to take such differences into account, aid the development of individual learning styles and strategies, taking care also to help the learners themselves realize and reflect upon these. Learner autonomy is in this regard a matter of encouraging learners to assume control of their own learning, so that the learning process may be more adaptive and effective. The aspect of learner autonomy as an individual attribute, or more specifically, a capacity to take control of one's own learning (Holec 1981: 3), is based on the necessity for learners to develop their ability to learn languages. Apart from helping them to learn more effectively in a school context, the ability to learn empowers learners to continue their learning after institutional education is finished. As language learning is a lifelong process, this ability must be regarded as important. In this thesis it is argued that both of the above aspects of learner autonomy pertain to the same attitude to learning, that providing learners with opportunities for autonomous learning should be regarded as crucial for them to live up to their potential for language learning.

It is not only in the interest of supporting students' individuality and autonomy and developing their abilities to learn languages that learner autonomy should be promoted. Part of my interest for taking on the issue of learner autonomy is rooted in its potential for strengthening learner motivation and self-efficacy. Self-determination theory argues that true intrinsic motivation requires satisfying an innate human need for autonomy (Deci et.al. 2000: 234), and that suppressing this need by means of authoritative exercises undermines intrinsic motivation. Lack of learner motivation presents a challenge in Norwegian education. For

example, the percentage of students who do not complete upper-secondary school within 5 years after admission is somewhat higher than the OECD average (Statistics Norway 2014). Researchers have attempted to outline underlying causes, with some finding that students' lack of identification and engagement with the school is partly to blame for this development (Markussen et.al. 2010: 263), brought on by lack of motivation to learn and low self-efficacy. On the basis of self-determination theory, scholars have argued that in order to improve this situation it is imperative for learners to experience autonomous learning (Danielsen and Tjomsland 2013: 445). Strengthening students' autonomy in learning is therefore an important aspect of increasing learner motivation, which in addition to improving students' overall happiness and performances in school could in turn also contribute to a decrease of drop-outs in upper secondary school.

1.3 Why study curricula?

The research field of learner autonomy is one where the importance of and need for more classroom-based research and action research has been promoted by many of its scholarly contributors (Benson 2001: 182), in line with a modern interest in more practical understandings and applications of learner autonomy. Despite the fact that learner autonomy in practice is subject to so much interest, I believe that much attention should also be paid to its promotion in national curricula. My choice of researching curricula is largely based on knowing that the content, presentation and structure of these chiefly form the foundation for what is to be learned and how learning should be facilitated (Trebbi 2003: 166). Determining what should happen in the foreign language learning classroom starts by determining the contents of the national curriculum. It should be noted also that research carried out on learner autonomy in curricula seems relatively scant, especially in the matter of Norwegian national curricula, and that some work on this topic is needed.

1.4 Research question

The primary research question this thesis aims to answer may be formulated as follows: how do Norwegian national curricula promote the concept of learner autonomy as part of English learning? To answer this question, I will attempt to explore how various aspects of learner autonomy are emphasized in these curricula. This involves discussing how important purposes of learner autonomy are presented, such as developing the ability to learn languages and facilitating adaptive learning, as well as discussing what focus is given to important

principles for learner autonomy like learner choice, metacognition and developing autonomy through interaction with peers and teachers. It will also be investigated how the fundamental learning views of the curricula, in addition to relevant aspects of their design, support learner autonomy.

1.5 Thesis outline

The second chapter takes on the theoretical framework underlying the concept of learner autonomy. How are we to define learner autonomy? What academic developments have lead to the advance of learner autonomy in foreign language learning, and what aims and principles are crucial for its promotion? Following this, a third chapter will briefly explore the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio in relation to learner autonomy promotion, in order to view the promotion of learner autonomy in a European context. The fourth chapter will be concerned with the materials for research and the choice of research method. In this chapter an account is included of the role of curricula in education, followed by brief presentations of the Norwegian national curricula subject to research, after which the choice of research method is stated and explained. The findings of the research and a detailed discussion of these will be presented in the fifth chapter. The paper will finally arrive at a conclusion in which the research question will be answered by summarizing the salient findings of the study and discussing the implications of these. A discussion of possibilities for further research will also be included.

2.

On learner autonomy: developments, definitions and principles

This section will provide a theoretical framework of the concept of learner autonomy in foreign language learning. Here the issue of what learner autonomy is, or rather, how it will be viewed in this thesis, shall be discussed. The first section is a historical account of essential developments of learner autonomy, which serves to introduce the topic and explain

the various purposes, attitudes and events that have driven the autonomy movement to its present position in language education. In the second section different definitions of learner autonomy are examined and discussed, and a working definition of the term for this thesis is provided. The third section connects theory to research by suggesting some preliminary ideas of how learner autonomy may be promoted in curricula.

2.1 The rise of autonomy in foreign language learning

For a comprehensive discussion of learner autonomy in foreign language learning, it is important to include a perspective on the historical background of the topic. Awareness of past ideas and challenges that have led to our present understanding of learner autonomy is necessary in order to discuss its promotion. The concept of learner autonomy has gone from being a fringe opposition to traditional and established teaching norms to becoming an internationally recognized aspect of modern education, and in particular within the context of foreign language learning (Esch 2009: 28). The aim of the present section is to provide an outline of the historical background behind this development.

While scholarly discussion of learner autonomy in foreign language learning is a fairly young phenomenon, it should be noted that some of the core ideas underlying learner autonomy have arguably been around for quite some time, as they are closely related to developments in philosophy and psychology (Gremmo and Riley 1995: 151). The autonomy of the individual has been viewed as a virtue in many historic societies, although it was not something every individual could aspire to. One example is ancient Greece, from where the term autonomy originates. Moreover, several immensely influential figures in history have expressed favor towards a learner-centered educational philosophy in which control of the learning process is given to the learner, such as the Czech teacher and writer John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), whose goal of didactic was to "find a method of instruction by which our teachers teach less, but learners may learn more" (Keatinge 1896: 156); or philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), who claimed that the teacher's business is "not so much to teach all that is knowable, but to put [the learner] in the right way of knowing and improving himself" (Locke 2001: 195). Several more early proponents of autonomy could be mentioned[1]. However, these early ideas evidently remained mere ideas and did not result in widespread contemporary movements within education. They did, however, inspire a more progressive movement in education that appeared around the turn of the 19th century. Fronted by such figures as John Dewey and

[1] For a more comprehensive discussion, see Smith (2002:2-5)

Maria Montessori, the movement voiced support for lifelong learning as well as the active, experiential learning of the individual, while also rejecting social class restrictions in education.

Progress towards a new philosophy of learning (especially one as radical as autonomy in education) can never be considered outside of the context of social, political and cultural change. The late 1960s and early 1970s were undeniably a period of socio-cultural change, and Henri Holec in his early work on autonomy recognizes the post-war social progress of industrialized Western countries as a vital reason for the advancement of learner autonomy (1981:1). Although these countries had achieved growing material prosperity and consumerism, there was concern for the overall well-being of individuals due to oppression and discrimination. A wave of movements to establish the rights and autonomy of individuals in society, especially those of minority groups - such as African-Americans, feminists, homosexuals and others - formed a culture of protest among the booming number of students and young intellectuals. There was overall a newfound interest in freedom of thought and expression for the individual, which naturally came to influence the area of education.

Within the context of social change, developments in learning theory also contributed to the rise of autonomy in education. The growing idealization of personal experience and freedom wrought new resistance to the behaviorist philosophy of education (Gremmo and Riley 1995:152), which had been dominant since the end of World War II. Behaviorists' views on individuals as mechanic creatures whose external behaviors and actions had to be trained to a desirable pattern implied that learners were to be regarded as passive recipients of knowledge, and little respect was paid to the autonomy and individuality of every learner. The process of learning a foreign language was therefore primarily seen as a matter of forming and memorizing acceptable language speaking habits. The best known approach to language learning from this era is the audio-lingual method, where learners would practice and repeat correct sentence structures in extensive oral drills. With a gradual shift in which paradigms of cognitive psychology were becoming increasingly supported, behaviorist and determinist influence lost ground in psychology. Amongst educators the growing inclination towards learner-centeredness was a radical shift, which involved the primary focus of learning moving from the teacher to the learner. Whereas traditional learning relied heavily upon the teacher as the interpreter and presenter of knowledge, learner-centered education opened up opportunities for the individual learners to be participants in their own learning. As a result, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) relieved behaviorist methods as the dominant

language learning approach during the 1970s and 1980s (Mitchell 1994:33). CLT emphasizes interaction in the target language, and stresses also the importance of the learner's personal experiences in the learning situation as well as the learner's reflection on the language learning process itself. Through various group activities and classroom activities learners experiment with the target language and will learn inductively rather than deductively. CLT remains the most common approach of language learning to this day.

The notion of learner-centeredness is closely related to constructivist theories, which have been essential to the promotion of learner autonomy. Constructivism was fronted by such influential psychologists as George Kelly and Jean Piaget, and is built on the assumption that each individual constructs knowledge based on his/her interpretations of the outside world and, crucially, individuals differ greatly in this construction depending on pre-existing experiences (Kelly 1955:4). As events in themselves have no objective meaning, they are open to interpretation by individuals who create meaning. Therefore, in the context of education, constructivist theory calls for pedagogical approaches that allow for learners to *experience* learning by actively pursuing, processing and obtaining knowledge without it being explicitly and narrowly outlined by a teacher. This process of discovery is key to autonomous learning - it is effective both in convincing the learners of the knowledge they themselves have created, and the validity of it.

However, while the early constructivist ideas of Piaget and Kelly should be regarded as fundamental to the promotion of autonomy in education, it should be noted that both these place heavy emphasis on the processes of the individual learner, and do not pay much attention to the aspect of learning as a social process. According to Benson (2001: 14), though it may seem counter-intuitive that autonomy should involve a social dimension, most scholars and practitioners of learner autonomy regard learner interaction and collaboration to be essential for autonomy. After all, any autonomous individual makes decisions more or less with respect to social norms and traditions as well as the expectations of a social context, and gains further knowledge through sharing ideas with peers, which has led many educators to stress that autonomy is more about *interdependence* than independence (Little 2004: 20, Kohonen 1992: 19), in other words, that learners are dependent upon the support and mediation of others if they are to develop their capacities for learning. Crucial to the understanding of learner autonomy as a socially mediated process is the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky, by most regarded as the forefather of social constructivism. Although his work remained highly controversial in the Soviet Union until his early death in

1934, it was rediscovered and became very influential from the 1980s on. Vygotsky's theory of learning assumes that, while a learner may achieve a certain level of competence without aid, he/she requires interaction with teachers or more proficient peers in order to reach a higher level of competence. The so-called Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) expresses the distance between the actual level of the independent learner and the potential level of the learner if there is interaction (Vygotsky 1978: 86). As Vygotsky puts it, "what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow." Sharing the cognitive process with other individuals is also advantageous for developing the ability to learn as well as the ability to collaborate with others (Little 2004: 22). Furthermore, each and every learner must be regarded as a unique individual that is a resource to the learning community, and one that can provide scaffolding for other individuals in the learning process. Social constructivism has had a great deal of influence on learner autonomy, as evidenced by newer definitions of learner autonomy that stress social interaction as essential to its development (see ch.2.2). The social constructivist stance has also contributed to affirming the importance of the teacher's role as a facilitator for learning, one who rather than directly lecturing learners guides and supports them through their own processes of knowledge construction. Along with the works of many other progressive educationists, for instance Paulo Freire and Ivan Ilich, these theories were immensely important in reforming education towards a more learner-centered philosophy that values the autonomy of the individual learner (Komorowska 2012: 52).

This far some of the significant developments and theories that have promoted autonomy as an important issue in modern education have been touched upon. As the focus of this paper is on the study of language learning, the chapter will now turn to some historical advances towards learner autonomy in language learning specifically.

The most significant early efforts to promote autonomy in language learning were instigated by the Modern Languages Project of the Council of Europe in 1971 (Benson 2001: 8). The project was created with the initial aim to promote lifelong learning for adult language learners, as the contemporary need for competent speakers of foreign languages grew along with globalization and immigration. Extensive research and experimentation with various forms of self-directed learning were carried out, with the *Centre de Recherches et d'Applications en Langues* (CRAPEL) accounting for much of it. Autonomy was seen as the capacity of the learner for taking charge of his/her own learning (Holec 1981: 3), a capacity that had to be developed by means of self-directed learning, in which learners decided upon

their own learning needs, objectives, progression and evaluation. With the growing number of adult learners, self-directed learning was also a way of making the learning process more effective, as this meant less teaching and did not require busy adults to attend classes regularly. The arguably most notable program applied for the experimentation with autonomy was the newly established self-access centers at CRAPEL and the University of Cambridge, in which collections of wide-ranging resources were made readily available for learners to use. In addition to more traditional learning resources, these facilities also featured technological advancements and innovations such as computers, tape recorders, fast-copy machines, faxes, etc., all of which made the prospect of self-directed learning more promising than it had been before. In 1979 the head of CRAPEL, Henri Holec, wrote a report to the Council of Europe which was to be published as *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning* in 1981, the first book on autonomy in language learning. This work had great impact in its field, and features the most widely cited definition of learner autonomy as well as some of its most essential principles. Some twenty years later, in 2001, the Council published the *Common European Framework of References for Languages* (CEFR), setting a European standard for determining the proficiency levels of language learners. As would be expected after the Council's extensive work on learner autonomy over the preceding decades, the Framework recognizes and elaborates on the ability to learn as one of the general competences of the language learner (this will be discussed in some detail in chapter 3). Throughout the 1970s, and to some extent the 1980s, most of the work on autonomy was associated with the Council of Europe (Smith 2008: 6). When presenting the historical development of learner autonomy it is hard to overestimate the importance of an international initiative, especially when it is instigated by an organization with such widespread influence in foreign language teaching and learning as the Council of Europe.

The mid-1980s saw the coming of another international network that worked toward the development of autonomy in the foreign language classroom, namely the Nordic Workshops, in which teachers and researchers alike were brought together at conferences to discuss, on the basis of classroom experience, the notion of learner autonomy in language learning and conditions for promoting it, to suggest kinds of research needed to elucidate and concretize the various aspects of learner autonomy, and to share experiences and concepts in order to establish a network of inter-Nordic cooperation for the dissemination of ideas and research-based innovation" (Trebbi 1990: 2). The Workshops have conducted a lot of research and discussion on a number of aspects regarding autonomous language learning in its nearly 30-

year history. Of particular importance was the promotion of effective classroom-based practices which showed the potential of autonomous learning for young learners to be just as viable as for adult learners (Smith 2008: 10).

As a result, a new wave of interest in learner autonomy emerged in the 1990s, this time with particular focus on the application of autonomy in classroom contexts (Benson 2007: 22). While it was assumed in the preceding couple of decades that autonomous language learning was feasible only for adult learners and advanced learners, new research carried out in secondary schools proved that children and adolescents also benefit from autonomous approaches in the classroom (Gremmo and Riley 1995: 155). Particularly important were the contributions of researchers from the Nordic countries, like Dam (1995), Trebbi (1990) and Fenner (1998). Dam (1995) implemented principles of autonomy through classroom negotiation in a secondary-school setting, and found that while the language learning achievements of the autonomous learners were similar to those of the learners who had been taught, their ability to learn was significantly better. The efforts of these researchers have been instrumental to the promotion of learner autonomy, as it arguably was through this newfound interest in classroom-oriented theories and principles that the attention toward learner autonomy reached a new level (Benson 2009: 17).

While the first few decades of learner autonomy in language learning were dominated by European initiatives, the concept later went on to gain traction in other parts of the world. The spread to Asia in the 1990s was particularly conspicuous, with international conferences on learner autonomy being held in cities like Hong Kong, Bangkok and Tokyo (Smith 2008: 7). Learner autonomy has now become a global educational issue, with a number of recent publications focusing on the status and challenges of learner autonomy in different educational cultures in the world (Benson 2007: 25). Its increased popularity around the world has resulted in perspectives and contributions from a variety of countries and cultures, which is naturally encouraging to proponents of learner autonomy. Even so, there are attitudes that could interfere with further global spread of autonomy. The concept of learner autonomy in language learning seems to be a Western construct, as most academics that have promoted it have been of Western origin. As a consequence, its spread has amongst some been viewed as a cultural-imperialist imposition on non-Western cultures (Smith 2002: 8). Also, as one of the purposes of learner autonomy is to develop learners to be critical citizens capable of independent participation in democratic processes, it has been discussed whether learner autonomy is exclusively a Western goal that would be unattainable in countries and cultures

with different political systems and paradigms. But it has been pointed out that autonomy is a common ideal even in non-Western cultures (Little 1999:12) Furthermore, it is evident that cultural differences, however great they may seem, generally do not override universal human needs such as the need to experience autonomy and develop as an autonomous being. Learner autonomy is therefore a universally valid goal, although approaches to promote it have shown to vary according to cultural context (Palfreyman 2003: 7).

An important question to be answered is this: why has language learning become the field of study in which learner autonomy has been by far the most theorized and researched in the past few decades? It is certainly not the case that learner autonomy is exclusively a language learning concept (Benson 2009: 16), in fact it has no inherent base in linguistics at all. Autonomy in a learning context originates from learning theories grounded in psychology, which again had been derived from the field of philosophy and politics. It is clear that the growing need for competent adult language users in Europe was a major motivation for the early work on autonomy in language learning, and that a number of subsequent advances within the field led to increased awareness and interest. Yet it may also be assumed that there is something in the nature of learning languages that relates well to learner autonomy. Vygotsky's theories have stated that higher cognitive processes develop as a result of various forms of social interaction, and not as an automatic result of individual efforts. Language is the device that makes interaction possible, and in this regard speaking a language is not only a means of conveying meaning from one person to the other, but also a means of creating meaning. In the words of Vygotsky himself: "thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them (1991: 218)". The acquisition and use of a foreign language therefore prompts reflection and independent thinking from the learner, processes which are essential in autonomous learning. Foreign language learning can thus be seen as a context particularly supportive for the development of learner autonomy.

To summarize, learner autonomy has had a complex and multi-faceted development towards its present status as an internationally recognized aspect of foreign language learning. The process has been driven by socio-cultural changes, shifting psychological paradigms and learning theories, academic contributions of international groups and individual researchers as well as advances in technology and communication.

Learner autonomy has been described as a "buzz-word" (Little 1991: 2) and a "touted term" (Little 2003a: 37) in foreign language teaching. There are signs, however, that the concept is

becoming something more than simply a fashionable trend in the ever-changing agenda of education. The corpus of published literature on learner autonomy since the turn of the century has long surpassed the three decades worth of literature preceding it (Benson 2006: 21), and now grows with contributions from all around the world. Based on this increasing scholarly interest it seems appropriate to assume that the history of autonomy in foreign language learning, some 40 years in the making, has only begun, and that there will be much to add to this chapter in the future.

2.2 Defining learner autonomy

As the goal of this paper is to research the promotion of learner autonomy, the term learner autonomy must naturally come under some scrutiny in this paper. What is learner autonomy? While it may seem simple enough to provide an appropriate working definition for the term in question, this is actually a somewhat daunting exercise. There is no full consensus on how learner autonomy should be defined, which reflects the different views of precisely what learner autonomy is and what it is not. Contemporary views of learner autonomy are under constant change, and while none of the many definitions proposed by scholars should be regarded as inherently wrong, they tend to both focus on different aspects of autonomy and express them differently. This chapter will address the issue of how we are to define learner autonomy in this text.

The etymology of autonomy provides a basic idea of what is meant by the term. 'Autonomy' is derived from the Greek term *autonomos*, which may be split into *auto* ("self") and *nomos* ("law"), making the literal translation "self-law" or "self-rule". Autonomy was in ancient Greece a political term describing a city-state that had complete independence from other states. The term has since come into use in a large variety of other contexts and is, as would be expected, presented differently according to which context or academic discipline in which it appears. Within the field of medicine, for example, autonomy is most often related to patient rights such as informed consent and advance directives. In the field of philosophy, however, autonomy refers to the capacity of the individual for making decisions. In modern politics, autonomy is related to the idea of independence and self-governance of nations and ethnic groups. Such different uses and aspects reflect how definitions of the term learner autonomy have been subject to disagreement since its introduction to the agenda of educational research in the 1970s.

The by far most widely cited definition of learner autonomy in language learning was provided by Henri Holec in his 1981 book *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*, which was also the first work on learner autonomy specified in the field of foreign language learning. In this book, Holec stated that learner autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (1981: 3) and claimed that this involved being able to make all relevant decisions in the learning process, such as determining learning objectives, contents, methods and assessment. Several subsequent definitions tended to build on this early definition rather than dispute it, such as that of Trebbi et. al. (1990: 102), who claimed that learner autonomy is a "readiness" to take charge of one's own learning", thus also emphasizing the learner's motivation and sense of personal responsibility as imperative to learner autonomy. Another notable contribution was provided by David Little (1991: 4), who formulated his view that autonomy is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action". While maintaining the essence of Holec's definition, this definition also captured the cognitive processes of learning and thus grounded the definition of learner autonomy to learning theory. Holec's early definition may be said to explain the skills of the autonomous learner, the technical aspect of learner autonomy, but that of Little also explores how the autonomous learner is psychologically capable of using these skills, and so pertains to what we may call a psychological aspect of learner autonomy. Both are, however, concerned with the view of learner autonomy as a mental attribute of the learner that must be trained and developed, which reflects the modern popularized ideas of learner-centeredness, where the primary focus of attention is shifted from the teacher to the learner.

This perspective, while certainly being the most commonly accepted, has not gone unchallenged. Leslie Dickinson (1987: 11) posited an early view which contradicted that of Holec, claiming that learner autonomy is a "situation where the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions". In other words, learner autonomy may also be seen as a situation or context in which the learner takes on responsibility for his/her own learning, which resembles the view of the term autonomy as it is applied in modern politics. The distinction between learner autonomy as an ability and learner autonomy as a learning situation is important. While the former view states that autonomy is a goal (an end in itself), the latter view states that autonomy is a means to a different end (Benson and Voller 1997: 2), such as improved language learning.

Another interesting approach towards a definition takes as a starting point a more political aspect of learner autonomy, namely the idea that autonomy is required by learners' rights to assume greater control over the content and activities of their learning. The best known example comes from Benson and Voller (1997: 29), who regarded autonomy as a "recognition of the rights of learners within educational systems". It is apparent that such a stance towards learner autonomy is inspired by values of social transformation. It is important for us as social beings to experience personal autonomy and thereby be able to grow into free-thinking individuals without the constant constraint of outside forces. Personal autonomy is at the foundation of human rights, and one can also say that education is at the foundation of experiencing and developing personal autonomy (Benson 2001: 46).

One must stress, however, that exercising these rights in education does not imply complete freedom from the influence of others. As was stated in the previous chapter, social interaction is regarded as a prerequisite for autonomous learning. Learners need social mediation from teachers and peers to validate meaning, and cannot reach a higher level of target language proficiency nor fully attain the ability to learn by acting only on their own needs and preferences. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the definitions presented here thus far, the trend in defining learner autonomy seems to be one of overwhelming emphasis on the individual. There are, however, definitions that have included a mention of the social aspect of autonomy. One contribution of particular importance was created in the proceedings of the 3rd Nordic workshop on learner autonomy, which was held in Bergen in 1989. Subsequently known as the "Bergen definition of learner autonomy", this definition is special in the sense that it was conceived by a group of researchers, among these Little, Dam and Trebbi. It builds on the foundation of Holec (1981) by stating that learner autonomy is "characterized by a readiness to take control of one's own learning in the service of one's own needs and purposes" (Trebbi 1990: 102), and goes on to explain that autonomy entails "a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person". This view clearly asserts that being an autonomous learner means being able to participate in social interaction as well as being able to reflect individually.

Also adding to the confusion about the meaning of learner autonomy is its close relations to other terms built around learner-centeredness (Komorowska 2012: 54, Lamb and Raya 2008: 62), making it necessary to distinguish between these and learner autonomy. *Self-directed learning*, for instance, is a term that has been applied in various autonomy contexts, although mostly in early studies on adult language learning. It has been defined in many ways, but

generally refers to approaches in which the learner is responsible for making all choices regarding his/her learning, which relates it to an aspect of learner autonomy. *Self-instruction* (or *self-study*), on the other hand, is an approach to learning that the learner initiates outside of educational institutions and entirely without the support of teachers or peers. The term *independent learning* has been applied to both of the above contexts. *Self-access learning* is a term describing a mostly self-directed learning approach in which the learner is granted access to various resources that may be used as part of his/her own learning. These are examples of terms that are related to the concept of autonomy and may potentially cause some confusion. They do, however, generally stand for learning largely without the aid of teachers, whereas the practice of learner autonomy requires the presence of teachers who facilitate learning.

To summarize, the term learner autonomy is one that is subject to some disagreement in that its proponents have yet to settle on a fixed definition. It is apparent that learner autonomy can be used to denote abilities, skills, situations and rights (Benson and Voller 1997: 2). This uncertainty and lack of consensus on the meaning of learner autonomy could of course be considered a hindrance to the promotion of autonomy in education, though it may in one way be regarded as positive: it forces scholars, curricula planners, teacher educators, teachers and learners alike to become familiarized with the theories underlying the term and to reflect upon what learner autonomy means to them. Learner autonomy is a multi-dimensional concept, and quoting and applying only the most popular and widespread definition could yield a far too simplistic view on the matter. In addition to definitions, there have also been attempts to outline what learner autonomy is *not* (Little 1990: 7), which is an interesting approach that serves to work against misconceptions of the term. It is for example commonly accepted that learner autonomy is not a teaching methodology. This is because describing it as such would imply that it is something that the teacher does to the students, while the common understanding is that learner autonomy is something the learners themselves actively exercise. Those unfamiliar with the development of the concept of learner autonomy may also easily arrive at the conclusion that learner autonomy is simply a matter of learning without assistance, a form of self-instruction, but this is certainly not the case.

In light of the many different definitions of learner autonomy it is difficult to settle for one, just as it is difficult to reject any of them. Therefore it is tempting to consider learner autonomy as an attitude or a philosophy of learning (Fenner 2003: 28), a set of values that need to be promoted in language education. When regarding it as such one can accept that there are many and somewhat contrastive views on the matter, but that these all in the end

pertain to the same attitude towards learning. Learner autonomy in foreign language learning is not just a goal of learning how to learn or just a means of improving language learning, it is rather a double process of cognition and metacognition (Fenner 2003: 29). In the short term, autonomous learning allows for learners to experience learning the language on their own and to make the learning situation more effective, more motivational and more suited to their individual needs. In the long term, it will make the learners better able to take charge of their own learning. Furthermore, I believe it to be important to state that learners have a right to experience autonomy. Consequently, the definition presented here will contain elements from several of the aspects on learner autonomy that have been presented above. Learner autonomy is, in the context of this thesis, an attitude to learning which emphasizes the rights of learners to

- develop their target language competence in accordance with their own individual needs and learning styles
- develop their ability to take control of their own learning and reflect actively and critically upon it, thus ensuring lifelong learning

This definition explains the essence of learner autonomy in this text, but elaboration is needed on what learner autonomy entails. The next chapter will discuss principles which should be regarded as important to learner autonomy promotion, so that the categories for the curricula research can be identified and validated.

2.3 Principles of learner autonomy promotion

The goal of the preceding chapter was to define learner autonomy. The present chapter will further build upon the present understanding of learner autonomy by examining important principles for its promotion. As this thesis aims to explore how learner autonomy is promoted in national curricula, the purpose of this chapter is essentially to identify preliminary categories for the research that will be conducted. It should be noted that, as there is no complete consensus on how learner autonomy should be defined, there will most certainly be different perspectives amongst educators on how it should be promoted.

Earlier it was posited that learner autonomy should be regarded as both a product and a process in foreign language learning, and the promotion of learner autonomy must therefore include the mention of relevant aims as well as principles of learner autonomy. In presenting the aims, the curriculum answers the question of why learner autonomy in foreign language

learning is important. In stating its principles, the curriculum will facilitate the conditions needed for learner autonomy in foreign language learning. The chapter concludes by discussing various implications for the curricula research.

2.3.1 Aims of autonomous learning

The first point to be made in promoting learner autonomy should be to figure out what aims learner autonomy encompasses and therefore also why it is of importance to the learners.

The continuous progress toward autonomy is crucial with a view to making the learner an independent, critically thinking, open-minded, socially and democratically conscious being. It is also a way of recognizing and supporting the rights of the learner to develop his/her identity. Learner autonomy is therefore sometimes discussed in relation to the overall personal growth and maturation of the individual, in line with Klafki's concept of formal Bildung. In a related fashion, Kumaravadivelu (2001: 133) argues that a "broad" view of learner autonomy encompasses the aim of liberating learners from educational constraints and make them critical thinkers, and that a "narrow" view of learner autonomy simply refers to the aim of learning to learn. In taking the broad view of learner autonomy one would certainly find some interesting answers to how the concept is promoted in education. However, this text will not concern itself with overall pedagogical aims of this sort, and will mainly explore the topic of learner autonomy as an integrated part of foreign language learning.

A major purpose of learner autonomy is "learning to learn", also termed *savoir-apprendre* (CEFR: 106), which provides learners with opportunities for future independent learning. Legitimizing this aim is not difficult. The process of learning a language is never-ending, and to a large extent foreign language learning takes place outside of educational contexts. It is therefore essential to make sure students are able to continue their learning independently, as a future dependence upon teachers for language learning is highly unfortunate. This has from the very beginning of research on learner autonomy in foreign language learning been a central objective. Learning to learn is no inborn capacity of the individual, but rather one that must be trained through practice (Benson 2001: 60). It therefore follows that no individuals are totally incapable of developing this capacity, making it a realistic aim for all learners.

Another aim is that of learner autonomy as a means of facilitating learning adapted to individuals and thereby also making foreign language learning more effective overall. It is arguably an aspect few scholars tend to focus on, but should be regarded as essential for

learner autonomy promotion (Komorowska 2012: 53, Little 2003b: 1). It is a well-known fact that learners are different. For example, they possess different learning styles. Styles can be determined by a number of individual preferences (Dunn 2000), such as visual, auditive or tactile stimuli; group work, pair work or individual work; well-lit or dark learning environment, et cetera. As a result, they favor different learning approaches. Moreover, they display varying degrees of interest in the subject matter and varying overall proficiency and aptitude in the target language. Such differences as described here result in diverse needs, and learner autonomy is in this regard an answer to the question of how learning may be tailored to satisfy these needs and support the individual characteristics of every learner. Several buzz-words have been linked to this aim, such as *individualization* and *adaptive learning*. One could easily come to believe that individualization is another term for learner autonomy, and in the early days of autonomy research the two terms were both applied as denoting approaches meeting the needs of individual learners (Benson 2001: 12). There is definitely a relation between learner autonomy and individualization in that both are learner-centered by principle. However, the term individualization is at the present widely associated with a form of learning directed solely by a teacher to meet the needs of the learner (Benson 2001: 11), and so does not fall within the present understanding of autonomous learning. This text will therefore refer to the present aim as adaptive learning. As mentioned in chapter 2.1, the early efforts of European research on learner autonomy were partly instigated by a call for more effective language learning. When learners are encouraged to take more control of their own learning, the learning process becomes more effective for both the learners, who can personalize the learning process to his or her own needs, and the teacher, who may find it challenging and time-consuming to cater for the individual needs of each and every learner. The call for more adaptive learning is growing in the Norwegian educational agenda (Rasen 2014: 14), and it is certainly a justifiable call, as the first chapter of the Norwegian Education Act clearly states that "education shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupil"(§ 1-3).

Learner autonomy is beneficial also with respect to increasing motivation for learning. Studies in self-determination theory conducted on both learners and workers have shown that exercising autonomy is necessary for motivation, as it satisfies an innate human need to be in control (Deci and Ryan 2000: 234). By contrast, a controlling and authoritative environment results in a low degree of motivation. We are of course dealing with intrinsic motivation here, which comes from within, and not extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external forces.

Research of learner autonomy in relation to motivation has enjoyed increased interest in recent years (Ushioda 2011: 222), and this is reflected in the view among some scholars that learner autonomy is best described as a "readiness to learn" rather than an ability or capacity to learn (cf. section 2.2). The autonomous learner is inherently motivated, as accepting responsibility for one's own learning and reflecting upon it is only possible as long as the learner *wants* to do so. Intrinsic motivation has in this regard a mutually beneficial relationship to learner autonomy in that it is both a prerequisite for autonomous learning and a result of it. It is therefore essential that learners are convinced of the purpose and benefits of working autonomously, which may require some effort from the teacher. Another factor related to motivation for learning is the self-efficacy of the learner. Self-efficacy is perhaps best described as the individual's beliefs in his/her own ability to achieve a given objective, and these beliefs effect the manner in which the individual thinks, acts and motivates himself/herself. As learners with a high degree of self-efficacy will be more convinced of their own abilities, it seems plausible that they will be more adept to learning autonomously. This idea is supported by claims that a strong sense of self and display of confidence are key characteristics of the autonomous learner (Benson 2001: 85). It then also seems plausible that successful experiences of autonomous learning will improve self-efficacy, making the learner more motivated. There seems to be widespread agreement among teachers and scholars alike that learner autonomy leads to greater motivation for learning (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012: 15, Benson 2001: 69). Motivation for learning is essential to effective learning in general, and in foreign language learning motivated learners are more able to experiment with the target language in accordance with their competence levels. It follows that the goal of improved learner motivation supports the promotion of learner autonomy (Dickinson (1987: 13).

2.3.2 Principles of autonomous learning

Promoting learner autonomy also involves outlining essential principles that explain the processes of autonomous learning, i.e. how the above aims are to be reached. Little (2004: 22-23) lists three pedagogical principles for learner autonomy in foreign language education: learner empowerment, learner reflection and appropriate target language use. These principles are quite comprehensive, and build upon the most commonly accepted ideas of autonomous language learning.

The principle of *learner empowerment* refers to the operational aspect of taking charge of one's own learning, which was asserted by early research on autonomy as well as most

definitions of it. Learners may assume control by determining learning objectives, defining content and progression, choosing appropriate methods and assessing the results. In short, learners are to make choices that greatly affect the outcome of their learning. This forces educators to tackle the issue of whether learners are capable of assuming such responsibility (Fenner 2006: 35). It is for instance not improbable that a learner may select authentic texts for study based on perceived simplicity or familiarity rather than his/her learning needs. The degree to which responsibility for learning can be given to the learner is of course relative to the learning context: acquired learning skills, target language proficiency and so on, but the principle maintains that without the practice of autonomous learning by empowerment and choice there can be no development of autonomy. This process is, however, not simply a matter of leaving learners in situations where they have no option but to take complete control of their own learning (Benson 2006: 22). Autonomous learning must be mediated by a teacher, who takes on the role of an advisor and resource person rather than the role of an authoritative leader. This involves active engagement in the learning process, for example by means of encouraging and supporting the learner's decisions, observing and analyzing the learner's behavior and providing valuable feedback (Komorowska 2012: 61).

If learners from the beginning of language learning were left to their own devices, they would arguably not gain many results, as they would have little or no understanding of how they best can learn a language, let alone what it truly means to learn a language. An important part of a teacher's job in facilitating learner autonomy is therefore to initiate *learner training*. Learner training was, like self-access centers, an important tool in the early work on learner autonomy that was carried out by CRAPEL on the behest of the Council of Europe (Benson 2001: 10). Dickinson (1992: 13) states that learner training serves to "help learners consider the factors that affect their learning and discover the learning strategies that suit them best". In aiding the development of their own *learner strategies*, i.e. what strategies learners use to learn a language, the teacher empowers them with individually adapted means to take control of their own learning. This training involves a variety of exercises, for example making learners aware of the language as a system and introducing common language learner strategies[2]. It must be noted that if teachers were to explicitly tell learners what they must do to learn the target language, the point of learner training would be rendered moot. Therefore, although such training is instigated and conducted by a teacher, it is essentially the learners that must train themselves.

[2] For further reference, see Dickinson (1992)

Little's second principle *learner reflection* refers largely to the aspect of metacognition, namely that learners should develop awareness of the learning process and actively reflect upon their individual learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. The concept of learner reflection is not widely discussed in early texts on learner autonomy, as there seems to have been less interest in the psychological and cognitive processes involved in autonomous learning at the time. However, the inclusion of the metacognitive aspect in newer definitions from the 1990s on shows its importance to our present understanding of learner autonomy (Trebbi 1990: 102). When learners are given choices in learning, opportunities also arise for them to reflect upon their learning and the choices they make. With a view to developing autonomy, it is less meaningful being in control of one's own learning without critically monitoring the process. Learner reflection should thus be seen as a necessary condition of learner empowerment. It takes place both in planning and executive stages of learning, but is perhaps most evident in self-assessment. An autonomous learner seeks to review past experiences in order to improve future learning, and so assesses various aspects of the learning process from his/her own perspective, such as e.g. learning outcome compared to the objectives or suitability of methods in relation to the content. As is the case with learner empowerment, it is also vital that learner reflection is both encouraged and mediated by a teacher, who can provide additional input on the process.

The third principle, the principle of *appropriate target language use*, states the need for classroom activities to be carried out primarily in the target language. This obviously entails that learners must be urged to speak spontaneously in the target language to the best of their abilities, but also that the teacher must speak in the target language in such a manner that it may be understandable and useful input for the learners. The view that active language use is vital to language learning in general is arguably one that most educators would agree on. For the learner to improve his or her language skills, these skills must be put to practice. With this principle though, unlike the two previous principles, the relation to learner autonomy may be seen as less straightforward. There is, however, solid reasoning underlying the claim that target language use is important for autonomous learning. From a Vygotskyan perspective, just as thinking develops speaking, speaking also develops thinking (cf. section 2.1), which means that language use stimulates reflection and independent thinking. Through exploratory talk in the target language, and even better, through using the target language throughout the planning, execution and evaluation of their own work, learners can become more aware of

their own development, and as long as these efforts to communicate are spontaneous and not in any way directed by others, they are necessarily autonomous acts.

As previously stated, social interaction is a necessary component of learner autonomy. While Little explains that interaction between learners and teacher is essential to the practical application of his three principles, I would argue that the socio-interactive aspect of autonomous learning is worthy of a principle in its own right when it comes to the promotion of learner autonomy. Apart from the fact that being able to work with others is part of the socio-cultural competence that is emphasized in foreign language learning, social-constructivist theories have shown that higher cognitive functions such as the ability to learn are developed from interactive experiences. Just as learner empowerment, learner reflection and target language use are regarded as prerequisites for autonomous learning, so should interaction be. Furthermore, it seems evident that the communicative nature of languages requires that the process of learning a foreign language should be based largely on learners working together. The principle of *interaction*, therefore, states that learners should be given opportunities to share responsibility for each other's learning. There are various ways in which this principle can be put to practice. For example, learners may be put in teams or pairs in which all participants are responsible for planning, executing and evaluating their work on a given topic - as is often the case in project work - or they can in various ways evaluate each other's work. The essential idea is that learners through interaction with others will learn from each other and develop greater insight on their own learning in the process.

2.3.3 Implications for curricula research

The promotion of autonomy must be firmly implemented in national curricula if it is to lead to innovative and effective changes of classroom practice and overall increased awareness of learner autonomy. This is primarily because the national curricula form the foundation for what is to be learned and how learning should be facilitated (Trebbi 2003: 166). Also stressing the need for autonomy promotion in curricula is the likely difficulties in promoting it through other important materials for learning, such as textbooks. Textbooks generally contain texts, tasks and material within a progression designed for all learners to follow, which severely limits the learners' options of making autonomous choices[3] and leaves most of the relevant decisions to be made by the textbook writers. Generally speaking, such resources

[3] Despite this, means of making course books which assist the development of autonomy have been suggested (Fenner 1998:256-258).

serve to control the learning process rather than let the learner control it, and the consistent use of these remains highly common in contemporary education (Afsar et. al. 2007: 215). On a theoretical level one could claim that curricula also constrain autonomous learning, but there obviously needs to be some basic fundamental aims and principles which education must adhere to.

This chapter has presented aims and principles that should be regarded as important for the promotion of learner autonomy. Dickinson (1987: 13) posits that there are several adequate reasons for the promotion of autonomy in language learning: making the learning process more effective, developing the characteristics of the individual learner, providing lifelong learning and motivating learners. This view is reflected in the three main aims that are here suggested as important for the promotion of learner autonomy in curricula:

- The aim of learning to learn (*savoir-apprendre*)
- The aim of adaptive and more effective language learning
- The aim of increased learner motivation

Curricula must, however, also facilitate the processes by which learners can achieve these aims. For that reason, four principles will be regarded as important for the promotion of learner autonomy:

- The principle of learner empowerment
- The principle of learner reflection
- The principle of appropriate target language use
- The principle of interaction

3.

The European initiative

When discussing the promotion of learner autonomy in curricula, it is important to view it as part of an international endeavor. The role of the Council of Europe in the development of the concept of learner autonomy is, as outlined in chapter 2.1, of considerable importance. As

the Council was founded on the basis of defending human rights, democracy and law, one of its continuing missions is the work on educational policies for the development of democratic citizenship. Foreign language learning was regarded as an important field for the early work towards this aim, and the process of learning a foreign language was sought to be democratic in itself, by taking the needs and characteristics of the individual learner into account and enabling him/her to take control of the learning process (Little 2012: 74).

This chapter will outline the promotion of learner autonomy in two essential documents from the language projects of the Council of Europe: the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP). Its purpose is not to provide an exhaustive study of these documents, an endeavor which would be worthy of a thesis in its own right, but rather to provide a brief discussion of how they promote learner autonomy in relation to the principles presented in the previous chapter, so that the discussion may serve as a point of reference for the research on Norwegian national curricula in this thesis.

3.1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The primary goal of the Council of Europe is achieving greater unity between its member states, of which common action in the area of culture and education is considered imperative (Council of Europe 1982: 1). The Council stresses the need for better understanding of European languages so that communication and interaction between Europeans may be facilitated, and that convergence of policies in modern language teaching and learning is an important means for this. The idea that an internationally acknowledged framework for languages could result in better coordination of efforts from all involved in the process of language learning - teachers, learners, examiners, curricula and course developers, educational administrators, et cetera - was of course appealing.

The ambition for such a scheme was evident as early as the 1970s, in particular with the publication of the *Threshold Level* (1975), a specification of language learning objectives for a learner to reach in order to communicate independently in a foreign language environment. The first in a series with three levels of language competence, the subsequent publications were *Waystage* (1977) and *Vantage* (2001). It was, however, not until 1991, at a symposium in Rüschlikon, Switzerland, that the recommendation of a comprehensive and common framework for language learning was made (Trim 2001: 5), and nearly a decade of work resulted in the first publication of the *Common European Framework of Reference for*

Languages in 2001. The framework provides "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (CEFR: 1). It is, simply put, a comprehensive description of what it means to learn a language. It elaborates on the competences and characteristics of language users, options for the processes of language teaching and learning, as well as curricular design and assessment. Now translated into all official European languages, the recommendations of the framework have been highly influential in the development of curricula as well as the practices of European language classrooms (Figueras 2012: 477).

It is important to note, however, that this framework is no official curriculum in itself, nor is it mandatory for any participants in language learning to adhere to, or even be familiar with, its contents. The Council of Europe is an advisory organization that does not impose binding laws. As a result, the framework is a strictly descriptive document, and its contents may only be regarded as recommendations for language learning participants to draw inspiration from and reflect on.

It is a highly noticeable feature of the framework that it contains no reference to any specific language, as one of its principal aims is to preserve linguistic diversity and encourage plurilingualism, in line with the policy of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 1982: 1). It has been argued among some scholars that this is a disadvantage (Figueras 2012: 483), but for the purpose of promoting autonomy this is certainly not the case, as learner autonomy should be viewed as a universal effort (see ch. 2.1).

The CEFR's presentation of the competences of the individual language learner is perhaps its most prominent feature. The communicative competences are presented in the form of a number of "can do" statements. Such statements suggests a positive focus, reinforcing what the learner can do rather than what he/she cannot do. These are not referred to as learning objectives. Learning objectives determine what should be learned within a given time frame, whereas these statements describe the characteristics of a learner at a given competence level. Therefore, they are known as descriptors. The concomitant reference levels (A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C2[4]) are at the present one of the most widely applied measures of language proficiency (Figueras 2012: 479).

[4] Also termed *Breakthrough, Waystage, Threshold, Vantage, Effective Operational Proficiency* and *Mastery*, these correspond to earlier Council of Europe content specification.

As was pointed out in chapter 2.3, the promotion of learner autonomy in language learning requires that the competence of learning to learn and its purposes are explicitly stated and explained. The facilitation of lifelong learning has been part of the educational agenda of the European Council for decades, and it is therefore not surprising that this purpose is firmly asserted in the opening chapter of the CEFR: "Once it is recognized that language learning is a lifelong task, the development of a young person's skill and confidence in facing new language experience out of school comes to be of central importance" (CEFR: 5). The process of learning a language is of such a magnitude that a large part of language learning will take place outside of education, and individuals must therefore be able to direct their own learning independently throughout life.

Chapter 2.3 also emphasized that the profits of autonomous learning should be included in the promotion of learner autonomy, as self-directed learning is more adaptive and effective and as it has a positive effect on learner motivation. Through practicing their ability to learn by working independently, learners will direct their own learning to suit their individual needs and learning styles, making the learning process more efficient overall; and by being in complete control of this process, the learners will also find themselves more motivated and confident. The CEFR goes into some detail on self-directed learning, but it is only discussed with a view to developing learners' ability to learn.

The competence of *savoir-apprendre* as described in the Framework corresponds to the ability to learn and is listed as one of the general competences, alongside *savoir*, declarative knowledge; *savoir-faire*, skills and know-how; and *savoir-être*, existential competence. The ability to learn is here described as consisting of several skills: language and communication awareness, general phonetic awareness and skills, study skills and heuristic skills. Language and communication awareness involves "knowledge and understanding of the principles according to which languages are organized and used" (CEFR: 107), which requires reflection on the similarities and differences between languages; general phonetic awareness skills form a capacity for perceiving and producing speech sounds; study skills refer to the technical aspect of learning to learn, and include being able to use appropriate learning materials, state learning goals or engage in self-assessment; and heuristic skills involve being able to process new experiences, for example using new forms of technology in learning.

Despite being labeled a general competence, the ability to learn is described as somewhat specific to language learning rather than learning in general, certainly more so than the other

general competences. The distinction between general and communicative competences is significant. General competences are so called because they are considered less related to language use specifically, and they are also not subject to the reference levels as the communicative competences are. This could perhaps be suspected, due to the apparent difficulties in determining the degree to which a learner - for example - possesses the ability to learn (Benson 2001: 51).

The CEFR is not, however, limited to merely stating the aims and competences of the language learner. It also includes some elaboration on the processes of teaching and learning. The CEFR restricts itself to briefly presenting various views on learning and methodological options, so as not to favor any particular stance in debates on language teaching approaches, but encourages all involved in the learning process to "state as explicitly and transparently as possible their own theoretical basis and their practical procedures" (CEFR: 18). It only endorses that teaching should serve the needs of the learners, and that the resulting diversity of approaches and methods should be regarded as an ideal.

As was posited in chapter 2.3, the promotion of autonomy should also involve mention of the processes of autonomous learning. The CEFR raises the issue of what approaches may be used for the facilitation of the various competences of language learning, of which the ability to learn is the most interesting for the present thesis. Suggestions are made as to how this ability can be developed, for example by "'spin-off' from language learning and teaching, without any special planning or provision"; "systematically raising the learners' awareness of the learning/teaching processes in which they are participating" or "progressively transferring responsibility for learning from the teacher to the pupils/students and encouraging them to reflect on their learning and to share this experience with other learners". (CEFR: 149)

These approaches all relate well to the principles of learner empowerment and learner reflection as presented in ch.2.3, but no explanations are provided on how these approaches may be put into practice. At the Rüschlikon Symposium it was also concluded, however, that some type of satellite document to the CEFR was needed, which could be used as a practical tool for helping the learners develop awareness of their learning and support reflective learning. Hence, the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) was developed.

3.2 The European Language Portfolio

The ELP is a tool which was drafted along with the CEFR in the Language Learning for European Citizenship project of the European Council. In some ways resembling a type of language journal, the ELP serves as evidence for the linguistic identity and the language proficiencies of the individual learner, but it also has a pedagogical function in that it is designed to support the language learning process and promote plurilingualism, cultural awareness and learner autonomy (Council of Europe 2011: 4).

Unlike the framework, a great number of models of the portfolio has been published[5], having been created by educational ministries, organizations and groups from various European countries and validated by the European Council. Different models have been made for different age groups and groups with particular needs, for example adult migrants, as well as models for different formats. The model that will be discussed in the present chapter is *Europeisk språkperm 13-18*, created by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training for use by Norwegian learners between the ages of 13 and 18.

The ELP is a personal document which consists of three parts: a language passport, a language biography and a dossier. The passport is essentially a statement of the learner's linguistic identity, containing relevant personal information, an overview of the learner's first and foreign languages, formal language qualifications, records of intercultural experiences as well as grids for self-assessment of language proficiencies. Designed identically in all member countries of the European Council, the purpose of the passport is to attest language competence in an inter-European profile. The language biography, on the other hand, has a predominately pedagogical function. In it, learners are encouraged to reflect on their competences, learning styles and strategies, intercultural observations and encounters, as well as assess their communicative skills in extensive checklists. The dossier is a collection of work written and compiled by the learner as evidence for his/her language proficiencies. While it mainly has a reporting function, the dossier could also be described as pedagogical in the sense that learners will select texts they feel best represent their accomplishments and learning styles, which requires some reflection.

In chapter 2.3 it was suggested that four principles are important to autonomous learning: learner empowerment, learner reflection, target language use and interaction. The ELP is first and foremost a tool that builds on the principle of learner reflection in that it presents

[5] 118 models from 33 different countries were validated between 2001 and 2010, with several more models registered in the following years (Council of Europe 2014)

opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful metacognitive exercises such as self-assessment. In the language passport learners can keep a profile of their language skills by stating their levels in the CEFR self-assessment grid (Council of Europe 2001: 26-27). The checklists in the language biography are set up in accordance with the level descriptors of the CEFR, and here the learners can answer to what extent they, for example, can "understand short and simple greetings, invitations and messages" (Reading, A1), state when this goal was achieved and whether or not it is documented in the dossier. Amidst the checklists there are strategy surveys, where learners can state which learning strategies they employ, such as "I use response from others to improve my texts" (Writing), and become familiar with other strategies. Learners are also encouraged to write short texts explaining their intercultural observations and encounters, for example regarding similarities and differences between languages and language cultures. Engaging in activities of these kinds encourages learners not only to find out what they learn, but also why and how they learn, thus providing them with insights into, and control over, their own learning processes and enabling them to learn more independently and effectively (Little 2002: 186).

The principle of learner empowerment is closely related to the principle of learner reflection, as learners cannot reflect on their own learning unless they are provided with the opportunity and means to do so. The ELP is a tool which empowers learners to take more control of their own learning, and it is the learners that are fully responsible for maintaining and working with its contents.

The principle of target language use states that learning activities should be performed primarily in the target language, because target language use stimulates independent thinking and reflection. As there may be a danger that a focus on learner reflection might get in the way of foreign language learning in general, it would also be more effective if metacognitive exercises were carried out in the target language, so that learners simultaneously practice their communicative skills. In the Norwegian model of the ELP, however, learners are free to choose what languages they want to write in, first language or foreign language, and using a target language is not explicitly encouraged. It could be argued that presenting the document in the target language of the learners would promote target language use, but most information and instruction provided in the portfolio is presented in Norwegian, with a smaller portion of the content also written in the most relevant foreign languages (English, German, French and Spanish), which suggests that the need for target language use in metacognitive exercises has not been prioritized.

The principle of interaction states that autonomy develops as a result of interactive processes, but the ELP is a personal document that does not encourage much interaction. It is only interactive in the sense that the learner's reflection involves interaction with a former self by means of self-assessment. There are no interactive tasks or exercises in the Norwegian model, nor is there any mention of interactive exercises in the principles and guidelines document for the development of ELP models (Council of Europe 2011). It might be very fruitful for learners to collaborate in certain activities in the ELP, for example by negotiating the meaning of the statements in the checklists, some of which seem very open to interpretation[6]. The lack of such instruction in the ELP does of course not prohibit users from collaborating and interacting. It should also be noted that the ELP is to be regarded as a document that is "open" for personal accommodation (Council of Europe 2011: 10). With this in mind, it is produced in a loose-leaf binder, to which users may add pages if there are particular things or features that the model has omitted, or if there is simply not enough space for writing.

The use of the ELP is also claimed to have a motivating effect on language learners (Little and Perclovà 2001: 44), mainly because its metacognitive exercises provide the learners with a sense of awareness, control and ownership over their language learning. It may also motivate in the sense that it allows for learners to work on a product of their own which proves their progress and their achievements. In chapter 2.3 it was stated that autonomous learning creates better motivation for learning, but it was also stated that motivation is a prerequisite for autonomous learning. Unless learners are made aware of the purposes and profits of learner reflection, they may not be as motivated for this aspect of language learning (Komorowska 2012: 68). Although its concomitant teacher handbook elaborates on the theoretical background of the content, the Norwegian ELP model does not provide much of this information, and mostly focuses on instructions for the learners. There is no mention at all of the ability to learn or the prospect of lifelong learning in the document itself, thereby leaving the responsibility of explaining the purpose of learning to learn through the ELP solely in the hands of a teacher.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, two of the most influential documents published by the European Council, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language

[6] For instance: "I can write well-structured and well-written reports and articles about complex issues" (Writing, C2). What does "well-structured" and "well-written" mean? And what is meant by "complex issues"?

Portfolio, have been briefly presented and discussed in relation to the promotion of learner autonomy.

The CEFR is a very comprehensive document in which the nature of language teaching and learning is presented that has been immensely influential in its field. The promotion of learner autonomy is therefore shaped by its presentation in this framework. It is quite clear that the CEFR values the lifelong learning of the individual as one of its principal aims. That being said, it could well be argued that, aside from the main purpose of preparing individuals for lifelong language learning, there are other advantages also underlying the focus on learner autonomy in foreign language learning that should be stated in the CEFR, such as the prospect of making the learning process more adapted and effective for the individual learner, as well as the prospect of improving learners' motivation. The section on the *savoir-apprendre* competence is an important statement. Although presented as a general competence, the ability to learn is described in rich detail and presented as closely connected to language learning. The CEFR also provides some explanation on the process, suggesting what approaches may be used to develop the ability to learn, without presenting concrete and practical examples.

The ELP is a highly useful tool for the development of autonomous learners, as it contains extensive and nuanced practical exercises which engage the learner in reflective learning. Furthermore, research seems to support the notion that the ELP supports autonomy (Gonzales 2008: 378). The pilot projects (1998-2000), which were carried out in fifteen European Council member states with an estimated 30 000 participants (Little 2002: 183), were conspicuous. Most attention was paid to reviewing the pedagogical function of the ELP, with 70 % of teachers reporting that it was a helpful tool for the learners. Studies have also shown that learners have found the process of reflective learning through the use of a portfolio motivating (Little 2002: 184). It must be noted, however, that the ELP seems to lack a social dimension. It is a tool made wholly for the individual development of its users, and does not encourage learners to interact or collaborate with each other in their work with it. It might also be argued that the ELP should encourage its users to write in their target language(s).

It seems appropriate to conclude that, in light of the principles suggested in chapter 2.3, the CEFR and the ELP complement each other with respect to promoting learner autonomy. While the CEFR provides the theoretical background of learner autonomy by validating the goal of learning to learn and explaining the skills and processes involved, its satellite

document, the ELP, is first and foremost a practical tool that facilitates autonomous learning, mostly by encouraging learners to reflect on their learning processes through a variety of tasks.

There are a number of other Council of Europe works that have contributed to the promotion of learner autonomy that could be mentioned. One example is the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL*, 2007*).* As the focus of this text rests on the learner, this document will not be discussed in detail. It should be stated, however, that much of the initiative towards autonomous learning depends upon classroom teachers' awareness of learner autonomy, and that it therefore is of great importance to promote learner autonomy in teacher education (Fenner 2006: 37). The development of this portfolio for teachers should therefore also be regarded as an important contribution to the promotion of learner autonomy in modern language learning and teaching.

4.

Materials and method

This chapter will elaborate on the materials and methods used in this research project. The first section will deal with the role of the curriculum in education. Following this there will be a brief presentation of the Norwegian national curricula subject to study, L97 and LK06. Lastly, an account will be given on the choice of a qualitative document analysis (QDA) as a research method and how this method will be applied in practice.

4.1 The role of curricula

Before presenting the curricula that will be analyzed in this thesis, it seems appropriate to include a brief discussion on the role of curricula in education. What is a curriculum? A curriculum is perhaps best recognized in its most simple form: a document or a series of documents outlining the subject contents of education. However, many scholars have found this perspective to be much too narrow (Kelly 1999: 3). Although this view of the curriculum captures the aspect of what knowledge the learners should gain, and thus equates the terms

curriculum and syllabus, it excludes any rationale for the content and elaborations on the nature of the learning process. Scholars of curriculum studies also discuss such concepts as the "received curriculum", which is what the learners gain from the "planned curriculum" found in the documents; as well as the unexpected learning outcomes, which constitute the "hidden curriculum". A further distinction has been made between the "formal curriculum", the experiences that take place in a learning context, and the "informal curriculum", the experiences that take place outside of a learning context. Such considerations have complicated the common understanding of the term "curriculum" and led to the use of broader definitions. For example, one definition states that the curriculum is "the totality of student experiences in the learning process" (Wiles 2008: 2). For the present discussion, however, the curricula referred to are formal documents that state values, principles and contents of education.

Based on the different aims and contents that are found in curricula, Kelly (1999) outlines three general curriculum models:

- Curriculum as content and education as transmission
- Curriculum as product and education as instrumental
- Curriculum as process and education as development

In the model of curriculum as content and education as transmission, the content that should be taught is knowledge that is regarded as important for integration into society, and is often based on tradition and culture. The learning process is largely viewed as a matter of transmitting this knowledge to a mostly passive learner. The model of curriculum as product and education as instrumental expresses a view that there must be clear and predefined objectives that the learners should reach. Whatever the method, the center of focus is the learning outcomes of the learners, which is measured as a cumulative product. The model of curriculum as process and education as development, however, is not built around objectives, but rather around principles and procedures. It stresses the importance of the processes and experiences of the learner rather than measurable learning outcomes. The learning process often involves learners interacting, participating and experimenting.

It must of course be noted that these models are not mutually exclusive, and that most curricula which are developed, be it on a national or local level, cannot simply be placed into categories of this kind. Nevertheless, these models reflect different stances on the purposes of the curriculum and of education itself. Largely advertising the model of curriculum as process

and education as development, which he also calls the *developmental* model, Kelly states that it "sees the individual as an active being" and that "its central concern is with individual empowerment" (1999: 84). Considering this it seems evident that, for the purpose of promoting such concepts as learner autonomy, it is the developmental model of the curriculum that is most advantageous. Essential to this kind of curriculum is the idea that not all relevant learning outcomes are measurable, or even specifiable. The ability to learn is an example of one such outcome.

Kelly posits that what is standing in the way of implementing such curricula are political demands of effectiveness and "hard" results, in other words emphasis on what education is *for* rather than what it *is*. There is, and arguably always has been, a political aspect of curriculum development. Education has always been a tool for preparing young people for participation in society, and this preparation must be conducted in a manner which supports the needs and values of that society. Consequently, there are many groups exerting influence on curriculum development, ranging from administrative bodies such as government departments to interest groups such as industries and businesses (Levin 2008: 21).

The present thesis explores how the concept of learner autonomy is promoted in curricula. Underlying this choice of research is, obviously, the assumption that the promotion of learner autonomy in curricula is of importance to the way in which it is implemented at the classroom level. It should be noted that the extent to which curricula determine the content and practices in present-day language teaching and learning is disputed, with some scholars claiming that the direct effects of curricula on teaching and learning practices are at best uncertain (Westbury 2008: 5), that textbook developers are the main interpreters of curricular content, and therefore that changes in textbook content as a result of curriculum reform more directly influences classroom practices than the curriculum reform itself. However, research in Norway has indicated that the national curriculum remains an important resource for teaching and learning practices (Afsar et.al. 2007: 215).

A national curriculum is the foremost determinant of educational practices in society, and it is required that schools follow its contents and regulations. However, as Kelly (1999: 9) states, "the quality of any educational experience will to a very large extent depend on the individual teacher responsible for it", and they "have a make or break role in any curriculum innovation". Teachers look to the national curriculum for reference, ideas and inspiration. Their interpretation and understanding of the curriculum is decisive for the experiences of learners,

and the form and manner in which content is presented in the curriculum will also influence the way in which teachers understand and interpret it.

4.2 Materials for research

Education in Norway has since 1939 been based on common standards of aims and principles regulated by national curricula. In this section I will briefly introduce the Norwegian national curricula that form the materials for the present study, L97 and LK06.

4.2.1 L97

The Curriculum for the 10-year Compulsory School in Norway[7], henceforth known as L97, is a national curriculum that was implemented as part of a 1997 Norwegian educational reform (Reform 97) which also saw the implementation of a new school system with 10 years of mandatory schooling (formerly 9), in which students were to attend school from the age of 6 (formerly 7). The expressed aim of the reform was to increase the proficiency of the population by developing greater coherence, progression and effectiveness across the Norwegian educational system (Koritzinsky 2000: 47). The L97 curriculum has been viewed as quite prescriptive compared to previous Norwegian national curricula in that it, through very detailed and process-oriented aims, specifies what activities and content learners shall work with in every year of school.

Unlike its predecessors, the L97 curriculum features a tripartite construction consisting of the *Core Curriculum, Principles and Guidelines for Compulsory Education* (henceforth known as *the Principles and Guidelines*) and curricula for the various subjects. The Core Curriculum was designed on the basis of the Norwegian Education Act and important ideas from former curricula, presenting fundamental values and visions which were binding for all levels of education. The Principles and Guidelines was designed to form a "bridge" between the Core Curriculum and the subject curricula, and outlines important principles for learning. As was stated in the introduction of this thesis, it is not only the English subject of the curricula that will be subject of study. The content of both the Core Curriculum and the Principles and Guidelines will also be explored, as they express important learning views and principles which influence learning across all subjects and therefore will be of importance in gaining a proper understanding of how learner autonomy is promoted.

[7] Norwegian: *Læreplanverket for den 10-årige grunnskolen*

Whilst generally being positively reviewed by teachers and scholars alike for its promotion of learner-centeredness, inclusive schooling and adaptive learning, L97 also received criticism for various examples of ambiguity and contradictions (Research Council of Norway 2003: 41). More importantly, reports and surveys suggested that the learning outcomes of learners were highly variable and that the distance between the planned curriculum and the received curriculum was too great. Criticism was directed against the process-oriented aims on the grounds that it placed little priority on achieving learning aims (Øzerk 2006: 64).

4.2.2 LK06

LK06, the Norwegian national curriculum currently in use, was implemented in 2006[8] as part of the most recent educational reform, *The Knowledge Promotion*[9]. The reform was driven by a demand for stronger focus on students' learning output (Øzerk 2006: 63).

The first curriculum to be released also as a digital document, the new curriculum features important changes from the 1997 curriculum, most conspicuous of which is probably the implementation of new subject curricula featuring competence aims, which signaled greater priority on what students should have learned at the various stages of education. Another significant change from L97 is that the new curriculum does not include any instructions on what methods or resources should be used in the learning process. An important focus area was developing basic skills (reading, writing, oral skills, digital skills and numeracy) in all subjects. The new curriculum also included upper-secondary school specification, which had earlier formed a curriculum of its own. While the Core Curriculum of L97 was retained, the Principles and Guidelines of L97 was removed in favor of a new document, *The Quality Framework*. The basis of this document is the Learning Poster, which presents various principles for education based on the regulations of the Education Act. As these principles are highly relevant for learning across all stages and subjects, The Quality Framework will also be subject to study in this thesis.

The LK06 curriculum has received praise for improving learners' basic skills and facilitating better assessment practices, but has also been subject to some criticism due to an apparent tendency among teachers to strongly focus on methods and tasks that promote cursory subject

[8] It should be noted that LK06 underwent a revision in 2013. However, as none of the changes brought about by this revision are of relevance to learner autonomy, the curriculum will here only be referred to as LK06.
[9] Norwegian: *Kunnskapsløftet*

knowledge at the expense of in-depth knowledge and thematic understanding (Hodgson, et. al. 2012: 188).

4.3 Method of analysis and rationale

In this section the choice of method for the research will be discussed. There is a substantial number of empirical methods that have been applied to educational research over the years, and the choice of method must be determined by the materials of the study and the nature of the field of study.

Firstly, it should be discussed under which research paradigms the study is conducted. In most research assumptions will be made of what knowledge will be gained and how it will be gained (Creswell 2003: 6), and educational research has resulted in the emergence of several paradigms that provide different answers to these questions. Cohen et.al. (2007: 7) distinguishes between three major schools of thought in educational research: a traditional or normative view, an interpretive view and a critical view. The normative view, commonly known as *positivism*, states that social sciences should aim to discover and describe general laws of human behavior, deeming knowledge as objective and individuals as products of their environments. Positivist research emphasizes external observation and objectivity, and is often conducted by means of quantitative approaches. Quantitative approaches involve collecting larger samples of statistical data to be measured for the purpose of testing theories or hypotheses (Creswell 2003: 18). Common means of data collection therefore include surveys, questionnaires and experiments.

The interpretive view, however, holds that the explanation of human behavior involves understanding the uniqueness of individuals rather than finding general laws, that knowledge is based on subjective and personal experience, and that individuals have a free will to shape their own environment. Research subscribing to the interpretive paradigm will often favor qualitative approaches, which seek to find themes and meanings and analyze them in some detail (Creswell 2003: 18) and therefore typically employs strategies exploring fewer and more focused samples of data, such as case studies, narratives or interviews.

The critical view, often referred to as *critical theory*, argues that normative and interpretive views fail to take into account political and ideological contexts when explaining human behavior. It is a prescriptive research paradigm with the purpose of emancipating and empowering individuals in a democratic society, by discovering the interests at play in society

and questioning whether these are appropriate. It is therefore not only based on the aim of understanding, it is also based on the aim of transforming. Action research and ideology critique[10] are common research practices for this aim, although a variety of methodologies have been applied.

The present thesis sets out to discover how the concept of learner autonomy is promoted in Norwegian national curricula. Judging by the descriptions above, it seems apparent that the normative view on social science research does not easily correlate with the purposes of this thesis. A degree of subjectivity will necessarily be at play in determining how curricula "promote" a given concept; especially, perhaps, with a concept that has been subject to so much discussion as learner autonomy. It would seem that this kind of research is a matter of interpreting and understanding rather than testing and generalizing. Furthermore, promotion is arguably a rather abstract idea that is not immediately open to measuring, making a quantitative approach somewhat problematic. Although a quantitative content analysis[11] of a larger number of curricula could have yielded results from which it would be possible to identify courses and trends in curricular content, it seems evident that a more qualitative and in-depth look at a curriculum in its entirety will provide a fuller and more critical perspective on how learner autonomy can be promoted. With its emphasis on qualitative approaches, interpretation and subjectivity, then, the research in this thesis is partly based on an interpretive paradigm of educational research, although it also relates to the critical theory paradigm. It is no coincidence that the ideas of critical theory have been very influential in the field of curriculum research (Cohen et.al. 2007: 31). As was asserted in chapter 4.1, the development of curricula is a political process which is influenced by a number of interests and goals, particularly with the aspect of determining what is to be learnt. Critical theory states the need to recognize these interests as important context for research. Furthermore, the concept of learner autonomy is built on ideals of individual emancipation and democratic participation, the same ideals that form the basis of critical theory. Although the present thesis should not in itself be seen as an outright attempt at promoting learner autonomy, it is written under the conviction that learner autonomy is important for the future of foreign language learning, and seeks both to understand and question how it is featured in curricula.

[10] See Cohen et. al. (2007:28-29)

[11] A quantitative method investigating texts involving statistical information, for example by means of word counts, phrase counts or space measurements (see Prior 2014:359-451).

There has in recent years been an increase of studies using qualitative document analysis (QDA) as a research method, which has resulted in several approaches to the issue of how a qualitative document analysis should be conducted. Bowen (2009) has suggested an interesting approach which will be applied in the present thesis. In this process of analysis, the researcher first skims through the documents, looking to gain an overview of the contents. Afterwards, all data that is deemed relevant for the topic at hand is identified and extracted. Then follows a process of reviewing the extracted data, finding patterns and attempting to conceptualize these patterns into appropriate categories for discussion.

It should be noted that most investigations of curricula have largely been restrained to present the contents of curricula rather than the form of these contents - they have asked "what" has been included, but not "how" (Connelly et. al. 2008: 26). However, the aim of finding out how curricula promotes learner autonomy necessitates an approach that takes into account relevant issues of the presentation of the curricular content, not only the content in itself. Consequently, the document analysis will where found appropriate address how various elements are presented and emphasized in the curricula, for example by . Furthermore, the analysis will not only focus on what information is included in the curricula, but also aim to discover any relevant information that is left out. It has been claimed that working with documents is just as much focusing on what is not said as what is said (Rapley 2007: 112).

QDA has often been applied as part of a triangulated approach to qualitative research, where data from several sources are examined and compared in order to make findings more credible, but it has also been a stand-alone method in some interpretive research projects (Bowen 2009: 29), as is the case in this thesis. It could well be argued that focusing solely on a document analysis is a quite one-dimensional method, and that it should include data of interpretations by language learning participants - for instance interviews or questionnaires with teachers and learners - and such an approach could certainly provide some interesting views that might explicate the findings of the document analysis. It would, however, make the scope of the present thesis too wide to allow proper discussion of the contents of the two curricula. It is certainly to be hoped that other researchers will provide future contributions that focus on language learning participants' views. The reason for opting to research two curricula is that I am interested to see whether or not there might be some progression from one to the other with respect to promoting autonomy. Tracking changes and development over time provides a comparative and longitudinal dimension to the research.

There are several advantages associated with the use of document analyses, the most conspicuous of which is perhaps that unlike in most other forms of research, the subjects of analysis are entirely non-reactive, stable and otherwise unaffected by the research process (Cohen 2007: 201). There are naturally also advantages of effectiveness. Selecting existing data from documents is less time-consuming than collecting new data, and documents of a certain prominence in society - such as national curricula - are very easy to obtain.

Relatively few disadvantages of document analyses have been found. It has been pointed out that documents are usually not written for the purpose of being researched, and that they therefore often do not contain enough detail to answer a research question (Bowen 2009: 31). Documents are also often biased and written in support of a specific agenda instead of being written as an objective account, which is something the researcher must be acutely aware of (Cohen 2007: 201). To a researcher of curricular documents, however, this is not a mere caveat, it is a basic assumption of the research. Curricula are politically motivated by nature, and these motivations must be taken into account in the research practice.

Some criticism has been directed against qualitative documentary research, in particular the claim that such studies are the results of "sheer intuition and individual guesswork" (Cohen 1974: 5). It should come as no surprise that there will be some degree of subjective interpretation with this kind of research, as the researcher must make choices when selecting content, making sense of it and placing it in a pattern that may form a theoretical basis. The issue of subjectivity does not at all undermine the relevance and reliability of the method. The nature of QDA involves asking questions to which there will be no explicitly right or wrong answer (Wesley 2014: 152), and the researcher will keep in mind that his or her interpretations of the document may differ from those of others. For the credibility of these interpretations it is important that justifications for the decisions made are stated throughout the analysis.

5.

Findings and discussion

The aim of the present thesis is to find out how learner autonomy is promoted in the English subject of two Norwegian national curricula, L97 and LK06. Research of these curricula is conducted by means of a qualitative document analysis in line with Bowen's (2009) approach. In this chapter, the findings of this research will be presented and discussed.

As has been previously stated, the work of the European Council has been pivotal to the present-day understanding of learner autonomy and to its importance in modern education. The Common European Framework of References for Languages (2001) and the European Language Portfolio (2008) are internationally recognized documents that have been influential in curriculum development in recent years. Therefore, the findings of the curriculum analysis will, where appropriate, be related to the discussion of these documents in chapter 3.

The process of analysis began with an initial read-through of the curricula, which provided an opportunity for getting an overview of the contents and early ideas of what information should be included in the findings. After this, I engaged in a more thorough review in which all the relevant data for discussion were identified and extracted. Then followed a process of grouping the extracts into appropriate categories, after which the findings were discussed.

In chapter 2.3 of this thesis a set of preliminary aims and principles were suggested as important for promoting learner autonomy in curricula. These aims and principles are based on the theoretical framework provided in chapter 2. After the initial read-through of the curricula in question, I came to the conclusion that there were other issues also worthy of analysis that were based on the contents of the curricula. First, as these curricula - in addition to determining the content and the processes of education - express a fundamental learning view that education is to be based on, it should be discussed how this view shows support for the idea of learner autonomy. Secondly, the curricula differ in certain important aspects of their design, for example with respect to types of subject aims and specification of learning methodology, that may be of influence to how learner autonomy is promoted.

It should be noted that the concepts that are investigated in this study should not be viewed as criteria, as this would lead to the assumption that such criteria must be fulfilled in order for a curriculum to meet a given standard or degree of learner autonomy promotion. The research question of the present thesis asks *how*, and not *whether or not* or *to what extent*, the Norwegian national curricula promote learner autonomy in foreign language learning.

This chapter is structured according to the categorization of the findings. The first section will explore how the curricula in question present a learning view that supports learner autonomy, followed by a section discussing issues on the design of the curricula and their implications for learner autonomy. The subsequent sections will deal with findings related to the aims and principles proposed in chapter 2.3.

5.1 Learning view

The Core Curriculum is the common ground of the curricula that are discussed in this thesis. Featured on the first 50 pages of both the L97 and the LK06 curriculum, it forms the foundation for more specific and subject-related content, and presents essential learning views and values that education should be based on. In this common core, therefore, one might expect to find reference to the main ideas underlying learner autonomy.

As stated in chapter 2.1, learner autonomy is based on the concept of learner-centeredness, in which the needs, processes and competences of the learner is at the center of attention. Consequently, as Little (2003: 36) argues, curricula should be learner-centered at the level of general principle if it is to promote learner autonomy. Focus must therefore be directed to the learners and their development. Investigating the Core Curriculum, one will find that there are several aspects of it that suggests a learning view that is centered on the learner. The most conspicuous feature is perhaps that the text is structured according to themes that are based on human traits: "The spiritual human being", "The creative human being", "The working human being", et cetera. Closer inspection will reveal that it also contains reference to active pupils, adaptive learning, personal development and other principles that emphasize the needs of learners.

The most important evidence of learner-centeredness is, however, that learning is seen as an active process of the learner rather than a matter of passing on knowledge to a passive learner. It was also asserted in chapter 2.1 that the development of learner autonomy as a concept was based on a shift from a behaviorist educational paradigm to a learner-centered paradigm, a

shift on which social constructivist theory had considerable impact. In the Core Curriculum, the following is stated on the nature of learning:

> [...] teaching and learning are not one and the same thing. Learning is what occurs within the pupil. Teaching is something done by another. Good teaching gets learning started - but it is consummated by the learner's own efforts. (p. 18)

This first excerpt clearly states what is arguably the most important tenet of a constructivist view of learning, the idea that knowledge is something constructed by learners rather than something that is transmitted from a teacher to a learner. It further states the logical necessity that teaching can only stimulate learning, and that teaching therefore must facilitate the learning process rather than attempt to assume control over it. Further evidence of constructivism can also be found:

> Learning occurs when new information is interpreted from the known - the concepts one already comprehends determine what one can fathom and grasp. Knowledge, skills and attitudes develop in the interplay between old notions and new impressions. (p. 19)

The constructivist idea expressed here is that pre-existing knowledge and experiences shape the individuals' construction and understanding of new knowledge. As a result, they will have different interpretations of ideas and events, which in an educational context result in differences between learners and make every learner unique. This brings the present discussion to an issue that was touched upon in the introduction of this thesis. If education is to be learner-centered, it must acknowledge these differences. As was stated in chapter 2.1, social constructivism values the uniqueness of every learner and considers the learners themselves as important resources for learning. This view is also shared in the Core Curriculum:

> The teacher must make use of the variations in pupils' aptitudes, the diversity in the classroom, and the heterogeneity of the school as resources for all-round development as well as the development of all. (p. 19)

In chapter 2.1 it was also found that, in the light of Vygotsky's theories, learning must be viewed as an active, social process, as it is only through interaction with others that learners can reach higher levels of understanding. There is a brief mention of this in the Core Curriculum, where it in a section on the social human being states that "a person's aptitudes

and identity develop in interaction with others; human beings are formed by their environment, just as they contribute to forming it" (p. 30). From this we understand that individuals are interdependent, they require interaction with others if they are to develop understanding and skills. This is an essential idea in social constructivism.

In summary, the excerpts above prove that, although the term constructivism is nowhere mentioned, these national curricula are based on a social constructivist view of learning, which is a view that is fundamental to learner autonomy. As learners themselves are seen as active in, and indeed fully in control of, the thought processes that result in true learning, education must be centered on the learners and allow for them to take control of their own learning. However, one more aspect of this learning view should be briefly discussed here. Although most discussions of learner autonomy will mainly be focused on the processes of the learner, some attention should also be directed to the role of the teacher. As was stated in chapter 2.2, learner autonomy is not to be regarded merely as a matter of learning without a teacher. With a view of learning as active processes of the learners, teachers cannot dictate these processes. Rather, as Little (2004: 22) states, they must seek to facilitate them through negotiation with the learners. This is reflected in the Core Curriculum, where entire sections are written that explain the teacher's role and its importance in education, and it that teachers must "show the way to skills that are reachable and to material that is manageable" (p. 37). In other words, the role of the teacher as expressed here is not one of conveying knowledge to the learners, but to guide the learners.

In chapter 2.3.1 it was claimed that intrinsic learner motivation is essential for autonomous learning, and that there must be a degree of responsibility upon the teacher to inspire his or her learners to take control of their own learning.

> A good teacher can inspire by encouragement, by providing experience of increased mastery, and by giving a positive response to their progress. [...] The most important of all pedagogical tasks is to convey to the children and the young that they are continuously making headway so that they gain trust in their own abilities. (p. 38)

Within the framework of the Core Curriculum, therefore, the role of the teacher is not only one of facilitating and supporting learning, but also one of motivating and inspiring learners. By affirming that the role of the teacher is primarily one of guiding and motivating the learners, the Core Curriculum shows strong support for learner autonomy.

5.2 Curriculum design

When investigating the two curricula in question one will find differences between them, the most noticeable of which are differences in design and structure. For example, the L97 curriculum is published as a single document specifying only the contents of the 10-year compulsory school, whereas the LK06 curriculum consists of a series of electronic documents that includes upper-secondary school specification as well as compulsory school specification. There are, however, several other important differences in the design of the curricula, some of which in this section will be discussed in relation to the promotion of learner autonomy.

Although these share the same Core Curriculum, it is evident that, in the scope of the 10-year compulsory school, L97 is a significantly larger and more elaborative document. The Principles and Guidelines in L97 is the "bridge" between the Core Curriculum and the subject curricula. Standing at 36 pages, it not only contains general principles and guidelines for education, but also instructions for the use of methods, materials and assessment, as well as an outline of the characteristics of the main stages of education and information on the organization of the subject curricula. In LK06 it is The Quality Framework that bridges the Core Curriculum and the subject curricula, which in its 8 pages only presents and explains essential principles based on the Education Act, such as adaptive learning, pupil participation and cooperation with the home and the local community. Similar differences can be found in the subject curricula, which in the case of L97 contain reference to appropriate subject-specific methods and materials, while those of LK06 do not. Furthermore, in the subject curricula of L97 there are three levels of aim specification: general aims for the subject, objectives for the main stages of education and main subject elements of every school year. In LK06, on the other hand, the subject curricula only specify competence aims for each main stage of education. In short, the amount of information and the level of specification is far greater in the L97 curriculum. As a result it has been argued that L97 is a much more controlling document, and that it therefore leaves little room for local and individual adaptation (Research Council of Norway 2003: 41).

As mentioned above, L97 outlines appropriate learning methods both at the general level and the subject level, some of which are particularly interesting for the present discussion of learner autonomy in the curriculum. In the Principles and Guidelines it is mentioned, for example, that there must be room for independent work and in-depth studies in the subjects (p.84), and the curriculum also places heavy focus on theme and project work. What

characterizes theme and project work is that groups of learners in various ways are given responsibility to plan, execute and assess their work on a chosen assignment, either within a single subject or across subjects. There is arguably several aspects of this kind of work that relates well to learner autonomy, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.4.1. L97 recommends that a certain percentage of classroom hours should be allocated for theme and project work (p. 91), depending on the stage of education: at least 60 % at the primary stage, at least 30 % at the intermediate stage and at least 20 % at the lower secondary stage. While no explanation is provided as to why the focus on theme and project work gradually lessens during the course of education, it can be assumed that this is because of the focus in the primary stage on practical working methods and coherence between the various subjects. Furthermore, L97 states that learners must complete a cross-curricular graded project assignment in their final year of the lower secondary stage. It is surprising, however, that there is such emphasis on project work expressed in the Principles and Guidelines while highly varying emphasis in the subject curricula. It seems unfortunate that there is no mention at all of project work in the English subject curriculum, whereas in, for example, the Norwegian subject it is frequently mentioned. This lack of consistency has been recognized by developers of the curriculum as a mistake (Koritzinsky 2000: 277).

Apart from stating that there should be variation in learning methods (The Quality Framework, p. 2), the LK06 curriculum essentially contains no guidelines on what methods should be applied in the classrooms. It could certainly be argued that this will force teachers and learners to reflect on and negotiate what approaches should be used to reach the competence aims, which with a view to promoting learner autonomy should be regarded as positive. However, the degree to which learners can be involved in the choice of approaches will depend entirely upon the individual teacher. If the teacher is well aware of the concept of learner autonomy and how it can be put into practice, then opportunities may arise for learners to experience autonomous learning. By contrast, if the teacher has no training in or interest in learner autonomy, it is likely that the learning process will offer few or none such opportunities (Fenner 2006:29).

It can, of course, also be discussed whether the LK06 curriculum, through its lack of methodological guidelines, leaves to textbook writers the issue of determining what methods are to be applied in the classroom. It should be noted that textbooks have a strong hold in Norwegian education and have been found to be slightly more influential for classroom

methods than the curriculum (Afsar et.al. 2007: 215). The importance of textbook use is even stated in the Core Curriculum:

> Active educators require effective teaching tools. Textbooks and other teaching aids are essential to the quality of education. They must therefore be designed and used in accordance with the principles of this national core curriculum. (p. 23)

As was briefly discussed in chapter 2.3.3, textbooks generally serve to make important decisions on behalf of both teachers and learners - defining objectives and content progression, suggesting work methods, finding appropriate texts and materials, et cetera - and consistent use of textbooks can therefore be said to severely constrain learners' opportunities to experience autonomous learning.

Another key difference between the two curricula, and indeed one that has gained much attention since the 2006 educational reform (Sivesind 2012: 22), is found in the manner in which the learning content is expressed in the subject curricula. The L97 curriculum outlines the subject matter as *main subject elements*, experiences that the learners shall undergo in the course of their education. Reflecting the focus on what learners are to do, L97 refers to the subject curricula as "subject syllabuses". The LK06 curriculum, on the other hand, outlines the subject matter as *competence aims*, in other words, what the learners shall be able to do at the end of their education. Consequently, the main subject elements of L97 are expressed in statements in the form of "Pupils should have the opportunity to [...]", while the competence aims of LK06 are formulated as "The aims of the studies are to enable pupils to [...]". There is obviously significant difference between these approaches to aim design. It is clear that specifying the competences of the learner signals greater focus on the learners themselves, and in this regard the competence aims are more learner-centered than the main subject elements. Through working with the competence aims, learners may gain better understanding of their own progress in the subjects. However, with a focus on what students should have learned by the end of a given point in education, there will also be increased emphasis on summative assessment.

The move from what could be described as highly process-oriented aims in L97 to the competence aims found in LK06 must primarily be seen as a response to the demand for making the curricular aims clearer and more related to assessment (Ministry of Education and Research 2004: 15), which was partly spurred by Norwegian learners' low scores on international tests. Not only was this a pressing issue in Norway, it was also important for

European organizations such as the Council of Europe. In line with this, it may also be argued that there has been influence from the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR), which was published in 2001. As was discussed in chapter 3.1, this framework presents competence aims in the form of "can do" statements, and does not state what learning methods should be used in language learning. With such statements of what students should be able to do as is presented in LK06, there will necessarily be increased focus on summative assessment, i.e. assessment which serves to evaluate learners' learning outcomes according to a set standard rather than evaluate learners for the purpose of facilitating further learning. This is reflected in the fact that the subject curricula of LK06 include general provisions for final assessment in each subject. Consequently it has been argued amongst some scholars that a competence-based curriculum reduces learners to objects and education to a product (Koritzinsky 2000: 55), and may cause the prioritization of assessable aims at the expense of more general and non-assessable aims such as learning to learn languages, developing cultural awareness and forming a linguistic identity. In this regard the implementation of competence aims may be considered unfortunate for the promotion of learner autonomy.

To summarize, there are aspects of the design of these curricula which influence the promotion of learner autonomy in various ways. One aspect to be considered is that the L97 curriculum is far more detailed in content, describing not only learning aims for every stage of education and for every school year, but also which various methods and materials are to be applied. With such a level of detail there are generally fewer opportunities for local and individual adaptation, which potentially can be carried out through negotiation between teachers and learners and thus empower the learners. With its simpler competence aims and lack of reference to methods and materials the LK06 curriculum is arguably more open for such adaptation, although there is a danger that classroom approaches will be more teacher-centered or reliant upon textbook use. It is notable that L97 places emphasis on project work, which is a learning method that encompasses several tenets of learner autonomy. This issue will be returned to later in the present chapter.

It was also argued that the shift from process-oriented aims in L97 to competence aims in LK06 can be seen as detrimental to the promotion of learner autonomy. In chapter 4.1 Kelly's (1999) three curriculum models were presented, each of which expresses a different view on what the role of the curriculum in education should be:

- Curriculum as content and education as transmission
- Curriculum as product and education as instrumental
- Curriculum as a process and education as development

Naturally, it would be simplistic to label the curricula that are discussed in the present thesis as belonging to any one such category, as they arguably contain elements from all three. It does, however, seem apparent that the implementation of competence aims and the concomitant focus on summative assessment in the LK06 curriculum express a view that is more in line with "curriculum as product and education as instrumental" than the L97 curriculum. As the ability to learn languages, along with many other essential aims of language learning, is not easily assessable and is not to be regarded as a product (Komorowska 2012: 57), it follows that the use of competence aims may be negative for learner autonomy promotion.

One more aspect of the curricular design should be briefly addressed here. Upon close scrutiny one will find that there is no mention of the term "learner autonomy" anywhere in the documents that are investigated in this thesis, although related terms such as "independence" are sometimes used. "Constructivism", "learner-centeredness" and "self-directed learning" are other examples of relevant terms that are left out. On the whole, there are few distinctly scholarly terms based on pedagogical theories to be found in the curricula. This is because the use of such terms may cause confusion and uncertainty on the part of the reader. As has been mentioned earlier, the curricula are documents that should be facilitated for the use of all participants in education, which includes teachers with non-academic backgrounds, parents and learners (Koritzinsky 2000: 90). While this certainly seems a reasonable argument, it could be discussed how learner autonomy promotion is affected by the lack of explicit reference to the concept itself or the theory underlying it. The term learner autonomy has, after all, been described as a "buzz-word" in foreign language teaching and learning (Little 1991: 2), and it can certainly be argued that the term itself has played a crucial part in its promotion.

5.3 Aims of learner autonomy

If learner autonomy is to be promoted in foreign language learning, its aims must be made specific. This section will explore how the Norwegian national curricula present three major

aims of learner autonomy: learning to learn, facilitating adaptive learning and improving learner motivation and self-efficacy.

5.3.1 Learning to learn

An essential aim of learner autonomy in foreign language learning is "learning to learn", providing learners with the knowledge and experience necessary to learn independently, thereby laying the foundation for lifelong language learning. This aim is given some attention in the Core Curriculum, where it is stated in the introduction that education must "impart attitudes and learning to last a lifetime, and build the foundation for the new skills required in a rapidly changing society" (p.5). Further mention is included in a highlighted quote which states that education "shall not only transmit learning; it shall also provide learners with the ability to acquire and attain new knowledge themselves" (p. 14). This is a clear reference to an ability to learn that every learner should develop, although it must be noted that there is a discrepancy in this quote with respect to the social constructivist view of learning that earlier in this chapter was found to be central in these curricula. Education cannot really "transmit" learning with a view of learning as an active process of the learner.

The statements found this far are clearly in support of "learning to learn" as a general educational aim and the need for individuals to be able to learn for themselves throughout life. But how is the same aim presented as integral to English learning specifically? In the L97 curriculum, the following is one of the three general aims of the English subject:

> To promote pupils' insight into what it is to learn English and their capacity to take charge of their own learning, in order to give all pupils good opportunities to learn the language and lay foundations for further learning in English and learning of other languages (p. 240).

From this excerpt it is apparent that learners are expected to gain an understanding of their own English learning process and become able to control it. Learning to learn is here phrased as "the capacity to take charge of their own learning", a direct quotation from Henri Holec's early definition of learner autonomy which was discussed in chapter 2.2, suggesting influence from the work of the Council of Europe. It is also made clear here that this capacity allows for further language learning. In the English subject curriculum of the LK06, on the other hand, there is no statement highlighting the prospect of lifelong language learning, nor is there

direct reference to an overall capacity or ability to learn a language. On the purposes of the English subject, the following is stated:

> When we are aware of the strategies that are used to learn a language, and strategies that help us to understand and to be understood, the acquisition of knowledge and skills becomes easier and more meaningful. It is also important to establish our own goals for learning, to determine how these can be reached and to assess the way we use the language (p. 2)

Here the aim of learning to learn is explained as awareness of strategies for managing one's own language learning. This may be regarded as a more *instrumental* view of what learning to learn involves, as focus is directed to what learners do to learn rather than an overall ability to learn. While it is more specifically formulated than in the former curriculum, it may also be seen as a narrower perspective on what skills are involved in learning to learn a language. As was discussed in chapter 3.1, the CEFR contains a somewhat rich account of what the ability to learn a language, here also termed *savoir-apprendre*, involves. It should come as no surprise that the CEFR is more detailed than the Norwegian curricula in terms of describing the ability to learn languages, as it is a far more extensive document whose focus is solely on language learning processes. Apart from outlining essential study skills, such as being able to determine goals, choose appropriate learning materials and methods and engage in self-assessment, it also cites language and communication awareness, phonetic awareness and heuristic skills as important to be able to learn languages. It seems that these aspects can be seen as part of the overall capacity to learn asserted in L97 but are not compatible with the view of learning to learn as an awareness of learning strategies that is expressed in LK06.

What prominence is given to the aim of learning to learn English should also be discussed. As we have seen, this aim is one of the three general aims of the English subject in L97. Also, *Knowledge of one's own language learning*, which will "open up for pupils' insight into the process of learning English, increasing their independence and capacity as language learners" (p. 239), constitutes a main subject area, which signals that this is an area of focus equal to the three other main subject areas, *Encountering the spoken and written language*, *Using the language* and *Knowledge of the English language and its cultural context*. Where the subject elements for each grade are specified, however, the aspect of English-learning knowledge is combined with cultural awareness and language awareness, thus forming a joint heading entitled *Knowledge of the English language and culture and of one's own language learning*.

In LK06 learning to learn is no main subject area in itself, it is only part of the main subject area *Language learning*, which "covers knowledge about the language, language usage and insight into one's own language learning" (LK06 English subject curriculum, p.3).

To summarize, it is apparent that the two English subject curricula both express different perspectives on the aim of learning to learn languages and display different emphasis on it. In describing it as a capacity to take charge of one's own language learning, the L97 curriculum has a wider, albeit less specific view on learning to learn than LK06. The latter curriculum explains it as awareness of basic learning strategies, and therefore does not cover other aspects that have been outlined in the CEFR. The aim of learning to learn seems also to be more prominent in the L97 curriculum, as it is regarded as one of three general aims in the English subject as well as one of four main subject areas. Notably, L97 also more clearly states the prospect of lifelong English learning than LK06.

5.3.2 Learner autonomy for adaptive learning

One of the foremost advantages of autonomous learning is its potential for facilitating adaptive learning[12]. In allowing students to take more control of their own learning one is also making sure that every individual learner can learn according to his or her own needs, thereby also making the learning process more efficient. In chapter 2.3.1 it was argued that promotion of learner autonomy should involve fostering this aim. Due to its legal basis in the Norwegian Education Act there is a great deal of focus on learners' rights for adaptive learning to be found in both the L97 curriculum and the LK06 curriculum. Having been introduced as a basic principle in the preceding curriculum, adaptive learning for each and every individual is an important ideal of the "inclusive education" that has been a central policy in Norwegian education since the mid-1970s (Ministry of Education and Research 2008:7). That adaptive learning is regarded as an important principle of education is reflected in the fact that it is repeatedly stated in the Core Curriculum:

> Good teaching addresses the fact that different pupils have different needs, abilities and aspirations in different fields and phases. (p. 21)
>
> Education must be adapted to the needs of every individual. Greater equality of results can be achieved by differences in the efforts directed towards each individual learner. (p. 5)

[12] Adaptive learning here corresponds to the Norwegian term *tilpasset opplæring.*

> The school shall have room for everybody and teachers must therefore have an eye for each individual learner. The mode of teaching must not only be adapted to subject and content, but also to age and maturity, the individual learner and the mixed abilities of the entire class. (p. 19)

The recognition and acceptance of the inevitable differences between learners, as well as the rights of all learners to be included in school, here forms the basis for adaptive learning. These differences are presented as "needs, abilities and aspirations", which are quite extensive terms that capture a wide array of relevant learner characteristics, though it might be argued that the element of learner preferences is also worthy of its own mention. Although the Core Curriculum provides the rationale for adaptive learning, it contains no reference as to how adaptation can be realized in practice. To find this one must look to the Principles and Guidelines of the L97 curriculum and The Quality Framework of the LK06 curriculum, both of which contain sections on this matter:

> If all pupils are to receive schooling of equal value, individual adaptation is essential. Every element in the learning process - syllabus, working methods, organization and learning materials - must therefore be implemented with the abilities of different pupils in mind. (L97 Principles and Guidelines, p. 64)

> Adapted teaching for each and every pupil is characterized by variation in the use of subject materials, ways of working and teaching aids, as well as variation in the structure and intensity of the education. (The Quality Framework, p.5)

From this it is evident that both curricula explain adaptation as something that can be realized by modifying content, methodology and progression so that the learning process is more suited to the individual learner. What the curricula seemingly also have in common is a view that adaptation is something the teacher should do unto a learner. As it is described with such phrases as "efforts directed towards each individual learner", "mode of teaching" and "adapted teaching for each and every pupil" there seems to be an overwhelming focus on the teacher as the sole person in charge of accommodating the learning process for every individual learner - determining objectives, materials, methods and so on - while the idea of giving learners opportunities to make such decisions through negotiation with the teacher is nowhere mentioned. Although not directly dismissing the possibility of providing learners with such opportunities, the Norwegian curricula can be said to promote adaptive teaching rather than adaptive learning. Upon consulting these curricula teachers and learners will find

confirmation that learning shall be adapted to every individual, but might be less likely to assume that any action or responsibility for this should fall on the learners, and that this can be an opportunity for them to develop greater insight into their own learning as well as make the learning process more effective.

As a result the strong emphasis on adaptive learning in recent decades can, when its practice is predominately viewed as a responsibility of the teacher, be said to hinder rather than promote learner autonomy.

5.3.3 Learner autonomy for motivation

Chapter 2.3 stated that there are important relations between the concepts of learner autonomy and learner motivation, and argued that promoting learner autonomy should include mention on its positive effects on intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. The Core Curriculum comments only briefly on learner motivation:

> Successful learning demands two sided motivation: on the part of the pupil and on the part of the teacher. [...] Good teaching will give pupils evidence of succeeding in their work, faith in their own abilities, and the heart to take responsibility for their own learning and their own lives. (Core Curriculum, p. 34)

This statement makes clear the importance of learners' motivation for learning, and that self-efficacy is strengthened by successful learning experiences. It also states that motivated learners are better able to take control of their own learning, as was posited in chapter 2.3.1. However, there seems to be no direct reference to the adverse: the idea that taking control of their own learning is helpful for the learners' motivation. Notably, there is no more elaboration on learner motivation to be found in L97, as there is no direct mention of it in the Principles and Guidelines for Compulsory Education. In The Quality Framework of LK06, however, learner motivation forms an important principle for learning. The section on "Motivation and learning strategies" expands upon this:

> Motivated pupils want to learn, have stamina and curiosity and demonstrate the ability to work towards their goals. Experiencing mastering strengthens one’s stamina both in times of success and adversity. [...] Using varied and adapted work methods and providing the opportunity to actively cooperate in the learning, teachers and instructors that are inspired, enthusiastic, confident and knowledgeable can instill in the pupils a desire to learn and a positive and realistic perception of their own talents

> and possibilities. [...] Good learning strategies promote the pupil's motivation to learn (The Quality Framework, p. 3)

Here intrinsic learner motivation and self-efficacy are presented not only as important prerequisites for learning, but also as positive outcomes of participation in the learning process itself. This is also mentioned in another section of The Quality Framework which elaborates on pupil participation as an important principle for education, where it is stated that, in an inclusive learning environment, "pupil participation is positive for the development of social relations and motivation for learning at all stages of the education" (p. 4). As evidenced by self-determination theory (cf. chapter 2.3.1), participation and cooperation in the learning process provide learners with a sense of control that is important for intrinsic motivation. The issue of learner motivation is here also related to learning strategies. While it is not explained why learning strategies are positive for motivation, it is likely that the awareness and use of strategies entail a sense of control by being able to learn independently.

In short, while the importance of learner motivation is stated in the Core Curriculum, it is only the LK06 curriculum that points to learner motivation as a positive outcome of important aspects of learner autonomy such as learner participation and awareness and use of learning strategies.

5.4 Principles of learner autonomy

The question to be discussed here is how the regulations and guidelines of the curricula answer to the principles for learner autonomy that were proposed in chapter 2.3. The principles of *learner empowerment*, *learner reflection* and *target language use* have been outlined by Little (2004). In addition to these I have added a fourth principle, *interaction*, for the present discussion. The interactive aspect of learner autonomy, although integrated in Little's principles, is of such importance to learner autonomy that I will argue that it should form a principle of its own, particularly with a view to researching curricula that are based on a socio-constructivist view of learning.

5.4.1 Learner empowerment and learner reflection

The principle of learner empowerment states that learners are to be given responsibility and control of their own learning processes, as they cannot truly develop their capacities for autonomous learning without this. The principle of learner reflection states that learners must be given the chance to think about and evaluate aspects of their own learning, so that they

may make a better foundation for future learning. As has previously been stated, there is a close relationship between the principles of learner empowerment and learner reflection. One cannot assume proper control of one's own learning without reflecting on the matter, and learners cannot reflect upon their own learning unless they are empowered with the responsibility and means to do so. Considering this, and the fact that many of the aims of the curricula deal with elements of empowerment and reflection interchangeably, this section will discuss both these principles in relation to the curricular content.

For reference to the issue of how learners should be empowered in education in general, one can again look to the Core Curriculum:

> Education must allow each individual to learn by observing the practical consequences of his or her choices [...] the young must gradually shoulder more responsibility for the planning and achievement of their own education - and they must take responsibility for their own conduct and behavior. (p. 19)

From this excerpt we understand that gradually giving learners responsibility to make decisions of importance to their education is something that all Norwegian educational institutions must commit to. In stating that learners must observe the consequences of their choices, it is also implied that they must be encouraged to reflect on their own learning. This begs the question of specifically how, when and to what extent such opportunities are to be presented to the learners. The excerpt above states that the amount of responsibility that learners will have for their learning must increase gradually, which is natural given that the ability to take control of one's own learning is no inborn human attribute, but rather something that must develop through continuous practice.

In the Principles and Guidelines of the L97 curriculum the most distinct references to learner empowerment and learner reflection are included in an account of the characteristics of the main stages of education[13]. Here it is stated that the primary stage shall focus on learning through play and exploration, so that there may be a smooth transition between kindergarten and school. It is not explicitly stated here that learners at this stage shall make choices or reflect on their own learning. At the intermediate stage, however, learners are to "learn to work independently by developing good working habits and study techniques" and "have the opportunity to engage in activities of their own choice" (p. 81). It is therefore at this stage,

[13] The main stages of compulsory Norwegian education are the primary stage, year 1 to 4; the intermediate stage, year 5 to 7; the lower secondary stage, year 8 to 10.

according to L97, that learners are supposed to begin experimenting with control over their own learning. The lower secondary stage of education goes one step further in empowering the learners, who at this point "should have joint responsibility for the planning, implementation and assessment of shared assignments and for their own learning" (p. 82).

These characteristics form a basis for the desirable progression in the subjects, which is also evident in the contents of the L97 English subject curriculum, where the subject elements of the primary stage are all gathered under the main subject area "Encountering the spoken and written language". These elements mostly deal with learners playing with and exploring the English language. At the intermediate stage and the lower secondary stage, on the other hand, "Knowledge of one's own language learning" is included as one of the main subject areas. For elaboration on how learners are to experience control during the various stages, we must look to the main subject elements of the English curriculum. The elements that are of most relevance to the present discussion are listed below:

The primary stage:

Pupils should have the opportunity to

Grade 4

- talk about what they can do to learn English, practice using sources of reference such as technical aids and illustrated dictionaries, and compile their own wordlists (p. 242)

The intermediate stage:

Pupils should have the opportunity to

Grade 5

- talk about the ways in which they have been working in their language learning; practice listening and giving constructive feedback on each other's work; experience that language can be learned in different ways, gain experience by choosing their own approaches, and use various sources of information, e.g. dictionaries and other works of reference (p. 243)

Grade 6

- practice choosing their own approaches; help each other to compose texts; use dictionaries, technical aids and media (p. 243)

Grade 7

- gain experience of describing their own work and progress, e.g. by keeping a log book; experience choosing learning material; use dictionaries, simple grammars and other aids (p. 244)

The lower secondary stage:

Pupils should have the opportunity to

Grade 8

- help to create good learning situations, discuss ways of working, define good conditions for learning English, and practice evaluating their own work and effort
- use dictionaries, grammars and other sources of reference such as information technology in their work with the language (p. 245)

Grade 9

- define their own learning needs, set up learning targets, gain experience of designing tasks and exchanging them with other pupils, and of planning and evaluating their own work
- make use of such sources of reference as dictionaries, grammars, the media and information technology (p. 245)

Grade 10

- talk about and evaluate learning material and approaches in relation to the aims and objectives of the English syllabus, and make choices that will benefit their own language learning
- solve problems they encounter in their study of the language, using a broad range of sources of reference, and experience how useful information can be stored, organized and made available in the classroom and library (p. 246)

The subject elements are, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, quite detailed, outlining specifically what learners should learn in the English subject in all grades. Specifying aims for

each grade can be seen as rather redundant, as several of the aims are repeated with only slight modification. For example, one can question whether there is much difference between "gaining experience choosing their own approaches" (Grade 5) and "practice choosing their own approaches" (Grade 6). It seems understandable that concerns have been raised about the level of detail that is found in the subject curricula, as there appears to be little room for local adaptation.

Despite the fact that the primary stage of English learning is mainly concerned with learners' encounters with the target language, there is an element included which states that learners in the 4th grade will engage in early reflection on how one can learn English. Looking at the intermediate stage elements, one will find that these are quite similar to the process of learner training as described in chapter 2.3.2; learners must initially become aware of various ways in which they can learn the language, after which they will experiment with and choose approaches and material that they feel are well suited to their own needs and preferences. At the lower secondary stage, learners' joint responsibility for their own learning is evident. At first helping in creating good learning situations, learners will move on to working with the contents of the English curriculum, and in general make decisions for their own learning.

In terms of learner reflection by self-assessment, there is also progression from the intermediate level, in which learners will "talk about" and later "describe" their own work and progression, to the lower secondary level, in which they will "evaluate" their own work, which demands a higher and more critical level of reflection that is more in line with formative self-assessment.

The elements discussed thus far are concerned with the procedural aspect of learning to learn English. Throughout the stages of the English subject there is, however, also a focus on developing the ability to use various language learning aids such as dictionaries and media, which in the CEFR (p. 108) is referred to as a heuristic skill that forms part of the ability to learn. At the lower secondary stage the use of such aids, which at this point also includes the use of information technology, is stated in separate elements.

It should also be noted that, in addition to the elements presented above, there are other subject elements that may also be seen as related to learner autonomy. These are aims to develop learners' awareness of the English language and its use, for example by making the learners acquainted with grammar rules, sentence structures, differences between spoken and written English, et cetera. These elements have not been included above, as they are not

described as directly related to learner empowerment and learner reflection, although they form part of the same subject area, *Knowledge of the English language and culture and of one's own learning*. Promoting language awareness may be seen a means of empowering learners, as the learners, by becoming more familiar with the system of the English language and its principles, will be better equipped for further learning. Notably, language and communication awareness is in the CEFR (p. 107) described as a component of the ability to learn.

The discussion will now turn to the LK06 curriculum and how it facilitates learner empowerment and learner reflection. It was established earlier in this chapter that the Core Curriculum states that learners are to gradually take more responsibility for their own learning processes, which raises the question of how this is followed up in The Quality Framework and the English subject curriculum.

The starting point of The Quality Framework is the Learning Poster, which contains 11 fundamental commitments of Norwegian schools that are based on the regulations of the Education Act and the Core Curriculum. Of these commitments, there are two that are of special importance to the present discussion:

The school and the apprenticeship-training enterprise shall:

- stimulate pupils and apprentices/trainees to develop their own learning strategies and critical-thinking abilities
- facilitate for pupil participation and enable pupils and apprentices/trainees to make informed value choices and choices relating to their education and future professions/occupations (p. 2)

These statements both correlate with the principle of learner empowerment in the sense that they assert that the schools must provide learners with the means and opportunities to take control of their own learning. The concept of learner strategies was touched upon in chapter 5.3.1, where it was found that the LK06 English curriculum explains the ability to learn languages in terms of awareness of such strategies. Here it is stated that learners must be provided with opportunities to develop their own strategies for learning. The process of developing strategies for one's own learning necessarily requires reflection: learners must take into consideration their own learning styles and preferences as well as the learning contexts in which the strategies shall be applied. It is also asserted that learners shall have opportunities

to engage in *pupil participation*, which is a concept that is not mentioned in either L97 or the Core Curriculum. In The Quality Framework pupil participation is elaborated on as follows:

> The school and apprenticeship-training enterprise shall ensure that the pupils gain experience of different types of participation and empowerment in democratic processes in their day-to-day activities and through participation in representative bodies. Pupil participation involves taking part in decisions on one's own and the group's learning. When working with the school subjects, pupil participation makes them more aware of their own learning processes, and this gives greater influence on one's own learning. [...] The pupils shall be able to participate in planning, carrying out and assessing their education within the framework provided by the Act and regulations, including the National Curriculum. The extent of this participation and how it is practiced must vary according to the age and development levels of the pupils. Pupil participation requires that they are familiar with the choices they can make and the possible consequences of these choices. (p. 4)

Pupil participation is a key principle of The Quality Framework, and is concerned not only with making learners aware of and able to control their own learning, but also with making learners capable of democratic participation. It is a therefore a concept that involves more than making decisions about one's own learning; it also involves contributing to making decisions for a group or for the class as a whole, and is therefore also important in developing social competence. What is most relevant for the present discussion, however, is that pupil participation involves participating in planning, execution and assessment of learning, which ensures both learner empowerment and learner reflection. It is also stated here that this participation must be adjusted to the age and development levels of the learners.

As The Quality Framework includes no section in which the various stages are explained, it is only the competence aims of every subject curriculum that can provide indications of how learners are to develop learning strategies and participate in their own learning during the course of education. The competence aims in the LK06 English subject curriculum which are relevant for the present discussion are listed below:

After year 4:

The aims of the studies are to enable pupils to

- converse about one's own work in learning English

- use digital resources and other aids in exploring the language (p. 6)

After year 7:

The aims of the studies are to enable pupils to

- identify and use different situations and learning strategies to expand one's English-language skills
- describe his/her own work in learning English
- use digital resources and other aids in one's own language learning (p. 7)

After year 10:

The aims of the studies are to enable pupils to

- use different situations, working methods and learning strategies to develop one's English-language skills
- comment on own work in learning English
- identify significant linguistic similarities and differences between English and one's native language and use this knowledge in one's own language learning
- select different digital resources and other aids and use them in an independent manner in own language learning (p. 8)

It is evident that the aims in this English curriculum are somewhat different from those found in the L97 curriculum, the most obvious differences being that these are competence aims, which explain what learners should be able to do rather than how they should work in the English subject, and that aims are provided only for the end of each stage in education. As a result, they are both fewer in number and less specific, which leaves more room for local and individual adaptation. Notably, there is no elaboration on the degree to which learners may engage in pupil participation at the various stages of English learning, which means that it is the individual teacher that must decide upon this.

Upon closer inspection of these competence aims it seems, however, that there are several aspects of the L97 curriculum that have been retained in the LK06 curriculum. For example, we find that learners at the end of the primary stage shall be able to engage in early learner reflection, which is also stated in L97. Also included are aims of developing the ability to use various aids for learning, although with greater focus on digital resources than in L97, as

would perhaps be expected due to the increased use of such tools in present-day education. Furthermore, in the discussion of the subject elements of the L97 English curriculum it was found that some of its aims are concerned with developing language awareness, and that language awareness empowers the learner as it is part of the ability to learn English. Such aims can also be found in the LK06 curriculum, within the subject area *Language learning*. One of these competence aims has been listed above, as it is particularly interesting with respect to learner reflection. This aim states that the learner at the end of the lower-secondary stage should be able to "identify significant linguistic similarities and differences between English and one's native language and use this knowledge in one's own language learning". This aim clearly integrates language awareness in learner reflection, and therefore also in learner autonomy. Reflecting upon similarities and differences between the native language and the target language is notably also a metacognitive exercise featured in the language biography of the European Language Portfolio.

Instead of stating aims based on the procedural aspect of taking charge of one's own learning, such as determining objectives, learning materials and methods, the LK06 English curriculum is centered on learners' awareness of appropriate learning strategies. Notably, while it is stated in The Quality Framework that learners should "develop their own strategies for learning", the competence aims found in the English curriculum do not seem to stress this. After the intermediate stage, learners should be enabled to "identify and use" different learning strategies to improve their English-skills, whereas they after the lower secondary stage should be enabled to "use" different learning strategies. It is in other words not made explicitly clear that learners must develop their own learning strategies, which is a process that requires learner reflection.

The main reference to learner reflection, however, is found in the aims which state that learners after the intermediate stage should be able to describe their own work in learning English, and that they after the lower secondary stage should be able to comment on it. These aims are quite akin to the L97 aims, with only a small change in terminology: L97 states that lower-secondary stage learners should "evaluate" their own work. It could be argued here that "commenting" upon one's own work does not necessarily imply that there must be assessment, and can involve merely describing it.

In chapter 5.2 it was found that the L97 curriculum contains reference to what various working methods should be used in education, and that it puts particular emphasis on project

work. Although, rather surprisingly, no mention of project work is included in the English curriculum, the Principles and Guidelines of L97 recommend that a certain percentage of classroom hours should be set aside for theme and project work. It was further stated that project work as a learning method is of great importance for learner autonomy in education, which will here be discussed in relation to learner empowerment and learner reflection.

In the Principles and Guidelines of L97, project work is defined as "a form of work in which pupils, in order to tackle a problem or a set of problems or a specific assignment, define and carry out a purposeful piece of work from the original idea to the finished product, result or resolution (p. 85)". The essential criterion here is that learners are given active roles, responsibility for and control of the process. It is also stressed that project work must be "adapted to the ages, interests and aptitudes of the pupil". In taking such aspects into account, this mode of learning will be both relevant and efficient for each and every learner. Adapting the project to account for these needs is, however, not the sole responsibility of an authoritative teacher. Rather, it should be a result of teacher-learner negotiation:

> The planning, implementation and assessment of project work should be carried out in close cooperation between pupils and teachers. The teacher plays an important role as a guide and a mentor. (L97 Principles and Guidelines, p. 85)

The emphasis on negotiation between learners and teachers and on the roles that teachers assume in project work are very much in line with Little's principle of learner empowerment. Furthermore, it is also stated that assessment also should be carried out through negotiation, ensuring that the learners must reflect upon the process. It must also be asserted that there is an interactive and cooperative nature to project work in which learners, in addition to improving their abilities for working with others, also have the opportunity to learn from each other. While the L97 curriculum does not explicitly state that project work will be carried out in groups, the learners' options to present their findings and experiences to peers and teachers are another opportunity for interaction. In short, the emphasis on project work in L97 must be seen as important to the promotion of learner autonomy in this curriculum.

This section has discussed how the L97 curriculum and the LK06 curriculum facilitate learner empowerment and learner reflection, which are essential principles for learner autonomy. The Core Curriculum states that learners should have the opportunity to gradually take more responsibility for their own learning. The Principles and Guidelines and the English subject of L97 build upon this by asserting that learners at the intermediate stage should begin taking

part in various decisions on their own learning, and that they, at the lower secondary stage, should have joint responsibility for their own learning, which must be acknowledged as a powerful claim for learner empowerment. The Quality Framework and English subject of LK06, on the other hand, empower learners by stressing the attainment of learning strategies and that learners should be given opportunities for pupil participation, though it is not made clear the extent to which learners can participate. The principle of learner reflection, on the other hand, is fostered in the English curriculum of both L97 and LK06 by aims stating that learners should engage in increasingly demanding forms of self-assessment. It was also found that project work as a learning method encompasses elements of learner empowerment, learner reflection and interaction, and that the L97 curriculum promotes learner autonomy by emphasizing project work.

5.4.2 Target language use

Little's third principle of learner autonomy in foreign language learning states that all classroom activities should be carried out in the target language. Chapter 2.3.2 proposed that curricula should encourage target language use, as this, from a Vygotskyan perspective, stimulates reflection and independent thinking, as well as making the learners more conscious of their own language learning development, which is essential for developing their abilities to learn the language.

The English subject curriculum of L97 includes a section outlining appropriate approaches and guidelines for the English subject, in which the following is stated:

> Pupils shall be given opportunities to discover and investigate the language, use it themselves right from the start, and, through their own use of it, gradually systematize their discoveries and try out their knowledge of the language. [...] Most classroom communication shall be in English. (L97, p. 238).

While making it clear that English must be the preferred language of use, this excerpt also points to the fact that target language use will improve learners' awareness and understanding of the language, which must be regarded as positive for learner autonomy.

In the English subject curriculum of LK06, as in all other subjects of that curriculum, there are few practical guidelines for the learning process, as it mostly deals with the overall purposes of the subject and the concomitant competence aims. Therefore, one can find no direct reference to the degree to which the target language should be used in the English

classroom. There are, however, statements from which it is inferable that English should be the primary language of use, for example, that "the development of oral skills in English involves using oral language in gradually using more precise and nuanced language in conversation and in other kinds of oral communication" (p. 5).

5.4.3 Interaction

Previously in this chapter it was argued that the Norwegian national curricula are built on a social constructivist view of learning which entails that the development of skills and knowledge is dependent on interaction with others. In line with this view, Little (2004) claims that the individual learner's capacity to take control of and reflect upon his or her learning prospers by interaction with peers. In chapter 2.3.2 I argued that, since interaction seems to be essential for learner autonomy, it should accordingly be included as an additional principle for learner autonomy. This principle states that learners must be given opportunities to share responsibility for each other's learning, and in this section it will therefore be discussed how the curricula facilitate such opportunities. One suitable approach is, for instance, to make learners work in teams in which they all are responsible for making decisions. In the Core Curriculum the following is stated:

> Progress depends not only on how teachers function in relation to each pupil, but also on how they make each of the pupils relate to the others. In a good working team, the members enhance the quality of each others' work. In this, pupils also share responsibility for planning, executing and evaluating their own work. (p. 23)

The statement above agrees with the idea that learners can improve by mediating and supporting each other's learning. What is more interesting is the assertion that learners should share the responsibility for learning with each other through planning, execution and evaluation, which supports the principle of interaction.

It should also be explored how the L97 curriculum and the LK06 curriculum build on the principle of interaction by shared responsibility for learning. In the Principles and Guidelines of L97 this is referred to twice:

> Pupils who work together learn from each other. [...] Through cooperation they learn to plan and to allocate tasks, find solutions to problems, and evaluate the results of their efforts. Cooperation between pupils must therefore have a prominent place in school activities. (p. 69)

> The pupils shall learn to work independently and develop the ability to cooperate with other pupils and with adults in the school community. They shall work in teams and take part in the joint planning, implementation, problem solving and evaluation of tasks (p. 73)

The emphasis on learners' shared responsibility for learning expressed in L97 should perhaps be seen in relation to the focus on project and theme work that is expressed in this curriculum, as such approaches are often carried out in groups. This emphasis is also reflected in the English subject curriculum, which state that learners "in cooperation with teachers and fellow pupils will gain experience of shaping their own language learning" (L97 p. 238). Interestingly, there are also references to ways in which learners will reflect on each other's work. These are presented in the main subject elements that were discussed earlier in this chapter, where it is stated that learners should have the opportunity to "practice listening and giving constructive feedback" (p. 243), "help each other to compose texts" (p. 243), "gain experience of designing tasks and exchanging them with other pupils" (p. 245).

As the LK06 English curriculum does not include any information as to what methods should be used, there is no reference to how learners can share responsibility for learning. In The Quality Framework, only the following is stated on learner interaction at a general level:

> "When pupils work together with adults or each other, the diversity of abilities and talents may strengthen the community and the learning and development of the individual." (The Quality Framework, p. 5)

This excerpt essentially expresses the same view that was presented in the Core Curriculum, namely that learners working with each other and teachers will improve their development, here also stressing the diversity of learners as positive for both the individual and the collective. There is, however, no mention of how such work will result in learners' sharing responsibility of learning with each other. Therefore, while both curricula maintain that interaction between learners is essential for their development, it is only in the L97 curriculum that builds on the principle of interaction that in this thesis is suggested as an important principle for learner autonomy.

6.

Conclusion

The research question of the present thesis was formulated as follows: how do Norwegian national curricula promote the concept of learner autonomy as part of English learning? In this final chapter an attempt will be made to answer the research question by summarizing the findings of the qualitative document analysis that were presented and discussed in the previous chapter. A section is also included in which possibilities for future research are discussed.

6.1 Summary

The theoretical framework for the present thesis was presented in chapter 2. Here the key developments of the concept of learner autonomy were discussed, and a working definition of the term learner autonomy was provided. The chapter also presented various aims and principles that were deemed important for learner autonomy promotion. Chapter 3 focused on the importance of the work of the Council of Europe, briefly discussing how learner autonomy is promoted in two of its most influential documents, the Common European Framework of References for Languages (2001) and The European Portfolio (2008). Chapter 4 briefly presented the curricula subject to analysis and explained the choice of research method. It was asserted that the research of this thesis should be regarded as interpretative, seeking to understand how learner autonomy is promoted in the curricula rather than determining the extent of this promotion. The choice of a qualitative document analysis as a research method allowed for these curricula to be studied in some detail, so that the analysis would yield a fuller perspective on how learner autonomy is promoted.

The subsequent chapter presented the findings of the analysis and discussed these. After the first read-through of the curricula, it was concluded that the first point of discussion should be to find out whether the curricula expresses a fundamental learning view which supports the promotion of learner autonomy. Excerpts taken from the Core Curriculum proved that the curricula in question were based on a learner-centered, social constructivist view of learning, which has formed the basis for the development of the concept of learner autonomy. In the

Core Curriculum it is made completely clear that learning is an active process of the learner, in fact that it happens "within" the learner, suggesting that the learner *constructs* knowledge, and that learning is not simply a matter of receiving knowledge from somebody else. Consequently, it is also stated that teaching must be a matter of facilitating the learning process, and that teachers must take on the role of guiding the learners and motivating them in their efforts rather than controlling their actions. It is also recognized in the Core Curriculum that learners construct their knowledge through interaction with others, which is another basic assumption of social constructivism.

The first read-through of the curricula also revealed that there are several aspects of the design of the curricula that can be said to influence how learner autonomy is promoted. The L97 curriculum and the LK06 curriculum differ in a number of ways, but the sheer size of and level of detail in L97 compared to its successor are the most conspicuous differences. The main reason for this is that both its Principles and Guidelines and its various subject curricula include extensive references to materials and methods for learning, whereas LK06 contains no such references. It was therefore argued in chapter 5.2 that LK06 is more open to local and individual adaptation, and that it largely leaves the responsibility of determining how its aims should be reached to the teachers. It was also discovered that L97 promotes learner autonomy by emphasizing learning methods that allow for learners to take control of the learning process, in particular project work, which requires learners to plan, execute and assess their work on a chosen assignment through negotiation with teachers and/or peers.

The same chapter also addresses the fact that aims are specified differently in the subject curricula. In L97 the subject matter is expressed in process-oriented aims, aims that state what learners should experience in the subject. Concerns about the high level of detail in these aims and their weak relation to assessment led to the introduction of competence aims in the 2006 reform, aims that express what learners should be able to do at the end of each stage of education. These competence aims are more centered on the learners, and through working with these aims learners may better understand and reflect upon their own progress. However, these aims also cause a greater focus on summative assessment, which might lead to teachers and learners emphasizing assessable aims at the expense of the aim of developing the ability to learn.

In the theoretical framework that was provided in chapter 2 a set of preliminary aims and principles were presented as important for the promotion of learner autonomy in the curricula.

It was argued that there are several aims for learner autonomy in foreign language learning that should be made clear in the curricula, in order to justify autonomous learning for both teachers and learners.

The most basic purpose of learner autonomy is arguably to develop the learners' ability to learn the language, so as to facilitate lifelong language learning. In the Core Curriculum there was reference to an overall ability to learn and to the prospect of "imparting attitudes and learning to last a lifetime" (p. 5). Further investigation showed, however, that the English curricula of L97 and LK06 differ somewhat in their presentation of this aim in English learning specifically. Whereas L97 refers to an overall "capacity to take charge of one's own learning", and so draws inspiration from the work of the Council of Europe, LK06 refers to the need for learners to develop an awareness of language learning strategies, which can be regarded as a narrower and more instrumental view of learning to learn languages than that of L97. It was also argued that the L97 curriculum more clearly promotes the prospect of lifelong language learning.

Another purpose of learner autonomy explored in these curricula is facilitating adaptive learning, which is a long-standing and prominent aim in Norwegian education. In giving learners the opportunities to take control of their own learning process, one is also ensuring that learners can learn in accordance with their own needs and preferences, thereby making learning both adaptive and effective. A closer look at statements referring to adaptive learning in the Core Curriculum, the Principles and Guidelines of L97 and The Quality Framework of LK06 revealed a seemingly unanimous view of adaptive learning as something the teacher must do to the learners, by determining their objectives, learning materials and learning methods for them. It was therefore argued that the focus on adaptive learning in the Norwegian national curricula can be seen as hindering rather than promoting learner autonomy.

Based on self-determination theory it was stated in chapter 2.3 of this thesis that focus on autonomous learning has positive effects on intrinsic learner motivation and self-efficacy, and that it should be explored how the curricula in question stress increased learner motivation as a positive outcome of autonomous learning. It was found that, while the Core Curriculum states the importance of learner motivation and self-efficacy in order for the learners to take control of their own learning, it is only in The Quality Framework of LK06 it is stated that

learners' cooperation and participation in the learning process can be a means of motivating them.

In order to answer the question of how learner autonomy is promoted it was also discussed how the curricula build on essential principles of learner autonomy suggested by Little (2004). Little's principle of *learner empowerment* asserts that learners must be provided with control of and responsibility for their own learning if they are to develop their ability to learn. The Core Curriculum was found to build on this principle by stating that learners should "gradually shoulder more responsibility" (p. 19) for their education. However, the nature and extent of this responsibility is described somewhat differently in L97 and LK06. The Principles and Guidelines of L97 outlines gradual learner responsibility up to the lower secondary stage, at which point learners shall have "joint responsibility for their own learning". The Quality Framework of LK06, on the other hand, states that learners should have opportunities for pupil participation, which involves learners "taking part in decisions on one's own learning" (p. 4), though there is no elaboration on the extent of this participation.

The principle of *learner reflection* asserts that learners should engage in metacognitive exercises, which indicates that they should reflect on aspects their own learning so that they may gain insight into their own learning situation and become better able to make decisions for further learning. The main reference to learner reflection in both curricula were found in the English subject curricula, which state that learners should engage in increasingly critical forms of self-assessment.

Little's third principle, *target language use*, states that all classroom interaction should be carried out in the target language, which in the case of this thesis is English. The principle is based on the idea that speaking stimulates reflection and makes learners better aware of their own target language development. It was consequently discussed to which extent the English subject curricula answered to this principle. In a section on appropriate approaches and guidelines for the English subject, the L97 curriculum states very clearly that English is to be the primary language of communication in the subject. The LK06 curriculum, however, contains no guidelines explicitly stating the extent to which English should be used.

Although not a principle of Little's, it was argued in the theoretical framework of this thesis that learners' sharing responsibility for each other's learning is important for learner autonomy, as the ability to learn is promoted by *interaction* with peers and teachers. It was proved that both the Principles and Guidelines as well as the English subject curriculum of

L97 build on this principle by referring to ways in which learners should share the responsibility for learning. While The Quality Framework of LK06 affirms that interaction and group work can strengthen the development of learners, it does not include mention of sharing responsibility for learning.

In conclusion, the analysis of these two curricula was fruitful, as it provided a comparative perspective illustrating that learner autonomy can be promoted in several ways. Although sharing a fundamental view of learning that supports learner autonomy, it is evident that the two curricula represent two very different approaches to the promotion of learner autonomy in foreign language learning. Through its extensive and detailed guidelines of methods, materials and progression, both at the general level and the subject level, the L97 curriculum seemingly has a very *direct* approach to learner autonomy promotion. The document analysis in the present thesis has shown that, compared to LK06, L97 more clearly states the aim of lifelong language learning, more clearly states the responsibility of learners to take control of their own learning, recommends the use of methods that support autonomy, most notably project work; encourages primary use of the target language in the classroom and stresses that learners should share responsibility for each other's learning. In short, the L97 curriculum more specifically answers the question of how autonomous learning can be facilitated. The LK06 curriculum, however, with its lack of methodological and content guidelines and its less descriptive subject aims, can be viewed as expressing a more *open* approach to learner autonomy promotion, in which the nature and extent of autonomous learning is left to be determined at local levels. An outcome of this approach to learner autonomy promotion is that, with more leaner-centered subject aims such as those outlined in the LK06 English curriculum, there may be more opportunities for learners to negotiate with teachers what means should be used to reach the aims, and for learners to reflect on their progression in relation to these aims. With this approach, however, LK06 has left more responsibility on the teachers to facilitate autonomous learning, which raises the question of whether teachers are interested in, or even capable of, assuming that responsibility. Notably, it has been posited by teachers that the methodological freedom of LK06 combined with its emphasis on competence aims has resulted in more teacher-centered classroom practices and less learner-centered approaches such as project work (Nordenbo 2013: 22), which could indicate that some teachers, free to choose methods and feeling pressure for their learners to reach the competence aims, are less comfortable giving learners responsibility for their own learning. It is also no secret that some teachers generally subscribe to a more traditional and teacher-

centered view of learning. As briefly stated in chapter 3.3, this serves to demonstrate the importance of promoting the concept of learner autonomy in teacher education, so that future teachers will be more able and willing to facilitate autonomous learning. Significant efforts have been made by the Council of Europe to develop tools for this aim, the most notable of which is arguably the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL, 2007).

6.2 Further research

The work on this thesis has provided me with better insight into a topic I deem interesting both on a personal and scholarly level. The research field of learner autonomy in foreign language learning is still growing internationally (Benson 2006: 21), and it is at present an exciting time to contribute to this development. However, the present thesis is a contribution to a field of learner autonomy research that is in need of more scholarly attention. While there has been a fair amount of research conducted on learner autonomy at the classroom level in Norway, this thesis is, to my knowledge, the first paper to study the promotion of learner autonomy in Norwegian national curricula. As national curricula form the most fundamental authority on the content and nature of education, curricular research is an area of study which deserves attention from researchers. It is, after all, the curriculum that all those involved in the field of education - teachers, learners, educational administrators, parents, et cetera - must look to for reference on what should be learned and how it should be learned. It is also the content of the curriculum that forms the basis for the development of textbooks and other learning materials which are highly influential in present-day education. The manner in which the concept of learner autonomy is promoted in curricula is therefore highly influential on classroom practice, and should accordingly be subject to more research.

It would be interesting to see comparable studies conducted on curricula from other countries, so that trends and differences may be discussed in an international context. A few important contributions have already been made in exploring the promotion of learner autonomy in European curricula (notably those of Sifakis et.al. 2006), but there is still need for more research on the matter. It is not unlikely that such studies will be approached differently from the document analysis in the present thesis, which is, as stated in chapter 4.3, an interpretive study that does not claim definitive answers to the question of how learner autonomy is promoted. Other researchers discussing the promotion of learner autonomy in curricula might well use other methods or emphasize other aspects and principles of the concept than those

investigated in this thesis, which should be considered positive as regards diversity in research.

As was briefly mentioned in chapter 4.3, the findings of the present thesis would be further explicated if some research was carried out on teachers' and learners' interpretations of the aspects of learner autonomy in the curricula, for example by means of interviews or questionnaires. Learners and teachers are the only direct participants in language learning, and can best explain how the learning processes are shaped by the content of the curriculum. For example, what are the teachers' attitudes to learner autonomy in the curriculum? To what extent are learners aware of, or made aware of, elements of learner autonomy in the curriculum? What are the learners' thoughts on the inclusion of such concepts as responsibility of their own learning, self-assessment and project work in their curriculum? Answers to such questions would help to illustrate how the promotion of learner autonomy in the curricula influences the most important agents in education.

Education always aims to improve, and educational policy is subject to continuous change in step with shifting pedagogical trends. As new educational reforms are carried out and new curricula are developed, both in Norway and elsewhere, it is certainly to be hoped that there will be interest in investigating their promotion of the concept of learner autonomy.

REFERENCES

Literature

Afsar, A., Bachmann, K., Hopmann, S. and Sivesind, K. (2007). *Hvordan formidles lærеplanen?* Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget.

Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. London: Longman.

Benson, P. (2006). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching* (vol. 40). Cambridge University Press.

Benson, P. (2009). Making sense of autonomy in language learning. In Pemberton, R., Toogood, S. and Barfield, A. (eds.). *Maintaining Control: Autonomy and Language Learning*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Benson, P. and Voller, P. (1997). *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*. London: Longman.

Borg, S. and Al Busaidi, S. (2012). Learner Autonomy: English Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices. *ELT Research Paper*, 12-07.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, vol. 9 (2).

Cohen, A. (1974). *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed.). New York: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Danielsen, A.G. and Tjomsland, H.E. (2013). Mestringsforventning, trivsel og frafall. Ch. 16 of Krumsvik, R.J. and Saljö, R. (2013). *Praktisk-Pedagogisk Utdanning - En Antologi.* Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Deci, E. and Ryan, R. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, vol. 11*. London: Routledge.

Dickinson, L. (1987). *Self-Instruction in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dickinson, L. (1992). *Learner Autonomy 2: Learner Training for Language Learning*. Dublin: Authentik.

Dunn, R. S. (2000). Capitalizing on College Students' Learning Styles in Higher Education. In Dunn, R. S. and Griggs, S.A. (eds.) *Practical Approaches to Using Learning Styles in Higher Education*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Esch, E. (2009). Crash or clash? Autonomy 10 years on. In Pemberton, R., Toogood, S. and Barfield, A. (eds.). *Maintaining Control: Autonomy and Language Learning*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Fenner, A-B. (1998). Developing materials for autonomous learning: Writing a coursebook as a means to promote learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom - a paradox?. In Council of Europe (1998). *Modern language learning and teaching in central and eastern Europe: which diversification and how can it be achieved?* Strasbourg/European Centre for Modern Languages: Council of Europe Publishing.

Fenner, A-B. (2003). Learner autonomy. In Newby, D. (ed.) *Thematic Collections: Presentation and evaluation of work carried out by the ECML from 1995 to 1999*. Strasbourg/European Centre for Modern Languages: Council of Europe Publishing.

Fenner, A-B. (2006). Learner autonomy - One of the most widely touted terms in recent discussion on language teaching? In Fenner, A-B and Newby, D. (eds.). *Coherence of principles, cohesion of competences. Exploring theories and designing materials for teacher education.* Strasbourg/European Centre for Modern Languages: Council of Europe Publishing.

Figueras, N. (2012). The impact of the CEFR. *ELT Journal*, vol.66 (4). Oxford University Press.

Gonzales, J. A. (2008). Promoting student autonomy through the use of the European Language Portfolio. *ELT Journal*, vol. 63 (4). Oxford University Press.

Gremmo, M-J. and Riley, P. (1995). Autonomy, self-direction and self-access in language teaching and learning: The history of an idea. *System*, vol. 23 (2). Pergamon.

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy in foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Keatinge, M.W. (1896). *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*. London: A. and C. Black.

Kelly, A.V. (1999). *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice* (4th ed.) London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Kelly, G. (1955). *The Psychology of Personal Constructs, vol. II*. New York: Norton.

Kohonen, V. (2000). Experiential language learning: second language learning as cooperative learner education. In Nunan, D. (ed.) *Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Komorowska, H. (2012). Learner autonomy and its implications for the EPOSTL. Ch. 3 in Newby, D. (ed.). *Insights into the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Koritzinsky, T. (2000). *Pedagogikk og Politikk i L97: Læreplanens innhold og beslutningsprosessene*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). *Beyond Methods: Macro-strategies for Language Teaching.* Newhaven: Yale University Press.

Lamb, T. and Jimènez Raya, M. (2008). *Pedagogy for Autonomy in Modern Languages Education: Theory, practice and teacher education*. Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D. (1990). Autonomy in language learning. In Gathercole (ed.) *Autonomy in Language Learning*. London: CILT.

Little, D. (1991). *Learner Autonomy 1. Definitions, Issues and Problems.* Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D. (1999). Learner autonomy is more than a Western cultural construct. In Cotterall, S. and Crabbe, D. (eds.). *Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Defining the Field and Effecting Change*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Little, D. (2002). The European Portfolio: structure, origins, implementation and challenges. *Language Teaching*, vol. 35-03. Cambridge University Press.

Little, D. (2003a). *Languages in the Post-primary Curriculum. A discussion paper*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Little, D. (2004). Constructing a theory of learner autonomy: some steps along the way. In K. Mäkinen, P. Kaikkonen, and V. Kohonen (eds.). *Future Perspectives in Foreign Language Education.* Oulu: Faculty of Education, Oulu University.

Little, D. (2012). Learner Autonomy, the Common European Framework of References for Languages, the European Portfolio and Language Teaching at University. In Alderete-Dìez, P., Incalcaterra McLoughlin, L. and Nì Dhonnchadha, L. (eds.) *Intercultural Studies and*

Foreign Language Learning, vol.12: Translation, Technology and Autonomy in Language Teaching and Learning. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Markussen, Borgen, Frøseth, Lødding, Sandberg (2010). Early Leaving, Non-Completion and Completion in Upper Secondary Education in Norway. Ch. 12 of Lamb, S., Markussen, E., Polesel, J., Sandberg, N., and Teese, R. (eds.). *School Dropout and Completion. International Comparative Studies in Theory and Policy*. London: Springer.

Mitchell, R. (1994). The communicative approach to language teaching. In Swarbrick, A. *Teaching Modern Languages*. New York: Routledge.

Nordenbo, S. E. (2013). *Kunnskapsløftet som reformproces*. *En synteserapport*. Aarhus: Institut for uddannelse og pædagogik, Aarhus Universitet.

Palfreyman, D. and Smith, R. (2003). *Learner Autonomy Across Cultures: Language Education Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Prior, L. (2014). Content Analysis. Ch. 18 in Leavy, P. (ed.) (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Rasen, W. B. (2014). Mer oppmerksomhet om evnerike barn i skolen. *Lektorbladet*, (vol. 6).

Rapley, T. (2007). Exploring Documents. In Rapley, T. (ed.) *Doing Conversation, Discourse and Document Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Sifakis, N., Oder, T., Lehmann, M. and Bluma, D. (2006). Aspects of Learner Autonomy in the National Curricula of Four European Countries. In Fenner, A-B. and Newby, D. (eds). *Coherence of Principles, Cohesion of Competences*. Strasbourg/European Centre for Modern Languages: Council of Europe Publishing.

Sivesind, K. (2012). Kunnskapsløftet: Implementering av nye læreplaner i reformen. *Acta Didactica,* 2/2012. Oslo: Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleforskning.

Smith, R. (2002). Autonomy, context, and 'appropriate methodology'. In Vieira, F., Moreira, M.A., Barbosa, I. and Paiva, M. (eds.). 2002. *Pedagogy for Autonomy and English Learning: Proceedings of the 1st Conference of the Working Group – Pedagogy for Autonomy*. Braga: Universidade do Minho.

Smith, R. (2008). The History of Learner Autonomy. In Dam, L. (ed.) (2008). *The 9th Nordic Conference on Developing Learner Autonomy in Language Learning and Teaching: Status and Ways Ahead after Twenty Years.* Copenhagen: CVU.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2008). *Europeisk språkperm 13-18*.

The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs (1999). *The Curriculum for the 10-year Compulsory School in Norway*. Oslo: National Centre for Educational Resources.

Trebbi, T. (ed.) (1990). *Third Nordic Workshop on Developing Autonomous Learning in the FL Classroom*. Bergen: Department of Education.

Trebbi, T. (2003). Curriculum development and learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: constraints and possibilities. In Little, D., Ridley, J. and Ushioda, E.(eds) (2003). *Learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: teacher, learner, curriculum and assessment*. Dublin: Authentik.

Trim, J. (2002). Can the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages help students to become autonomous? In Direcciò General de Polìtica Linguìstica (ed.) *VII Trobada de Centres d'Autoaprenentatge. Autoaprenentatge: models d'integraciò dins i fora de l'aula*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya

Ushioda, E. (2011). Why autonomy? Insights from motivation theory and research. *Innovation in language learning and teaching*, vol. 5 (2).

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1991). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Wesley, J. J. (2014). The qualitative analysis of political documents. In Kaal, B., Maks, I. and van Elfrinkhof (eds.). *From Text to Political Positions: Text Analysis Across Disciplines*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Øzerk, K. (2006). *Opplæringsteori og læreplanforståelse*. Oslo: Oplandske Bokforlag.

Electronic documents

Act of 17 July 1998 no. 61 relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (the Education Act). Available at https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/vedlegg/grunnskole/dokumenter/education act_with_amendments_entered2013.pdf (accessed on 05.01.2015)

Apple, M. W. (2008). Curriculum Planning: Content, form and the politics of accountability. In Connelly, F. M., Fang He, M. and Phillion, J. (eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction*. SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: http://knowledge.sagepub.com.pva.uib.no/view/hdbk_curriculum/SAGE.xml (accessed on 23.01.2015)

Council of Europe (2001). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf (accessed on 29.01.2015)

Council of Europe (1982). Recommendation R (82) 18 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States Concerning Modern Languages. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dlapil/codexter/Source/CM_Recommendation_R_82_1_EN.pdf (accessed on 04.02.2015)

Council of Europe (2011). European Language Portfolio ELP: Principles and guidelines with added explanatory notes. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/elp-reg/Source/Templates/ELP_Annotated_PrinciplesGuidelines_EN.pdf (accessed on 06.02.2015)

Hodgson, J., Rønning, W. and Tomlinson, P. (2012). *Sammenhengen Mellom Undervisning og Læring. En studie av læreres praksis og deres tenkning under Kunnskapsløftet. Sluttrapport*. Nordland Research Institute. Available at: http://www.udir.no/Upload/Rapporter/2012/SMUL.pdf?epslanguage=no (accessed on 10.05.2015)

Levin, B. (2008). Curriculum policy and the politics of what should be learned in schools. In Connelly, F. M., He, M. F. and Phillion, J. (eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction*. SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: http://knowledge.sagepub.com.pva.uib.no/view/hdbk_curriculum/SAGE.xml (accessed on 23.01.2015)

Little, D. (2003b). *Learner autonomy and second/foreign language learning.* Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Good Practice Guide. http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/1409 (accessed on 04.05.2015)

Little, D. and Perclovà, R. (2001). The European Language Portfolio: a guide for teachers and teacher trainers. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/elp-reg/Source/Publications/ELPguide_teacherstrainers_EN.pdf (accessed on 08.02.2015)

Locke, J. (2001). Some Thoughts Concerning Education. Vol. XXXVII, Part 1. *Harvard Classics, Vol. 37, Part 1*. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; Bartleby.com, 2001. Available at: www.bartleby.com/37/1/ (accessed on 08.01.2015)

Ministry of Education and Research (2004). *St. meld. nr. 30 (2003-2004). Kultur for læring*. Available at: https://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-030-2003-2004-/id404433/?docId=STM200320040030000DDDEPIS&ch=1&q= (accessed on 03.05.2015)

Ministry of Education and Research (2008). *All Inclusive...? Inclusive Education in Norway - Policy, Practice, Experiences and Challenges*. Available at: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/norway_NR08.pdf (accessed on 07.05.2015)

Research Council of Norway (2003). *Evaluering av Reform 97*. Available at: http://www.forskningsradet.no/csstorage/flex_attachment/Sluttrapport_evaluering_av_Reform_97-_Ve_reform97.pdf (accessed on 15.03.2015).

Statistics Norway (2014). Throughput of pupils in upper secondary education, 2008-2013. Available at: http://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/statistikker/vgogjen/aar/2014-06-19 (accessed on 06.10.2014)

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2013). *English Subject Curriculum*. Available at: http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/?lplang=eng (accessed on 12.05.2015)

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2005). *The Quality Framework*. Available at: http://www.udir.no/Upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte_lareplaner_for_Kunnskapsloeftet/5/prinsipper_lk06_Eng.pdf?epslanguage=no (accessed on 12.05.2015)

Trim, J. (2001). The Work of the Council of Europe in the Field of Modern Languages, 1957-2001. Available at: http://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/resources/John%20Trim%20collection/Trim_TheWorkOfTheCouncilOfEurope_ModernLanguages_1957_2001.pdf (accessed on 03.02.2015)

Westbury, I. (2008) Making Curricula: Why do States Make Curricula, and How? In Connelly, F. M., He, M. F. and Phillion, J. (eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction*. SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: http://knowledge.sagepub.com.pva.uib.no/view/hdbk_curriculum/SAGE.xml (accessed on 23.01.2015)