

# Teacher's Beliefs about Literature as a Way of Talking about Mental Health Topics in the English Classroom

A mixed- methods study.

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## Summary in Norwegian

De siste årene har vist et økende fokus på betydningen av god psykisk helse. Denne utviklingen har også kommet til syne i skolen, ettersom fagfornyelsen fra 2020 medbrakte det tverrfaglige temaet «folkehelse og livsmestring» som anmoder lærerne til å gi elevene kunnskap som fremmer «god psykisk helse». Uten ytterligere definisjon på hva det tverrfaglige temaet innebærer og forventer er det opp til hver lærer å finne en passende praksis, for å imøtekomme dette temaet. Denne oppgaven utforsker litteraturundervisningen som en mulig praksis, og stiller derfor spørsmålet: hva er VG1 engelsklæreres holdninger til å benytte seg av litteratur for å imøtekomme forventningene til det tverrfaglige temaet?

Målet med studien er å sette søkelys på litteratur sine mange muligheter, deriblant å fremme konstruktive samtaler om et tema mange synes er utfordrende. Dette gjøres gjennom et fokus på litteratur sin mulighet til å fremme *Bildung*, skape emosjonelt engasjement, samt det individuelle dialogiske samspillet mellom tekst og leser. I et forsøk på å se om lærernes nåværende praksis allerede tilrettelegger for en slik praksis, har deres nåværende litteraturundervisning samt deres tanker rundt litteratur sine egenskaper, også blitt undersøkt. For å besvare forskningsspørsmålet har det blitt brukt en kombinasjon av kvalitative og kvantitative metoder. Det har blitt foretatt fire intervjuer og en spørreundersøkelse. Funnene indikerer at lærere i stor grad benytter seg av sosiokulturelle læringspraksiser, hvor de har fokus på individuelle tolkninger av tekster. Det er tydelig at lærerne ønsker at elevene skal få et personlig møte med teksten, og vektlegger derfor autentisitet og hvorvidt teksten er relevant til elevene, når de velger litteratur. Forskingen finner varierende meninger om det tverrfaglige temaets rolle i skolen. Til tross for at mange mente at temaet var en essensiell del av den nåværende undervisningspraksisen, var det mange som mente at dette var for mye å forlange av lærere. Informantene påpekte derimot at litteratur var en god arena for å imøtekomme det tverrfaglige temaet, og flere forklarte at de allerede inkorporerte dette temaet i litteraturundervisningen.

Til tross for at flere informanter rapporterte om en undervisningspraksis som tilrettelegger for å snakke om mental helse, var det mange som poengterte en manglende kunnskap til å imøtekomme temaet til det fulle. Avhandlingen foreslår derfor en avklaring av forventningene til det tverrfaglige temaet, samt at lærere utforsker litteraturens som en praksis for å imøtekomme temaet.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“You have to remember that I’m only an English teacher (...) I know grammar, and I don’t know about all of this”*

- *Teacher A (Appendix 8, lines 376-379)*

Talking about mental health can be a daunting task. Although it may be deemed to be of great importance, it is not easy to know what to say or do when confronted with the topic. As exemplified in the quote above, there may be a distance between what teachers feel is expected of them, and what they feel competent to teach. From the fall of 2020, however, the Norwegian Core Curriculum asks teachers to do just that; talk about subjects that research has found to be challenging for the majority of teachers (Ekornes, 2017). However, the topic of mental health in the Core Curriculum does not come with an action manual or any further description as to what is expected of the teachers, or how they are supposed to address the topic. Therefore, the question is; what practice can be utilized in which teachers can be comfortable in talking about topics of mental health?

The Knowledge Promotion Renewal was introduced in the fall of 2020 and simultaneously implemented for grades 1-9 and the first grade of upper secondary school (VG1) (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, nye læreplaner). With the renewal of the curriculum came three new interdisciplinary topics: health and life skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Core Curriculum). These topics apply to both the primary and secondary education and serve as overriding principles for the Norwegian school. Furthermore, each subject holds interdisciplinary topics that are tailored to the subjects specifically, although they are the same as in the overarching core curriculum. Within the VG1 English subject, the interdisciplinary topics of health and life skills, and democracy and citizenship, apply. When it comes to the topic of health and life skills, the Core Curriculum states: “The school shall give the pupils competence which promotes sound physical and mental health” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Health and life skills). Furthermore, the English subject curriculum specifies that the interdisciplinary topic involves “[t]he ability to handle situations that require linguistic and cultural competences [which] can give pupils a sense of achievement and help them develop a positive self-image and a secure identity” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020,

interdisciplinary topic). This thesis will focus on how the issue of mental health is dealt with in the context of teaching and learning English.

According to Anders Bakken's research in lower and upper secondary schools in Norway, there has been an increase in mental disorders amongst adolescents (2018, p.81). He reports that from year 10 through 13 (VG3), over one fourth of the students, girls in particular, report a high level of symptoms of depression (2018, p. 81). It is hard to say whether findings such as this one is the reason behind implementing mental health topics in the National Curriculum. However, the findings provide some insight into the prevalence of this problem, which, in turn, also gives reason to believe that the topic of mental health is not new to teachers.

### 1.1 The importance of literature

In the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, literature serves many purposes. It can be a model for expanding vocabulary, understand stylistic devices and provide a meeting with other English-speaking cultures and their ways of life. Additionally, reading about other people's lives and cultures is believed to contribute to the person's sense of self and broaden their horizons (Fenner, 2000, p. 17). It is ultimately argued that literature can facilitate enhancement of *Bildung* (see 1.1.1).

Although one can conduct research about the many attributes related to reading literature, it is not given that these correlate with the VG1 English teachers' views and opinions about literature. In the VG1 English competence aims, it is stated that the students shall be able to "discuss and reflect on form, content and language features and literary devices in different forms of expressions from different media in the English language world, including music, film and gaming", and "read, analyze and interpret fictional texts in English" (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, competence aims and assessment). Considering that there is no guide or direction provided alongside these competence aims; the curriculum relies on the teachers to make informed decisions regarding the choice of literature and their approaches to working with such texts in the English classroom. Ultimately, the teachers' opinions about literature will have an impact on what their teaching practice looks like. This leaves the teacher with the task to balance the directives from the competence aims with the aims of the interdisciplinary topics. Thus, it is necessary to research how teachers view literature and

what their current literature practice looks like in order to discover whether literature can be used as a way of talking about mental health.

### 1.1.1 Literature as a facilitator for talking about mental health

*Bildung* can be defined as the development of a person through acquiring knowledge about someone or something (Klafki, 2001, p. 17). However, the term is complex, and will therefore be discussed further in chapter 2.2.1. Theories suggest that literature holds many attributes that can facilitate enhancement of *Bildung* in the reader (Fenner 2005). In order to facilitate *Bildung*, meetings with other cultures and people are essential. It is therefore believed that through reading literature, the reader is able to acquire knowledge about other cultures and ways of life, whilst simultaneously gaining new perspectives on their own ways of life. Subsequently, this broadening of one's horizon, as Gadamer puts it (Fenner, 2000, p. 17), is an essential part of enhancing *Bildung*.

Considering the belief that literature holds the ability to enhance the reader's sense of self and expand their horizon, there is reason to believe that literature can be a facilitator for talking about mental health. As exemplified in the quote provided at the beginning of this chapter, talking about topics of mental health may be a challenging task. Considering that teachers now are obliged to address the topic, there is a need to explore teachers' perceptions about the topic and what they report about how they approach the topic in practice. Literature teaching is arguably a practice in which teachers are confident in their competence. Combing the familiarity of literature teaching with the, arguably, challenging topic of mental health might make the accommodation of the interdisciplinary topic more manageable.

## 1.2 Research questions

The aim of this research is twofold as it seeks to investigate the teachers' current literature teaching practice as well as their opinions towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health. Based on Ekornes' findings (see chapter 1.3), there is a reported discrepancy between teachers' perceived expectation to aid their students in their mental health, and their reported lack of competence to do so (2017). Therefore, there was reason to believe that the teachers' opinions about the interdisciplinary topic would be mixed, and perhaps hesitant. Ekornes also finds, however, that teachers recognize their key role in their students' mental health, and therefore feel obliged to address the topic of mental health in the classroom (2017). This thesis will therefore research their opinions towards the interdisciplinary topic

and their current literature teaching practice, in order to regard how their view on literature's potential and current literature teaching facilities addressing the interdisciplinary topic.

The main research question is as follows: "What are VG1 English teachers attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health?". Due to the fact that the interdisciplinary topic has already been implemented in VG1, this thesis will concern itself with VG1 English teachers, as opposed to the entirety of the upper secondary school English teachers. Moreover, considering that mental health is a new topic in the curriculum, the thesis will concern itself with the teachers' attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic in isolation, in addition to their opinion on using literature as a way of accommodating said topic.

However, as research conducted by Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri and Goel found that 75% of teachers report that they work with students' who suffer from mental health issues (2011), there is reason to believe that some teachers already have some practices in relation to this topic in place. Hence, this will also be investigated. As previously discussed, several elements go into providing an answer to the research question and it is therefore supplemented with two sub-questions.

The first sub-question concerns the teachers' opinions about literature and asks: "What are VG1 English teachers' opinions about literature's properties?". As aforementioned, the teachers' attitudes towards the attributes of literature are likely to influence their practices. Additionally, this will provide some indication as to what unique qualities they believe literature has, which in turn may be relevant when exploring their opinions about literature in relation to talking about mental health. Additionally, the second sub-question reads: "What do the teachers report about how they teach English literature, and do they already facilitate a classroom environment for talking about mental health topics in combination with this type of text?". This serves to investigate what the teachers reveal about their practices currently in place in the English literature teaching. The aim is to regard whether the practice already facilitates enhancement of *Bildung*, and subsequently whether it can be said to facilitate an environment for talking about mental health. In order to do so, this thesis will explore how they choose literature, teach literary reading and how they assist the learners in the interpretation process.

### 1.3 Research gap

As aforementioned, this thesis is concerned with the teachers' attitudes towards literature's attributes, and towards dealing with the topic of mental health in the English classroom. In order to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the use of literature as a way of talking about mental health, looking at their opinions about literature's potential, is necessary. Some research has been conducted on this topic, particularly in relation to its ability to enhance *Bildung* and intercultural competence.

Andreassen's master thesis (2014) investigated to what extent teachers see English as a *Bildung* subject. Her study was conducted through a mixed- method, which included a questionnaire and four in-depth interviews. She found that the teachers' opinions of the English subject are closely related to Klafki's theory on formal *Bildung*, a theory which this thesis will explore further in chapter 2.2.1. She found that although there was unity in the subject's significance to the enhancement of *Bildung*, the teachers attributed this to different aspects of the subject. She found that teachers have very different interpretations of *Bildung*, which may result in classroom practices with different approaches to *Bildung* enhancement.

Oshug Stavik's master thesis (2015) investigated teachers' views on the teaching of literature in the EFL classroom, with a focus on *Bildung* and intercultural competence. Through her mixed-methods study, she found that although the approaches to and attitudes towards literature are diverse, the teachers agreed that literature is important for the development of *Bildung* (2015, p. 116). This was also the opinions regarding intercultural competence, although this was not as prominent in the teachers' responses.

Although the interdisciplinary topic "Health and life skills" is new as of 2020, the topic of mental health in schools is not unknown. Ekornes has conducted several studies on the topic of mental health in Norwegian schools. Of particular relevance is her study of the relationship between the teachers' perceived demands and competence, in relation to aiding students with mental health issues (2017). Her study found that whilst teachers report on an expectation to help students with mental health difficulties, they also report on having inadequate qualifications to do so (Ekornes, 2017, p. 344-345). In spite of their reported lack of competence to address mental health issues, Ekornes found that a majority of teachers acknowledge their key role in promoting mental health (2017, p. 348). Although it is not based in English didactics, Ekornes' study is relevant to this thesis as it depicts the

discrepancy between the expectations of the teachers' role in promoting positive mental health and the teachers' reported lack of competence to do so.

To the author's knowledge, the topic of mental health in relation to literature teaching, is relatively new and hardly investigated. Some studies have been conducted on the teachers' opinions of literature, and mental health issues in schools individually, but not in combination. This thesis' investigation of teachers' opinions on literature as a way of talking about mental health, will contribute to diminishing this research gap.

#### 1.4 Research method

Considering this thesis' concern with teachers' perspectives, it is necessary to focus on teacher cognition. According to Simon Borg, teacher cognition concerns "what language teachers think, know and believe" (2006, p. 1). Borg found that there might be a distinction between what teachers report about their practices, and what their practices actually looks like. This is an important factor to consider in this research, and it will therefore be discussed further in chapter 3.5.

The data collection for this study consisted of a questionnaire and four in-depth interviews, and was conducted in the fall of 2020. The interviews were conducted with two VG1 English teachers from Bergen and two from Kristiansand. The questionnaire was distributed to 41 Upper secondary schools in the Western, Southern and Eastern parts of Norway, in which 28 teachers partook. The structure and themes of the two strands are similar and are divided into three main topics: current teaching practice, the interdisciplinary topic and future teaching.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions related to the teachers' opinions about students' motivation to read, their thoughts on literature's attributes, their current literature teaching practice and lastly their attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic itself, and in combination with literature. The questions were both quantitative and qualitative, and aimed to investigate whether the participants find that utilizing English literature as a way of talking about mental health is possible and desirable. The interviews had the same aims and were conducted prior to the questionnaire. The semi-structured design of the interviews allowed for impromptu conversations and elaborations on the questions and topics. Therefore, although the two strands are similar thematically, they provided unique data. The interview allowed for in-depth explorations, whereas the questionnaire gathered data from a broader part of the

population which provided important insight into more general tendencies within the population. The methods and their designs are further explored in chapter 3.

### 1.5 An outline of the thesis

This thesis is structured in five chapters, with accompanying sub-chapters. The first chapter has introduced the aim and scope of the thesis, as well as how it fits in with the existing field of research. The research questions and correlating aims have also been presented.

In the second chapter, the theoretical background for the research, is presented. The chapter will, firstly, provide a definition of the term *literature* and will, subsequently, explore two main attributes of literature, namely its potential to promote *Bildung* and literature as a meeting with authentic material. Thereafter, the choice of literature and what adolescents find interesting to read, is explored. Moreover, mental health is devoted particular attention by exploring the definition of what good mental health can, before exploring how literature can be a facilitator for talking about mental health. Lastly, three literary theories are presented, both in terms of their historical context, but also in relation to their impact on the teaching practice.

Chapter 3 consists of a presentation and discussion of the research design, and accounts for the choices made in gathering and analysing the data. This chapter explores teacher cognition, sampling, how the research was conducted, as well as other considerations relevant when conducting a research.

Chapter 4 will present and discuss the findings from the research in light of the research questions and theories discussed in chapter 2. The presentation will be thematic in which the findings from the two strands are presented and discussed simultaneously. The results will be presented in two main parts, namely “reported current literature teaching” and “the interdisciplinary topic”.

The thesis will conclude in chapter 5, where the findings will be summarized in light of the research questions. A presentation of didactic implications and suggestions for future research will follow.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical background

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter constitutes the theoretical background for the study. This chapter will look further into reasons as to why literary reading is given particular attention in the upper secondary National Curriculum by looking at the many properties of English literature reading. Furthermore, this chapter will explore what attributes literature holds that potentially makes it a good resource for accommodating the interdisciplinary topic, in the VG1 English subject.

Firstly, the definition of the term *literature* will be discussed. Considering that one can have a narrow or broad definition of the term, a working definition for this thesis is necessary.

Secondly, this thesis will argue that literature is a good resource for students to gain knowledge about the world in which they live. In relation to this argument, the thesis will furthermore explore the importance of using authentic texts, as they may be an important prerequisite for enhancing *Bildung*.

Thirdly, this thesis will discuss the importance of choosing the right literary works for the VG1 English classroom. The way in which teachers choose literature can arguably influence the students' motivation to both read literature and engage in the classroom practices related to the reading.

Moreover, this thesis will argue that as literature holds attributes that enables it to contribute to the enhancement *Bildung*, it is also a good resource for talking about mental health topics. The sub- chapter will discuss definitions of mental health before exploring attributes in literature that may make it a useful medium for talking about this topic. Lastly, it will discuss the importance of classroom interactions, as researched by Ertesvåg and Havik (2021).

When having discussed the importance of literature in terms of enhancing *Bildung*, as a meeting with authentic material and in terms of talking about mental health, the chapter will transcend to exploring the literary theories of historical- biographical, New Criticism and Reader- response.

## 2.1 Defining literature

Considering that the term *literature* holds many meanings to different people or in different settings, a working definition for the current context is necessary. In the initial stages of writing this thesis, there was a desire to restrict the term to fictional novels and short stories. However, after consulting with peers and conducting interviews where teachers chose a broader definition of the term, it was necessary to revise the initial definition. Although the traditional definition of the literary canon was limited to works of esteemed authors that had been recognized as “major” (Abrams, 1999, p. 29), recent years have included a broader field. When conducting this study, several teachers chose to include film in their definition, and considering that this thesis is concerned with teachers’ opinions and practices, it would be wrong to not take their practices into account.

In the new English for VG1 competence aims from the Knowledge promotion reform (LK20), an aim for the teaching is for the students to “discuss and reflect over form, content and literary devices in English speaking cultural forms of expression in different medias, including music, film and games” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Competence aims and assessment). An essential part is therefore to include the analysis of films. As a natural development from the previously narrow definition concerning “major” authors, the definition has become broader. This thesis aligns itself with the following definition from Abrams, which states that literature is: “Hollywood films, television serials, popular songs and fiction written for a mass audience” (1999, p. 30).

## 2.2 Literature in the EFL classroom

In the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, the act of reading is devoted particular attention as evident in the subject curriculum. One of the three core elements of the English subject is devoted to “meeting with English- language texts”, stating that “through reflection, interpretation as well as through critically evaluating different kinds of English- language texts, students will increase language proficiency and knowledge about culture and society” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Core elements). In other words, the Norwegian Directorate of Education attributes several aspects of language acquisition to the reading of literature. Additionally, the core elements also emphasize that through reading literature students should acquire “a foundation for regarding one’s own as well as other’s identity in a

multilingual and multicultural context” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, core elements). Although the curriculum links such knowledge and skill to literary reading, it is relevant to explore further what attributes literature holds in this particular context.

Reading literature is attributed several different knowledge acquisitions, for example language acquisition and learning about literary devices. In addition, literature also entails the ability to develop the readers’ identities in that it has the potential to enhance *Bildung*, which this thesis will explore more thoroughly in chapter 2.2.1. Hoff states that reading literature is “a more subjective and emotional experience than the reading of factual texts” (Hoff, 2016, s. 54), which exemplifies how reading fiction can engage students’ emotions which might be important in increasing motivation for reading.

Developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is an important aspect of reading literature. An influential voice in theoretical research on intercultural communicative competence is Michael Byram who states that ICC entails approaching other cultures with “curiosity and openness” as well as “readiness to suspend disbelief and judgement with respect to other’s meanings, beliefs and behaviours” (1997, p. 34). In addition to being able to meet other cultures with openness and curiosity, ICC also includes the ability to look at one’s own culture in a critical manner (Byram, 1997, p. 50). Considering that a large part of evolving one’s own ICC comes through interacting with other people as well as being able to put yourself in someone else’s shoes, exposing learners to foreign language literature can be an effective way of creating such meetings. As aforementioned, literature has the ability to transfer the reader into another reality, into someone else’s life and struggles, allowing the reader to gain greater understanding of other people and cultures, ultimately having the ability to enhance intercultural communicative competence. Although ICC is concerned with intercultural relations and language acquisitions, it is also an important factor in enhancement of *Bildung*. According to Hoff, the full potential of a human being cannot be “brought out by focusing solely on the individual” (2014, p. 509). Rather, she emphasises the importance of the individuals «relation to cultural and social communities as well as humanity at large» (Hoff, 2014, p. 509). Seeing that the individual understands himself in relation to others, this relationship contributes to insight into the Self (Hoff 2015, p. 509), in other words, to potential enhancement of *Bildung*.

Although literary reading happens in the Norwegian classroom as well, reading literature in one's second language (L2), has the ability to enhance aspects of *Bildung* that may exceed that of the first language (L1) literature. According to Fenner, learning another language is closely knit to being socialized into a new culture (2005, p. 95), and furthermore lays a foundation for respect and increased tolerance (2005, p. 96). The meeting with another language thus enables a meeting with another culture, which readers may gain respect and tolerance for, whilst simultaneously viewing their own culture in a new light. Fenner states that "through a meeting with 'the other', the student is able to develop a critical perspective on themselves and their culture" (2005, p. 96). Although second- language reading may entail language barriers, the reader utilizes their experience from L1 reading, to successfully read L2 literature (Bernhardt 2011, as cited in Ørevik, 2018, p. 99).

Moreover, when reading literature in a classroom setting, there are often situations in which one interprets or analyses the literary work in plenary, encouraging the pupils to engage in oral communication. Considering that reading fictional literature may spark engagement, more so than when reading factual texts, this may entail increased engagement in oral communication. According to Gilmore, in order for students to engage in oral communication, they need "realistic models of proficient users doing the same thing" (2007, p. 101). Engaging the students in what is called the "meaningfulness principle" meaning to engage students in "(...) meaningful and authentic language use" (Skulstad, 2018, s. 55) is important to engage pupils to contribute to oral communication. Additionally, in order to develop this discourse competence, the best resource is casual conversations, which, according to Gilmore, is largely ignored in textbooks (2007, p. 101). Which, again, exemplifies the central role of literature reading in language acquisition. Moreover, if one introduces students to literary works that are authentic, one might find that students have an easier time in acquiring typical conversation patterns of the target language. In turn, it is arguably more likely that students are able to engage in authentic conversations as they have had realistic models in their literature which may help develop their language proficiency.

This part of the chapter has explored the many reasons that may be central in explaining why literature has been deemed as important in the core curriculum of the English subject. Notions such as the ability to transfer the reader to other characters' reality, allowing for a meeting

with other cultures and enhancing *Bildung* are part in explaining why literature is devoted particular attention in the core curriculum of VG1 English. In the following, literature's abilities will be explored further, by exploring literature's ability to enhance *Bildung*.

### 2.2.1 Literature and *Bildung*

Schools are attributed many functions; it is supposed to be a place of knowledge learning in a number of subjects, as well as holding a social function for pupils to meet and learn from each other whilst engaging in the making of important friendships. In other words, there is an emphasis on both knowledge development and social development and the relationship between the two. As the world is getting smaller and we now more than ever meet people from all sets of life, there is an increased importance attributed to the enhancement of *Bildung*. As schools are supposed to reflect the society in which it stands, enhancing *Bildung* is important in order to equip pupils with a skillset that encourages them to be constructive fellow citizens.

The term *Bildung* is an overarching element of the Norwegian schools and therefore important in any subject, as evident in the Core Curriculum, as it states that: "The School's mission is the education and all-round development (*Bildung*) of all pupils." (Principles for education and all-round development, 2017). Here, *Bildung* is defined as "all-round development", however, *Bildung* is a complex term which requires further exploration.

According to Ulvik and Sæverot, the term *Bildung* has German origin and has historically been connected to how man is seen in God's image (2013, p. 35). The ultimate purpose was to develop one's self in order to be as close to the image of God as possible. Ultimately, according to early theorists, *Bildung* concerns the improvement and reshaping of the self in order to achieve perfection. With the Enlightenment came reform in this definition of the term which now exchanged the religious dominance for the benefit of reason and science (Ulvik & Sæverot, 2013, p. 35). In these new times, the person's sense of self was the main focus. One of the most central figures in educational *Bildung* theory is Wolfgang Klafki, a German didactician who is prominent in pedagogical theory and history. He categorizes *Bildung* into two traditions, making a distinction between the formal and material (2001, p. 15). The material *Bildung* tradition values the objective over the subjective and is concerned with how, for instance, the literary work affects the reader (Klafki, 2001, s. 15). On the other hand, the formal *Bildung* values the subjective over the objective, and is concerned with the underlying

abilities within each person and how one can use learning methods in order to bring out someone's inner properties (Klafki, 2001, s. 15).

According to Klafki, both of the aforementioned perspectives are essential in the *Bildung* process, however, they are too one-sided. There is, therefore, a need to combine them, which Klafki does in his third theory: categorial *Bildung* (2001, p. 17). According to this view, *Bildung* is achieved when the learner is able to see themselves in relation to the world in which they live, which Klafki regards as the ideal way of learning. Accordingly, to develop categorial *Bildung*, it is both essential that the learner opens up to the world and the world opens up for the learner (Klafki, 2001, p. 17). The main objective of categorial *Bildung* is the interaction between the subjective and the objective, in a way that enables learning about someone or something, in order to enable learning about the self. According to Andreassen, literature “provides the pupil with both personal and cultural encounters between the pupil and other” (2014, p. 16). This plays an important role, according to Fenner, when developing a critical perspective of oneself and one's own culture (2005, p. 95). Through encounters with “the other”, the reader may be exposed to literary characters who struggle with mental health issues. This may help the learner to develop empathy for the character, and subsequently, other individuals who struggle with mental health issues. Additionally, this can aid learners who struggle with mental health issues themselves, as they may recognize themselves and their own struggles.

In addition to enabling a meeting with “the other”, other attributes of literature are essential in facilitating enhancement of *Bildung*. In some examples of literature, the text contains “gaps”, as argued by Iser and Eco (As cited in Fenner, 2000, p. 149). Gaps entail that the literary text conceals some information, which prompts the reader to insert his or her pre-knowledge, in order to make interpretations. In order to do so, Gadamer argues that there is a meeting between the text and the reader's “horizons”, in other words, between the text's contents and the personal cultural capital (as cited in Fenner, 2000, p. 17). Inserting the reader's personal cultural capital will, arguably, make the reading subjective and relatable to the reader. Relatability may be an essential prerequisite for creating engagement in the reading, but this will be explored further in chapter 2.3.

These literary “gaps” will arguably result in a classroom with multiple interpretations.

Through interactions with other peers and discovering how their interpretations are different

from one's own, there will once more occur a situation in which there is a possibility for enhancing *Bildung*. According to Vygotsky (1991), learners will develop their own thinking through meaningful interaction with others. As Klafki emphasizes that the *Bildung* process must entail a meeting with the natural world, a meeting with peers who have different interpretations from one's own can be regarded as valuable practice for meeting with the natural world. An important prerequisite here is the authenticity of the dialogue, which entails that the topic of conversation is not of the same nature as the so-called "constructed dialogues" found in textbooks which, according to Fenner, are often "devoid of meaning" (2000, p. 23). There is, in other words, an emphasis on the authenticity of the dialogue in order for it to enable enhancement of *Bildung*. This can, for example can be achieved through dialogue on a topic that interests the students, for instance by stimulating an emotional response. This can for instance entail conversations after having encountered characters who struggle with their mental health. As discussed previously, this encounter can aid learners in developing empathy for individuals who struggle with mental health issues. Learners who struggle with their own mental health may also recognize their own struggles in the reading. These emotional responses may prompt authentic conversations, such as emphasized in the *Bildung* theory. Additionally, one can argue that authentic dialogue will occur when discussing interpretations of literature in plenary in the classroom as students are talking about their own perception of a text whilst simultaneously discussing and negotiating other student's perceptions. Through listening to other student's perceptions and interpretations as well as creating new interpretations in dialogue with others, one can argue that this dialogue also is an important part in enhancing *Bildung*.

Finally, as *Bildung* is hard to measure because it develops a person's sense of self, one way for teachers to gain insight into their students' thoughts and opinions, is through conversations. Considering that this thesis is concerned with literature as a way of talking about mental health, some emphasis will be put on the practice of plenary and group discussions. The sociocultural perspective on learning is based on the understanding that cognitive development "arises as a result of social interactions" (Vygotsky, as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2020, p. 118). Vygotsky argues that when students interact with peers, they can perform at a higher level than they would in independent work, because of the support (scaffolding) from a peer or a teacher, with a higher level of knowledge (Lightbown & Spada, 2020, p. 25). Such interactions are part of what Vygotsky calls the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a metaphorical place where the learner creates meaning in

collaboration with an interlocutor (Lightbown & Spada, 2020, p. 118). This theory aligns with Gilmore's theory on the most effective classrooms being those that have a high level of challenge and support (2007, p. 112). In terms of literature teaching, this may mean that students will arrive at higher levels of understanding, when the classroom is allowed to become an interpretative community in which the learners are encouraged to express different views on the literary text. In turn, this may contribute to enhancing the learners' horizon, and subsequently, further enhance *Bildung*.

This sub-chapter has explored what attributes literature holds that facilitates enhancement of *Bildung*, which is an overarching element of education, as expressed in the Norwegian Core Curriculum. From theories by Klafki and Fenner, it is evident that literature has the potential for enhancing *Bildung*, as exemplified in its ability to enable a meeting between the reader and "the other". Through exploration of Klafki's theory on *Bildung*, it was found that literature holds the potential of facilitating the open dissemination process, and subsequently, facilitating an environment for enhancing *Bildung*. Authenticity was briefly explored in connection with meaningful interactions, but the topic requires further exploration, and will therefore be dealt with in the following sub-chapter.

### 2.2.2 Literature as a meeting with authentic material

The ideas of communicative competence entail the importance of context in language-learning, and states that it is not sufficient to acquire knowledge of language structures only (Gilmore, 2007, p. 97). This approach to language teaching introduced a new look at literature as something not simply read for its linguistic forms and its potential for amplified language proficiency, but rather for its contribution to the classroom in the form of context learning, knowledge of other cultures and the many speakers of the language.

Before transcending into the discussion on the importance of authentic material, it is necessary to look at what it entails to claim that a text is authentic, which is reliant on what aspects one emphasizes. As there are many meanings associated with authenticity, defining it in terms of authentic material can be situated in "either the text itself, in the participants, in the social or cultural situation" (Gilmore 2007, p. 98). Seeing as there is indeed ambiguity and complexity in the term, providing a definition is essential and the definition this thesis aligns itself with is that of Morrow: "An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort"

(1997, p.13). It is still hard, however, to exemplify what sort of texts that would be in line with this definition and what texts that will not. On the other hand, it is possible to state that there is an emphasis on the occurrence of real-life conversations as well as topics where students learn about and from the natural world.

The importance of real-life conversations, and authentic texts in general, become apparent when looking at the disparities between the language spoken in the classroom and in other settings. This was made evident through research that show the discrepancies between the language learnt in schools, and the language used in real- life conversations. In a study conducted by Williams (1988, as cited in Gilmore, 2007, p. 100), the language used for formal meetings in authentic conversations was compared with the language of 30 English textbooks that replicated formal meeting conversations. The study found that only 5,2% of the exponents presented in these textbooks occurred in the authentic business conversations. In other words, this indicates that students are not sufficiently being prepared for real life conversations but rather imagined conversations. One can therefore argue that by reading authentic literature, students are increasingly prepared for real- life situations in that the conversations and situations they read about are examples of what real life situations and conversations look like.

As aforementioned, reading authentic literature can contribute to enhancement of the reader's *Bildung* (Cf. 2.2.1). Considering the fact that *Bildung* is an open dissemination process between the subject and the natural world, one can arguably state that in order for this process to occur, one is dependent on the reading of material that is representative of "the natural world". Additionally, it can be important when utilizing literature as a facilitator for talking about mental health topics. Material that is a representation of the natural world can make it more relatable, enabling readers to recognize themselves and, perhaps, their mental health struggles. Moreover, Gilmore further substantiates the claim that literature that has an authentic message is more interesting to read and a motivating force, as opposed to material that highlights, for example, language acquisition (2007, p. 106). As will be discussed in the following sub-chapter (2.3), the act of reading is reliant on the reader's willingness to select aspects of their lives as relevant to their reading (Kress, 2003, p. 125). Considering that facilitating authentic conversations is partially reliant on the student's emotional engagement, utilizing authentic material may be a contribution to this. In connection with the aim of using

literature as a way of talking about mental health, authentic material can be an important factor in facilitating such conversations.

In summary, authentic material is important as it is a representation of the natural world, which is an important factor in creating motivation for reading and when using literature as a facilitator for talking about mental health topics. Authentic texts are also important contributors to the enhancement of *Bildung*, as *Bildung* is reliant on the open- dissemination process between the subject and the natural world, which an authentic text facilitates.

However, classrooms are diverse with students with many different “horizons”, meaning that they will all relate to different issues, situations and real-life conversations. This means that teachers have to navigate the vast multitude of literature whilst keeping in mind what he or she thinks that the students might find engaging and relatable by attempting to accommodate the different students’ pre-knowledges. To explore this concern further, the next sub-chapter concerns the choice of literature.

### 2.3 The Choice of Literature

In the renewed curriculum for English in VG1 it is stated that students shall “read, analyze and interpret fictional texts in English” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, Competence aims and assessment). However, no guide as to which texts or literary genres are deemed to be of importance is provided. Ultimately, this leaves the teachers to decide what texts they deem to be of importance as well as what his or her students may find interesting. Gunther Kress emphasizes the importance of the choice of literature by stating that the act of reading relies on readers’ “willingness and ability to select aspects of their lives as being relevantly attachable to each of the brief accounts or predictions” (2003, p. 125). It is therefore important to find literature that facilitates this “willingness and ability” (Kress, 2003, p 125) in the reader. Therefore, what young readers find interesting, will be explored.

As evident from the competence aims, literature is associated with several different aspects of learning, related to language features and literary devices (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Competence aims and assessment). As chapter 2.2 explored, the way in which teachers choose literature may also impact the students’ engagement in the reading process, and hence whether the text has the ability to enhance *Bildung*. In other words, the choice of literature is important, as it serves to accommodate a multitude of learning

processes. In the following, what students of upper-secondary school want to read and also what effect the choice of literature might have on the students, will be explored.

When attempting to ascertain what young learners at upper secondary school wish to read, there are many different opinions, and it may differ entirely from classroom to classroom. However, some research has been conducted on the topic in an effort to navigate the teenage reader's preferences. According to Appleyard, reading for enjoyment is left behind in junior-high school years, decreasing from the ninth grade (1991, p. 99). Appleyard questioned students at upper secondary school about what they deemed as valuable in literature, and the most prominent responses concerned; identification with the character, the realism of the story and whether the story made them think (1991, p.100). When looking at Appleyard's research one can argue that realistic texts are appealing to students and will ultimately enable them to identify with the characters. This also substantiates the previous argument regarding the importance of authentic material and how this does in fact influence the reader. Moreover, there are many potential reasons as to why the young readers value texts that are realistic and relatable. When growing up and moving away from the juvenile literature, the young reader no longer wants to just read about their fantasies and wishes, but rather something that also "reflect[s] realistically the darker parts of life and the newfound limits on their idealism" (Whitehead, 1977, as cited in Appleyard 1991, p.109). This demonstrates the opinion that as young students grow up there is a willingness to meet and read about real life issues. In turn, this visualizes how literature can be a suitable arena for students to learn about mental health topics. If the literary work is able to reflect the students' real-life issues, such as mental health issues can be to many students, it is not only an relevant in order to talk about mental health topics, but it can also be motivating force.

The importance of choosing the right literature is evident in the fact that skill and pleasure go hand in hand, as Vicary states: "the more you enjoy something, the more often you are likely to do it: and the more often you practice doing something, the better you get at doing it" (2013, p. 77). However, as Whitehead states, it seems as though the young reader does not necessarily want to read about something they find comfortable or familiar, but rather something that challenges their existing views (1977, as cited in Appleyard 1991, p.109). Therefore, although it may be important to accommodate the readers' interests, there is reason to believe that there is a need to challenge them as well. According to Gilmore, the most effective classrooms are those "where learners have both high challenge and high support"

(2007, p. 112). Therefore, choosing literature that exclusively accommodates the students interests for the sake of enjoyment, may not be fruitful. Although one can argue that enjoyment and interest in the reading is an important prerequisite for engaging students in the act of reading, it is equally as important to challenge them. That is not to say, however, that enjoying the text and challenging the reader are polar opposites. Rather, this serves to exemplify how selecting literature purely with an aim of to spark enjoyment, may not be beneficial.

According to Williams, the stories' narratives may be a contributor when enhancing *Bildung* through literature reading. According to findings from Whitehead, pupils want stories that challenge and supplement their view on life (1977, as cited in Appleyard 1991, p. 109), which, according to Williams, can be done through reading novels written in a first-person point of view (2013, p. 169). Giving the reader the opportunity to engage on an emotional level whilst viewing "the world through the eyes of others", may in turn "help to generate insight and sympathy" (Williams, 2013, p. 169). Moreover, reading fictional texts is, as aforementioned, a more subjective and emotional experience than the reading of factual texts (Hoff, 2016, s. 54). One can therefore argue that reading fictional stories, written in a first-person point of view, is beneficial as it may generate motivation and empathy. This is, therefore, particularly important when reading with the aim of engaging the students in topics of mental health.

On the other hand, although ascertaining what young readers are interested in can be an important contributor in their motivation for reading, recent years have shown that teenage students do not have a habit of reading. A study conducted in 2013 in Norway found that only 54% of people aged 16-24 have read a novel, which is a decrease from previous years. Simultaneously, time spent on the internet is increasing (Habegger- Conti, 2015, p. 108). This decline does not have to mean the end of reading, but rather that teachers may have to find new ways of teaching literature. New media can also be considered as literature, as in the working definition of this thesis. Novels can be used as a path for personal development, but Habegger- Conti argues that new media also fulfills this purpose (2015, p. 122). Therefore, in choosing literature for the classroom, it is not only a question of which novel to choose, but also what media.

As has been made evident in this chapter, the choice of literature can have great impact on the students' interest and ultimately the literary work's ability to enhance *Bildung*. Although one can take into consideration what type of literature young students may be interested in in terms of authenticity as well as the ability to relate to the text, every classroom looks different and students within the classroom are also likely to have different proficiency levels. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to attempt to generalize what all teenage readers will find interesting as they have individual "horizons" (Fenner, 2000, p. 17). This chapter has therefore not aimed to make a guide as to what adolescent readers will find engaging, rather, it has explored theories on readers' interests, and where these origin.

## 2.4 Mental Health

Although subjects concerning mental health have had negative connotations and negative stigma (Stigma and discrimination, 2020), recent years have arguably shown signs of change in this regard. This development has also been made evident in the new National Curriculum that as of 2020 includes an interdisciplinary topic that petitions teachers to talk about mental health topics in order to promote independent life choices (Health and life skills, 2020). As aforementioned, the Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2020 brought with it new national curricula, and new interdisciplinary topic, which, as of 2020, applies to grades 1-9 and VG1 (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Core Curriculum; cf. 1.1). This interdisciplinary topic is arguably closely related to enhancing student's health literacy which is "the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions" (Bagnell & Santor, 2015, p. 47). This thesis will argue that this knowledge acquisition as well as accommodating the interdisciplinary topic of talking about mental health can be done through reading and interpreting literature.

The following sections will explore the impact of one's definition of mental health, what attributes that make literature a possible facilitator for talking about mental health and, finally, Ertesvåg and Havik's (2017) research on the importance of good student- teacher interactions.

### 2.4.1 Defining mental health

According to the interdisciplinary topic, teachers are supposed to "give the pupils competence which promotes sound physical and mental health, and which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices" (Health and life skills, 2020). When reading this, the reader

is left to define what knowledge one thinks is important in order to promote sound mental health and also what sound mental health entails. The need for individual interpretation subsequently means that this interdisciplinary topic and the amount of work this topic involves is subjective. It is therefore necessary for this thesis to explore what the definition of “sound mental health” can entail and how the definition may impact the classroom practices. A working definition for this thesis will not be provided, as the individual teachers are likely to have different understandings of the term. Hence, this thesis does not aim to pass judgement on their definitions, but rather explore how their understanding of the term may impact their practices.

As mentioned in chapter 1.3, in a study on Norwegian teachers in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school, Ekornes found that teachers recognize their key role in their students’ mental health, but report on a lack of knowledge in order to do so (2017, p. 344-345). In other words, while there is a recognized need and arguably a willingness among teachers to talk about mental health topics, many reportedly feel they do not possess the necessary knowledge and competence to do so. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), good mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (2018). One could argue that according to the definition by WHO teachers are not required to have any specific psychological education in order to be qualified to speak on topics of mental health with their students. Rather, their task is to enable students to develop competences which in turn may help them to deal with everyday obstacles. Again, the definition by WHO is not the working definition of this thesis, but serves as an example.

Moreover, one might argue that the teachers who took part in Ekornes’ study’s definition of good mental health had an impact on what they think is expected of them in order to, for example, have accommodated the interdisciplinary topic. Perhaps the teachers from the study by Ekornes had high expectations of what talking about mental health topics must entail and therefore were of the opinion that they did not possess the appropriate knowledge in order to do so. When one reads the definition provided by the World Health Organization one might regard the topic as manageable. Moreover, the definition gives clues as to what competences one might deem to be of importance for students to attain. According

to the Mental Health Organization in Great Britain, one of the most important parts of encouraging good mental health in the classroom is to be a good role model (2020). They argue that a part in doing so, is to talk about this topic in a non-stigmatizing way and talk about one's own mental health in the classroom in an effort to normalize taking care of your own mental health (WHO, 2020). This does not, however, necessarily imply that teachers should be transparent about, for example, their personal mental health struggles, but rather to talk about the subject in an informal manner. By talking about the subject in an informal manner, one is arguably contributing to diminishing the stigma through normalizing the topic in the classroom.

Considering the vague formulation of the interdisciplinary topic, and the definition of good mental health provided by WHO, there is reason to believe that teachers may add higher expectations to their role in promoting "good mental health", than intended. This claim is substantiated by Ekornes' study, where she found that there is an increase in perceived responsibility for students' mental well-being, as a result of what the teacher role has become (2017, p. 348). In her study, Ekornes finds that teachers attribute their expanding role as emerging from a classroom where students suffer mentally but have very few persons to confide in (2017, 348). Considering this with the fact that teachers reportedly recognize the connection between mental health and learning outcomes, they regard their expanded role as necessary.

The definition of good mental health may impact one's attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic. As seen in Ekornes' study, teachers feel that they lack the necessary competence to address the topic of mental health, despite stating that they already work with their students' mental health. This also shows evidence of a determination within the teachers, as they address the topic in spite of their attitudes towards it. Therefore, there is not necessarily a correlation between teachers' attitudes towards the topic, and their desire to work with it. As aforementioned, teachers are likely to have many different definitions of "sound mental health". Considering that this thesis is investigating teachers' opinions and practices, it is not desirable to exclude anyone's opinions simply because they do not align with the thesis's pre-determined definition. Therefore, a working definition has not been provided.

### 2.4.2 Mental health and literature

Integrating mental health topics in lower secondary school and upper secondary school is deemed important as young students begin making decisions about their mental health in lower secondary school (Bagnell & Santor, 2015, p. 49). Additionally, from lower secondary school, it is expected that young learners begin to make decisions about their health, but they are not equipped to do so (Bagnell & Santor, 2015, p. 56). Considering this with the fact that poor mental health is the number one issue facing schools today with one in five students suffering from mental disorders (Bagnell & Santor, 2015, p.49), there is indeed reason as to why this topic is important. Mental disorders have immense impact on the individual's ability to put efforts into academic endeavors as disorders such as depression may cause "sadness, poor concentration, irritability, interpersonal conflict, social isolation and decreased academic performance" (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010, p. 5). Mental health is therefore not only of importance for the individual's sense of self, but also their ability to participate in school endeavors. Considering that literature has the ability to enhance *Bildung*, as discussed chapter 2.1.1, this sub-chapter will explore the possibilities of using literature as a way of talking about mental health topics.

One of the main problems related to mental health is that people who suffer from such issues also suffer from "othering" as the people around them might struggle to understand their suffering (Richmond, 2014, p. 2). As aforementioned, literature holds the ability for readers to step into someone else's reality and might therefore be an important source in helping the readers that do not suffer from mental disorders get a glimpse into these sufferings. Richmond argues that "there is a connection that can be made between the reader and the text which enables the composition to affect the reader's thoughts, feelings and beliefs in a truly personal way" (2014, p. 5). The emotional engagement in the reader is an important part in being able to understand the life and struggles of people suffering from these disorders which further might be part in diminishing the stigma and negative connotations of mental disorders.

Diminishing the stigma and negative connotations whilst simultaneously increasing empathy and understanding for people who suffer from mental disorders is arguably an important prerequisite for talking about mental health in the classroom. As classrooms are diverse with people of many different backgrounds and therefore also different horizons, it is important to create a common ground of understanding and respect when talking about such topics.

Therefore, by reading about people who suffer from mental disorders one has the potential to create a classroom that empathizes and perhaps even understands these sufferings, creating a

safe environment for those who suffer themselves. That is not to say, however, that there is an immediate link between reading about mental health and creating an environment where talking about mental health is unproblematic. Rather, this is one factor that may be part in creating such an environment.

According to Djikic, Oatley and Moldoveniu, fictional stories help the reader develop “empathy with literary characters” (2013, as cited in Richmond 2014, p. 24). Furthermore, they find that “the world of literature engages us to become others in imagination” (Djikic et al., 2013, as cited in Richmond 2014, p. 24). These attributes are, as aforementioned (cf. 2.2.1), important factors in enhancing *Bildung*, and may also be essential in facilitating a resource for talking about mental health. Arguably, by introducing the students to another culture or life in a way they can relate to, this may engage them emotionally. If the students are emotionally engaged, they may have empathy for a character that, for example, struggles with mental health issues. This may, according to Richmond, engage students in conversations about “how characters with physiological problems are treated by peers, bullies and community members” (2014, p. 24). This claim is also supported by Pieper et al., as they find that “the narrative functions as a mirror for ourselves; we find confirmation and recognition in encountering ‘the other’ in the text” (2007, p.8). Moreover, we may also meet the unknown and explore new grounds” (Pieper et al., 2007, p. 8). Through exploring narratives and characters, the reader is meeting other realities, which may influence the reader’s “horizon”. This expansion may contribute to understanding other’s struggles, and perhaps one’s own.

Moreover, considering that literature has the ability to allow the reader to step into someone else’s shoes, Fenner argues that “literary text as an artefact of the foreign culture provides the mirror in which they can see themselves reflected; it provides an outside to their inside” (2000, p. 149). For individuals struggling with daily struggles or mental disorders, seeing their issues dealt with by, for example, a literary character, can give important perspective. In addition to learning about others, as Fenner argues, literature engages the reader emotionally, encouraging them to insert themselves in its context. Hoff argues that literature challenges the reader to “place themselves in somebody else’s shoes and to enter into a negotiating dialogue with the values and worldviews inherent in the text” (2016, p. 54). For students who suffer, whether it is from heartbreak or mental disorders, literature will, arguably, make the reader turn the message or values inherent in the text, onto themselves. Subsequently, this may result

in enhancement of the reader's self as it can broaden their "horizon", and how they manage their struggles. The emotional engagement, which is likely to occur, is also part in creating motivation for the reading (Fenner, 2001, 28), which may be important when considering that only a slight majority of people aged 16-24 have read a novel (2015, p. 108. Cf. 2.3).

On the other hand, similar to the discussion on *Bildung*, it is hard for teachers to gain insight into what the students are left with when talking about mental health, especially when considering the sensitivity and complexity surrounding this particular subject. Therefore, one should concern oneself with how teachers can best facilitate an environment for development of *Bildung*, and for talking about mental health.

There are arguably many factors that go into creating an environment for talking about mental health, and literature with its attributes, is arguably one way of doing so. Through many of the same attributes that enable enhancement of *Bildung*, literature holds the potential for creating emotional engagement. Through meetings with "the other", the reader meets other people, cultures and ways of living that can broaden their horizons, and subsequently develop their sense of self. Particularly, reading about how characters with mental health issues are treated, may give them crucial insight into their own health and how they treat the people around them.

#### 2.4.3 Classroom interactions and mental health

According to Allen et al., an important prerequisite for talking about mental health in the classroom is the relationship between student and teacher (2013, as cited in Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p.1). In order to discuss whether literature can be a good resource for talking about mental health, it is essential to also investigate the importance of teachers' interaction and relationship with their students. Although this topic is a mainly pedagogical concern, its relevancy to this thesis is rooted in the relationship between mental health issues as highly influential on the learner's ability to engage in academic endeavors (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010, p. 5; cf. 2.4.2). It is necessary to emphasize the teachers' role in students' mental health, because it can be part in creating a classroom environment that facilitates conversations about a sensitive topic such as what mental health can be. According to Ertesvåg and Havik, classroom interaction is understood as "the quality of interactions between teachers and students" (2021, p. 2), and is divided into three dimensions. These

dimensions are; teachers' emotional support, monitoring and instructional support. In the following, the three dimensions will be described in short.

Teachers' emotional support concerns the dimensions such as "personal care and warmth towards the students" and reflects "the emotional climate of the classroom" (Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p. 2). To provide emotional support in the classroom, the teacher can, for example, avoid topics that are triggering to their students. It is further argued that teachers who provide emotional support focus on "feelings of comfort, safety, respects, acceptance and being valued" (Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p. 2). One can argue that by taking students' emotion into account, students will feel more connected to their teachers, and will therefore establish positive development trajectories (Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p. 2). Furthermore, teachers' monitoring includes "the regulation and structuring of students' behavior, work progress, time and attention in the classroom" (Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p. 2). In the classroom, monitoring can be to make short-term regulations to the timetable or changing the teaching practice in accordance with their students' needs. Lastly, teachers' instructional support concerns the feedback provided to students, and argues that in classrooms with high instructional support "teachers help their students solve problems, encourage higher-order thinking and provide feedback that expands and deepens students' skills and knowledge" (Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p. 3). The instructional support aligns with practices related to a sociocultural approach to teaching, as discussed in chapter 2.2.1. Through instructional support, the teacher is creating scaffolding for the learners, that enables knowledge acquisitions that, in individual work, would have been unobtainable.

There are several factors that go into creating an environment where talking about mental health through the use of literature is productive. The findings by Ertesvåg and Havik display how the teacher can be an important factor in their students' mental well-being, and therefore potentially important when facilitating an environment for talking about mental health. Although classroom interactions are not the main concern of this thesis, it may be essential to review in relation to the teachers' current practices.

## 2.5 Literary theories

There are numerous ways in which one reads literature and furthermore how one interprets it. The interpretation of a text is likely to depend on which elements of the text you emphasize, whether it is the author's life, the context of the novel or the contents of the text alone.

Exploring the evolution of literary theory is relevant as it gives important insight into how such theories have had an impact on different pedagogical approaches to literature. In the following the text will explore the theories of historical-biographical, New Criticism and Reader- Response theory and consider the ways in which they have influenced the classroom practice.

These theories are essential to consider because they enable unique ways of reading, interpreting and, subsequently, talking about the literary work. As will become evident in the following sub-chapters, the different theories have diverse approaches to reading and interpreting literature, as they concern different aspects of the literary work as essential in obtaining the “correct” interpretations. This will arguably enable different conversations, and the different approaches to literature will therefore be essential to review when exploring the teachers’ current teaching practice and how they facilitate talking about mental health topics.

#### 2.5.1 The impact of Historical- Biographical theory

For a long period of time, the focus of interpretation of literature was on the context in which the text was created. Literary critics would therefore have to investigate the author life as well as his or her “milieu”, namely the author’s friends as well as other authors, in order to properly discover the text’s true meaning (Parker, 2015, p.13). The text alone was, in other words, not sufficient in order to obtain the “right” interpretation of the text and information on the author was an important prerequisite in order to discover the text’s meaning. The task for literary critics and teachers was not to interpret the text in their own way in relation to one’s own pre-knowledge, as will become important in later times, but rather to discover the author’s intended meaning of the text. In a classroom setting, this approach would require background information about the author’s life and the historical context of the text, in order for students’ to arrive at the “correct” interpretation.

#### 2.5.2 New Criticism

The term New Criticism came from John Crowe Ransom who in 1941 first coined the term as *The New Criticism* (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p.274), and the theory dominated the approach to literature in the late 1970s (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 46). Different from the historical-biographical theory, New critics strayed away from the importance of the author’s context and argued that all clues needed for interpretation were to be found within the text itself. According to the new critics, the best way to make meaning of a text is through “close reading, which means detailed, careful attention to evidence from the text itself, to the words

on the page” (Parker, 2015, p.16). However, that is not to say that these critics were not interested in addressing the text’s history and culture, as they argued that these elements were important, but should not be the focus of literary criticism. In this theory, the reader and their pre-knowledge is also taken out of the equation, as the meaning of a text was regarded as something existing independently from the reader. This would ultimately mean that different people should arrive at the same interpretations of their similar readings.

This theory influence classroom practice in the sense that it gave a basis for the view that the teacher was in possession of the “right” interpretation of any text, and the teacher’s tasks was to guide the learners to this interpretation (Ibsen, 2000, p.144). Here, there is left little room for students to be independent readers, but rather passive readers as they take little part in the meaning- making process. In difference to the historical- biographical theory, teachers, in this theory, are not required to provide information regarding the author’s background or context. Rather, all the necessary clues for the interpretation lie within the text.

### 2.5.3 Reader- Response Theory

In the 1960s and 70s a new era arose, switching the focus from solely the text or the text’s context, to valuing the reader as an active and crucial participant in the meaning making process. Different from previous theories, the meaning of the text was no longer regarded to solely lie within the text, as if “it existed there before and independently of the reading” (Parker, 2015, p. 334). Instead, this theory values the reader’s role in reading process to such an extent, that it claims the work of literature is “not fully realized until it has been read” (Fenner, 2018, p.223). The theory argues that whilst reading, the reader will have an emotional response, perhaps memories are triggered and other associations, resulting in individual interpretations, dependent on their pre-knowledge or “horizon” as Gadamer (as cited in Fenner, 2000, p. 17) calls it.

One of the prominent figures of this tradition of literary criticism is Louise Rosenblatt who is the creator of the Transactional Theory, a reader-response theory that came out of the want to further include the reader as an important part in the meaning-making process. Rosenblatt attributes equal importance to the reader and the text. She differentiates between two different ways of reading within this theory; aesthetic reading and efferent reading (Wiland, 2016, p. 17). Efferent reading is concerned with what information the reader can take from the reading, for example, about linguistic features or cultural issues (Wiland, 2016, p. 17).

Aesthetic response, on the other hand, emphasizes the “feelings evoked in the reader by more formal characteristics of the text: choice of words, rhythm, images and connotations” (Fenner, 2018, p. 223). Arguably, the aesthetic way of reading is important in order to promote interest and motivation for reading as this might make the efferent reading more accessible to the reader.

Although Reader- response is regarded as a theory in the sense of being one of many approaches to reading texts, that is, according to Parker, not the case. Parker argues that “all criticism is reader-criticism” and, therefore, there is no need for a separate theory devoted to this topic (2015, p. 330). He argues that all literary theories concern the reader’s response, to some extent, whether it chooses to “focus on that dimension of its own method” (2015, p. 330), or not. The reader-response is therefore not as exclusive as it may seem to be, according to Parker, as he argues that reader-response is evident in any literary theory. Therefore, although one can differentiate between the different theories, that is not to say they are entirely different.

#### 2.5.4 Literary theory in the classroom

Through the historical development of the teaching and learning of languages, the reading of literature has evolved into an emphasized focus on the learners and their pre-knowledge as an important part of the meaning- making process. Although it has been made evident that there are different approaches, it is not expected to find practices only correlating to one of the theories. Rather, it would be appropriate to say that a combination of the different approaches is common, for instance taking into consideration both the author’s context as well as valuing each individual’s pre-knowledge. Although one can find evidence of the historical- biographical or new criticism theories, that is not to say that the reader- response theory is undermined or deteriorated. Rather, every aspect of the literary work may be deemed important in the classroom in terms of utilizing the text in order to acquire different important aspects of the VG1 English curricular aims, for instance language proficiency, literary devices, history and other elements evident in texts. In other words, one should not expect to find the occurrence of only one theory in classrooms but rather a combination of them. In the data presentation and discussion, there will be a focus on how the teachers currently teach literature, in terms of what literary theory their practice aligns with and what effect this has on its ability to address the topic of mental health.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to gather data to explore how English teachers work with literature, what properties they attribute literature and what their attitudes towards talking about mental health in the context of literary reading in the English classroom are. Subsequently, this information will culminate in being able to argue whether or not the use of literature as a way of talking about mental health is something teachers find feasible and advantageous. The data collection consisted of a questionnaire, which was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, as well as four in-depth interviews. 41 Upper Secondary schools in the western, southern and eastern parts of Norway were contacted with an invitation to take part in the questionnaire, and 28 teachers participated. Considering the limited population in relation to the number of VG1 English teachers in Norway, this thesis does not aim to make any claims on behalf of the whole population. Rather, this thesis aims to comment on the tendencies found in the data.

This chapter consists of an exploration of the rationale behind the mixed methods study, the sampling process, securing data quality, and authorization and consent. Considering this thesis' investigation of teachers' reported practices, it is important to be aware of the limitations such a focus on teacher cognition entails, and a discussion of this topic therefore follows. Additionally, the two research strands are presented and discussed individually. Within these presentations, a presentation of the design, participants and strengths and shortcomings, is included. Within the presentation of the qualitative strand, a presentation of how the interviews were conducted and transcribed, is also included. Lastly, a presentation of how the data was analysed, which ethical considerations apply and the research's limitations, is included.

### 3.1 Mixed methods

In research design, there is a traditional between a qualitative and quantitative research method. However, these are not polar opposites as the quantitative method can have qualitative aspects or elements making it quantitative, yet also, qualitative. Gorard portrays this ambiguity by stating that "to some extent all methods of educational research deal with qualities, even when the observed qualities are counted" (2001, p.6). Although Gorard makes this claim, there is a traditional distinction between the two methods where a qualitative method often refers to the use of, for example, interviews, observation, and case studies,

whilst a quantitative research often collects numerical data in the form of for example questionnaires.

The Mixed Method Approach includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies. A definition of the method is: “a study that combines qualitative data collection and/or analysis with quantitative data collection and/or analysis in a single study” (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela, 2006, p. 441). Moreover, one might regard the use of mixed methods as challenging when taking into consideration the additional time required when one has to “collect and analyse two different types of data” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). However, although the mixed method requires an additional amount of work, it also adds value according to Hurmerinta-Peltomäki and Nummela who argue that studies that use a mixed method approach “increase the validity of the findings” (2006, p. 213).

To answer the research questions, the most appropriate way of conducting the study was deemed to be mixed methods. The rationale for deciding upon two methods was from the desire to gain knowledge about tendencies from a broad part of the population, as well as in-depth knowledge about Upper Secondary School English teachers’ experiences and attitudes. Traditionally, the questionnaire would be conducted first, and participants for the interviews would be selected from those participants. This would enable the interviews to further explore the teachers’ answers from the questionnaire. However, although this may be the most suited order, this was not the order in the current study. Rather, the questionnaire was distributed after the interviews were conducted. The interviews, therefore, were not able to discuss the interviewees’ responses to the questionnaire, and the two strands are therefore, somewhat, independent from each other. In spite of this, the two strands were designed based on the same themes, namely, current literature teaching practice, attitudes towards literature’ attributes, attitudes towards the new interdisciplinary topic on mental health and future teaching. Therefore, although the strands are not directly connected, they are thematically comparable. In the analysis, the data from the interviews are therefore likely to enable further explanations to the quantitative findings from the questionnaire. The two strands were, therefore, necessary to include as they each can collect unique data, which this thesis discusses explicitly in chapters 3.6 and 3.7.

### 3.2 Sampling

Sampling is one of the most important aspects of conducting research and can have great impact on the results of the study. According to Stephen Gorard, a high- quality sample is “crucial for safe generalization to take place” (2001, p. 24). Sampling is used when, for example, the population in which one wishes to research is vast and it is therefore deemed too challenging to investigate each individual case within the population. Therefore, one will research a sample that can be representative for the entire population. In this context, the population is VG1 English teachers at Upper Secondary School, and sampling is therefore necessary as it would be unmanageable to include every individual in this population.

In this study, the method of non-probability sampling, more specifically a convenience sample, was utilized. According to Gorard, a non-probability sample is a method where all the possible “cases” do not have the same chance at being selected (2001, p.24). Within the non-probability sample, the convenience sample entails gathering participants due to their accessibility (Gorard, 2001), for example by recruiting acquaintances or others that are easy to contact. The convenience sample was used in the quantitative as well as qualitative study as this was the most efficient and advantageous method for the type of research and the time frame. In terms of the qualitative method, the method for contacting teacher was reliant on former acquaintances as well as acquaintances of fellow students.

### 3.3 Validity and Reliability

Data quality is an important factor in securing data validity and reliability. During the collection process, the research is prone to issues that may impact the quality of the data. This sub-chapter discusses how data quality is obtained, supported by the theoretical perspectives of Kvale and Brinkmann (2019), and Pervin (1984).

Kvale and Brinkmann state that reliability concerns the data’s consistency and credibility, and is often connected to whether the results can be reproduced by another researcher (2019, p. 276). In other words, as a research project is prone to influence from the interviewer or the design of the research instruments, reliability is dependent on whether the data findings can be reproduced. Therefore, the reliability of the research in question relies on its accuracy in both the design of both strands of research, and the execution of them. The question of reliability is present in both the planning, execution, transcription as well as in the analysis of the data. In order to secure the reliability of research it is important to explicitly declare and

explain the process of planning and conducting the research. Therefore, during the presentation of the quantitative (Cf. 3.6) and qualitative (Cf. 3.7) strands of the research, the discussion will address potential limitations, in an effort to be transparent and further strengthen the reliability of the data.

Validity refers to the study's ability to answer the research questions. According to Pervin (1984), validity is measured in terms of whether our observations actually reflect the phenomena or variables that we wish to learn more about (As cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019, p. 276). In this context, validity comes down to whether you have chosen the right research method, and whether the study has been designed and carried out in a manner that provides data that sufficiently answer the research questions. During the presentation of how the questionnaire (Cf. 3.6.1) and the interview guide (Cf. 3.7.1) were designed, the questions' relevancy to the research questions will therefore be declared.

Although the notions of reliability and validity refer to separate aspects of the research and analysis process, they are interdependent in determining the quality of the research and are therefore equally important. In the presentations of the two strands of research (Cf. 3.6 & 3.7), factors that may have impacted the data quality will be presented and discussed.

#### 3.4. Authorization and informed consent

Another important prerequisite for securing data quality, involves securing authorisation from the appropriate institutions, and consent from the participants. Any research project which processes, stores and uses personal data must be notified and authorised by The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). This section explores how the appropriate authorization and consent was obtained.

In relation to the questionnaire, no personal information regarding the participants was gathered, therefore, it was not necessary to collect consent from these participants. Moreover, in the interviews, audio recordings were made and stored on personal electronic devices. An authorisation to use private devices in this regard was therefore necessary. Such an authorization was provided in October of 2020, by the University of Bergen (Appendix 2). The e-mail addresses of the interviewees were also gathered, in order to schedule a meeting and to allow for question or withdrawal from participating in the study. Additionally, a consent form was also gathered from the interviewees, which contained their full name

(Appendix 3). The research was therefore subject to notification of the NSD, and approval was given in the fall of 2020 (Appendix 1).

In line with the guidelines provided by the NSD, an information letter was sent to the interviewees prior to the interviews. This contained information about the aim and scope of the research project, as well as what their participation would entail. They were made aware that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the possibility to withdraw from the project at any time. To allow for such inquiries, or to ask any further questions, the researcher and supervisor's names and contact information was provided. Moreover, information regarding the participant's rights, how their information was stored and how this information was to be deleted at the end of the project, was provided. Finally, the information letter included a consent form. This consent form was signed by the four participants, either at the beginning of the interview, or prior, in which the respective teachers would e-mail the consent form to the researcher. Prior to the conduction of the interviews, it was agreed, in cooperation with the participants, that the interviews were to be conducted in English. The reasoning behind this choice will be discussed further in chapter 3.7.3.

In accordance with the guidelines from the NSD, all the stored data are to be deleted when the project is finalised in the spring of 2021.

### 3.5 Teacher Cognition

This thesis concerns teachers' reported classroom practices, as opposed to entering the physical classroom, as done in, for example, a case study. Considering that this thesis concerns teachers' reported classroom practices, cognition is essential to review. According to Simon Borg, teacher cognition concerns "what language teachers think, know and believe" (2006, p. 1). When conducting research on teachers' reported teaching, one might question whether there is resemblance between what the teacher think they practice, and what their actual practice is, and if there are divergences, why do they occur?

In his review of several studies on the topic of teacher cognition, Borg remarks that teachers' beliefs contradict themselves, depending on the context; "teachers may express a particular belief when responding to a survey but state an apparently contradictory view when talking about actual examples of their practice" (2006, p. 107). In other words, Borg argues that there may be distinction between what the teacher thinks their practice is, and what it is in reality.

He makes a distinction in terms of researching teachers' practices and beliefs, stating; "we can go into a classroom, we can observe behaviour, we can see what the teachers do, we can describe that; but with beliefs we can't see them" (Birello, 2012, p. 89). Whilst teachers' reported practices can be "checked" in their classrooms, teachers' beliefs remain hard to observe. Although researching teachers' beliefs includes some difficulty and perhaps faults, that is not to say that the teachers are overtly expressing their beliefs incorrectly in attempt to, for example, accommodate what they think the researcher wants to hear. Rather, Borg argues that teachers are rarely asked about their opinions, and therefore, when asked about them, they may not be aware of them and hence struggle to put their thoughts into words (Birello, 2012, p. 89). There can arguably be many reasons as to why teachers may give wrongful information regarding their practice and beliefs. The researcher and the research's design may also have impacted the teacher's responses, which will be discussed further in relation to the presentations of the questionnaire (Cf. 3.6.1) and interview guide (3.7.1).

The present study researches an interdisciplinary topic that was implemented in the fall of 2020, hence, right before the interviews were conducted. Whilst the mental health topic in the classroom may be new to some teachers, the research also investigated their opinions about literature's attributes, which, arguably, is a more familiar practice. Here, Borg makes the distinction between core and peripheral beliefs. Core beliefs are "the ones that are more stable and powerful in what we do" (Birello, 2012, p. 90), and, on the other hand, peripheral beliefs are "less stable, perhaps issues that we are less committed to" (Birello, 2012, p. 90). For some teachers, beliefs about literature are core beliefs, whilst, as mental health is a new topic to some, beliefs connected to this topic may be peripheral. However, as Ekornes found in her study (2017), several teachers implicate a current practice of working with mental health topics, and one might therefore find that some teachers have core beliefs about mental health in the classroom. This distinction may influence the findings from the research, as some will have stronger core beliefs about mental health issues than others, and may, therefore, be more aware of their opinions in this regard.

There are evidently many factors that influence the teachers' reported teaching and their opinions. Although teachers may not overtly report wrongly about their practices, this distinction is important to be aware of, as this thesis is restricted to researching teachers' reported practices. Additionally, it is natural that some topics are more important core beliefs

to some teachers who, arguably, will have more to say than other who view the same beliefs as peripheral.

### 3.6 The questionnaire

While the purpose of conducting a qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of this thesis' research question, the quantitative study, the questionnaire, was conducted in order to identify broader trends and patterns. This was done to further strengthen the validity of the research. Although the quantitative study reaches a broader part of the population, it is important to mention that the study is still limited in its scope as the research utilized a non-probability sample, meaning that every individual in the population did not have the same chance of getting selected for the study (Cf. 3.2). Moreover, as 28 teachers participated, it is not representative for the population of VG1 English teachers. It is therefore important to state that the findings will represent indications, rather than general claims on behalf of the entire population of VG1 English teachers.

According to Stephen Gorard, the use of questionnaires is best suited when the aim is to gather simple facts, rather than “opinions, attitudes or explanations” (2001, p. 47). Although this survey does in fact consider opinions and attitudes, Gorard defends the use of questionnaires in these situations, if it is part of a larger study (2001). Therefore, one can argue that the use of a questionnaire in this case, although it deals with opinions and attitudes, is beneficial. In connection with the qualitative study, the survey will be able to comment on the general tendencies of opinions and attitudes of both literature teaching and talking about mental health in the English classroom. This sub-chapter will explore the design and structure of the questionnaire, how the participants were recruited, before, lastly, discussing the method's strengths and weaknesses.

#### 3.6.1 Designing and structuring the questionnaire

To conduct the quantitative strand of the research, an online questionnaire, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative questions, was developed. Creating and distributing the questionnaire online made the data collection more efficient than, for example, if it were to be done on paper. By distributing the questionnaire online, one is able to reach a broader audience that is not available in your immediate place of residency, making it possible to reach teachers in upper secondary schools in different geographical regions. The program SurveyXact was used to design and distribute the questionnaire.

As will be discussed further in chapter 3.6.3, the e-mail distributed to the teachers included a brief explanation of the study and its content, and it was therefore decided that it would not be necessary to repeat this information at the beginning of the questionnaire. The email also explained that the survey was anonymous (appendix 4). Furthermore, the questionnaire was made in English, for a few reasons. As this survey was to be completed by English teachers exclusively, it was likely that they were adequate readers and writers of English. Therefore, the questionnaire was designed in English, in order to avoid translations in the aftermath. However, some participants nevertheless chose to respond in Norwegian, and, therefore, when used in the analysis, these responses have been translated into English.

Furthermore, the structure of the questionnaire was divided into three main topics, similar to that of the interview guide, which this thesis will return to in chapter 3.7.1. The three topics were:

- Current literature teaching practice
  - Perceptions about literature's attributes
- Attitudes towards the new interdisciplinary topic on mental health
- Future teaching

These divisions were not made explicit in the questionnaire but worked as a general structure in the design process. Making the structure the same for the interview guide was part in ensuring that the two strands were related and comparable in the analytical process. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions, in which three were qualitative. In the following, the questionnaire will be presented. For the sake of readability, the appendix number will not be provided to each of the questions, as they are found within the same appendix. The questionnaire is found in appendix 6, and the questionnaire with responses is found in appendix 12.

At the start of the questionnaire, it was deemed necessary to start with a question that would, arguably, further strengthen the validity of the research. Considering that the questionnaire was distributed to Principals and Department managers of Upper Secondary schools, it was uncertain whether the link was in fact distributed to English teachers only. Therefore, in order to ensure that the participants were English teachers, the first question is “Do you as of today

work as an Upper Secondary school English teacher?”. In retrospect, this question should have been formulated differently, as there is necessarily no reason as to why teachers who no longer teach the English subject cannot take part in the study. However, to ensure that those who this might apply to also had an answer alternative, the option “no, but I have worked as an upper secondary school teacher previously” (appendix 6), was provided. In retrospect, the question should have specified that it concerned “VG1” teachers of English. However, there is reason to believe that most teachers of English in upper secondary school are teaching, or have taught, English at VG1 level at some point. It was therefore most important to specify that the questionnaire concerns teachers of English.

Moreover, the first section concerns the topic “current literature practice” and consists of 5 questions. The topic starts with questions regarding the respondents’ perception of pupils’ motivation to read. Question 2 asks: “Do you experience that pupils are motivated to read English literature” and question 3 follows up the latter, asking: “If you feel that students are NOT motivated to read English literature, what do you think could be the reason(s) for this?”. The purpose of these questions was to investigate whether teachers perceive literature as challenging to teach in the classroom, and what their obstacles might be. This is important to the analysis, in comparing the students’ challenges with reading literature in relation to the teachers’ opinions about literature’s properties and attributes. I was interested in exploring whether the respondents believed that students’ motivation, or lack thereof, influences the teaching practices and the teachers’ opinions about literature in the classroom. Additionally, methodology literature emphasises the importance of beginning the questionnaires with easy questions in order to encourage and motivate the participant to complete the questionnaire (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 182, Gorard, 2001, p. 90). These questions were deemed to be relatively easy to answer, as this is something the teachers arguably will have some clear opinions about.

Next, the questionnaire asks about how the teachers choose literature for the classroom. The three questions pertaining to the selection process consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The variation between open-ended and closed question is, according to Gorard, most advisable (2001, p. 93). Question 4 is open-ended and asks: “What are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the English classroom?”. Leaving this question to be open-ended allows the teacher to emphasise what first comes to mind, as opposed to leading them in any direction. If the question was closed, there would have to be multiple choices for

different responses, which could be leading the participant. Perhaps they would see an answer on the list of choices that might sound appealing to them, for example by choosing the option that many may value as most “correct” but not a reflection of their actual practice. That is not to say, however, that this cannot occur in response to open-ended questions as well.

Moreover, according to Gorard, many may respond “more sensitively” to open-ended questions, and it is therefore valuable to combine such open-ended questions with closed ones (2001, p. 93). Therefore, this open-ended question was followed by the closed question 5:

“Do you provide your students with options when deciding what to read in the English classroom?”. This provided several different answer options related to ways of choosing texts, either by allowing the students to participate in the decision-making process, or not. This was important to the research question as gives insight into whether the teachers are concerned with finding literature that the students can relate to. As discussed in chapter 2.4.2, this can be an important prerequisite in the practice of utilizing literature as a way of talking about mental health topics. The option of “other, please state” was also provided, in order to allow for individual qualitative responses for those that could not find a suitable pre-defined alternative. In retrospect, this question is rather vague as it investigates the teachers’ practices when deciding “what to read”. Arguably, as opposed to “what to read”, a specification of its concerns with literature would have been more precise. Question 6 asks: “Which of the following options do you use the most when interpreting literature in the English classroom?”. Here, the participants are provided with multiple choices consisting of options related to conversations in plenary, group or other sociocultural activities. The pre-defined options were mainly directed towards practices entailing some form of oral communication. In retrospect, options related to individual work, for example writing tasks, should have been included. Although the option of “other, please specify” was included, it is likely that some participants will not take the time to write a qualitative answer, and rather select one of the pre-defined alternatives.

Moreover, the questionnaire moves to the topic “perceptions about literature’s attributes”.

Question 7 asks: “In your opinion, what are the most important reasons for students to read English literature?”. In this question it was important to emphasise that the questionnaire was asking about the teachers’ opinion and not necessarily what the teachers think the curriculum regards as most important. This question was closed with fixed alternatives, where the participants could select multiple options. The options were chosen based on answers from the interviews that had already been conducted, and on the theories presented in chapter 2.2.

The options are, therefore, related to *Bildung* processes, intercultural competence, authenticity, and language proficiency, in all, 10 options are provided. At the time, the number of options provided were deemed sufficient, and the option of “other, please state”, was, therefore, not included. However, such an alternative would have been beneficial as it is challenging to foresee every possible reason as to why it is important for students to read English literature. Furthermore, question 8 continues on this topic by asking “which competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of literature?”. This question was open as it was difficult to predict all the possible answers, whilst also attempting to not lead the participants in any direction.

Lastly, question 9 introduces the third topic, namely “Attitudes towards the new interdisciplinary topic on mental health” and asks: “With the National curriculum renewal came new interdisciplinary topics, stating: ‘The school must provide the students with the relevant knowledge in order to promote good mental health as well as physical health’. Do you feel that this interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the English classroom?”. This question is closed, with 8 answer options. The aim of this question was to gather indications of teachers’ attitudes as this might again affect their interest in working with the topic. The answer options were designed with the aim of uncovering whether they felt it was necessary or not, and the reason behind their opinions. Two of the answer options were “Yes” and “No”, whilst the remaining options included an explanation, such as “Yes, because I experience that students suffer from mental health issues”. It may also be an important influence on whether they find that using literature as a way of talking about mental health is practically feasible. Question 10 is also closed with 6 fixed alternatives and asks whether the participant finds the interdisciplinary topic to be challenging to accommodate in the English classroom. The fixed alternatives were designed based on the same principals as in question 9, namely, to discover the reasoning behind the “yes” and “no” responses. As it was difficult to foresee what the participant may think on this topic, there is an option to answer “other” and write their own answer. Question 12 asks what literary medium the participant would regard as the best medium for talking about mental health. The fixed options to this question were movie, non-fictional novel, short story and fictional novel. Another option was intended and was meant to state “documentaries”. However, due to a malfunction in either the creation or the distribution of the questionnaire, the last option was displayed as “8”. Due to this, and to the fact that the fixed options were narrow and unclear, it was decided not to include this question in the data analysis. The last question asks, “would you consider using/continue

using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own English classroom?”. This question is a way of gaining indications of whether the participants regard literature as a good resource for talking about mental health.

### 3.6.2 Participants

When gathering participants for the questionnaire, principals and department managers were contacted and asked to distribute the questionnaire to their English teachers (Appendix 4). 41 Upper Secondary schools in the eastern, southern, and western parts of Norway were contacted through their principal or the Department manager. In the e-mail, they were asked to distribute the questionnaire to the school’s English teachers (Appendix 4). The e-mail included a short introduction of myself, the context of the study, the topic of this thesis and the questionnaire, and, lastly, that participation in the study was anonymous. Despite contacting 41 schools, very few of those replied, and very few teachers participated, and it became clear that gathering participants would be somewhat challenging. Some principals and Department managers replied, where some were happy to take part in the study and distributed the questionnaire, whilst others denied the request. Several of the schools that declined the request explained this by emphasising that the Covid-19 restrictions at the time were demanding for their teachers. They therefore did not wish to assign any additional work onto them.

Moreover, a large number of principals and Department managers did not reply. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to repeat the process of sending out the questionnaire to the schools in question. The first e-mail was sent in mid- December and the follow-up e-mails were sent during the first and second weeks of January. When re-sending the mail in January, the principals and/or Department managers were made aware that they had received another mail previously and that they received this mail as they did not respond the first time. Once again, some schools accepted the request, whilst others responded that their teachers were rather busy and would therefore not be able to participate. In all, a total of 28 teachers participated.

No information was collected from the participants in the quantitative study. The only indication regarding the participants place of residency comes from which schools the researcher contacted. Therefore, there is reason to believe that all participants reside in the southern, eastern and western parts of Norway.

### 3.6.3 Strengths and shortcomings of the questionnaire

Although the use of questionnaires has its advantages, it does not come without some limitations. Despite the fact that I designed and distributed the questionnaire to the best of my ability, there are still shortcomings to the use of questionnaires in general, and in terms of this questionnaire in particular. In accordance with Kvale and Binkmann's theory on reliability (2019, p. 276. Cf. 3.3.), this part of the chapter is devoted to addressing the shortcoming of the questionnaire.

Considering that this questionnaire was distributed electronically, the researcher was not present during the time in which the participants completed the questionnaire. According to Gilham, one of the shortcomings of questionnaires is that misunderstandings cannot be "immediately detected and corrected" (2000, p.10). In other words, if the researcher is not present during the completion of the questionnaire, the participants are not able to ask questions they might have and might therefore respond "incorrectly". Although the researcher's contact info is present in the e-mail requesting their participation (Appendix 4), one might regard sending a mail to be too time consuming, as opposed to simply asking the researcher, if she were present. Therefore, misinterpretations or misunderstanding may not have been clarified. On the other hand, as the researcher is indeed not present with the participant, this leaves the teachers with flexibility to answer the questionnaire at their own pace and time. This also goes hand in hand with the fact that if the researcher is not present, one does not have to account for interviewer bias.

Additionally, the questionnaire was explicit in expressing its concern with English teachers teaching in upper secondary school, however, it was not specific to its interest in VG1 specifically (cf. 3.6.1). Therefore, there is a possibility that the respondents answered based on their experience teaching English at other levels and programs. Lastly, there was no requirement to answer every question on the questionnaire, as the design allowed for partially completed submissions. Whilst this might entail that some questions have more respondents than others, it may have meant that more teachers participated as they could leave out questions that, for example, would be too time-consuming.

### 3.7 The interviews

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted in addition to the quantitative research. The interviews were a substantial and essential part of the study as they allowed for in-depth

exploration of the topics investigated in the questionnaire. Traditionally, the interviews would have been conducted after the questionnaire, where one would gather interviewees from the participants from the questionnaire. This would allow the interview to address the participants' answers from the questionnaire, to further explore their thought processes and reasoning behind their answers. As discussed previously (cf. 3.1), the present study did not follow this order, as the interviews were conducted before the questionnaire. Although this precludes the ability to explore the data findings from the questionnaire in relation to the specific participants, the two research strands were thematically similar, and, to a certain extent, concern similar questions. Therefore, the interview data still holds the ability to elaborate and expand upon the findings from the questionnaire.

This section will explore the design of the interview guide, how the interviews were conducted, how the participants were gathered and how the interviews were transcribed before moving on to a discussion concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the interview method.

### 3.7.1 Designing the interview guide

Similar to the structure of the questionnaire, the interview guide also consisted of three main topics. These were created with the aim of having a natural progression from talking about topics that the teachers arguably have a clear opinion on, such as whether they find students to be motivated to read or not, and what criteria they use for choosing literature in the classroom to talking about topics of mental health. The topic of mental health is perhaps more challenging to respond to, as it concerns potentially sensitive issues in the classroom, and how, or if, they deal with such issues in their current practice. As aforementioned, the new curriculum was implemented a few months before the interviews were conducted, and it was therefore not guaranteed that the participants had already worked with the interdisciplinary theme "Health and life skills" in general or the topic of mental health in particular.

Moreover, the interviews were semi-structured, a structure that both allows for similarity across the four interviews, whilst simultaneously leaving room for impromptu conversation. It was deemed beneficial to design a semi-structured interview guide as this allows the interview to take unexpected turns if necessary. According to Creswell and Creswell, an interview should involve "unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (2018, p. 187). This

semi-structure allowed the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and for the interview to take unexpected turns which led to interesting unforeseen discussions. Therefore, the interviews were different, but had the similar structure. The interview guide was designed based on the following themes:

- Current literature teaching practice
  - Perceptions about literature's attributes
- Attitudes towards the new interdisciplinary topic on mental health
- Future teaching

The topics are the same as the questionnaire in order to make possible comparisons between the findings emerging from the two data sets. The questions of the interview guide were the same for each interview, however, during each interview smaller changes were made in order to make it a natural continuation of what the conversation had concerned previously.

In the following, the interview guide will be presented and discussed. For the sake of readability, the appendix number will not be provided after the presentation of each question, as it is similar for every question. The interview guide is found in appendix 5, where key words for follow-up questions also are listed.

According to Creswell and Creswell, it is important to start the interview by discussing the general structure of the interview and ask the interviewee if he or she has any questions (2018, p.191). The interview therefore started with a description of the interview, and also asked if the interviewee had any questions. This is in an effort to put the interview in context, and to perhaps start the interview experience in an easy manner. This is also why it is important to start the interview with questions that set the interviewee at ease (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 191). The first question was therefore: "What are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the classroom?". This question was designed to investigate what attributes of literature teachers' value, as it is important to explore in order to understand what choices teachers make in their teaching practice and why. Moreover, it is interesting to see if criteria such as "relatability" come up, which was an important criterion for motivation, as found in the theories discussed in chapter 2.2. This is also part of the reason for the next question "Do you let the students partake in choosing what literary work they are going to read?". As enjoyment can be an important prerequisite for motivation, it is important to

research what teachers report about their practices for choosing literature, and whether this is linked to the learners' motivation for working with literature.

Moreover, relatability is also the main concern of the next question as it aims to explore whether teachers have an opinion of what students find interesting, and what they choose to emphasise, and therefore asks: "In your experience/opinion, what type of literature do you find that pupils are most interested in?". The next question asks, "Do you experience any challenges when teaching literature?" and attempts to further investigate the teachers' experience with literature, and perceptions about literature's role in the classroom. The following question asks, "How do you work with literature in the classroom before, during and after the reading?". This question aims to gain insight into the participants' current teaching practices in order to view how and whether these facilitate an environment for talking about mental health topics. Through acquiring knowledge about which literary theory their practice aligns with and whether they use sociocultural activities, one gains insight that can be important in regarding the ability to use literature as a way of talking about mental health topics. The two following questions concern the same in that they ask about the teachers' opinions about literature's attributes: "In your opinion, what are the reasons for pupils to read English literature" and "Which competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of literature?". When researching the abilities of literature that can make it a good resource for talking about mental health, certain aspects align with those found to be important in facilitating enhancement of *Bildung* (Cf. 2.2.1 and 2.4.2). I was therefore interested in investigating whether the teachers' opinions about literature's attributes comply with those that contribute to the enhancement of *Bildung* and, furthermore, addressing mental health topics. This may be an important prerequisite in order for the teachers to regard literature as a good way of talking about mental health.

Moreover, the next topic is "Attitudes towards the new interdisciplinary topic" and starts with the question "Do you regard this new interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate?". Before going into a discussion on the possibility of using literature as a way of talking about mental health, it was essential to start with the interviewees' opinions towards the interdisciplinary topic in general. It was important to regard their opinions towards the topic itself as this could perhaps influence whether they were positive or negative towards the use of literature in this context. In order to understand what they feel obliged to do in relation to the interdisciplinary topic, the next question asked, "When reading this new

interdisciplinary topic, what do you feel is expected from you as a teacher in order for you to have accommodated it?”. As discussed in chapter 2.4.1, the definition of the term “mental health” may influence what the teachers feel is expected of them. As this may vary from person to person, and ultimately may change their opinions regarding the interdisciplinary topic and the work that goes with it, this issue was essential to investigate.

Furthermore, in order to investigate whether teachers already had experience working with issues which can be linked to the interdisciplinary topic prior to its implementation, it was essential to ask, “Do you feel that your current practice accommodates these interdisciplinary topics?”. According to an American study on primary school teachers, Reinke et al. found that 75% of teachers work on mental health topics in the classroom (2011). This gives reason to believe that the Norwegian teachers also might have prior experience on the topic, and it was therefore necessary to investigate. The two next questions concern the interviewees’ opinions about literature in relation to the interdisciplinary topic “Do you feel that there are any advantages to literature that can be helpful in using it as a resource for talking about mental health?” and “Do you deem literature as a good resource for talking about mental health?”. After having discussed the properties of literature, and their opinions regarding the interdisciplinary topic, there is reason to believe that the teachers have been able to draw some conclusions regarding the use of literature in accommodating the interdisciplinary topic. Through discussing their current teaching practice, as well as their opinions on literature and mental health, the participant would hopefully become, if they were not already, aware of their own opinions and should thus arguably be able to answer the two aforementioned questions. As discussed in chapter 3.3, there is a difference between core and peripheral beliefs, and one might argue that the interdisciplinary topic, as it is new to the curriculum, has not yet been adopted as a core belief among the teachers. That is also why the last question on this topic is: “would you consider using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own classroom?”. The answers to this will give an affirmation of whether they find literature to be a useful resource in this context. Additionally, this will also provide indication as to whether they already use literature in this context. This also applies for the final topic of “future practice” and the final question: “Will you be changing your practice in order to accommodate this interdisciplinary topic?”. Again, this question ascertains whether the teachers find the practice of literature reading beneficial in combination with mental health topics, but it can also provide insight into whether the teachers already accommodate this practice.

### 3.7.2 Participants

Potential participants for the interviews were contacted per e-mail in August 2020. Some of the participants were contacted as they were acquaintances of either the researcher or of the researcher's fellow students. In all, 4 female VG1 English teachers were contacted, and all accepted the request. The four interviews were conducted in October and November of 2020, some in person and some via the digital platforms Google Meet and Zoom. Ideally, all four interviews would have been conducted in person, but due to Covid-19 restrictions at the time, it was deemed to be most beneficial to conduct the interviews online. However, as both Google Meet and Zoom allow the interviewer and interviewee to both see and hear each other, the online interviews were similar in nature to a physical one. That being said, the online interviews were recorded through the speaker of the computer, and the quality of said recording therefore varied, which will be discussed further in chapter, 3.7.4.

In the transcriptions, each teacher is given an initial, distinguishing between participants A (Appendix 8), B (Appendix 9), C (Appendix 10) and D (Appendix 11). Teachers A and B reside in Kristiansand and teachers C and D reside in Bergen.

### 3.7.3 Conducting the interviews

At the beginning of the interview, the participants were made aware of the topics to be discussed, that the audio would be recorded and what the recordings would be used for as well as how they would be stored. Furthermore, they were made aware that they could withdraw from the participation at any time. In order to make sure that they were aware of these conditions, they were sent an information letter with a consent form ahead of time, in order for them to become familiar with the information, before signing the consent form on the day of the interview (Appendix 3). The participants who were interviewed online sent the signed consent form to the interviewer at the day of the interview.

Before the interviews were conducted, it was decided, in agreement with the teachers, that the interviews were to be conducted in English. Although it may be most beneficial to conduct interviews in the first language due to possible language barriers, considering that the teachers all teach English as one of their subjects, this was not perceived to be an obstacle. Rather, it was more important to be able to transcribe the interviews in a manner that would reflect the statements of the teachers as accurately as possible. If the interviews were to be conducted in

Norwegian, the interviewer would be required to translate the interview to English afterwards, which might influence the arguments and statements of the teachers. According to Kvale and Brinkmann, an important element of the comprehension of an interview is that the interviewer has to “master the language” (2019, p. 337). One can argue that this also applies to the interviewee, and that both the interviewer and interviewee qualify to Kvale and Brinkmann’s required degree of comprehension.

The duration of the interviews ranged from thirty to fifty minutes. The range, to some extent, was due to the online interviews being conducted at home where the interviewee at times was interrupted by members of the household. Additionally, challenges with Wi-Fi quality, microphone and/or speakers required repetition and further explanation on several occasions. In the beginning of the interview, teachers were asked if they had any questions and if they consented to starting the interview. Likewise, every interview ended by asking the teacher whether they had anything they would like to add or clear up. As a way of rounding off the interview after turning off the recording device, they were then asked how they found the interview experience. On some occasions, topics from the interview that were too far from the aims of the research were discussed further, out of interest and enthusiasm on both the participant and interviewer’s part.

Considering that the interviews were semi-structured, they all took somewhat different turns on different questions, but the questions were asked similarly and the same topics were, therefore, discussed in every interview. However, it became evident that the teachers were different in their level of interest in, and engagement with, different questions. Therefore, the interviews often trailed off into a discussion on certain topics of the interview, however, this was deemed to be of importance and was therefore nourished for some time before moving on with questions from the interview guide.

#### 3.7.4 Transcribing the interviews

Transcribing the interviews is an important part of the research process and is an essential prerequisite for the process of analysing the data. Recordings were made on private devices, which was done with consent from the University of Bergen who provided directives on how to maintain the recordings (Appendix 2). These directives required the recordings to be stored anonymously and to keep the interviewees’ information separate. The process of transcribing the interviews was done by playing and pausing the recordings over and over, in order to

ensure that the transcriptions were as close to the recording as possible. Due to poor computer speakers, combined with a somewhat noisy background, some parts of the online interviews were inaudible. However, this only pertained to short parts of sentences or isolated words.

In order to keep a main focus of the transcription on the conversation itself, it was decided to not include most fillers and other non-verbal utterances. However, some non-verbal utterances for example, utterances of laughter, have been included on several occasions as this is arguably important in obtaining the correct meaning of certain statements.

Additionally, longer pauses have been included and marked with ellipses. On some occasions, in referring to certain classroom events, teachers have mentioned students' names, which in the transcription has been replaced with "(student's name)". Other conventions were used in transcribing the interviews, which are described in appendix 7. Moreover, the introductory conversation at the beginning of each interview, as well as the closing conversation at the end, were not included in the transcriptions as it was deemed irrelevant to the analysis of the interview. Additionally, on some occasions the interviews took detours which made the conversation irrelevant to the topic of the interview and the analysis, and have, therefore, been left out of the transcriptions.

### 3.7.5 Strengths and weaknesses

Although the interviews were designed and conducted to the best of my ability, some limitations are arguably inevitable. This section explores these limitations, in accordance with Kvale and Brinkmann's theory on reliability (2019, p. 276; cf. 3.3).

In terms of answering the current research question which regards the teachers' practices in the classroom, an interview will only report on the teacher's experienced teaching and not the teaching in itself. According to Kvale and Brinkmann, one of the most prominent weaknesses of conducting interviews as part of a research is that the interview is subjective rather than objective (2019, p. 198-200). When researching a topic of a teacher's practice, conducting interviews will always report on what the teacher reports as his or her practice, meaning that the interview and its findings will be subjective. Additionally, this research method gathers "indirect information filtered through the views of the interviewees" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 188).

Similarly, this research method allows the teacher, the interviewee, to change their answers according to what they might think the interviewer wants to hear. One might argue that the teachers will want to display themselves and their practice as something else if they feel that the interviewer values one way of teaching over another. In other words, the presence of the interviewer may influence the responses. This will perhaps question the validity of the teacher's responses as the interviewer does not have the ability to ascertain the accuracy of for example the teacher's reported teaching. Additionally, the interviewer's relationship with the participants may have had an impact on the data. The participants were asked and selected from the interviewer and fellow students' acquaintances which, arguably, could have influenced the participating teachers' desire to 'please' the researcher.

### 3.8 Analysing the data

The analysis of the quantitative data was done through the SurveyXact program. Here, the data was formatted into graphs, which were used to present the results. The qualitative answers, both from qualitative questions and from questions containing the option of "other, please state" were analysed together with the qualitative data from the interviews.

After the interviews were transcribed, they were gathered in one document. In the initial stages of analysing the data, the transcriptions and the qualitative findings from the data were thoroughly read multiple times. This was done to gain insight into the general topics, opinions, particularly, topics in which the participants either agreed or disagreed upon. The data was categorized in order to make the findings easily comparable, and the categories were formed inductively and deductively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). When reviewing the data initially, recurring themes of particular interest were noted and functioned as the starting point for the analysis categories. Some categories were formed before reviewing the data, based on the theories found in chapter 2, in other words, deductively. However, as the interviews were semi-structured, some data findings were not foreseen, and some categories were therefore formed inductively. In accordance with the guidelines from Creswell and Creswell, who suggest limiting the categories to between five and seven (2018, p. 268), five main categories and 3 sub-categories were formed. The categories are as follows:

- Current literature practice
- Opinions regarding students' motivation for reading literature
- Opinions on why reading is essential

- Attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic
  - Positive attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health topics
  - Negative attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health topics
- Current practice in terms of mental health topics
  - Creating a safe space

As evident, some categories are rather wide for example, “current literature practice”, whilst some are more narrow, for instance; “attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health”. This difference in inclusivity reflects the amount of data available within each category, as the sub-categories are part of a large data category. Moreover, each category was given a colour which, through the Word format, was used to highlight individual statements or passages that correlated with the colour of the relevant category.

### 3.9 Ethical considerations

In any given research project, the researcher will have to consider ethical and moral implications throughout the process; however, these considerations may look different from project to project. This sub-chapter will discuss the ethical considerations to be aware of, and how these were addressed throughout the research process.

An important part in being ethical in the present study, was disclosing the purpose of the research project to the participants. As discussed previously, in order to be transparent with the interviewees, they were given an information letter describing the extent of their participation, what the data would be used for and what topics were to be discussed in the interviews (appendix 3). They were also informed about how their personal information as well as the recordings were to be stored and subsequently deleted after the project’s completion (Appendix 3). Furthermore, the letter emphasised that participation in the study was voluntary, and that by withdrawing from participation all data would be removed and it would not have any further consequences for the participant.

Although one can take the necessary precautions in order to follow the guidelines of NSD and secure participants’ confidentiality and informed consent, there is more to securing an ethical research. Kvale and Brinkmann introduces the ethical principal of beneficence, which entails

that the risk of harming a participant should be as low as possible (2019, p.107). This means that both in the interview situation itself, as well as in the subsequent analytical process, the researcher must treat the participants with respect. According to Creswell and Creswell, to respect the participants, the researcher must “respect the site and disrupt as little as possible”, “avoid deceiving participants”, and “avoid collecting harmful information” (2018, p. 93-94). Through transparency regarding the interview’s discussion topics, the extent of the teachers’ participation, and how the data will be used, the research has attempted to follow Creswell and Creswell’s principles. In the publishing of the research, participants are unlikely to be harmed as no personal information was shared. However, in the transcription of the interviews, it was hard to capture and include the environment of the interview and the emotions in play when talking to the participants, which is an ethical concern in and of itself.

Moreover, this brings up the topic of transcribing the interviews. Firstly, the interviewer is responsible for transcribing the interviews in a manner that will secure the participants’ personal information as well as obtaining their anonymity. This has been done by excluding personal remarks that would otherwise make it possible to identify the participant. However, it is hard to exclude every statement that might indicate, for instance, what current practices the teacher has, which could potentially be used in order to identify the participant. If one were to do so, one would run the risk of interfering too much with the original interview and the statements, and, hence, the transcriptions and the findings would lose their quality and credibility. The transcriptions were therefore kept as similar to the data recordings as possible, with the exclusion of students’ names, certain specific events described by the participants, and other sentences that made implications to the relationship between the interviewer and the teacher.

### 3.10 Possible limitations of the material and methods

Although one conducts research to the best of one’s ability, limitations are arguably inevitable. Therefore, it is important to explore these limitations in an effort to be transparent as well as suggest improvements for future research. Although some limitations have been discussed in the context of their occurrence in the chapter, a sub-chapter is devoted to this matter. This sub-chapter will explore limitations that concern the research as a whole, in an effort to demonstrate my awareness as well as construct improvements for further research.

Considering that the research is partly researching teachers' opinions, it risks that "people may not have definite opinions or may not have reflected on the topic behind the questions" (Gillham, 2000, p. 12). In other words, one can ask the teachers' opinions, but one cannot expect that they have made reflections on the topic. Thus, one might find that teachers are "unprepared" when the question is asked. Respondents may therefore not have a definite opinion, and may, as argued by Gillham, "answer whether they have an opinion or not" (2000, p.12). This goes hand in hand with the argument that participants may not take the questionnaire seriously, and due to the impersonal nature of the method, "honesty and integrity of answers may not be seen as a priority" (Gillham, 2000, p. 13). Similarly, this thesis is concerned with teachers' opinions and reported practices. As these are teachers' own perceptions about their practices, these may or may not be an accurate representation of their actual practice (Borg, 2006. Cf. 3.5). As discussed in relation to teacher cognition, Borg found that teachers beliefs may contradict themselves, depending on the context (2006, p. 107. Cf. 3.5). Therefore, as this thesis focuses on teachers' opinions and reported practices, it is important to be aware of the potential discrepancies between the teachers' revelations and their actual practices.

Next, another shortcoming of this research is that it is concerned an interdisciplinary topic that had only been implemented for 3 months at the time of conducting the study. This meant that some teachers were not yet familiar with the topic and had perhaps not worked with it in the classroom. Therefore, the teachers were, to some extent, unable to comment on their perception of the topic and whether they found it to be challenging to accommodate. Their answers to certain questions were therefore, arguably, speculative and hypothetical in nature. However, some teachers claimed to have been working with this topic for a long period of time despite the fact that it had only been on the curriculum for three months and were therefore able to comment on their perceptions and experiences.

Moreover, one may argue that the most beneficial method of research in providing answers to the thesis's research questions would be classroom observation. Although such an approach provides insight to the teachers' actual practices, in contrast to an interview or questionnaire, this method also has some shortcomings. Apart from the time-consuming aspect of the method, it also brings with it the influence of the observer's paradox. According to Dale and Vinson, the observer's paradox is "the notion that intervention or measurement by an observer can directly impact the behaviour of the system being studied" (2013, p. 305). In

other words, although classroom observation entails a direct examination of the teachers' practices, this may also be influenced by the researcher's presence. This statement is not included to diminish the method of observation, but rather to reflect upon the fact that influence from the observer or interviewer is hard to elude.

Lastly, the four teachers that partook in the interviews were female. This is a limitation as it is not representative of the population of teachers in upper secondary school today. Statistics provided by the Norwegian Directorate of Education reveal that 45% of teachers in upper secondary school are male (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2019). In the questionnaire, no information regarding the participants' gender was collected, and it is therefore not known whether these participants were representative of the ratio of male and female teachers in upper secondary school.

## Chapter 4: Presentation and discussion of findings

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data. The findings will be presented and discussed in connection with the theories which were considered in chapter 2. The two strands of the research are similar as they concern the same topics and questions. In mixed-methods research projects, the questionnaire is often distributed first, and participants for the interviews are chosen based on their responses to the questionnaire. This was not done in this research, as the questionnaire was distributed after the interviews were conducted (Cf. 3.1). However, as aforementioned, their designs are based on the same themes to make them comparable. The categories are as follows:

- Current literature teaching practice
  - Perceptions about literature's attributes
- Attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic on mental health
- Future teaching.

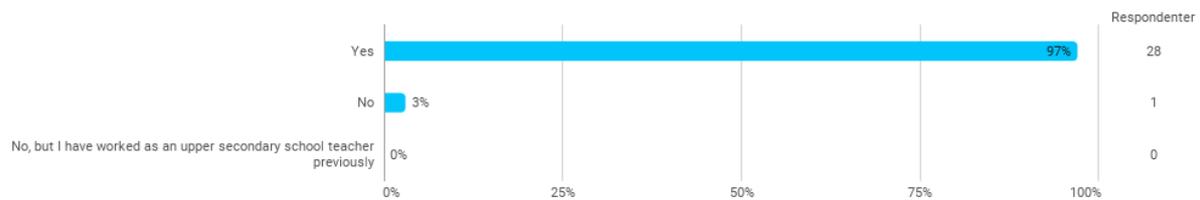
As discussed in chapter 3.6, the questionnaire facilitates the investigation of a broader population, but is restricted in terms of qualitative findings. Although some parts of the questionnaire were qualitative in nature, it was not suited to acquire the same quality of qualitative data as found in the interviews. As discussed in chapter 3.7, the interviews were restricted to a smaller number of participants, but they allowed for follow-up questions and

complementary answers that the questionnaire could not provide. The two strands are similar as they are designed based on the same themes, and the findings will therefore be presented thematically, drawing on the results from both the questionnaire and interviews simultaneously.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the participants' attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health. To investigate this aim, part of the research has concerned teachers' reported current literature teaching and their opinions about literature's attributes. This was done in order to understand the teachers' attitudes towards literature in general, and to regard whether the teachers see literature' potential that possibly makes it a good starting point for talking about mental health topics. Although the interdisciplinary topic "Health and life skills" was implemented in the fall of 2020, it was interesting to see whether the participants reported that work related to this topic was already in place. Therefore, questions regarding teachers' opinions of the interdisciplinary topic and, subsequently, whether they currently take this topic into account in their teaching practice, were included. As discussed in chapters 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4, many different elements contribute to creating an environment that engages students in reading, that in turn will have the potential of engaging students in conversations about mental health. Therefore, the participants' opinion on both the attributes of literature and their reported practices in teaching and working with literature in the English classroom, are relevant to investigate whether they already facilitate an environment for talking about such topics.

As noted in chapter 1.2, this study aims to examine the following research questions: "What are VG1 English teachers' attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health?" With the sub-questions: "What are VG1 English teachers' opinions about literature's properties" and "What do the teachers report about how they teach English literature, and do they already facilitate a classroom environment for talking about mental health topics in combination with this type of text?". The presentation and discussion of findings will be conducted in two main parts. Firstly, the teachers' current literature teaching practices will be presented and discussed, before, secondly, concerning teachers' attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic.

The following figure (Figure 1) displays the findings from question 1 in the questionnaire, which asks: “Do you as of today work as an Upper Secondary school English teacher?” (Appendix 12).



**Figure 1.** Question 1: “Do you as of today work as an Upper Secondary school English teacher?”.

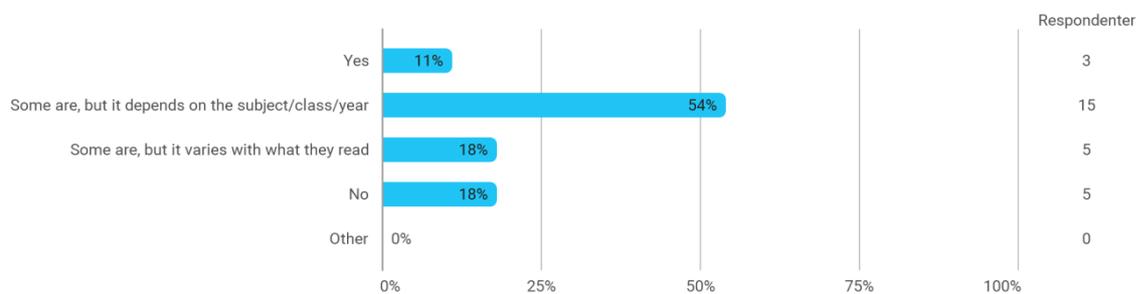
As discussed in chapter 3.6.2, the questionnaire was sent to multiple schools’ principals and department managers, requesting that they distribute the questionnaire to their VG1 English teachers. Although the mail explicitly requested English teachers, it is hard to determine whether this was upheld. Therefore, in order to somewhat validate that the participants were English teachers, this question was included. In retrospect, the question should have mentioned explicitly that it concerns “VG1” teachers, but unfortunately, this was not specified. As evident from figure 1, one participant selected the “No” option, and the participant’s answers were therefore removed from the final data.

#### 4.1 Reported current teaching practices

Understanding teachers’ current pedagogical approaches to literature can be an important prerequisite for understanding the teachers’ attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health. The teachers’ reported current practices can provide insight into the ways in which they value literature in the VG1 English classroom and whether they already see it as an option to use literature as a facilitator for talking about topics of mental health. This sub- chapter will be further divided into four sections. The first section will concern the teachers’ opinions on students’ motivation to read (4.1.1). The second section concerns how the teachers choose literature for their classrooms (4.1.2). The third section will concern the teachers’ opinions about literatures’ attributes (4.1.3). Lastly, the fourth section concerns the teachers’ reported current teaching practices (4.1.4).

#### 4.1.1 Opinions about students' motivation to read English literature

In order to consider whether there may be a correlation between the students' motivation to read and the teacher's practices in relation to teaching literature, the topic of motivation was necessary to investigate. Considering that the present study did not explore students' perspectives, teachers' perceptions about their students' motivation for literary reading was investigated. In the following, Figure 2 presents the findings from the questionnaire's question 2: "Do you experience that students are motivated to read English literature?" (Appendix 12). This was a closed question which included five different answer categories.



**Figure 2.** Question 2: "Do you experience that pupils are motivated to read English literature?".

A majority (54%) of the respondents to question 2 found that students' motivation depends on the subject/class/year, 18% stated that "Some are, but it varies with what they read", 18% stated "No" and 11% stated "Yes" (Appendix 12, question 2). The fact that the majority of the respondents state that it depends on the subject, class or year, suggests that the students' motivation may be linked to the level of language and reading proficiency. Additionally, English in VG2 and VG3 is optional, and one may presume that the students in these classes are further interested in and motivated to read English literature, as opposed to the students in the obligatory subject of VG1 English.

In order to understand what the reason may be as to why motivation for reading depends on certain factors, or why the respondents find students to be unmotivated, question 3 asks: "If you feel that pupils are NOT motivated to read English literature, what do you think could be the reason(s) for this?" (Appendix 6, question 3). This was an open question, inviting respondents to type out their answers, and 27 of the 28 respondents did. Several of the respondents emphasise that students are not used to reading, stating "They have never

developed the habit of reading” and “They would rather watch the film” (Appendix 12, question 3). Some also explain how literature and the lack of experience with it, results in a fear of reading: “Many pupils have not read much by the time that they are in upper secondary school, and so the task of reading, especially long texts feel quite daunting” (Appendix 12, question 3). According to these findings, students appear to be reluctant readers, which some teachers attribute to their lack of reading experience. Reading experience and reading proficiency are, arguably, closely connected (Ørevik, 2018, p. 20). It is therefore reasonable to believe that students who are less experienced readers, will have a harder time when reading, for example, a novel in the VG1 English subject. There is reason to believe that teachers, therefore, will address this matter in their literature teaching practices, as this is likely to be an obstacle when teaching longer literary works.

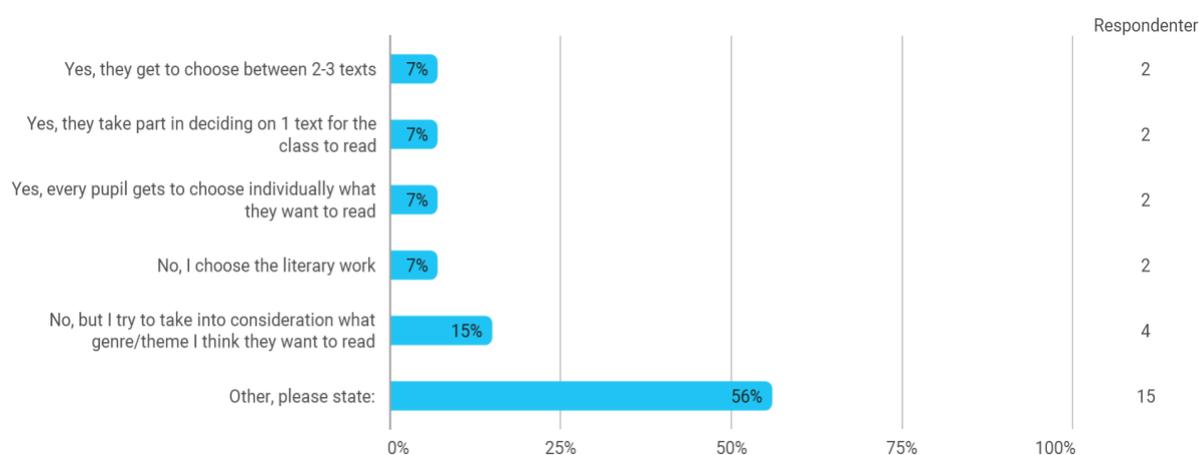
These findings correlate with those emerging from the analysis of the interviews. Teacher C argues that students’ lack of motivation for reading comes from the fact that they are not used to reading (Appendix 9, line 101), and explains that “it doesn’t depend that much on the book as it does on the fact that some people aren’t reading” (Appendix 10, lines 112-113). Teacher D addresses the concern that she will lose the less avid readers when working with literature (Appendix 11, lines 106-107), and uses film as a way of achieving the same exposure for those less avid readers (Appendix 11, line 113). According to Habegger- Conti, an annually conducted Norwegian study found that in people aged 16-24, only 52% have read a novel, which is a decrease from previous years (2015, p. 108. Cf. 2.3). Simultaneously, the amount of time spent on the internet, is increasing (2015, p. 108. Cf. 2.3). Although the data findings are reflections of teachers’ perception of their students’ reading habits, their opinions align with these statistics. Habegger-Conti refers to the new generation of less experienced readers as “digital natives” (2015, 109. Cf. 2.3), often referred to as individuals who have grown up under the influence of the internet and other technologies. In the following chapters, it will therefore be interesting to see whether there is an emphasis on accommodating and working with the “digital natives” preferences for reading.

The teachers report that their students are somewhat unmotivated to read, but state that this depends on the class, subject and year. When attempting to ascertain where this lack in motivation for reading comes from, some teachers point to their lack of experience with reading, and that they would rather watch the film. These opinions are supported by studies that display how reading is declining, whilst time spent on the internet is increasing

(Habegger- Conti, 2015, p. 108). These findings provide a backdrop to the further discussions on the teachers’ reported pedagogical approaches to literature in a context of the English subject.

#### 4.1.2 The choice of literature

Choosing the right literature for the class may be challenging considering the multitude of competence aims attributed to literary reading (Cf. 2.3). Regarding the findings from questions 2 and 3 in the questionnaire, which indicated that students are reluctant readers (Cf. 4.1.1), finding literature students may enjoy can be essential for their engagement in the reading experience. This section will concern that selection process, and investigates how teachers choose literature, and what properties of literature they emphasise in their decision-making. Relevant data derives from questions 3 and 4 from the questionnaire (appendix 6), and correlating data from the interviews. The following figure presents the findings to question 5 in the questionnaire: “Do you provide your pupils with options when deciding what to read in the classroom?” (Appendix 12).



**Figure 3.** Question 5; “Do you provide your pupils with options when deciding what to read in the English classroom?”.

Despite the fact that several answer options were provided for this question, 50% of the respondents decided to write their answer in the “other, please state” option. The second most selected option was “No, but I try to take into consideration what genre/theme I think they want to read”, with 14%, and “No, I choose the literary work”, “Yes, every pupil gets to choose individually what to read”, “Yes, they take part in deciding on 1 text for the class to read” and “Yes, they get to choose between 2-3 texts” received an equal amount of 7% each. However, as the majority of the respondents selected the “Other, please state” option, this will

be most interesting to look at. 12 of the 15 answers included statements claiming that they rely on a combination of the options mentioned in the pre-defined answer categories, and that their approach to choosing literature varies, stating: “Sometimes they choose, and sometimes I do” (Appendix 12, question 5).

The analysis of the data from the interviews also revealed similar tendencies, where several of the interviewees reported that they use a combination of practices. Teacher A reports that she will take her students’ opinions into account if she feels that it is productive, but “sometimes I might not, if I feel like the discussion is not going to take us anywhere” (Appendix 8, lines 65-66). Moreover, teacher B states that the degree to which she includes the students in the decision-making process depends on their level of maturity and reading proficiency; “in year 11 I’ll say ‘alright, so everybody’s reading this book’ because I like for us to have a shared experience where I can show them that you can analyse a whole book” (Appendix 9, lines 31-33). It is evident that the teachers aspire to include their students in the process, however, it depends on the class and whether they can be a constructive part of this selection process. If the class is able to make good choices that fit with the teachers’ aspirations for the reading, they take their thoughts into consideration.

As previously mentioned, Vicary states that “the more you enjoy something, the more likely you are to do more of it” (2013, p. 77. CF 2.3). In that sense, it is important for teachers to make the right choices about literature and including students’ opinions might make these choices more appropriate. However, in the interviews, some of the teachers point out that students are not aware of literature’s potential. Teacher D states that; “anytime I would ask them about *elevmedvirking* [student participation] or *elevvurdering* [student assessment], they would just be like, they don’t know the subject, they don’t know the potential” (Appendix 11, lines 56-58). Furthermore, teacher C also argues that students do not have the same aims when choosing literature; “I feel that I should be the one making that decision, because I am the one who knows how it is going to fit into the whole context” (Appendix 10, lines 20-21). In other words, the findings indicate that teachers find it necessary to provide the right material for the English classroom and the teachers will therefore be the ultimate decision-maker in choosing literature. However, they also find it valuable to include their students’ opinions and will take these into consideration. As discussed in chapter 2.2, reading for enjoyment decreases from the ninth grade, and it is therefore, according to Appleyard, important to introduce learners to literary works that make them think (1991, p. 100). By

considering what their students find interesting, but simultaneously not allowing them to be the sole determiner, the teachers may introduce them to literature that they would not have read otherwise.

On the other hand, as evident in chapter 4.1.1, teachers report that students are not experienced readers. An effort in creating motivation and enjoyment for reading is to give them ample opportunities to read texts that engage them (Williams, 1986, as cited in Ørevik, 2018, p. 20). Therefore, although one might wish to challenge the reader, by introducing them to literature that they did not select, allowing them freedom of choice may be important in engaging and motivating unexperienced readers. Additionally, allowing the students to choose a literary work does not necessarily entail that the reading is no longer facilitating an environment that challenges the reader and makes them think, as valued by Appleyard (1991, p. 100). Through freedom of choice, the students might discover literary works that potentially spark an interest in reading. Encouraging learners to engage in the act of reading is important when regarding literature's potential for facilitating conversations about mental health topics. As evident in the findings, the teachers' practice seems to accommodate the students interests whilst also challenging them, which might be important when talking about mental health topics, which will be discussed further in chapter 4.2.

Moreover, in addition to the importance of selecting suitable literature for the sake of students' motivation, literature is part in accommodating the VG1 English competence aims. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate what criteria the teachers consider when choosing literature. In this relation, several teachers emphasise the influence of the students in what criteria they consider: "I try to go for relevance (Appendix 9, line 8), and furthermore "It depends completely on who you have in front of you. They are the guiding force behind all these decisions" (Appendix 9, lines 16-18). These statements were made by teacher B and were one of the first elements she emphasised when asked about the criteria she considers when selecting literature. It is apparent that she finds relevance to be of particular importance, and tailors her practice in accordance with her students' needs and interests. Teacher A supports such a practice, by stating: "maybe a topic they find interesting, because they will work harder at it" (Appendix 8, lines 5-6). According to Fenner, an important prerequisite for motivation is personal engagement (2011, p. 42). This claim is further substantiated by Ørevik, who claims that enjoyment also is an important factor in creating motivation for reading, which, in turn, can contribute to increased language proficiency (Ørevik, 2018, p.

20). It is arguably evident that in order to create engagement in the literary reading, and further, conversations about the reading, there is a need to engage the students in something they find enjoyable. Therefore, by tailoring the practice in accordance with the students' interests, teachers A and B are creating opportunities for engaging students in literary reading.

On the topic of what criteria the teachers consider when choosing literature, teacher A brings forward the parts of literature that deal with relatable issues: "that's the starting point, to give them a story or novel that is not too far away from their daily life" (Appendix 8, lines 26-27). When asked about whether she engages students in readings that relate to their everyday lives, teacher A states: "Yes", and states that this type of literature is important because it teaches them that "we need to be connecting with other people in order to have a good life, that is what music and what art adds to our life" (Appendix 8, lines 36-37). She points out that talking about emotions is important, and that literature has the ability to bring forward conversations on why emotion and human compassions are important in order to have a good life. In addition to this statement's distinct connection to the curricular aim of promoting "sound mental health", it also exemplifies how, in the eyes of the teacher, literature can enhance learning about the self. According to Djikic, Oatley and Moldovenu, fictional stories help the reader develop "empathy with literary characters" (2013, as cited in Richmond 2014, p. 24). According to recent studies, emotional engagement, whether negative or positive, is of great importance in knowledge acquisition, as it affects memory retention (Tyng, Amin, Saad & Malik, 2017). Therefore, engaging the reader emotionally, teachers are not only contributing to the readers' engagement in the reading itself, but also enhancing their ability to acquire knowledge from their reading. This is arguably an important factor in enhancing *Bildung*, which can be an important contributor to addressing the interdisciplinary topic.

Teacher A further says that she uses movies to talk about mental health issues, specifically a movie where a boy is bullied, stating that this movie is important for her students to view because; "you get different aspects of life and what is needed, and the conclusion of the story is that we need people, we need more people to live a good life" (Appendix 8, lines 47-48). She was then asked whether she feels that she already accommodates talking about mental health topics in some way, to which she answered: "Yes, because I thought that was necessary in some sense." (Appendix 8, line 53). Teacher A started the conversation on the interdisciplinary topic concerning mental health before being asked about it, and it was therefore interesting to include in this part of the chapter, as this was addressed on her

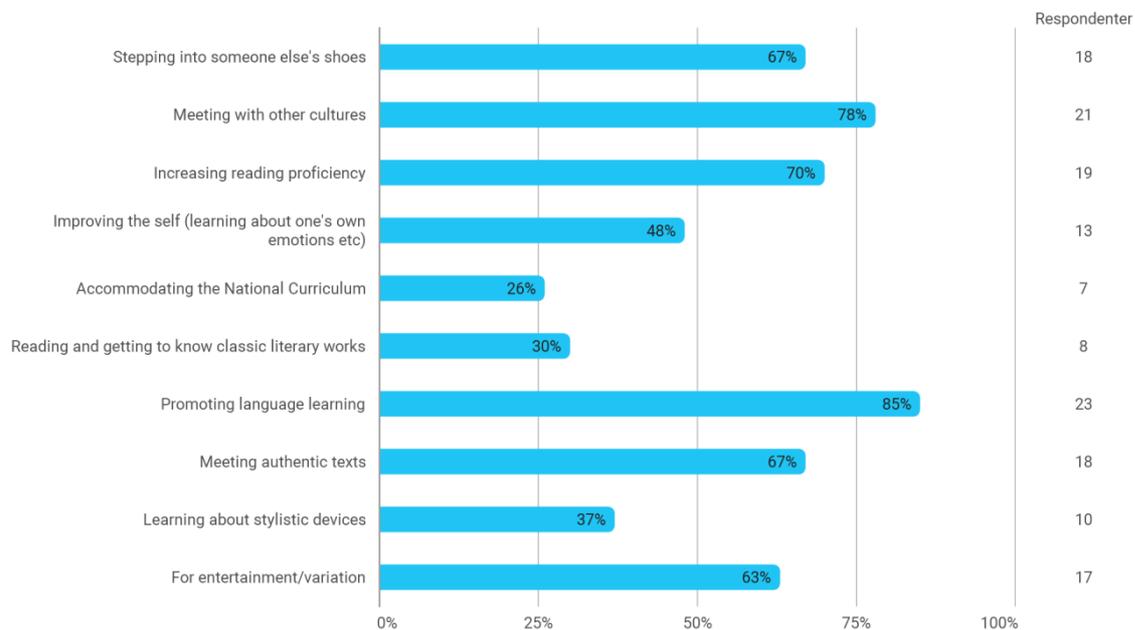
initiative during the conversation on the criteria to consider for choosing literature. It was also interesting to see that talking about mental health was important to teacher A, and already an important element to consider when choosing literary works for the classroom. Other teachers also addressed their current literature practice in relation to mental health topics, which will be discussed further in chapter 4.1.3.

To sum up, it has been made evident that the participants of the present study are concerned with finding material that the students may enjoy. They are therefore positive to including them in the text selection process, if it is deemed possible and productive. However, the teachers also point out that the students are not aware of the multitude of competence aims related to literary reading and are therefore not always competent to choose the right material. Moreover, the teachers' criteria for choosing literature are closely connected with who their students are, and what they require. They want to find literature that is not too far removed from their students' daily life, and value literature that can teach the students about how to live a good life. These practices and opinions about literature can be important facilitators in using literature as a way of talking about mental health.

#### 4.1.3 Opinions about literature's properties and advantages

One might argue that the way in which the teachers perceive literature's properties and advantages may influence their approaches to working with this type of text in the English classroom. As discussed in chapter 2.2, reading literature holds many potential advantages, such as promoting *Bildung*, enhancing language proficiency and acquiring knowledge about stylistic devices. In other words, many different attributes of literature are likely to be brought forward by the participants. Therefore, the goal of this discussion is not to pass judgement on the teachers' opinions regarding literatures' attributes by claiming that some are more important than others. Rather, the focus will be to look at what the teachers choose to emphasise, and what this might mean for the teaching of English literature, specifically in relation to the potential for talking about mental health issues. This section will explore what the participants consider to be the most important aspects of literature, and what they hope their students will gain from reading this type of text in the English classroom. To provide insights into these issues, questions 7 and 8 from the questionnaire (Appendix 6) and correlating data from the interviews, are relevant.

The following figure displays the findings from question 7 in the questionnaire, which asked: “In your opinion, what are the most important reasons for students to read English literature?” (Appendix 12).



**Figure 4.** Question 7; “In your opinion, what are the most important reasons for students to read English literature?”.

To question 7, ten different answer options were provided, and the participants could select multiple answers. In spite of the many answer options to this question, there are arguably certain options that are missing. In retrospect, more options should have been provided. For example, options such as “learning about the self” and “interpersonal understanding”, might have provided more nuanced data, than simply “stepping into someone else’s shoes” and “meeting with other cultures”. Additionally, there should arguably have been an inclusion of the “other, please state” option, as the researcher is unable to foresee all attributes that the participating teachers may value. In the absence of such an option, the respondents are required to select at least one of the options provided, even if none of them were perfectly suited to them. However, this question was also considered in the interviews, which added important insights that could not be derived from the questionnaire alone. The findings from the interviews will be presented after the presentation of the quantitative data from question 7.

As evident in figure 2, the most frequently selected options were “Stepping into someone else’s shoes” (67%), “Meeting with other cultures” (78%), “Increasing reading proficiency”

(70%), “Promoting language learning” (85%), “Meeting authentic texts” (67%) and “For entertainment/variation” (63%). There is an apparent duality in the findings, as they emphasise aspects directly related to *Bildung* and aspects related to more instrumental learning aims (e.g. language proficiency). As discussed in chapter 2.2.1, Klafki states that categorial *Bildung* can be enhanced when students are able to see themselves in relation to the world in which they live (2001, p. 17). It is evident that the respondents are selecting attributes that, arguably, can be closely related to the enhancement of *Bildung*. Aspects such as “stepping into someone else’s shoes” may be directly connected with Klafki’s theory on *Bildung*. On the other hand, options such as “Increased language proficiency” and “Promoting language learning” can be more directly connected with the competence aims of the English subject. That is not to say, however, that these competence aims are not also part in enhancing *Bildung*. Considering that *Bildung* is an overarching element of the Norwegian school (Principles for education and all-round development, 2017) and implemented in the core element “Working with texts in English” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Core elements), *Bildung* is an essential part of the English subject’s competence aims. In spite of this, there is a duality in the responses as some are more directly connected to the *Bildung*, such as “Stepping into someone else’s shoes”, whilst some are more directly connected to the competence aims, such as “Increasing reading proficiency”.

This duality is also present in the data from the interviews, where both language learning and enhancement of the self were mentioned as important reasons to read English literature. On the topic of discussing important competences that can be enhanced through reading literature, teacher A states: “it’s more about understanding other people, and it can, depending on the literature, be about understanding other cultures” (Appendix 8, lines 231-233). She continues on this note, stating: “that’s what literature helps us do, it lets us live other people’s lives and when we live other people’s lives we understand other people better. So, it builds empathy for people” (Appendix 8, lines 247-249). This further exemplifies what was found in the questionnaire and shows that teachers value the aspects of reading connected to enhancement of the self, in addition to the attributes connected to language and writing proficiency. Teacher B emphasises that literature allows “you [to] go places without going there, you can meet people without meeting them, you can experience things without experiencing them” (Appendix 9, lines 257-258). Again, what teacher B is stressing is literature’s ability to transport the reader to a context they would not experience on their own.

In other words, he/she highlights the role literary reading can play in broadening the learners' horizon and in turn potentially promoting *Bildung*.

As several of the participants of the questionnaire report, one of the most important aspects of literary reading is that it allows for a meeting with other cultures and stepping into someone else's shoes (Figure 4). Whilst "Meeting with other cultures" is closely connected to the development of intercultural competence, "Stepping into someone else's shoes" can be connected to the enhancement of the self, and subsequently, enhancement of *Bildung*. Moreover, this may be an important facilitator for talking about mental health, as the reader might learn about the self, through learning about "the other". Teacher C elaborates on how she encourages and enhances the meeting with the reality of others by choosing novels that are written in the first- person point of view and prompts her students to "[i]magine this is us, now we have to navigate the situation" (Appendix 10, line 164). These aspects of literature align with what Andreassen finds to be of particular importance, as he states that literature "[p]rovides the pupil with both personal and cultural encounters between the pupil and other" (2014, p. 16. Cf. 2.2.1). Moreover, Comer Kidd and Castano's study found that there is a link between reading fiction and increased self-reported empathy (2013, p. 1). In encouraging the students to "imagine this is us", one can arguably contribute to an emotional engagement, and, subsequently, increased empathy. In other words, as the teachers are encouraging the students to "[i]magine this is us" (Appendix 10, line 164), and valuing "The meeting with the other" (Appendix 11, lines 165- 167), they may be laying the ground for working with a topic such as mental health. Not all learners will have experienced mental health problems personally, but they may encounter literary characters who struggle with such issues and thus develop an empathetic understanding of how this may affect individuals.

Furthermore, teacher D emphasizes the importance of an authentic meeting with others: "I think when you see someone's authentic expression, if it's fiction or if it's biography or autobiography, I think that meeting with the other at that level has just a human, emphatic understanding, self-understanding" (Appendix 11, lines 165- 167). As discussed previously, authenticity can refer to several different aspects of, for instance, a literary work (cf. 2.2.2). According to Gilmore, literature with an authentic expression and message is more interesting to read, as opposed to texts that are written with an aim of increased language proficiency (2007, p. 106. Cf. 2.2.2). Reading someone's authentic expression is claimed to be a motivating force for learners (Gilmore, 2007, p. 106). Teacher D's emphasis of authentic

expression and its contribution to both emphatic understanding and self- understanding, may therefore be crucial factors in promoting motivation for reading, and enhancing *Bildung*. Subsequently, these factors are also important in laying a foundation for talking about mental health topics.

Moreover, question 8 on the questionnaire is an open question which asks; “Which competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of English literature?”. Interestingly, the responses here are different in nature from the ones elicited by the previous question. Here, the majority of the respondents highlighted competences related to language proficiency, mentioning; “Writing proficiency”, “Improving vocabulary”, “Reading proficiency”, “Vocabulary and writing skills” and “Increase their essay- writing abilities” (Appendix 12, question 8). In comparing these findings with the previous question (Figure 4, question 7), which found that there is focus on both instrumental aims related to testable skills and knowledge and more overarching aims related to the self-development of the learners, these findings can be said to be more directly linked to the competence aims of the curriculum. However, these data disparities may be due to the phrasing of question 8. As this question asks explicitly about “competences”, it is likely to have made the respondents think of the curriculum and, hence, the competence aims. However, nine of the responses concerned aims connected to *Bildung*, stating: “self-awareness”, “put words to their ideas and feelings” and “learn about your own emotions by stepping into someone else’s shoes” (Appendix 12, question 8).

The analysis of the interview data revealed a similar inclination among the participants to draw parallels to the competence aims in the curriculum as well as towards literature’s potential to let the learners “step into someone else’s shoes”. As previously mentioned, the general data from the interviews differs from the questionnaire which may be due to the opportunity for the interviewer to ask follow- up questions (Cf. 1.4). As discussed in chapter 3.7.5, the participants in an interview may be influenced to change their answers in accordance with what they think the interviewer wants to hear. Similarly, the interviewer can influence the interviewee, by asking leading questions or through giving of the impression that some answers are more desirable than others. In relation to the topic of literature’s attributes, some of the teachers started by talking about the competence aims, stating “My head is like, let’s go through the *læreplan* [curriculum] and sort of the competences at the top” (Appendix 8, lines 224-225). After their revelations, some were asked a follow- up

question, asking whether they value any other potential competences, for example competences that are not directly connected to the competence aims. This was a leading question and may have prompted the teachers to give answers that they may not have otherwise. This may impact the reliability of the data findings, as discussed in chapter 3.3, and is therefore necessary to point out.

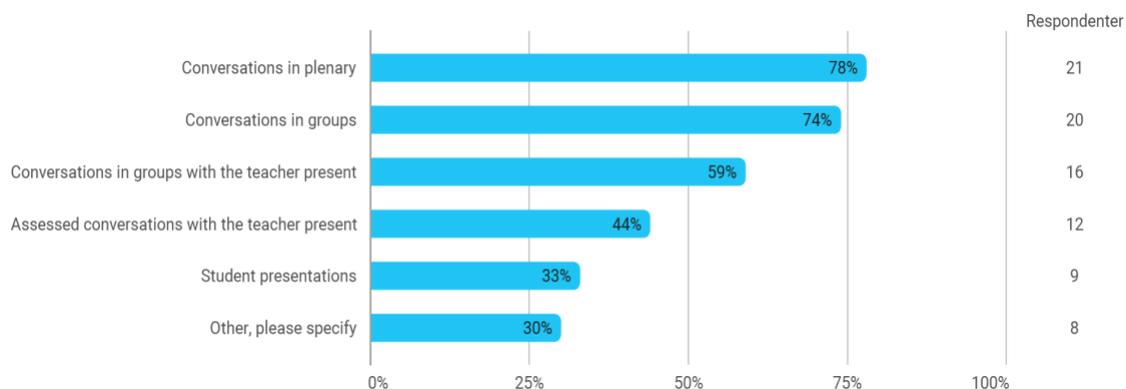
The data from both the interviews and the questionnaire are similar in that there is an emphasis on the importance of reading literature as it can improve language proficiency, reading proficiency and writing skills. As made evident, teachers value the aspects of reading that are related to culture, self-awareness and being able to step into someone else's shoes, which are all important prerequisites for enhancing *Bildung* (Klafki, 2001, p. 17. Cf. 2.2.1). Additionally, this is also part in accommodating the competence aim which states that students are expected to be able to: "discuss and reflect on form, content and language features and literary devices in different cultural forms of expression from different media in the English- language world, including music, film and gaming" (Norwegian Directorate of Education, Competence aims and assessment). By emphasising aspects such as "Self-awareness" and "Stepping into someone else's shoes", learners may expand their "horizons", in terms of how they view themselves and others who may struggle with mental health issues. Ultimately, this view of literary reading may be an important factor in laying the grounds for talking about mental health issues.

In summary, on the topic of literature's properties and advantages, the teachers acknowledge a multitude of different attributes. However, the analysis has shown that teachers overall value properties that are related to understanding other people and cultures as well as contributing to their students' self-awareness. Moreover, there is a general tendency to, directly or indirectly, accommodate the more instrumental aims of the competence aims. However, several of the teachers agree to the sentiment that "Stepping into someone else's shoes" is one of the most important reasons to read English literature. This duality is rooted in the difference between directly accommodating the competence aims, and factors in direct connection with Klafki's theory on categorial *Bildung*. These can be important properties that lay the grounds for talking about mental health topics, as they are enabling learning about others in order to learn about the self.

#### 4.1.4 Current teaching practice

In accordance with the research question “How do teachers teach literature, and do they already facilitate an environment for talking about mental health topics in combination with literature?”, this section presents the teachers’ reported practices when teaching English literature. This exploration is of importance as it provides insight into the teachers’ reported practices that serves as the foundation for investigating whether the current literature teaching practices can facilitate talking about mental health topics. In doing so, the teachers’ practices in relation to the introduction of the literary work and how they work in the interpretation process, will be investigated. Relevant questions for this part of the chapter is question 6 from the questionnaire, and correlating data from the interview guide.

The following figure displays the findings from question 6 in the questionnaire, which asked: “Which of the following options do you use when interpreting literature in the English classroom?” (Appendix 12).



**Figure 5.** Question 6: “Which of the following options do you use when interpreting literature in the English classroom?”.

Question 6 was a closed question with multiple pre-defined answer options, and the respondents could select several options. The aim of this question was to regard what practices the teachers use, and to investigate what type of learning processes these practices enable. The practices used in the interpretation process may influence the learners’ interaction with the literary work. For instance, through sociocultural activities, such as group work, the learner may be developing their understanding of a text in connection with their peers. Therefore, it was interesting to investigate whether the teachers use individual tasks, oral tasks in groups or plenary, and whether there was a particular focus on assessment. However,

the question does not provide any options for individual or written tasks when working with literature. In retrospect, the formulation of the question, and its response options, direct the participants into choosing practices concerning oral communication. Although the question includes an “other, please specify” option, it is likely that the participants find it easier to choose one of the pre-determined options, rather than to write a qualitative response. The analysis is therefore reliant on the qualitative data from the interviews in order to comment on the tendencies from the findings.

The findings indicate that the most frequently used approaches are “Conversations in plenary” (78%) and “Conversations in groups” (74%). However, several of the respondents also selected “Conversation in groups with the teacher present” (59%), “Assessed conversation with the teacher present” (44%) and “Student presentations” (33%). Moreover, 8 out of the 28 respondents chose to include a written response. Within these qualitative responses, activities such as “written analysis” and “written tasks” are mentioned in 5 of the responses.

Additionally, there is an emphasis on the use of varied approaches, such as “I normally give them time to discuss in 2s or small groups before we discuss it together” and “Tasks, then conversations in plenary” (Appendix 12, question 6). Therefore, although the questionnaire should ideally have included options on individual or written work, the “Other, please state” allowed for such responses and its findings substantiate the claim that a majority of the participants emphasize oral communication in the interpretation process.

These findings indicate that there is variety in the practices when interpreting literature. Although the most selected responses were conversations in plenary and groups, the distribution of responses indicate that several of the teachers use a combination of the practices. Considering that this question was, to some extent, limited in its options for practices, the data from the interviews are necessary to investigate before commenting on the general tendencies and what these practices may mean for the students’ interpretations.

The data from the interviews display the same practices as found in the questionnaire. Several of the teachers report on using group discussions. Teacher B uses a combination of plenary and group discussions (Appendix 9, lines 89-90). Similarly, teacher A states that she divides her class into groups: “I think I break it down into groups of three or four students, sort of like a reading group” (Appendix 8, lines 95-96). Teacher A states further that she puts the groups together, she does so consciously, in order for her students to “be in an environment where it

is okay. You don't have to be cool, or you don't have to be tough" (Appendix 8, lines 161-162). Teacher A is arguably concerned with creating a space in which her students can feel comfortable, and she indicates that creating smaller groups is better suited for creating such a space. This practice shows that teacher A is concerned with monitoring her students' needs and adapts her practice accordingly. Monitoring plays an important role in promoting successful classroom interactions (Ertesvåg and Havik, 2021), which can be an important prerequisite for facilitating an environment for talking about mental health. In a sociocultural perspective, learning does not happen in vacuum, but in interactions with peers and teachers. Vygotsky argues that learners are able to acquire knowledge through interacting with peers within the learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD), that, in independent work, would be inaccessible (Lightbown & Spada, 2020, p. 118; cf. 2.2.1). Therefore, groupwork and plenary work, as the teachers report, can help the students that may struggle with reading in general or literary reading in particular. Additionally, through literary dialogue, the learners' interpretations are likely to change and evolve, thus, enabling enhancement of their horizons and *Bildung*. Further evolving the self can also give new insight into how the student view themselves and others in relation to mental health issues.

Moreover, the sociocultural perspective on learning gives reason to believe that the teachers facilitate and value a classroom in which interpretations are created together. Such a classroom would require an emphasis on the students' role in the interpretation process, in line with the reader- response theory (Cf. 2.5.3). The reader- response theory argues that the reader is crucial in the meaning- making process, and that the text is not fully realized before it is read (Fenner, 2018, p. 223; cf. 2.5.3). If the classroom practices were to align with another literary theory, for instance new criticism, the classroom practices would likely not be concerned with creating meaning in group or plenary discussions. Rather, interpretations in new criticism would be pre-determined, as there is one true interpretation, and values close reading, which means detailed, careful attention to evidence from the text itself, to the words on the page" (Parker, 2015, p.16). Classroom practices that are influenced by this tradition of literary theory therefore tend to emphasize individual work, where the teacher serves as a guide for the readers in order to obtain a true interpretation. However, as literary reading in the English subject often culminates in an assessment, as evident from figure 5, that gives reason to believe that not "anything goes". Although they value individual interpretations, there is reason to believe that students are still required to give adequate reasoning for their interpretations, as this can be a relevant aspect in assessments. This is evident in the

following revelations from teacher C, who explains how she provides her students with the right tools and information, in order to make valid interpretations.

Giving an example of her pedagogical approach, teacher C refers to working with the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas: “we talk about the historical treatment of African Americans and try to bring it to what it is today. We make connections to the Black Lives Matter movement, the Black Panther movement” (Appendix 10, lines 58-60). Teacher C thus relates the message and topics of the book to issues her students are likely to have prior knowledge about. She also explains that throughout the reading she will stop at certain chapters or events in the book: “we’ll stop, do more lessons on that and then we’ll work our way through the book. Doing some writing tasks along the way to make them reflect” (Appendix 10, lines 64-66). Teacher C is explicitly stating that she enables individual reflections and interpretations of the novel, which implies that she values individual interpretations. Through this practice, she allows the individual reader to insert his or her pre-knowledges, or horizons (Gadamer, as cited in Fenner 2000, p. 17), in order to fill in the literary gaps (Iser & Eco, as cited in Fenner, 2000, p. 149). Although she values individual interpretations, she is also giving them the necessary knowledge to make valid interpretations.

Moreover, teacher C explains that during their reading of this novel, the anniversary of the verdict against the people who killed Emmet Till was marked, which she found to motivate the students in their reading as it “was incredibly relevant to what was going on about the book and I think that did something with their motivation, it had a positive effect” (Appendix 10, lines 91-92). Teacher C is working with the novel by continuously attaching the books’ events to something in the real world (Appendix 10, lines 62-66), thereby making the reading relevant and relatable to her students. Additionally, by including writing tasks, she enables individual reflections and work with the text. According to Klafki, categorial *Bildung* is achieved when the learner is able to see themselves in relation to the world in which they live (2001, p. 17; CF. 2.2.1). One important factor in this endeavour may be to put their reading into context. Teacher C states that she stops at certain events in the book to look at important historical events that may help the students in their interpretations. This practice supports the sentiment of Fenner, as she argues that “literary text as an artefact of the foreign culture provides the mirror in which they can see themselves reflected; it provides an outside to their inside” (2000, p. 149). Although literature enables a meeting between the reader and the text’s horizons on its own, it is argued that in order for such a meeting to take place, the

reader cannot be a passive one (Fenner, 2001, p. 22). Considering the students' reported lack in reading experience, teacher C is arguably enabling this meeting further by providing historical context for their reading, which may help the readers in their meeting with the text and, subsequently, their interpretations. Teacher C says that she notices a positive effect on her students, as she is making the reading more relatable to them.

Moreover, the interviewees elaborate on how they work with literature in the classroom before, during and after the reading. Teacher C states that before her students start reading a literary work, she gives them an introduction to literary reading, in which she explains "Why we are doing this, what's the point and how we are going to do it" (Appendix 10, line 54-55). Teacher A has a similar approach: "I try to find an angle into the story, trying to make a connection to what we have already done in the class" (Appendix 8, lines 128-129). When reading a novel, teacher A emphasises the importance of dividing it into sections so as not to overwhelm the students: "smaller parts in the beginning, not too long a read and then, as they get into the story, we can increase it" (Appendix 8, 209-210). Teacher B has a similar approach to teacher C where she divides the book into sections, stating "and then we will come together and we will be discussing part one based on these things, so everybody knows what's coming" (Appendix 9, lines 125-127). As found in chapter 4.1.1, teachers report that students are unmotivated to read, which some attributed to their lack of reading experience. According to one teacher in the questionnaire, due to their lacking reading experience, many students find "the task of reading, especially long texts feel quite daunting" (Appendix 12, question 3). As evident from teacher B and C, they are accommodating their students' fear of longer literary works, by dividing the book into sections. In other words, teachers recognize students' needs and possible struggles in their encounters with English literature. By finding angles into the stories, and introducing the purpose of the reading, they are addressing the fact that many students do not have experience with reading and may therefore be unmotivated to read, as found in the data which emerged in response to questions 2 (Figure 2; cf. 4.1.1) and 3 (Cf. 4.1.1). Through dividing the reading into smaller parts and addressing one part at a time, they are, arguably, making the reading manageable. As previously mentioned, considering the students' needs and starting points is an important part in creating good classroom interactions, which may be an important contributor to creating an environment for talking about mental health topics.

By valuing individual and group work with the literary texts, the teachers are enabling situations which help the students to make their own interpretation, which aligns with the learner-centred approach influenced by the reader-response theory. This approach argues that meaning is created through interaction between the reader and the text (Fenner, 2018, p. 223; cf. 2.5.3). Considering that the data has found no occurrence of the aim to bring students to a “correct” interpretation, there is reason to believe that the teachers value the individual’s own interpretations. Therefore, one may argue that the practices correlate with the aims of the learner-centred approach. However, as evident in teacher C’s revelation on exploring important historical events in order to give context to their reading, her practice also bears traces of the historical- biographical approach (cf. 2.5.1). According to this approach, the novel’s context is important in order to acquire the text’s true meaning (Parker, 2015, p.13). Although the teachers do not explicitly mention any aspirations of guiding their students towards a “correct” interpretation, they are providing some tools and information that would, arguably, influence the students’ interpretations. It is evident that although teachers are enabling and valuing individual interpretations, they are also expanding upon these interpretations by introducing the students to the novels’ context, historical events, and tools for analysis.

To sum up, the teachers report that classroom conversations, both in plenary and groups, are used frequently. By engaging the students in sociocultural practices, through group and plenary discussions, the teachers are facilitating a meeting between their horizons, which may expand each students’ interpretations and, in turn, enhance *Bildung*. It was also found that teachers acknowledge that many students struggle with reading and may find the task of reading English literature to be daunting. Therefore, teachers A and C found that dividing the book into sections was beneficial for the students. This practice shows that these teachers are monitoring their students and regulate their practices to accommodate their students’ needs. According to Ertesvåg and Havik (2021), this is an important part of the classroom interactions between teacher and students that can help create an environment for talking about mental health.

#### 4.2 The interdisciplinary topic “Health and life skills”

As mentioned previously, the interdisciplinary topic concerning mental health (“Health and life skills”) was part of the Knowledge Promotion reform of 2020 and was implemented for VG1 in the fall of the same year (cf. 2.4). As the topic was new to the curriculum and the

interviews were conducted in October and November of 2020, the teachers did not yet have much experience with the interdisciplinary topic. However, as previously mentioned, an American study from 2011 found that 75% of primary school teachers encounter mental health issues in their classrooms, and work with their students' mental health issues (Reinke et al, p.8; cf. 1.3 & 2.4.1). Although the present study focuses on a different educational context, there was therefore reason to believe that the participating teachers also had some prior knowledge about and experience with mental health issues in the classroom. This claim was further substantiated after conducting the interviews, where several of the interviewees could report on their work with the topic. Therefore, a part of this chapter is devoted to presenting findings concerning the participants' current practices in relation to dealing with mental health topics in the context of the English subject.

This sub-chapter will be divided into three parts. Chapter 4.2.1 concerns the teachers' attitudes towards the new interdisciplinary topic. Chapter 4.2.2 concerns their previous teaching practices related to the topic of mental health in general, prior to the implementation of the Knowledge promotion reform of 2020. Lastly, chapter 4.2.3 concerns the teachers' attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health topics.

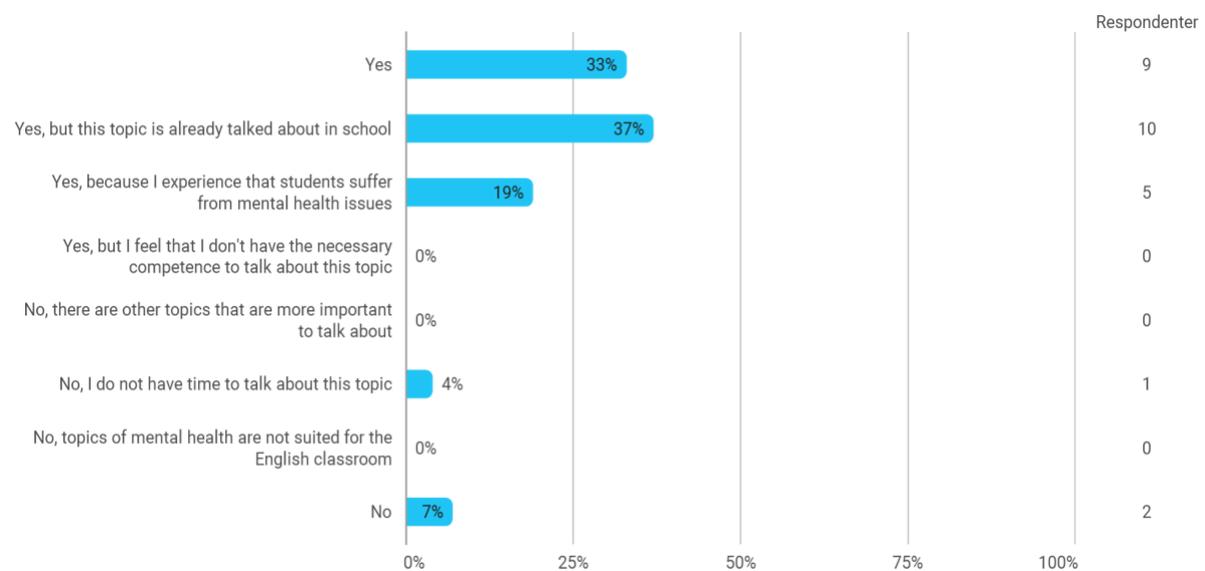
#### 4.2.1 Attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic

Although the study referred to above found that teachers work with students who struggle with their mental health, Ekornes found that a majority of teachers feel that they do not have the sufficient knowledge in order to aid their students (2017; cf. 1.3 & 2.4.1). Therefore, although it is likely that teachers already work with mental health topics, this does not necessarily mean that they are positive towards this learning aim. This was therefore necessary to investigate.

The core curriculum states that the school shall “give the pupils competence which promotes sound physical and mental health, and which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices” (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2020, Core Curriculum). The interdisciplinary topic provides little guidance as to what promoting “sound mental health” entails, and it is thus left to each teacher to determine which implications this has for their teaching practices. I therefore found it necessary to question the participants about their attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic, and what they believe the topic entails in a context of teaching and learning English. This part of the chapter will concern itself with

questions 9 and 10 from the questionnaire (appendix 6), and correlating data from the interviews.

The following figure displays the findings from question 9 in the questionnaire, which asked: “With the National curriculum renewal came new interdisciplinary topics, stating ‘The school must provide the students with the relevant knowledge in order to promote good mental health as well as physical health’. Do you feel that this interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the English classroom?” (Appendix 12).



**Figure 6.** Question 9: “With the National Curriculum renewal came new interdisciplinary topics, stating: The School must provide the students with the relevant knowledge in order to promote good mental health as well as physical health. Do you feel that this interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the English classroom?”.

As seen in figure 6, a multitude of the respondents answered “Yes, but this topic is already talked about in school” (37%), 33% chose “Yes” without any further explication and 19% answered “Yes, because I experience that students suffer from mental health issues”. On the other hand, some respondents were of the opinions that this topic is not necessary in the English classroom; “No, I don’t have time to talk about this topic” (4%) and “No” (7%). The results thus correspond with the findings from Reinke et al. (2011), that this topic is indeed already talked about in schools and teachers seem to have experience on the topic, prior to the Knowledge Promotion reform. Interestingly, one option that was not chosen by any respondents was “Yes, but I feel that I don’t have the necessary competence to talk about this

topic”. In Ekornes’ findings from investigating the opinions of Norwegian primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school teachers, a majority of the teachers reported that they feel incompetent to address topics of mental health (2017, p. 345; cf. 2.4.1). However, this does not seem to correlate with the findings from this question.

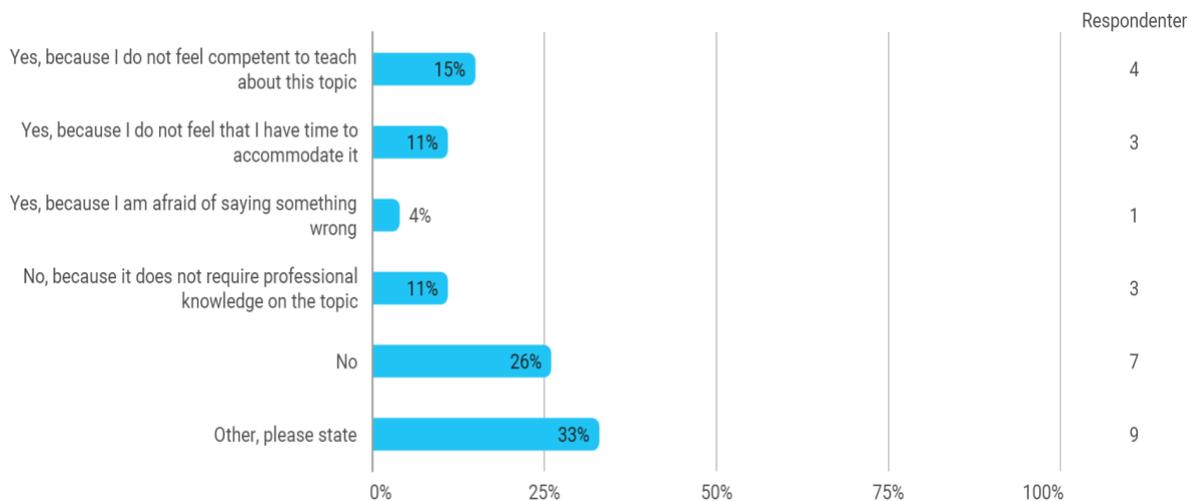
In discussing the necessity of this new topic, teacher B comments in the interview on the multitude of functions that are attributed to the teachers and schools:

“I think it’s an expression of how much school is meant to accommodate. Because we have to care of every aspect of the human so now it is left to schools to do a lot of the things that parents are meant to be doing” (Appendix 9, lines 366-368).

Although this is not directly connected to the question of whether the interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the English classroom, it does provide insight into the participants’ attitudes towards the interdisciplinary topic. Teacher C explains that her initial reaction to the implementations of the new core curriculum was “this is too much, and how can you put all of this responsibility on us” (Appendix 10, lines 331-332), before realising that “oh, it’s already in the fabric of what we are doing” (Appendix 10, line 333). In other words, it appears that teachers B and C acknowledge that the topic is necessary in schools. However, they also state that the Norwegian Directorate of Education is placing too much responsibility on teachers. Teacher C attests to this by stating that “the supreme argument is that I spend so much time with the students, and I agree, but I spend time with 30 students, not that one student” (Appendix 10, lines 387-388). From these excerpts, one can argue that the teachers feel they are attributed too many functions, and whilst they may find the topic important, it should not be the teachers’ responsibility to address. Meanwhile, teacher D states that she has been waiting for such a topic to be implemented: “one of the things that I complained about in English is that they didn’t have *identitetsutvikling* [identity development] (...) and then I was so happy when that came in” (appendix 11, lines 175-177). Teacher A also expresses her positive attitudes towards the topic when asked whether she feels that it will be challenging to accommodate: “No, I actually enjoy it, and so I’m happy” (Appendix 8, line 297). In other words, it is evident that they find the interdisciplinary topic of importance, but it is also an addition to the many functions attributed to them, some of which, according to teacher B, belongs to the home (Appendix 9, line 368).

According to Bagnell and Santor, students start making decisions regarding their own mental health in lower secondary school (2015, p. 49. Cf. 2.4.2). Considering this in connection with the fact that one in five students suffer from mental health related issues (2015, p.49. Cf. 2.4.2), one can argue that the topic of mental health is indeed important in the upper secondary school years. It appears the participants from the questionnaire and teachers C and D support this sentiment, and have, prior to the Knowledge Promotion reform, already addressed topics of mental health. On the other hand, as represented by the opinions of teacher B, there is also some concern directed towards the implementation of a new interdisciplinary topic. To investigate whether other teachers are of the same opinion, the question of whether this interdisciplinary topic is regarded as challenging, is presented, and discussed in the following.

On the topic of whether the interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the VG1 English classroom, question 10 seeks to gain more knowledge about the teachers' attitudes towards the topic, and asks; "Do you regard this interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate in the English classroom?" (Appendix 12). This was a closed question with fixed options.



**Figure 7.** Question 10: "Do you regard this interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate in the English classroom?".

As evident from Figure 7, there is a rather wide distribution between all the possible responses. A large portion of the respondents selected "No" (26%) and "Yes because I do not feel competent to teach on this topic" (15%). Furthermore, the last responses were distributed between "Yes, because I do not feel that I have time to accommodate it" (11%), "Yes, because I am afraid of saying something wrong" (4%) and "No, because it does not require

professional knowledge on the topic” (11%). However, the majority of the respondents selected “Other, please state”, and will therefore be explored further. The analysis of the qualitative data indicates the teachers’ concern about the severity of the topic, whilst simultaneously revealing their lack of confidence in their ability to address certain aspects of this topic. This is exemplified by statements such as: “Yes, but I leave the challenging part of this topic to the pros” (Appendix 12, question 10). Arguably, these teachers recognize the limitations of their role as they are teachers, not healthcare professionals. They are not attributing the interdisciplinary topic with expectations fit for trained professionals, as they state that their qualifications facilitate talking about this topic on a general level. Another respondent indicates that talking about mental health topics is already implemented in their practice but finds an interdisciplinary topic to be too much: “We can discuss texts and talk about mental and physical health in class, but there can be too much of it when it is an interdisciplinary topic” (Appendix 12, question 10). This teacher is, arguably, of the opinion that there is a difference between talking about mental and physical health through a subject-specific discussion of text, and accommodating the expectations of the interdisciplinary topic. Perhaps this teacher means that when promoting “sound mental health” is established as an interdisciplinary topic, there is added pressure and expectations to what the practice is meant to culminate in.

Furthermore, there is a discrepancy in the findings from question 9 (Figure 6) to question 10 (Figure 7). As previously discussed, question 9 asks: “Do you feel that this interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the English classroom” (Figure 6), to which the option of “Yes, but I do not feel that I have the necessary competence to talk about it” was not selected by any participant. However, the data from question 10 finds that 15% of the respondents feel incompetent to speak on the topic of mental health. This does not necessarily mean that the participants changed their mind from one question to the other. It might be as a result of the answer options, where the participants found other options to be more suited in relation to question 9. As question 9 was limited to choosing only one of the answer options, as well as lacking an “Other, please state” option, the respondents were required to choose the option they regarded as most relevant. It is therefore not apparent whether any of the other options were also suited to describe their experiences. Therefore, as this question (Question 10, Figure 7) asks specifically about their experiences related to the interdisciplinary topic, their answers may be more precise.

To further explore this discrepancy and regard whether the teachers feel competent to address the topic, and subsequently, whether they find it challenging to accommodate, it is necessary to look to the data from the interviews. Teacher A expresses her opinions of the English topic as more than just a subject: “You are used to thinking that it [English] is more than the subject. It affects the rest of their lives and the rest of the outside as well, so you bring that into it all the time” (Appendix 8, lines 342-344). Teacher A is of the opinion that teaching English is not merely about the subject itself, rather, it is part of a larger project that develops the students on a personal level, and ultimately affects their lives outside of the classroom. In other words, her understanding reflects the overarching *Bildung* aim of the Norwegian school (Principles for education and all-round development, 2017; cf. 2.2.1). On the other hand, although teacher A seems to implement topics of mental health in her practice, she displays some concern towards the interdisciplinary topic: “You have to remember that I’m only an English teacher. This is not my field of expertise. I know grammar and I don’t know about all this” (Appendix 8, lines 376-379). Again, this may be a representation of the previous findings, where there was a positive attitude towards talking about mental health topics, meanwhile, some displayed a somewhat negative attitude towards the implementation of the interdisciplinary topic. The latter quote from teacher A displays how the concern towards the interdisciplinary topic is rooted in a question of competence. As found in the quantitative data, teachers reported that they are competent to a certain extent and will leave the challenging topics to the professionals.

How the individual teacher interprets the interdisciplinary topic may impact whether they feel competent to address the topic of mental health, or not. As discussed in chapter 2.4.1, the definition of “sound mental health” may have an impact on a feeling of competency, or the lack thereof. Although the data does not provide direct insight into the teachers’ understanding of the term, it is evident that they find that the interdisciplinary topic does not exceed what they are able to accommodate, as English teachers. Moreover, the data revealed that some of the teachers are of the opinion that there is a difference between talking about mental health on a general level and accommodating the interdisciplinary topic. It, therefore, seems that the teachers have different definitions of what the interdisciplinary topic entails, and might feel incompetent as a result of this. Whilst some state that there is a difference between their current teaching practices and accommodating the interdisciplinary topic, some teachers recognize that there is a difference between what this topic entails for them as teachers, and what it would entail for a healthcare professional.

It is interesting to regard that the teachers feel incompetent to talk about the topic, and even argue that they are not healthcare professionals, which is why they are not able to address the topic of “sound mental health”, fully: “the dealings with the topic will have to be on a very ‘general’ level. I am not qualified to give expert health advice, but general ‘common sense’ is ok to point out” (Appendix 12, question 10). From this excerpt, there seems to be a difference between talking about mental health based on “common sense” and accommodating the interdisciplinary topic. Moreover, this teacher seems to be of the opinion that you need to be a healthcare professional in order to accommodate the topic successfully. An article by Holte and Halstensen finds that there is a vast difference between the expectations of the interdisciplinary topic, and a general professional perception of what mental health is (2020). In other words, addressing the interdisciplinary topic does not require professional knowledge about mental health (Holte & Halstensen, 2020). It is therefore interesting to discover that teachers draw conclusions diminishing their ability to address the topic, rooted in their lack of professional psychological education. Although it is hard to ascertain what makes teachers interpret this interdisciplinary according to such high standards and expectations, Ekornes found that teachers not only feel a professional responsibility to aid their students, but also on a personal level (2017, p. 344). Therefore, although they acknowledge that it would be incorrect to expect teachers to obtain the same knowledge as a healthcare professional, their wish to aid their students in mental health issues, may influence the teachers’ expectations of both themselves and the interdisciplinary topic.

To summarize, the data from both the questionnaire and the interviews reveal that the participants acknowledge the relevance and importance of the interdisciplinary topic. However, they also point out that they are given too many responsibilities as teachers, and, that they to some extent are not competent nor have the time to deal with the topic of mental health in the English classroom. Accordingly, there is an apparent discrepancy between their perception of the topic as a crucial one for young adults, and the implementation of “Health and life skills” an interdisciplinary topic. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that the teachers report to be working with the topic and that they link this endeavour to the overarching *Bildung* aims of education. The participants’ current teaching practices in relation to this topic in a context of the English subject will be discussed further in the next sub-chapter.

#### 4.2.2 Current literature teaching in relation to the topic of mental health

Although the interdisciplinary topic was implemented for VG1 subjects in the fall of 2020, the present study has explored whether teaching practices in relation to the issue of mental health issues were already in place. Rooted in the study by Reinke et al. (2011) which stated that 75% of primary school teachers work with students' mental health, there was reason to believe that this topic was present in Norwegian schools as well. Whilst the questionnaire did not ask about this topic specifically, the teachers in the interviews were explicitly asked about their current literature teaching in relation to the topic of mental health. This sub-chapter will, therefore, concern the interviewed teachers' reported practices.

At the start of the interview, on the topic of what criteria she considers when choosing literature for the English classroom, teacher A started the conversation on what type of literature is best suited for addressing mental health topics (Appendix 8, lines 38-39). When asked about whether she already talks about this topic, she stated: "Yes, because I thought that was necessary" (Appendix 8, line 53). In line with the findings from the previous sub-chapter, it is evident that teachers have recognized the number of students struggling with mental health issues and found it necessary to address the topic in the classroom. Distinctly, however, teacher A states that she uses literature in order to address the topic of mental health. She argues that in the practice of reading about topics of, for example, bullying, students can learn about themselves and the people around them: "it can change how they behave, and they can be better friends and, sort of, be more supportive of their friends that are struggling with this" (Appendix 8, lines 493-494). The use of literature in this context can, according to Hoff, be a suited practice as literature challenges the reader to "place themselves in somebody else's shoes and to enter into a negotiating dialogue with the values and worldviews inherent in the text" (2016, p. 54).

Considering that mental health may be a daunting subject to many, teacher A emphasised the importance of creating a safe environment for discussing it in the classroom. She explains that she makes sure to choose literary works that do not concern topics that she or her students can't handle: "I will not read books with my students about sexual abuse. (...) Because if you have been a victim of sexual abuse, then reading about it might be too hard on them" (Appendix 8, lines 478-482), and "this is my way of trying to protect the students and not have them be exposed to that in class" (Appendix 8, line 488-489). As previously discussed, classroom interaction concerns the quality of interaction between the teacher and student

(Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p. 2. Cf. 2.4.2). According to a study conducted by Ertesvåg and Havik, the relationship between the teacher and student was an important factor in the well-being of the students (2021). Amongst the factors in creating sufficient classroom interactions, is teachers' emotional support (Cf. 2.4.2). From the statements of teacher A, it is evident that her practice is focused on emotional support for her students as she takes into account her students' comfort and safety (Ertesvåg & Havik, 2021, p. 2; cf. 2.4.2). This can, in turn, be important when talking about mental health topics in the classroom, as engaging students in this topic may be uncomfortable for both the teacher and her students.

Additionally, Teacher B gives an example of how she teaches *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by looking at the main character's fear of his first day of school and asks her students "He is a little nervous. How many people felt scared or nervous on their first day here?" (Appendix 9, line 480). Teacher B relates the character's issues to the reality of the students, which additionally may be part in engaging the students emotionally. According to Fenner, an emotional response to the reading is crucial for young readers' motivation (2001, p. 28). Teacher B is, arguably, trying to aid her students in divulging in the reading, by helping them see the relationship between the book and their daily lives. The teacher's input and aid function as scaffolding for her students, as they may gain new insights that they would not have in their independent work. As aforementioned, students can acquire new knowledge in cooperation with individuals in their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2020, p. 118), which can be peers, or, as seen in this context, teachers.

Although literature can provide important insight in the dialogic meeting between the text and the readers individually, creating meaning in sociocultural activities can provide new insight and understanding. Teacher B explains that talking about mental health through literature, provides an opportunity to talk about it in a concealed manner: "there are so many things in there that you can use to access mental health issues. You just don't call them mental health issues" (Appendix 9, lines 463-464). Through this practice, the teacher is arguably engaging her students in meaningful conversations, which are conversations in which the students engage in authentic language use, such as in casual conversations (Skulstad, 2018, s. 55). She conceals the purpose of the conversations by not explicitly stating, for example, that the lesson is going to concern mental health topics. The conversation may, therefore, be more authentic, as the students are engaged in a casual conversation about what the characters are

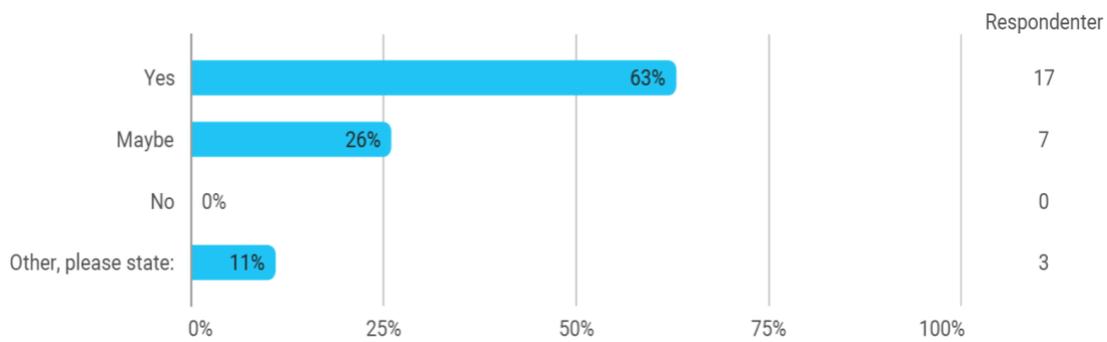
feeling, as opposed to exposing their own feelings. They are arguably emotionally engaged in the text, as teacher B is relating the character's issues to their real lives, but they are not forced to expose their own emotions. However, one can still regard this as part in accommodating the interdisciplinary topic, as it contributes to learning about their own mental health issues, and, perhaps, how to address and handle them.

In summary, teachers A and B report that they already use literature as a way of talking about mental health. They explain how literature enables conversations about mental health in a concealed manner, through talking about the characters. Moreover, teacher A emphasises that literature is the best way to show students how mental health issues affects individuals, and how their behaviour towards such individuals can make an impact. They arguably view literature as a useful resource for talking about mental health, rooted in its ability to facilitate authentic conversations and learning about one's own life through learning about other ways of life. Ultimately, these aspects may also culminate in enhancing *Bildung*.

#### 4.2.3 Attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health

The last topic concerns the idea of using literature as a way of talking about mental health topics, and whether the participating teachers find this to be a possibility in order to accommodate the interdisciplinary topic. Earlier sub-chapters have presented findings which indicate that the teachers find that English literature holds many attributes that correlate with enhancing *Bildung* (Cf. 4.1.1), and we have also seen that some of the respondents already work with mental health topics in the English classroom (Cf. 4.2.2). Additionally, the analysis revealed that while the respondents acknowledge the relevance and importance of dealing with mental health topics in the context of teaching and learning English, they do not necessarily feel competent to address every aspect of the topic (4.2.1). This section will explore what attitudes teachers have about using literature as a way of talking about mental health topics. Relevant questions from the questionnaire are 11 and 13, and correlating topics from the interview guide.

Figure 9 below presents the results from question 11 in the questionnaire "Do you consider literature as a good resource for talking about mental health topics in the English classroom?" (Appendix 12).



**Figure 8.** Question 11: “Do you consider literature as a good resource for talking about mental health topics in the English classroom?”.

One can see that an overwhelming majority, with 63%, chose “Yes”, while 26% said maybe and no respondent selected “No”. 11% chose the “Other, please state” option, and these responses confirm and comment on the “Yes” option with explanations such as “Defiantly” and “It can be” (Appendix 12, question 11). It is imperative to keep in mind that this question was asked at a time where the interdisciplinary had been implemented for 3-4 months. This particular question may, therefore, have been tough to answer for those that do not have specifically set out to work with literature in this manner.

This positive attitude towards the potentials of literature in a context of talking about mental health is also reflected in the interviews, as exemplified by teacher A, who states that “I think this is the best way to show how this [mental health issues] affects people and sort of the changes you can be a part of” (Appendix 8, lines 517-518). She explains that literature in particular holds the ability to show the students how mental health affects people, and through reading about it, the students will be “more aware of their own actions. And hopefully then, they will build better friendships and people” (Appendix 8, lines 521-522). Teacher B echoes this sentiment, arguing that “[t]he themes in literature, the big themes like love and friendship and family (...) students find it easier to talk about those things based on fiction” (Appendix 9, lines 436-438). These opinions are, arguably, a reflection of their literature teaching practices, as found in chapter 4.1.4. Through their sociocultural learning practices and practices aligning with the reader- response theory, there is evidently coherence between how they view literature as a facilitator for talking about mental health, and their current teaching practices.

Additionally, teacher B comments on the difference between working with fiction versus non-fiction “there is an emotional connection to literature and fiction, that they don’t have to fact” (Appendix 9, lines 451-452). This further substantiates her statements from the previous chapter (4.2.1), where she argued that literature allows for exploration of mental health topics in a concealed manner (Appendix 9, lines 448-449). Teacher B is arguably emphasising an aesthetic approach to reading, which is concerned with the reader’s emotional response to the text (Rosenblatt, as cited in Fenner, 2018, p. 223; cf. 2.5.3). This emotional response is important in creating engagement and motivation for the reading, according to Fenner (2001, 28). This approach is dependent on the reader’s willingness and ability to indulge in the reading and relies on the reader’s ability to insert their pre-knowledge (horizon) into the gaps of the literary work. This emotional connection that teacher B refers to, may also indicate that her aim of reading is not to guide her students to a “correct” interpretation, but that she rather values personal and individual interpretations. This practice may be important in creating an environment for talking about mental health, as each student can relate to the reading and enhance their horizon and *Bildung*.

Moreover, Teacher C also addresses the difference between factual and fictional texts: “They can read fact texts (...), which we do. But I think life skills is one we can [address in connection with] literary characters, I think it’s a good idea” (Appendix 10, lines 271-273). It is worth noting that teachers B and C emphasise that they find fictional texts to be of particular importance when talking about mental health topics. As seen above, they link this to the aesthetic dimension of literary reading, thus reflecting the notion that reading fictional texts is “a more subjective and emotional experience than the reading of factual texts” (Hoff, 2016, s. 54. Cf. 2.2). Moreover, as aforementioned, reading fiction holds particular potential in that it helps reader develop empathy with literary characters (Djikic et al., 2013, as cited in Richmond 2014, p. 24; cf. 2.4.2). These factors can be important contributors in facilitating talking about mental health issues through literature. Additionally, this potential may also entail that students who do not suffer from mental health issues, will have the ability to step into someone else’s shoes, and potentially feel empathy for these characters and, subsequently, individuals in their real life. Such insight and empathy may contribute to diminishing the negative stigma surrounding mental health issues, which may be important when talking about mental health topics in the classroom. When viewing these findings in connection with previous findings, where teachers reportedly tailor the reading to the interests of the students (cf. 4.1.2) and that literature allows students to step into someone else’s shoes

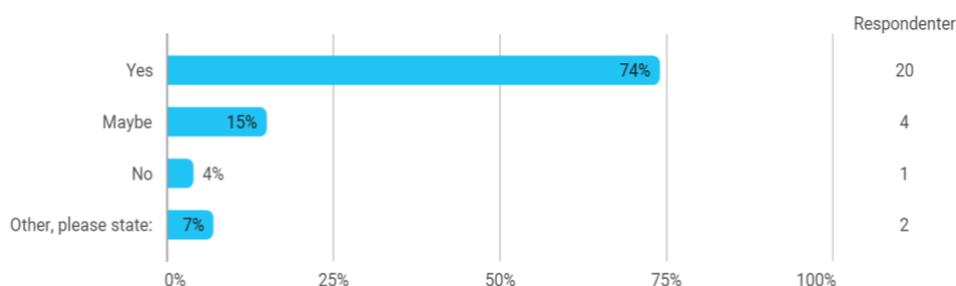
and understanding other people (cf. 4.1.3), there is reason to believe that teachers literature teaching practices facilitates talking about mental health topics.

Moreover, teacher D argues that literature holds particular potential that enables special developments within the reader: “I feel that by choosing the right text, and the right text meaning an authentic text, this *psykisk helse* [mental health] and then identitetsutvikling [development of the self], a real text is going to ask you ‘who are you?’ ” (Appendix 11, lines 261-263). Teacher D thus values authentic texts, which can be described as “a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” (Marrow, 1997, p.13. Cf. 2.2.2). Accordingly, the reading of authentic literary texts can be understood as a meeting between the subject and the natural world, which according to Klafki, is crucial to developing categorial *Bildung*. Teacher D says that an authentic text will ask “who are you” (Appendix 11, line 263), which displays how literature can enable self-scrutiny. According to Fenner, essential in reflecting on a text is that it will make the reader turn the interpretations upon themselves, which will result in enhanced “understanding and self-awareness” (2001, p. 19). Reflections about the self is also essential for someone who struggles with mental health issues, as the reader might be able to see their struggles reflected in the text. Subsequently, this may enhance learning about one’s own mental health issues, and perhaps provide insight into how literary characters handle such issues. This can in turn help the reader to see how he or she can manage them. This displays how literature can facilitate talking about mental health, as this, arguably, is dependent on a text that allows for reflections and interpretations on a personal level.

According to Klafki, *Bildung* is an open dissemination process between the subject and the natural world (2000, p. 37. Cf. 2.2.1), a process in which the subject is able to see itself in relation to the world in which it lives. As previously mentioned, an important part of enabling such a meeting is a text’s authenticity (Morrow 1997, p.13. Cf. 2.2.2). As found in chapter 4.1.3, teachers in the questionnaire and in the interviews value literature for its ability to create an authentic meeting between the reader and the natural world. Subsequently, they are arguably valuing aspects that are part in enhancing *Bildung*. In other words, it has been made evident that teachers are valuing aspects of reading that are connected to *Bildung* processes, increased self- awareness and a meeting with the natural world. Additionally, their reported teaching practices, as found in 4.1.4, show that the teachers emphasise sociocultural learning activities, where students learn from each other and create new interpretation and meaning

together, subsequently expanding their “horizons”. It is therefore not surprising to find that a majority of the teachers from the questionnaire and every teacher from the interview, are of the opinion that literature is a good resource for talking about mental health.

The following figure displays the findings from question 12 from the questionnaire: “Would you consider using/continue using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own English classroom?” (Appendix 12).



**Figure 9.** Question 13: “Would you consider using/continue using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own English classroom?”.

As evident in Figure 9, an overwhelming majority, 74%, of the respondents confirmed that they were likely to use English literature as a springboard for talking about mental health with pupils, 15% chose “Maybe” and 4% chose “No”. The qualitative answers provided in the “Other, please state” option, seemed to confirm the participants’ intention to use literature in this manner, but with some moderation in terms of the extent to which this should be done and the types of literary texts which should be used: “Yes, (...) but mental health is and should be a minor topic in English” and “Yes, but very carefully chosen” (Appendix 12, question 13). In other words, these findings indicate a general positive attitude among the teachers towards the use of literature in the context of dealing with the topic of mental health in the English classroom.

In the interviews, teachers A and B have provided insight into their current practice in using literature as a way of talking about mental health in the English classroom (Cf. 4.2.2.).

Therefore, when asked about their future practices, they both state that they will continue to use literature as a way of talking about topics of mental health (Appendix 8, lines 483-484 and appendix 9, line 479. Cf. 4.2.2). When asking teacher C about whether she will change her practice in the future, she says “No, (...) because I think I’m already there” (Appendix 10,

lines 326-327). Teacher D also says that she will use literature as a way of talking about mental health (Appendix 11, line 231). In other words, teachers from the questionnaire and interviews agree that literature is a good resource for talking about mental health topics. These findings further substantiate the findings related to the teachers' perception of literature's attributes (cf. 4.1.3), where the teachers found literature to enable learning about other people and cultures, as well as enhancing aspects about the self. Additionally, as found in chapter 4.2.1, teachers value the attributes of reading connected to stepping into someone else's shoes and meeting with other cultures. Considering the teachers' opinions about literature's abilities (Cf. 4.1.3) correlated with the factors that are important in enhancing *Bildung* (cf. 2.2.1), it is not surprising to find that a majority of the teachers find literature to be useful when talking about mental health topics.

In summary, it is evident that both the respondents to the questionnaire and the teachers in the interviews consider literature as a good resource for talking about mental health. Furthermore, their claims are substantiated by previous findings regarding the participants' opinions about literature's properties, their reported current teaching practices and how they choose literature. Therefore, while this sub-chapter's findings served to investigate their opinions about mental health topics explicitly, it was not surprising to find that a majority of the teachers found the practice of using literature as a way of talking about mental health to be beneficial.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This final chapter serves to sum up the main findings of the study, in an attempt to answer the research questions. Furthermore, sections will be devoted to exploring the didactic implications of the findings, in addition to considering the limitations of the study as well as offering suggestions for future research. Finally, the chapter will be brought to a close with some concluding remarks.

### 5.1 Summary of main findings

This study aimed to investigate teachers' opinions about using literature as a way of talking about mental health topics, through a focus on its potential to enhance *Bildung* and emotional engagement in the reader. This chapter will attempt to answer the three research questions, by referring to the findings from chapter 4. The two sub-questions will be considered first, as

they serve as the foundation for the main research question: “What are VG1 English teachers’ attitudes towards using literature as a way of talking about mental health?”.

The first sub-question asked: “What are VG1 English teachers’ opinions about literature’s properties?”. From the collective data, it was found that several of the teachers emphasised aspects of literature which reflected Klafki’s (2000) theory on categorial *Bildung*. Qualities such as literature’s inherent opportunities for enabling a meeting with “the other” and allowing the reader to step into someone else’s shoes were of particular importance. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis found that some teachers value literature’s potential to show the reader how to live a good life. These opinions thus reflected didactic theory on fiction’s ability to help the reader develop empathy with literary characters (Bredella, 2006; Richmond, 2014). This was deemed to be of particular importance as a gateway to talking about mental health topics in a classroom context, considering that stepping into someone else’s shoes can entail increased empathy for individuals struggling with mental health issues. In turn, this can be important in diminishing negative stigma associated with such issues.

However, the analysis also revealed a tendency among the teachers to emphasise the more instrumental aims of reading literature, where competences such as “promoting language learning” and “increased reading proficiency” were highlighted as important reasons for reading English literature. Although one may regard such aims as instrumental, and perhaps less valuable to the development of the self, such knowledge acquisitions can be connected to being socialized in other cultures. In that regard, these instrumental aims were also found to be important for enhancement of *Bildung* as they may contribute to a deeper understanding of other cultures, which in turn can lead to deeper understanding of the self. Indeed, these teachers demonstrate the belief that when reading literature, students are able to meet other cultures and individuals, which subsequently substantiates the claim that the narrative functions as “a mirror for ourselves, [where] we find confirmation and recognition in encountering ‘the other’ in the text (Pieper et. al, 2007, p. 8). Although they do not explicitly refer to Klafki’s concept of categorial *Bildung*, through their view on literature’s potential, it is evident that they find literature to enable enhancement of *Bildung*.

As discussed in chapter 1.2, Ekornes found a discrepancy between teachers’ perceived expectation of their responsibility to aid their students in their mental health struggles, and their reported feeling of lacking competence to do so (2017). Therefore, this thesis sought to

investigate the teachers' reported current pedagogical approaches to literature in addition to their opinions about the interdisciplinary topic, to further investigate whether there was discrepancy or similarity between their opinions and teaching practices. The second sub-question therefore asked: "What do the teachers report about how they teach English literature, and do they already facilitate a classroom environment for talking about mental health topics in combination with this type of text?". The data analysis from both data sets found that there were diverse approaches to literature teaching. Although the most frequently reported practices were classroom conversations in plenary and groups, activities such as individual writing tasks were also utilized. In spite of these variations, the most frequently reported practices indicated that the teachers have a sociocultural approach to teaching literature. In line with Vygotsky's theory on ZPD (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2020, p. 118). The teachers reported that these practices enabled the development of the students' "horizon" (cf. 2.2.1) which, subsequently, can be part in developing the students' self. Arguably, literature's ability to facilitate development of the self is an important factor in engaging the reader emotionally, which, in turn, can be important when engaging students in conversations about mental health topics.

When choosing literature for the English classroom, it was evident that the students' interests were influential. This did not always mean that the teachers indicated that the students participated in the selection process itself, but that they would consider what their students might find interesting and enjoyable. Some important factors that they reportedly considered in this context were the literary work's relevancy to the students' daily life, the authenticity of the text, and its potential to prompt an emotional reader response. In this view, the teachers emphasised the aspects of literature closely connected to enhancement of *Bildung*, and literature's potential of being a facilitator for engaging the students at a profound level. As aforementioned, the text's authenticity and the emotional response it may prompt are important factors in addressing the topic of mental health, as they contribute to teaching students empathy with individuals who struggle with their mental health. Additionally, this can be important for learners who struggle themselves, and may be able to gain new perspective on their own struggles and how to manage them, through the narrative of, for example, a literary character.

With respect to the teachers' reported current literature teaching practices, a rather surprising finding was that some teachers already utilized literature as a way of talking about mental

health topics. The respective teachers revealed that they regarded literature as a valuable medium for talking about such topics, because it allowed for exploration of the issue in a concealed manner. Through talking about literary characters' feelings, they reported that they were able to engage their students in conversations about emotions without revealing this intention explicitly. In order for literature to enable such conversations, the teachers emphasised the use of fictional texts, and for the text to be authentic.

The main research question asks: "What are teachers' attitudes towards using English literature as a way of talking about mental health topics?". Firstly, it was necessary to explore their opinions towards the interdisciplinary topic "Health and life skills" explicitly. The findings were somewhat unexpected in this respect, as some were overjoyed with the implementation of this interdisciplinary topic whereas others found the topic to be "too much" and argued that it belonged to the home. Moreover, some teachers recognise the topic as necessary in schools, whilst simultaneously expressing concerns towards its implementation. Several teachers argued that they would not be able to accommodate the topic in full, as it would require a healthcare professional to address some of the "heavier" subjects.

On the other hand, some reported that this topic is somewhat accommodated in their current literature teaching practice. Several implied that they already address the topic, reporting that they already talk about mental health at a general level, but leave the challenging parts to the professionals. Some emphasised how they are used to thinking that the English subject concerns more that the language as it affects the rest of their lives. However, they also emphasised that the topic of mental health is not their expertise. In other words, the teachers did not regard talking about emotions and mental health on a general level as being the same as accommodating the interdisciplinary topic in full.

The data analysis revealed that a majority of the participants regard English literature as a valuable medium for talking about mental health. The findings from the two sub-questions indicate that teachers find that this type of text enables learning about others as well as the self, and that it carries a unique potential to engage the readers' emotions. Additionally, their teaching practices emphasise the learners' individual interpretations, which can be challenged and elaborated upon in sociocultural practices, such as conversations in plenary and groups. Therefore, in spite of their divided opinions regarding their competence to accommodate the

interdisciplinary topic “Health and life skills”, their opinion is that literature is a good resource for talking about mental health.

## 5.2 Didactic implications

Considering this study’s concern with how English literature can be used for talking about mental health topics, which is a new topic in the National Curriculum, some didactic implications can be drawn from the findings. First of all, the discrepancy between how the teachers perceive the interdisciplinary topic and their reported lack of competence to fully implement this in the English classroom, indicates a need for a more detailed official clarification of what the interdisciplinary topic entails in terms of teachers’ responsibilities. This might enhance teachers’ confidence in their own competences in addition to elucidating what the topic encompasses in the specific context of teaching and learning English, which may be important in encouraging teachers to address the topic.

Furthermore, there is a need to explore literature’s potential to accommodate the interdisciplinary topic on its own. Several teachers reported an apprehensive attitude to talking about mental health topics, but simultaneously recognized the inherent qualities of literature which might teach students how to live good lives, and how to understand other people’s sufferings. This is, arguably, what the interdisciplinary topic “Health and life skills” concerns. The findings of this study could thus contribute to making teachers aware of some new aspects related to the didactic potential of English literature. Particularly, the use of such texts as a way of talking about a topic, which this research has found to be challenging to several teachers. The findings indicate that teachers are confident about their pedagogical approaches to English literature, and that they are well informed about the potential and advantages of this type of text in the context of language education. Therefore, this thesis can contribute to expanding the teachers’ view on literature’s potential in accommodating the topic of mental health. Teachers should further explore the practices that enable enhancement of *Bildung*, in connection with talking about mental health.

## 5.3 Potential limitations and suggestions for future research

Although the research has been carried out to the best of my ability, certain limitations of the material and methods have been addressed throughout this thesis, as they may have made an impact on the analytical findings. This sub-chapter, however, will address issues beyond the

scope of the present investigation, which will also serve as the foundation for some suggestions for future research.

The current study has concerned itself with researching teachers' reported practices and opinions, which is a limitation on its own. Through this focus on teacher cognition, the study has not explored the potential gap between what teachers believe to be true about their practice and what their actual practice is in the classrooms. Thus, a suggestion for future research would be to conduct a case study involving observation of classroom practice. This could arguably have been an interesting method to supplement the interviews and questionnaire in this thesis as well, but due to the limited time and resources available when writing a master thesis, this was deemed to be beyond the scope of the present investigation. Although there are certain limitations to such a method as well (cf. 3.7.5), it can play an important role in nuancing the teachers' reports about their own practices.

Moreover, the research is rather narrow in that it only had 28 respondents to the questionnaire. Due to the small sample population, this thesis is not able to make any general claims on behalf of the population of VG1 English teachers. Therefore, the aim of the thesis was not to make such general claims, but rather to investigate tendencies within the population, which has been possible in spite of the small sample. Within the population, there were great varieties and examples of different practices, making the data representative of several approaches to literature teaching.

Additionally, the interdisciplinary topic was new as of the fall of 2020, and several of the teachers stated that they did not have sufficient experience with it yet. Accordingly, the teachers, either in relation to the questionnaire or interviews, may not have had sufficient time to reflect upon how they interpret the topic and the different ways in which one can implement it in the English classroom. A suggestion for future research in this regard would be to investigate what the teachers' practices of accommodating the interdisciplinary look like in the classroom. Moreover, this thesis concerns teachers' opinions regarding the interdisciplinary topic, and it would therefore be interesting to also investigate the students' perception of the topic as well as their experiences related to working with the topic in the English classroom.

Lastly, through its focus on “talking” about the mental health issues, this thesis has emphasised oral classroom communication as an approach to accommodating the interdisciplinary topic, and has therefore not focused on didactic possibilities related to, for example, individual writing tasks. The use of writing tasks or other individual work as a way of accommodating the interdisciplinary topic would, therefore, also be interesting to investigate further in the future.

#### 5.4 Concluding remarks

Working with this thesis has nourished and increased my interest in both literary reading and mental health topics in the context of teaching English. Although this thesis is complete, my engagement in these topics has only just begun, and I am looking forward to exploring them further in my own teaching practice. The conversations with the interviewees have inspired me, and I am incredibly impressed by their dedication to the English subject and to their students.

This thesis has found that literature holds immense potential and is regarded by VG1 English teachers as an excellent medium for talking about mental health. Its potential for enhancing *Bildung* through a meeting with the literary “other”, thus allowing the reader to step into someone else’s shoes and expanding his or her horizons, provides a solid foundation for facilitating conversations about mental health in the English classroom. Considering that this interdisciplinary topic had only been implemented for a few months at the time of conducting the research, I am looking forward to seeing what future accommodation of the topic looks like.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Permission from the NSD

Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger

09.03.2021, 13:47



#### **NSD sin vurdering**

##### **Prosjekttittel**

Masteroppgave om litteratur og mental helse i videregående skole

##### **Referansenummer**

341305

##### **Registrert**

29.09.2020 av Julie Voie-Gunleifstøl - Julie.Voie@student.uib.no

##### **Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**

Universitetet i Bergen / Det humanistiske fakultet / Institutt for fremmedspråk

##### **Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)**

Hild Elisabeth Hoff, hild.hoff@uib.no, tlf: 55582361

##### **Type prosjekt**

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

##### **Kontaktinformasjon, student**

Julie Voie- Gunleifstøl, julie.voie@gmail.com, tlf: 47651418

##### **Prosjektperiode**

01.10.2020 - 30.06.2021

##### **Status**

12.10.2020 - Vurdert

##### **Vurdering (1)**

---

##### **12.10.2020 - Vurdert**

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 12.10.2020, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan

starte.

#### DEL PROSJEKTET MED PROSJEKTANSVARLIG.

Det er obligatorisk for studenter å dele meldeskjemaet med prosjektansvarlig (veileder). Det gjøres ved å trykke på "Del prosjekt" i meldeskjemaet.

#### MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:

[https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld\\_prosjekt/meld\\_endringer.html](https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html)

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

#### TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 30.06.2021.

#### LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

#### PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

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

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

#### DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

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

SurveyXact er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

plikt til å svare innen en måned.

#### **FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER**

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

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

#### **OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET**

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

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

## Appendix 2: Permission by the University of Bergen to use private recording equipment



UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN  
Institutt for framandspråk

Til den det måtte angå

Dato

20.10.2020

### Stadfesting ved bruk av privat optaksutstyr

Institutt for framandspråk stadfester med dette at **Julie Voie-Gunleifstøl (29.07.1997)** er student ved lektorutdanning med master i framandspråk (engelsk) ved Institutt for framandspråk, Universitetet i Bergen.

I samband med gjennomføring av intervju til masteroppgåva, treng Julie å nytte privat optaksutstyr. Institutt for framandspråk stadfester med dette at vi godkjenner bruken av privat optaksutstyr.

#### Desse forholda ligg til grunn for stadfestinga

- studenten må setje seg inn i relevant regelverk, og følge dette
- studenten må bruke ei sikker løysing for handsaming av personopplysingar, som til dømes SAFE (Sikker Adgang til Forskingsdata og E-infrastruktur)
- persondata skal så raskt som mogleg fjernast frå privat eining og ikkje delast utover det som er tillate i regelverket/godkjenninga av prosjektet

#### Nyttige lenker

[SAFE](#)

[Datatilsynet - Personvernregelverket](#)

Denne stadfestinga skal signerast av student og administrasjonssjef ved Institutt for framandspråk.

  
student



  
administrasjonssjef,  
Institutt for framandspråk

Institutt for framandspråk  
Telefon 55582340  
post@if.uib.no

Postadresse  
Postboks 7805  
5020 Bergen

Besøksadresse  
Sydnesplassen 7  
5007 Bergen

side 1 av 1

## Appendix 3: Information letter to the interviewees

### **Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet «Literature as a way of Talking about Mental Health»?**

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å få innblikk i engelsklærere ved videregående skole sin litteraturpraksis samt deres holdninger til de nye tverrfaglige temaene som omhandler mental helse. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### Bakgrunn og formål

Som student på Lektorutdanningen ved Universitetet i Bergen ønsker jeg høsten 2020 å gjennomføre intervju med lærere som underviser engelsk VG3. I intervjuene ønsker jeg å få innblikk i hvilken praksis læreren har ved undervisning av litteratur per i dag samt at jeg ønsker å høre deres tanker om hvordan den fremtidige litteraturundervisningen kan se ut i samhold med de nye tverrfaglige målene som omhandler Livsmestring og mental helse. Disse intervjuene vil bli en del av forskningen som vil være bakgrunn for en oppgave som vil utforske hvordan man kan bruke litteratur som utgangspunkt for å snakke om mental helse.

#### Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Julie Voie- Gunleifstøl (masterstudent ved Universitetet i Bergen) og Hild Elisabeth Hoff (veileder) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

#### Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Jeg ønsker å intervju lærere som per dags dato underviser ved en videregående skole som lærer i engelsk. Det vil bli intervjuet 4 lærere som arbeider ved forskjellige videregående skoler.

#### Hva innebærer deltagelse i studien?

Dersom du velger å delta i prosjektet vil dette innebære et intervju på ca. 45 minutter i slutten av oktober/ begynnelsen av november. Jeg vil på forhånd forberede en plan over hvilke spørsmål jeg ønsker å stille, som vil omhandle tematikk som litteraturundervisning, de nye tverrfaglige temaene og hvilket potensial litteraturundervisningen kan ha for å imøtekomme disse tverrfaglige målene. I etterkant vil du bli tilsendt en kvantitativ undersøkelse som også skal sendes ut til et større omfang videregående lærere.

#### Frivillig deltagelse

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

#### Ditt personvern- hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Det vil kun være min veileder (Hild Elisabeth Hoff) ved Institutt for fremmedspråk samt meg (Julie Voie- Gunleifstøl) som vil ha tilgang på informasjonen. Navn og kontaktinformasjon vil bli erstattet med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data.

#### Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt, og alle deltagere vil bli anonymisert i oppgaveteksten. Alt datamateriale vil bli slettet når masteren er godkjent, noe som etter planen er juni 2021. Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernombudet for Forskning, Norsk Samfunnsfaglig Datatjeneste a/s.

#### Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du an identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- Innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- Å få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- Å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- Å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandling av dine personopplysninger

#### Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke

På oppdrag fra Instituttet for Fremmedspråk har NSD- Norske Senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

#### Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter ta kontakt med:

- Julie Voie- Gunleifstøl via e-post [julie.voie@gmail.com](mailto:julie.voie@gmail.com)
- Du kan også ta kontakt med prosjektets veileder Hild Elisabeth Hoff via e-post [hild.hoff@uib.no](mailto:hild.hoff@uib.no)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD- Norsk Senter for forskningsdata AS på epost ([personvertjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personvertjenester@nsd.no)) eller på telefon 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Julie Voie- Gunleifstøl

Hild Elisabeth Hoff (Veileder)

## Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Literature as a Way of Talking About Mental Health», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- Å delta intervju
- Å delta i spørreskjema

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

---

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

## Appendix 4: Mail sent to Upper Secondary schools requesting participation in the questionnaire

Hei!

Jeg er lektorstudent ved Universitetet i Bergen og skriver for tiden en master i engelsk didaktikk. I den anledning har jeg utarbeidet en spørreundersøkelse hvor jeg ønsker å forske på engelsk lærere ved videregående skoler.

Undersøkelsen omhandler bruken av litteratur i undervisningen, og spør i den sammenheng om deres nåværende praksis ved bruk av litteratur, som f.eks. om elevene oppleves som motiverte for å lese litteratur samt hvordan litteraturen velges, arbeides med og tolkes. Videre handler undersøkelsen om hvordan man kan benytte seg av litteratur for å snakke om mental helse som er en del av et av de nye tverrfaglige temaene. Spørsmålene vil i den delen omhandle hvorvidt lærerne ser på temaet mental helse som nødvendig i skolen og hvorvidt man ser på litteratur som en mulig ressurs for å snakke om mental helse.

Jeg lurar i denne anledning på om du har mulighet til å sende linken på spørreundersøkelsen videre til skolens engelsklærere?

Spørreundersøkelsen er anonym.

Her er linken til spørreundersøkelsen: <https://svar.uib.no/LinkCollector?key=PL1H9KVNL51P>

Tusen takk på forhånd! Ha en fortsatt fin dag.

Mvh

Julie Voie- Gunleifstøl

## Appendix 5: Interview guide

Theme	Question	Key words for follow-up questions	
<b>Current teaching practice</b>	What are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Genre</li> <li>- Theme</li> <li>- Modern/classic</li> <li>- Competence aims</li> </ul>	
	Do you let the pupils partake in choosing what literary work they are going to read?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of novels to choose from</li> <li>- Why/why not</li> </ul>	
	In your experience/opinion, what type of literature do you find that pupils are most interested in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Genre</li> <li>- Theme</li> <li>- Relevancy</li> <li>- Modern/Classic</li> </ul>	
	Do you experience any challenges when teaching literature in the classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is literature outdated?</li> <li>- Pupil's experience and interest</li> </ul>	
	How do you work with literature in the classroom before, during and after the reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tasks</li> <li>- Classroom discussion</li> <li>- Assessment</li> <li>- Purpose</li> </ul>	
	In your opinion, what is the reason for the pupils to read literature?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Competence aims</li> <li>- Is it necessary for them to read, in your opinion?</li> </ul>	
	Which competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of literature?	-	
	<b>Interdisciplinary topics</b>	Do you regard these new interdisciplinary topics as challenging to accommodate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why/Why not</li> </ul>
		When reading these new interdisciplinary topics, what do you feel is expected from you as a teacher in order for you to have accommodated them?	
		Do you feel that your current practice accommodates these interdisciplinary topics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How/in what way?</li> </ul>
Do you feel that there are any advantages to literature that can be helpful in using it as a resource for talking about mental health?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are these and why</li> </ul>	
Do you deem literature as a good resource for talking about mental health?		-	
Would you consider using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own classroom?		-	
<b>Future</b>		Will you be changing your practice in order to accommodate these interdisciplinary topics?	-
<b>Closing questions</b>	Is there anything that you have not been able to say during this interview that you would like to add?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Other possible ways of talking about mental health</li> </ul>	

## Appendix 6: the questionnaire

1. Do you as of today work as an Upper Secondary school English teacher?
  - Yes
  - No
  - No, but I have worked as an upper secondary school teacher previously
  
2. Do you experience that pupils are motivated to read English literature?
  - Yes
  - Some are, but it depends on the subject/class/year
  - Some are, but it varies with what they read
  - No
  - Other
  
3. If you feel that pupils are NOT motivated to read English literature, what do you think could be the reason(s) for this?
  
4. What are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the English classroom?
  
5. Do you provide your pupils with options when deciding what to read in the English classroom?
  - Yes, they get to choose between 2-3 texts
  - Yes, they take part in deciding on 1 text for the class to read
  - Yes, every pupil gets to choose individually what they want to read
  - No, I choose the literary work
  - No, but I try to take into consideration what genre/theme I think they want to read
  - Other, please state:
  
6. Which of the following options do you use the most when interpreting literature in the English classroom?
  - Conversations in plenary
  - Conversations in groups
  - Conversations in groups with the teacher present
  - Assessed conversations with the teacher present
  - Student presentations
  - Other, please specify:
  
7. In your opinion, what are the most important reasons for students to read English literature?
  - Stepping into someone else's shoes
  - Meeting with other cultures

- Increased reading proficiency
- Improving the self (learning about one's own emotions etc)
- Accommodating the National Curriculum
- Reading and getting to know classic literary works
- Promoting language learning
- Meeting authentic texts
- Learning about stylistic devices
- For entertainment/ variation

8. Which competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of English literature?

9. With the national curriculum renewal came new interdisciplinary topics, stating: "The school must provide the students with the relevant knowledge in order to promote good mental health as well as physical health". Do you feel that this interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the English classroom?

- Yes
- Yes, but this topic is already talked about in school
- Yes, because I experience that students suffer from mental health issues
- Yes, but I feel that I don't have the necessary competence to talk about this topic
- No, there are other topics that are more important to talk about
- No, I do not have time to talk about this topic
- No, topics of mental health are not suited for the English classroom
- No

10. Do you regard this interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate in the English classroom?

- Yes, because I do not feel competent to teach about this topic
- Yes, because I do not feel that I have time to accommodate it
- Yes, because I am afraid of saying something wrong
- No, because it does not require professional knowledge on the topic
- No
- Other, please state:

11. Do you consider literature as a good resource for talking about mental health topics in the English classroom?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- Other, please state:

12. What type of literary medium would you regard as the most valuable for talking about topics of mental health?

- Movie
- Non-fictional novel
- Short story
- Fictional novel

13. Would you consider using/continue using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own English classroom?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- Other, please specify:

## Appendix 7: Transcription key

The conventions used when transcribing the interviews:

I: Interviewer

R: Respondent

... : Long pause

(--): Inaudible

-. : Interrupted/ overlapping speech. A hyphen indicates abrupt cut-off or self-interruption. In the case of one person interrupting the other, the hyphen is set at the end of the interrupted sentence and at the start of the other person's sentence.

(\*): Laughter

Norwegian words are set in italic

## Appendix 8: Transcript of interview A

1 I: My first question will be, what are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the  
2 classroom.

3

4 R: well basically, one of the main things is that we will give them a chance to discuss and to  
5 analyse and maybe be a topic they may find interesting because then they will work harder at  
6 it and retain the knowledge and I think that's basically more important than anything else.

7 That they connect with it so that when they have to write about a topic they just, it brings  
8 them to mind

9

10 I: and what type of either genre or theme do you find that motivates them or interests them, is  
11 there anything in particular?

12

13 R: well, I actually vary depending on the group that I teach. If I have lots of boys, I tend to  
14 sort of look for things that they would find interesting, so then I would go for science fiction  
15 or that kind of theme and if I have girls I go in a different direction. Might be a more quiet  
16 story, who might not be as action filled but have more depth to it in many different ways. I try  
17 to find depth either way, but in different ways because some of the boys have a harder time  
18 reading literature.

19

20 I: So, you consider the gender of the class more than just-

21

22 R: well gender and the sort of activities they favour. So, I look at the class and I- in the  
23 beginning of the year we tend to talk about literature and how they feel about literature.  
24 Especially for first year students, it's different for second and third, but for first year students,  
25 English might not be their favourite topic and they might never have read anything, and they  
26 hate poetry. So that's the starting point and to give them a story or a novel that is too far away  
27 from their daily life will make it impossible for them to get through it. I love it when I have  
28 that kind of a class where after reading a book, they say "this is the first time I actually  
29 finished and enjoyed a book." So sometimes that's actually the purpose, to have them enjoy a  
30 book. And enjoy the story.

31

32 I: Yeah, so you do take into consideration that real life aspect of literature, so they can relate  
33 to it?

34 R: yes, most definitely. Even though it is science fiction, it is basically the one that boys have  
35 favoured because some of them are hard to get engaged in books, is basically the need for  
36 emotions. That we need to be connecting with other people in order to have a good life, that is  
37 what music and what art actually adds to our life. And when you get to talk to boys about  
38 that, that's a good day basically. So that's the starting point. And then for mental health I  
39 actually use other material, but we do talk about that as well.

40

41 I: So, you do already?

42

43 R: Yes, I actually like to, and that's why I asked you specifically about movies because I use  
44 the movie, it's actually a book, but it's about a boy named (---) who is bullied, and his mom  
45 tries to kill herself. So, you get those sorts of aspects of mental health and then we have sort  
46 of one adult who sort of never grew up who distanced himself from society and is considered  
47 a loner. So, you get different aspects of life and what is needed, and the conclusion of the  
48 story is that we need people, we need more people to live a good life.

49

50 I: So, to some extent you already accommodate talking about mental health topics in some  
51 way?

52

53 R: yes, because I thought that was necessary in some sense. So, we are ahead of the times (\*).  
54 But now I might have to find books, and that's going to be my next challenge you know, we  
55 can read the book but it's too long at least for first year students. Maybe not for second or  
56 third year, but for first year students. These are the texts I use for the first-year students and  
57 that's what I bring up because that interdisciplinary is just for first year students this year,  
58 right, and then the next years will follow. But my main focus is on first year students this  
59 year.

60

61 I: So, do you let them, um, when you are choosing novels, do you let them partake in the  
62 decision making of what to read, or do you try to accommodate what you think they want to  
63 read, more or less?

64

65 R: I normally would give them an option, um, and ask them and sometimes I might not if I  
66 feel like the discussion is not going to take us anywhere. Because sometimes you have  
67 students that are like "this is boring" and they will sort of make the class unable to discuss  
68 because everyone has to be on that level of "literature is boring" and we are not going to get  
69 anywhere. So for me, it depends on the class whether or not I feel I can have a good  
70 discussion about it, and if not then I'll just bypass it and say "this is the interesting book, we  
71 have other options", and I might throw up some options I know they won't like so they feel  
72 like this is the best, right. And whatever I feel I can argue that they would enjoy might be  
73 where we are going. I guess, the objective is always to get them to read, so whatever-

74 I: - whatever gets them there, yeah-

75 R: Yeah, so I try to be ethical about it, it might not sound like it, but I actually do try, and I  
76 might even tell them that I don't think we can have a real discussion here, so I am going to  
77 pick. And say, this is the book that I think will suit us this year and I will tell them what  
78 students before have said about the book as a starting point and how we are going to do it.  
79 And most of the time we get through it, or so far, we have gotten through it.

80

81 I: do you experience, or I guess you have already touched upon it regarding challenging in  
82 terms of reading literature in the classroom. Is there anything else you would like to add in  
83 terms of what you find most challenging except from maybe interest?

84

85 R: well, whenever you are in a classroom it is challenging because you have 30 students and  
86 one teacher. And trying to engage them in literature and trying to engage a discussion about  
87 it, you always wish you had more time. So, you wish you had time to, especially when you  
88 see they are waking up, you really want to stay put for two hours and get there you know. But  
89 there is never that, you have 45 minutes and it's on to the next, so that's one of the many  
90 challenges I guess. The time constraints and the amount of students that you have. Cause  
91 sometimes you feel like literature is a personal thing and you want to be there on that personal  
92 level just for once with the students. I can do the whole year, but once in a blue moon you  
93 have that, and I think that's part of it and also because then you can- I think. Sort of the  
94 variety within the group, that making a personal and reaching them wherever they are at and  
95 get through to them. And I think I break it down into groups of three or four students sort of  
96 like a reading group activity where we read and discuss the book together, parts of it. To get  
97 closer. But it is still hard when you have 16 years old, they tend to always look to the next  
98 person and whatever they think or feel, they are going to be on that same page as well.

99

100 I: Do you find that different from first graders to third graders?

101

102 R: Yes. Because they are more mature, so they are more able to say what they feel and think  
103 and are able to make it more personal, to be what it is to me. They are sort of growing more  
104 into that.

105

106 I: So, they are more co-dependent in the first year?

107

108 R: Yes, absolutely. Not all of them, but there are, to me, too many. And I understand where  
109 they are at, but it is hard to break through that.

110

111 I: Yeah, I can see that.

112

113 R: You probably remember-

114

115 I: - I do.

116

117 R: But that's, that's some of the challenges. There are probably others that I can't think of  
118 right now.

119

120 I: Yeah, but I think you elaborated on it pretty good. Which kind of brings me to the next one,  
121 because you talked a bit about how you work with the literature in smaller groups, could you  
122 elaborate a bit more on what you do before you read, during the reading, and after the  
123 reading- is there a ritual you have, more or less, to the reading?

124 R: Yes, well it always will depend both on the book we are reading and the class. But I try to  
125 talk about, when we start I- see the thing is I have done this for a few years, and you change  
126 the tactics from one year to the next and you decide on- things might work for a while before  
127 you decide you need to try something new. So, I'm kind of in this space now where I want to  
128 try something new. But basically, what I try to do is find an angle into the story, trying to

129 make a connection to what we have already done in the class, so the starting point will always  
130 be different because I will try to find something that connects to the class and group dynamics  
131 we are in, because I basically choose books about being young, coming of age and figuring  
132 out who you are in one way or another. And so, whatever has happened is something we use  
133 as a starting point. And say- we have had so many different things happen in our class  
134 whether it be stories about bullying, people have social anxiety, or some even losing a parent,  
135 where you in some way can use that when things happen and change. We start either when  
136 something has changed, or something will change. And as you said, as a starting point into  
137 literature, and I always try to make it not dangerous. Because I think a lot of students are  
138 scared of literature and are afraid that there will be tasks they can't handle so I try to break  
139 that down and say "we are not going to worry about the whole book, we are just going to  
140 worry about this and a little bit at a time. And the last few years I have done reading groups  
141 and that I am happy with. It seems like students are more comfortable with that when there  
142 are just a few people there. And they get sort of, we read the book over time, but they get  
143 assignments saying you have to read the first 50 pages by next Monday, and then the four of  
144 us are going to sit down and you are going to tell me, and I give them examples of questions I  
145 am going to ask. And the last time we do it, we do it two or three times whilst reading the  
146 book, and the last one they will be graded on, so they have sort of true practice. And they  
147 recognize the questions. So, with characters, they get to pick a character each and tell me  
148 about the character, what do we know about it and is it changing, what is particular about that  
149 character. So, they are prepared for that, so they know on the finale day they are going to get  
150 a character and I am going to need to say this about that. So normally they are supposed to be  
151 comfortable by then. And I try to put students together that are comfortable with, either  
152 because they are friends or because they are not friends. Because sometimes, especially for  
153 boys, talking about literature with their best buddies might not always work-.

154

155 I: yes.

156

157 R:- you get it right?

158

159 I: Yes, I do.

160

161 R: So I try to think of that when I put the groups together so that they can be in an  
162 environment where it is okay. You don't have to be cool or you don't have to be tough, you  
163 can just talk about these characters. And then I tell them, there might be a movie about this,  
164 but it is not the same as the book.

165

166 I: Exactly, so you make them aware that you know?

167

168 R: I know, and every once in a while, there is a student that doesn't buy it, they see the movie,  
169 come in to talk about the book and I say "well, where do you have that from, did you watch  
170 the movie?" and then I look at the others, and how do I know that this is the movie, well  
171 because that doesn't happen in the book. (\*) so, you know, it's always like that when you  
172 teach. But the important part is you know that is going to happen, you know some are going

173 to have a hard time getting started and you have to try to work with that so that you get  
174 everyone through in the end.

175

176 I: Do you experience, by doing what you do, practicing a few times for the assignment, do the  
177 students get more comfortable? And they open up more?

178

179 R: Yes. And most of the times, again, as I try to put groups together that haven't got the, they  
180 don't have to show off to be in that group and I always ask them again; "how did you like this  
181 project, did you enjoy it?" and most of the students say they read a book for the first time.

182 Some loved the first part; some loved the second part but they actually all found something  
183 that they loved. And that's a win- I'm going to call that a win-

184

185 I: That's valuable, yeah! That's a checkmark in your book (\*)

186

187 R: And I ask them about the sort of process, and they love being that group. Being a little  
188 group around a table talking about the book.

189

190 I: So, in you experience, if you did the same thing in a classroom setting, you would not get  
191 the same results?

192

193 R: No, because most of them would be quiet. But when there are 3 or 4 and I say you get a  
194 character each. If you are first you get to choose character first, and then who's next can't  
195 pick the character you talked about so and I do that with themes and symbols so that they get  
196 used to "if I get in fast, I get to decide, then I get to pick and if I stay quiet then I get what is  
197 left". If there is a fight going, I'll say you get first pick for character and you get first for  
198 themes, it's not, I don't want it to be a competition, but I want them to know what's going on.  
199 They know they have to talk; this is what I want to talk about, and I am just going to jump in  
200 and get to talk about that. And normally that works.

201

202 I: It sounds like it would, to me it sounds like a good idea.

203

204 R: it's just about getting everybody to talk, because then they have to read.

205

206 I: exactly, they are afraid to come unprepared when they know they have to talk.

207

208 R: they know they have to talk; they might as well do it. And one key is of course not too  
209 much in the beginning. Smaller parts in the beginning, not too long a read and then as they get  
210 into the story, we can increase it.

211

212 I: as not to scare them in the beginning with the amount of work?

213

214 R: yeah

215

216 R: and you have to start talking about the opening and things like that, and so we spend some  
217 time doing that, and then the middle part we sort of stretch out and then at the end again. So  
218 that's how.

219

220 I: So, I guess you already talked about it a bit, but which competences do you think can be  
221 enhanced through the reading of literature, which also goes into the question of why we read  
222 literature.

223

224 R: My head is like, let's go through the *læreplan* [National Curriculum] and sort of the  
225 competence aims at the top. So basically, they have to use the language to communicate, they  
226 have to learn the vocabulary because they have to talk about it and the only way they can to  
227 that is to actually have the words. And so, they prepare at home and they know, I give them  
228 the questions, so they know they have to talk about certain aspects and so they can prepare  
229 sort of the language that they need, but they can't read a manuscript. They can have que cards.  
230 and so I think its good for the language because they have to speak quite a lot when we have  
231 these sit downs, but when it gets to sort of the content of it, right, its more about  
232 understanding other people and it can, depending on the literature, be about understanding  
233 other cultures, and its also practicing discussions in being open to other interpretations as one  
234 person might have an interpretation of a character in one way and that might not be the same  
235 way as you thought. And I always open up saying that that is okay, you dont have to agree,  
236 but you have to explain to me why you see it in a different way. So I think that you can also  
237 say that it helps you understand British and American culture because normally those books  
238 are from England and the US, and so it hits those aims as well. But to me, its on a more  
239 important level because its also understanding people, and that I think- sometimes I say we  
240 say we have to learn for school, but sometimes we have to learn for life. And I think this  
241 actually takes it to that level where you have to learn for life. How to be a good person, how  
242 to be good neighbour, how to be a good friend in a sense, what does that take. So, that is why  
243 reading is important.

244

245 I: Yeah, so not just the curricular aspect of it but also-

246

247 R: yeah, it actually addresses more than that, because that's what literature helps us do, it lets  
248 us live other people's lives and when we live other people's lives we understand other people  
249 better so it builds empathy for people. And I think that's the most important part of it.

250

251 I: Yeah. So, I'm guessing that if it was not on the curriculum, you would probably encourage  
252 reading anyway.

253

254 R: yes defiantly. I would try to find a way to incorporate it, because I think it is important.  
255 And what I love about books is that you get to, and that works with the new *læreplan*  
256 (curriculum), *dybdelæring* (in- depth learning), you get to spend time, so you are not just a  
257 double session class and then you move on to another subject, you actually get to spend a  
258 larger amount of time on a topic and dig a little deeper. And so, I find that when, and I grade  
259 exam paper, that what people write about on that is books and movies if they can, because

260 short stories have so many fewer aspects. It is more complicated to write about, it is easier,  
261 you get more depth through a longer work. that's that, it gives some peace, sort of "now we  
262 are doing this for a period of time, we are not stressing to the next and the next and the next".  
263

264 I: And do you feel that in the students as well, that they feel more I guess, you can say  
265 whether they feel more calm or not but-  
266

267 R: No, but I get the sense that they actually enjoy that sort of different way of doing that. The  
268 period where they get to do something for a long time and then they are like "oh no, now we  
269 are going back to normal". Now they have sort of we are reading, we are talking, we are  
270 reading, we are talking and that's it for a period of time. So, I enjoy it, and when it gets to the  
271 reading, they, many of them not all, I am never going to say all of them, because no tall get to  
272 that point.

273  
274 I: some just don't.

275  
276 R: I just, I don't know. We work hard at it, but we might not always-  
277

278 I: Yes, there is always someone-  
279

280 R: Yeah. But I will still keep doing it for the rest that benefit from it. I just think that for those  
281 that don't enjoy it, there is a takeaway in the understanding that most people enjoy and learn  
282 to enjoy. they grow with it and have sort of a takeaway where you don't share, and you  
283 understand there is something you don't get, but there is something there that I don't get.

284  
285 I: so even though you feel that they might not be at the same level as the others, they still have  
286 something left from the work?  
287

288 R: yeah, I feel that they have left that there is more there that I don't access.  
289

290 I: I think you're right, (\*). I think we touched upon all the questions regarding your current  
291 teaching practice, and so I think we will move on to talking about this interdisciplinary topic  
292 more or less. We will talk about it more in relation to literature as well, but just kind of that  
293 you know that we are switching up on the topic now. So, you've already said that you sort of  
294 accommodate this topic already, but is there any aspect to it- because now you have to, more  
295 or less, so do you find it challenging in any way to have to accommodate this topic?  
296

297 R: No, I actually enjoy it, and so I'm happy. What is a challenge I found this year that it is  
298 interdisciplinary and that means I have to work with other teachers and what I have learned is  
299 that not all think it is important right? So, it is kind of hard because here at this school we are  
300 supposed to have sort of a period of time where we work with each topic because there are  
301 three of them and right now we are doing democracy because of the US election and so they  
302 put that first. However, not all the teachers thought that, they didn't really need to do anything  
303 with democracy, they just needed to do interdisciplinary whatever-

304

305 I: Oh, so they did not need to check off every box or?

306

307 R: Well, what can I say, some are math teachers, they decided that as long as it was a math  
308 related question that had to do with democracy and civil responsibility uh- so we had an  
309 argument. (\*) Where I say-

310

311 I: "I disagree!" (\*)

312

313 R: well, they wanted to do in PE where they just did some exercises and then sort of look at  
314 frequency and average, but then I was sort of "how do you connect that with democracy?".

315 I: So, you are kind of the forefront trying to- (\*) engage everyone else in the same-

316 R: yeah, so when we get to this then, *livsmestring*, we are going to start somewhere else,  
317 because it came as a surprise to me this time around. I did not think anyone would object to it,  
318 no-

319

320 I: No, because it so clearly black on white that you have to.

321

322 R: Yeah, so I said if you are doing that, why don't you do statistics and talk about how  
323 statistics can lie and present facts in a different way because that would be relevant. "Well,  
324 no, because it does not suit us now."

325

326 I: Okay, so it's more "it doesn't suit me, so I'm not going to-"

327

328 R: Well, that's not really an option we have, that's how I feel about it. So, we are working on  
329 this as I see, but hopefully we can find a project where we can work more as intended, but  
330 right now from one class, the first-year class, English is actually the only subject that is doing  
331 democracy.

332

333 I: Really? That's interesting to hear, because I thought, maybe as a naive student, that  
334 everyone kind of follows what is told for us to do, but I guess not to some extent.

335

336 R: I guess not. I don't know if they feel, I don't know how they argue about it. I have not  
337 figured that one out and I am working on it because it has to be addressed and it has to be  
338 fixed by the next time because we can't do it so- we have to start a lot earlier. there is  
339 probably a fight coming (\*) down the line, and I am not going to lose that one. So that is sort  
340 of it. We are in that space right now. But I think it is just that some teachers are so used to just  
341 doing their own subject that they are not used to think outside of that. And if you teach  
342 subjects like English or religion or something, you are used to thinking that it is more than the  
343 subject. It affects the rest of their lives and the rest of the outside as well, so you bring that  
344 into it all time. So, I think that if you are doing math or PE, maybe you are just-

345

346 I: Yes, you are bit more straightforward-

347

348 R: Yeah, we are doing fractions now and that is what it is.  
349  
350 I: Well, it is a different way of thinking about it, so if you are stuck in your own routine and  
351 way of doing it, then maybe it is hard to change.  
352  
353 R: So, it's a challenge right now, but we have to work on, after Christmas then, we have to  
354 start early and... but its settled. It didn't dawn on me that this would be an issue. So, I sort of  
355 walked into that one blind. I didn't. WHAT? (\*) I wasn't prepared, I didn't know. I was  
356 walking into it thinking everyone was going to be like "yeah, let's do this", but nope. Yeah.  
357 So next time that won't happen.  
358  
359 I: Yeah no. I hope not! Strange.  
360  
361 R: So yeah, there are some issues left there.  
362  
363 I: Yeah, of course. So, I guess, what do you feel... You said you had a discussion about what  
364 needs to be done in order to accommodate these interdisciplinary topics. In terms of the one  
365 relevant here, I guess, what do you feel is necessary for you to say that you have  
366 accommodated this topic?  
367  
368 R: and I, for me, the first thing has to be that the subjects that are supposed to address this  
369 actually do. For the students in this year, they are supposed to have this addresses on many  
370 different levels and many different perspectives go into that. And for that to happen means  
371 that teachers have to address it and do it. But the one you are talking about is basically the one  
372 that I think more teachers are scared of-  
373  
374 I: Yes. And understandably I must say!  
375  
376 R: Yes, and sometimes I have to tell people from childcare services or whatever is that you  
377 have to remember that I'm only an English teacher. This is not my field of expertise. And  
378 some of the subjects that come up... I-, I know grammar and sometimes I feel like... I know  
379 grammar and I don't know about all this, right?  
380  
381 I: You're not a psychiatrist, a therapist..-  
382  
383 R: No, I'm not.  
384  
385 I: But you are kind of expected to be at the same time, right?  
386  
387 R: Yes, definitely! Because the supreme argument is that I spend so much time with the  
388 students and I agree, but I spend that time with 30 students, not that one student. And there is  
389 a limit to what I can do and to what I should do because I am not trained for it. Especially for  
390 the heavier cases, I can deal with bullying, that's fine, that's what you are expected to do in  
391 school right. And some of these, even anxieties and that I can deal with that's fine. That's

392 what you expect in a classroom. But the heavier stuff... they probably need someone better  
393 than me to do. because I don't know what I'm doing, I am sort of grasping at straws. So, if  
394 you've been subject to sexual abuse or anything, I mean I can be a grown- up, I can be an  
395 adult in the room, but that is it.

396

397 I: Exactly, you can't take the role of someone trained professional.

398

399 R: no because I don't know what is right to ask, and what not to ask, and to suggest. I would  
400 be guessing and that's probably not a good idea.

401

402 I: Yeah, no (\*). That's probably right.

403

404 R: so that a challenge a little bit with these subjects that come up, that there is... we can talk  
405 about it, but we can only talk about it as adults, not as trained professionals.

406

407 I: But is that to say that you feel that they expect too much, or do you feel that you that there  
408 has to be a line between what is expected of me as a teacher and what goes beyond what  
409 needs to be talked about with someone else?

410

411 R: Yeah, I think, and I think, I think some of the things we only need tools. Because as I said  
412 some of these topics you are expected to come across in the classroom. so, then tools could be  
413 "this is the issue, and this is how we deal with it", because it is that kind of an issue. But the  
414 more serious ones, I feel that too often too much is left on the teacher to follow up on the  
415 student, and we can't really do that because we don't really know what we are doing. because  
416 it always comes back to sexual abuse or something and whenever that comes up in a  
417 discussion, I really don't know where to go, what would be the right way, right.

418

419 I: Yeah. It can go so many different ways and it can be wrong, it can be-

420

421 R: Yeah, you can make things worse. And so, you end up saying, trying to, you can't go  
422 anywhere because you are not trained for that, so you end up like "oh that's really bad, I feel  
423 for you and its horrible that this has happened to you", but that's not really helpful for the  
424 student either. That is how I feel. What I am doing then is not really helpful. So that is really  
425 the challenge. So, if we bring too many of those discussions into the classroom, we also need  
426 to be able to handle them. And we are not really. As I said, some we are but not all of them.  
427 so, we have to figure out what we do, how do we deal with them, how do we address them.

428

429 I: So, you feel that with, and correct me if I'm wrong, but with these sorts of topics  
430 reoccurring, and now it's on the competence aims or interdisciplinary, do you feel that there  
431 should be a resource for you as teachers to learn?

432

433 R: yes, we have actually talked about that. When you were in school, did you do VIP?

434

435 I: No.

436

437 R: Because that is a program we have used for a few years where we talked about mental  
438 health.

439

440 I: Oh, no we did not.

441

442 R: I have done that with some of my classes, because we had that as a program for a week or  
443 so. We spent time talking about mental health. And I always picked, because we as teachers  
444 got to pick a topic, and I always picked anxiety and bullying as sort of the easy part that I  
445 knew how to handle. And some experts would come into class and talk about whatever  
446 subject the students or some teachers wanted them to talk about. But they came in for two  
447 hours and what I found was that they didn't really know the class and didn't really understand.  
448 because I know the student and know the issues behind. So, I often felt that the way they  
449 answered the questions didn't fit with the students that asked the question. So, because there  
450 wasn't a connection, and they didn't understand the story-

451

452 I: yeah, it was an outsider.

453

454 R: Yeah. it didn't really work, and it left me with addressing these difficult issues afterwards.  
455 Because it was sort of left unfinished when they left, and so I was sort of left with the rest.  
456 and that's what I think, for me, I'm afraid of what's going to happen. If, depending on what  
457 kind of issues we address, and I'm only comfortable talking about the issues I know that I can  
458 help students with. and the more serious ones that I really have no training for, and I probably  
459 shouldn't, because then I would have to have a whole other education as well, I need a  
460 different background. it is something that I shouldn't try to bring up.

461

462 I: No, but it is expected of you at the same time and you're kind of left in the middle-

463

464 R: Yeah, and then, well you are on the verge of becoming a teacher, right? So, you are  
465 supposed to be almost done, there is not a lot of teaching left to you. You agree with that?

466

467 I: Yes.

468

469 R: If we look at that, if we have it as a subject in literature, then that subject is going to come  
470 up in real life. And then you might expect- sooner or later some student is going to come up  
471 and say, "this has happened to me". And then you have to be prepared for that and have a plan  
472 for how you are going to deal with that.

473

474 I: So, but you already said that you, to some extent, deal with this topic in terms of literature.  
475 How do you deal with it without, trying to engage students in this large and hard-to-deal- with  
476 conversation?

477

478 R: Well, I have learned, through experience, that some topics are not for me. So, I will not  
479 read books with my students about sexual abuse, even though there are quite a few books

480 about it. Because first of all, if you have been a victim of sexual abuse, and you have to  
481 assume that at least one student in your classroom has, then reading about it might be too hard  
482 on them. And I feel the same thing about suicide. And so, I actually decided, because for  
483 quite a few years I had students that I knew had been subjected to sexual abuse, I just put  
484 those books aside because I did not want to put them through that. Having to read that, having  
485 to discuss it in class when you have had that happen to you is just too personal. And I have an  
486 epiphany where it was one book we read where there was a suicide attempt and this, sort of,  
487 one of the boys broke down because his girlfriend had wanted to. So, it became too personal,  
488 and I don't want them to have to experience that in class. or even in a small group. So that is  
489 my way of trying to protect the students and not have them be exposed to that in class. And as  
490 I said I go for bullying, it's not that I shy away from it completely, but I try to find books that  
491 address topics that I feel is useful to address. Like bullying and anxiety and that kind. Where  
492 it is kind of common in a classroom and it affects a lot more people and so knowing about it  
493 can make an impact. It can change how they behave, and they can be kinder and better  
494 friends, and sort of be more supportive of their friends that are struggling with this. So I think  
495 we can do some good with that. But when we get to the more extreme, we can't really. so we  
496 have to address overstepping the boundaries of others from a different perspective. In a sort of  
497 "that's what you don't do" in that kind of training. But not about someone who have  
498 experienced it, that would be too difficult for those who have been through it.

499

500 I: So, you feel it is valuable to you to know what sort of experiences your students have  
501 although you might not be able to treat or help them like a trained professional?

502 R: Yes. Basically, to be able to avoid putting them in situations they will struggle to get  
503 through, and maybe that makes school too hard for them, so they stay home. And that is what  
504 I can do. I try to put subjects on the table that they feel comfortable enough that they will  
505 show up to class. And not because they have been through this they cannot go to school. So  
506 they stay home and they lose out on education. So that is what I feel. There is a limit to what I  
507 can do. So that is my way of doing it. It might not be right, but. I am trying to do what is best  
508 for the students. and sometimes that will be just one student, we are doing this for just the one  
509 student. This book might be fun to read, but because we have that one student, we are not  
510 going to do that. and so all the others get another option. Serious stuff.

511

512 I: It is! And so, I really don't want to stray away from it, because it is a good conversation,  
513 but yeah. Let's get somewhat back on track: I guess you have already responded to most of  
514 them. But so, would it be fair to say that you would deem literature to be a good resource for  
515 talking about this?

516

517 R: defiantly. Within those that I feel comfortable with, I feel that it is the best way to show  
518 how this affects people and sort of the changes that you can be a part of. Because normally  
519 you see a person or character in a book that is broken, either because of social anxiety or  
520 some kind of anxiety or bullying or something like that and then you get to learn what it takes  
521 to fix it. And sort of make the students more aware of their own actions. And hopefully then,  
522 you will build better friendships and people in a sense. That they understand what they are  
523 part of. because I can feel sometimes the students don't understand what they are doing. They

524 are laughing of someone; they don't get how that can be destructive. So, I think it is defiantly  
525 a very good way of doing it.

526

527 I: so, I guess, I have a question regarding whether or not you will change your current practice  
528 in order to accommodate this new topic, but I guess you already have in some sense, so I  
529 guess you won't be trying to turn the tables.

530

531 R: No, because I actually like to change things up. I like to try new things, so I never stay too  
532 long with one thing, I try to do different things. So, I will probably try something after  
533 Christmas this year. I probably won't be too happy with that, and probably change it the year  
534 after, trying to find something that works for the students and for teachers and all of it. But I  
535 just expect that the first thing I come up with probably won't be the best, but we have to try it  
536 and see how students response and try to fix it from there to get better response to it. So we  
537 are probably going to try something we have done before because we know that works, and  
538 then we are going to try something new and then trying to get that interdisciplinary to work  
539 might be interesting.

540

541 I: Yeah it does sound like it.

542

543 R: so yeah, hopefully. But it defiantly will change

## Appendix 9: Transcript of interview B

1 I: So, the first question is; what are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the  
2 classroom?

3

4 R: Yeah, that's complicated. Sometimes, like you mentioned, there is textbooks with little,  
5 short texts that are adapted for students and in a group where reading skills perhaps need to be  
6 developed or like this year, I've got a classroom with 27 people where 20 languages are  
7 spoken you need something on a level that will appeal to everybody. So, the language in the  
8 text is not a barrier. But other criteria... I try to go for relevance and that can be many  
9 different things. Sometimes we need more recent material, more updated material. Sometimes  
10 you want to work on fiction to illustrate fact and you look for material that can illustrate  
11 whatever it is that you are working on and it doesn't have to be super current, it can be older.  
12 And other times it's a really good way into working on emotion, for example poetry, song  
13 lyrics, rap lyrics, they really like that. But I think it's really amazing that we just school that  
14 everybody words on rap lyrics because everybody is super into it, because they're not. They  
15 just need to understand that that is poetry as well. So, I think there are a lot of different factors  
16 that come into choosing material for a classroom because it depends completely on who you  
17 have in front of you. they are the guiding force behind all those decisions.

18

19 I: Of course, yeah.

20

21 R: and personal preference plays a role of course because there are some things I prefer to  
22 work, that maybe my colleagues don't prefer to work with, and we all have different  
23 strengths. Plenty of strengths, that's a good advice, but. Yeah, I think the people, the students,  
24 they come first.

25

26 I: Exactly, and as you say, I guess, every year students change, you have a different set of  
27 students. Do you take them, do you let them partake in choosing what literature to read?  
28 Whether it is just deciding, choosing between or...

29

30 R: Yeah, different approaches to that. Some years, like on year, in year 11 I'll say "alright, so  
31 everybody's reading this book" because I like for us to have a shared experience where I can  
32 show

33 them that you can analyse a whole book. its novel and for some it will be the first novel they  
34 will ever have read in English, which baffles me but here we are. And then obviously you try  
35 to choose something that will appeal to the group as a whole. my preferred and go-to novel on  
36 year 11 has always been The Perks of Being a Wallflower because it appeals to kids  
37 everywhere in every life situation. everyone can find something. And for some learners this  
38 book has been literature life altering. They have started talking about mental health issues  
39 after reading this book. they have discovered things about themselves that they didn't know,  
40 you know, sexuality wise and there are lots of things that happen. But of course, there are  
41 other options, you can say "alright, we have got 5 titles available" and, you know, give them  
42 insight into those titles briefly and then see who would like to read what. Ideally there's an  
43 even distribution, but if there isn't an even distribution that my cause a bit of a problem.  
44 Sometimes I just, I give them a list of titles and authors and say "we are going to read a book  
45 and I would prefer if you choose something on this list, if not, come to me and we will see"  
46 because it has to fit within the framework of international English, it can't just be whatever. It  
47 should also be something written in English and not translated from another language. So, it  
48 can't be a book that they have already read in Norwegian for example. Don't come at me with  
49 Jo Nesbø for international English. I mean, you know, I prefer to have original material. Or  
50 just completely free choice. You know it sort of really depends on the year and the feel I have  
51 for the group and the kind of work I would like for us to do after.

52

53 I: yeah, because that is another question because, say that you have multiple different works  
54 in the classroom at the same time. Is that does that make the interpretation, the work before,  
55 during and after, harder?

56

57 R: Yes, of course it does. You can talk about things like, okay there is a plot, there is a setting,  
58 there is a scene, there are characters. You know, there is a general framework of analysing  
59 and talking about literature. But that being said, you know, if you are reading 1984 or you are  
60 reading Harry Potter, you know. Okay, between those two there might actually be a few  
61 parallels, but you have to have read both in order to understand that there might be parallels.  
62 Some books are so different from each other I could have one particularly keen person  
63 reading Jane Austen in one side of the room and this other person going "I've only read  
64 Donald Duck" or whatever and they don't know what to do. So, that gives you a bit of a  
65 challenge. And in those situations, very often what you end up doing is going "okay so we  
66 will be doing classroom presentations, everybody is going to be talking about the books they  
67 have read", which basically means you get to speak for 3 minutes as a student, and you get to  
68 listen for 5 hours. And that is incredibly boring, so I stopped doing that. I no longer do that. In  
69 that situation I will try, and I have done this, I did it last time I did year 3, they all had  
70 different books, but I knew them. So thematically I put them in groups where themes would  
71 either be similar or touch on each other so that when one person says "yeah this is what my  
72 book is about" another person can say "well that is sort of what my book is about, except...".  
73 And so there would be different takes on a theme, or an idea or character development or  
74 whatever. So, I try to find what these books have in common. Yeah, I did it last year for  
75 international English in fact and that was during Corona virus lockdown. So, then we did  
76 group work on Teams and we have group discussion on Teams, which was interesting.

77

78 I: I can imagine.

79

80 R: It sort of worked. Because, you know, they came together, it was sort of like a virtual  
81 classroom. we all came together and " I read this book and this is what it was about", and they  
82 all had a checklist of things to tell the others. So, they all read individually and then they  
83 came together in groups of five and then they talked about their books to the other people.  
84 Which means you get to learn about four other titles in the room, but you don't get to learn  
85 about everybody's title. But that is just the price you pay really, because otherwise you just  
86 lose so much if all you do is listen and listen and listen. As a student you... Ideally you think  
87 "they will be so motivated for that" and they will not. So that is one way of doing it. You can  
88 have five people reading the same book, coming together and discussing the same book. And  
89 in other groups, say you have four groups with learners of five. And then you do expert  
90 groups where you split them up and then they come together and discuss the various titles,  
91 that is another way of doing it. So, yeah pros and cons with each approach, I think. But for  
92 my personal point of view, in year one reading the same title is a really good way of coming  
93 together as a group and sort of exploring something together, and they need that. Because it is  
94 also a social activity.

95

96 I: Exactly, so when, because what I have heard most is that an entire classroom would read  
97 the same title. When you are not choosing to do it that way, is it in an effort to let the students  
98 find something that interests them in particular? Is that kind of why you let them be free,  
99 more or less?

100

101 R: Yeah. Yeah, I mean reading a whole book, to some people that is a very daunting prospect.  
102 Especially-. I had one boy in year three literature, which is, you know, in- depth studies of  
103 literature and he comes in and says, "Yeah I have never read a whole book in my life" and I  
104 go "why are you here?", you know (\*). "Oh, you know, I had to do it for time tables", or  
105 whatever. I think for motivation purposes it is good that you can find a title that maybe  
106 triggers you a little bit, you know. So, what I do throughout the year is I bring books from  
107 home, and I just give them, I maybe read the first page or the desk cover, and I say this is a  
108 book recommendation for today. And I try to bring various titles. I married somebody who  
109 owns probably half of Waterstones collection of fantasy and sci-fi. So, I have a wide selection  
110 from that and then I have my novels, and then I try to do a mix and match and bring titles that  
111 can maybe trigger their interest in reading something. Because they are on YouTube and  
112 watch 10-minute videos and that is their, that is what they do. Which in terms of mental  
113 health is probably not the best idea.

114

115 I: (\*) maybe not.

116

117 R: So, for motivation is a big part of it.

118

119 I: And when you work with a classroom where everyone has read the same, in a classroom  
120 setting, do you divide into small groups, do you discuss out loud, everyone partakes or?

121

122 R: yes, varied approach. the title I normally use, The Perks, its divided into sections, it's got  
123 three very clear sections. So, I will give them a deadline They go off and read on their own,  
124 they can come and ask me questions obviously, but you know they have time for reading.  
125 And so, I say "okey, by Thursday you will have to have read part one". And then we will  
126 come together and we will be discussing part one based on these things, so everybody knows  
127 what is coming. Sometimes I will lecture. I will go into things like symbols, foreshadowing,  
128 metaphors usage, whatever. And try to show them that the author is very clear and aware in  
129 how he deals with language for example. Language is n expression of a personality type, and  
130 Charlie, who is protagonist and the narrator. Looking at things like genre and style, for  
131 example this is a diary or not even a diary, they are letters. "oh okay, do they have  
132 recipients?" "no, they don't really, but they do", "oh okay, so what does that do?". So, there  
133 are some classroom discussions. I can put them in smaller groups and say, "discuss the  
134 characters, so and so". And that sort of varies a little bit according to what the material is  
135 about. what I will do at the end is that they will work in groups and I have devised this set of  
136 tasks basically that I will give to the groups and I will try to adapt the task to the people who  
137 are in the group. Usually, I work with music classes so I can give them tasks based on a  
138 musical performance for example. I can ask "if this character was a song, what song would it  
139 be and why? Perform the song in the classroom". And that has actually resulted in some  
140 really, really good performances.

141

142 I: Really?

143

144 R: A lot of fun together as a group so it becomes a mini concert, but everything happens in  
145 English. Yes, so activities during reading and post reading, I mean, very often post reading is  
146 very student cantered, they work together. But while we are reading it is me who sort of  
147 controls that, but also gives them free reign sometimes to work with each other.

148

149 I: yeah, that makes sense. And so do you feel that there are.. When you are choosing a novel,  
150 say, what type of genre or themes do you find that interests them or what are they drawn  
151 towards when they choose? Do you have any opinion of what they find interesting?

152

153 R: No, it is widely varied. Some just go "ah, she has given me a book, I have to read a book,  
154 just give me a book". Others come and ask, "what do you think I should read", and then I ask,  
155 "well do you enjoy reading, have you done much reading?" and to those that say yes, I have  
156 favourite authors that I will pitch to them. I will go "hey, Zadie Smith, check her out", she is  
157 very brilliant and annoyingly pretty, so, and super talent. So, there are some suggestions I  
158 have, and others I have to sort of steer away from the Tolkien because it is just too much for  
159 them. So really it varies, I mean, one year this guy just completely threw me because he  
160 wanted to read Pride and Prejudice. Not the easy reader mind you, because I said if you are  
161 going to that, you are going to really do it, and that is, you know. But he wanted to do it, and  
162 he did. And he did. He got through the whole thing. So, you know, yes... (---). Well go for it,  
163 we will use change books if it is too hard. Also, sad to say, sometimes choices have been  
164 dictated by what is available in the library. That has been dismal for a few years, but we are

165 working on getting that up a little bit. More current authors, current themes. The Hate U Give  
166 has been hugely popular for example, so that is an example of a title that many teachers now  
167 use.

168

169 I: Yeah, I have become familiar with the name. I feel like I have heard it a few times, yeah.

170

171 R: I haven't actually used it myself.

172

173 I: Oh, you have not?

174

175 R: No, I have not.

176

177 I: I used it once, it was pretty good, I think.

178

179 R: yeah, I have not, but possibly. I have not decided what to do this year yet. But maybe.

180

181 I: So, there are some constraints in that you have to kind of use what is available in the library  
182 as well, that is something to consider.

183

184 R: Well, you do absolutely, it is a practical consideration. Especially if you are doing the  
185 same book with everybody. Because there are class sets at school, you know, because you  
186 need 30 books available. And there are 7 year one classes, you know, so not everybody can  
187 read the same book. And so, these are constraints that people that write course plans don't  
188 consider.

189

190 I: (\*) take into consideration, yeah.

191

192 R. no, and possibly also university teachers don't consider that we have very real physical  
193 constraints and restrictions to relate to.

194

195 I: yeah of course. So apart from the fact that you have these physical constraints from libraries  
196 and that some students haven't really read much. Are there any other difficulties that come to  
197 mind when teaching literature? are there any other-

198

199 R: - well challenges in general?

200

201 I: Yes.

202

203 R: okay. There are quite a few.

204

205 I: (\*) there's a list?

206

207 R: there is, well I mean, it kind of gives itself doesn't it, because a book competes with  
208 Netflix, viably, Dplay, YouTube and all the other social media. Their attention spans are  
209 getting shorter and shorter and shorter, they just can't. I mean they struggle getting through a  
210 film and then you have to pick up a book and read it. I try telling them "look, see this is cool  
211 because you can like escape into your own imagination this is amazing it is like Narnia". And  
212 they all look at me and I go "you know the book with the like the whole place in the back of  
213 the wardrobe. No? No. Okay. It's like another world.". And they look at me and go "yeah, but  
214 I have got YouTube for that. right, so you are going to have to do it. So, we compete a lot  
215 with media and other platforms, defiantly. Motivating them to read, showing them that it is  
216 actually a good thing. Telling them that reading, and writing relate to each other. If you have  
217 read a lot, chances are your writing is going to get a lot better.

218 there is a clear, I mean research shows, children who have read a lot or have been read to a  
219 lot become better writers. That is not in dispute. So, I think that's really frustrating to me that  
220 they opt out because it is a little bit of an obstacle. But hey, a book never runs out of charge.

221

222 I: that's true (\*)

223

224 R: You can take it on a plane whenever we can travel again, you can take it wherever, its  
225 always there.

226

227 I: That's true. And does that relate to them in any way? Do they kind of get it? As you said,  
228 reading enhancing their writing as well, I feel like that would be valuable for a student.

229

230 R: It should be.

231

232 I: Exactly, it should be.

233

234 R: It should be. But for some of them, they can't see an immediate report. Maybe it comes in  
235 May, but they don't see it like "okay so I spend half an hour everyday this book this week and  
236 then I am writing an essay next week and it is going to get better?". Not necessarily, no. But if  
237 you give it some time! So what you end up with is trying to find material that will actually  
238 engage them, because they get into the story. And not all stories are like that on the first page.  
239 So, yeah for a while it is just pushing through, pushing through, just do it, just do it. You'll  
240 see. And some people have this "wow" experience where they are like "wow, this is amazing,  
241 I can't believe I have never read before! this is so cool". And that is always nice when that  
242 happens. But in school, teachers don't always, we don't always think about how they go from  
243 maths, to gym, to Norwegian, to science, to lunch, to music, and you know they do all these  
244 things and their minds are fragmented because they deal with an awful lot of subjects. So  
245 keeping focus I think is, it's hard.

246

247 I: Yeah, I can understand that. And so, what do you feel, apart from the curricular aspect, or  
248 maybe that's, I'm not going to force your answers in any way, what do you feel is the reason  
249 that students should read? Apart from the things you've already mentioned like writing and  
250 language improvement, but is that what you think is the most important?

251

252 R: No, it is not the most important for me. I think the most important thing for me is how it  
253 broadens your horizon. One of the most interesting authors for me is Emily Dickinson. She  
254 never left Amherst, she never left. And yet when she writes poetry it is like she has travelled  
255 the world. And she has experience big love stories and we know she didn't. there were some  
256 letters from a man who came to see her, and that was all very hot I'm sure, you know, in the  
257 early eighteen hundred. But it's this, you can go places without going there, you can meet  
258 people without meeting them, you can experience things without experiencing them. A book  
259 will take you places you can't even imagine. And that is why I think the Harry Potter books  
260 are so wildly successful. Because it was such a vivid description of an alternative reality. But  
261 it triggered them, and they were hooked after the first book, and they sort of carried on  
262 reading from there. It's an identity creation process obviously too, especially Harry Potter. I  
263 mean, I'm a Hufflepuff that's what I am, and so it's a part of the identity there that sort of  
264 stays with you, doesn't it. But, so for me.. But I think its this personal development issue as  
265 well, it's this open your mind, expand your horizon, go out of your comfort zone, and that  
266 will create, it will make you, I probably shouldn't say it, but it will make you a better person.  
267 Make you a more rounded person, and an adult possibly better equipped at handling things.  
268 So using that, keeping your mind elastic like that I think is hugely important. Also because  
269 books will teach you a lot about how people used to think, and you get a lot of history that  
270 way without actually realizing that you are reliving history. The history of literature is the  
271 history of the human mind and I think you just miss out on something really beautiful and  
272 important if you opt out. So for me, this is a project of, I don't know, aesthetics and the  
273 human project.

274

275 I: Yeah, personal development and-

276

277 R: Yeah, very much so.

278

279 I: Nice. Well that kind of brings me on to the next question, which is; which competences do  
280 you think can be enhanced through the reading of literature? You have already discussed  
281 that-

282

283 R: Yeah, we have already discussed that. Obviously, there is vocabulary, there is writing,  
284 there is comprehension where you can do reading out loud from books, if you read plays, if  
285 you see you have an idea of a dialogue... I mean, there are lots of different competences that  
286 can.. can be practiced. Yeah, I don't know if I should elaborate more..

287

288 I: Yeah, I feel that you have already touched about.. yeah, you have. I just wanted to make it  
289 clear if you wanted to add something else (\*).

290

291 R: No (\*) I think that covers..

292

293 I: Yeah, good. Well, that kind of wraps up the current teaching part of these questions. And so  
294 I would like to move on to the interdisciplinary topic and kind of discuss those, also in terms

295 of literature, but first more in general. Would you consider your current teaching practice to  
296 accommodate this mental health aspect of the interdisciplinary topic?

297 R: I think it is something we have already done, only now it is formulated into a bureaucratic  
298 goal. Which seems, I suppose in some ways a good thing and some ways it is just a really  
299 arbitrary "oh, I'll put that in". Democracy and citizenship is also in English, but economy and  
300 environmentalism is not. So, I don't really understand why because all three are inter-  
301 connected. I'm not exactly sure why they have left one out and put the other two in.

302

303 I: True.

304

305 R: Yeah, but I think in terms of mental health we do a lot of things in school to foster mental  
306 health and to put focus on mental health. We have a program in year one for contact teachers  
307 called IP, *veiledning I psykisk helse* [guidance in mental health]. Which is a five-hour thing  
308 where you do three hours with your contact teacher and then two hours with external advisors  
309 like psychologists, nurses and that sort of thing. And we talk about things that the class  
310 wishes to focus on, so maybe in one class its bullying and another class it can be how you  
311 handle stress and then in some class you might talk about performance anxiety issues.

312

313 I: And the students get to partake in what to talk about?

314

315 R: Yes. Yes, in my class we briefly talked about this thing that we are doing, and we are  
316 going to focus on mental health, everybody has mental health. And it is really important to  
317 take care of it. Maybe there are some things we can work better on together than alone, fill out  
318 a little piece of paper where you write something you feel that we should talk about. And then  
319 based on that, I've said to my group this year, we are going to talk about feeling alone, left  
320 out, bullying, and also how do we handle stress. Because both those topics are quite frequent.  
321 "Does that sound okay" and they are like "yeah, yeah that's fine". And we are doing that a  
322 couple of weeks. So, there is also quite a lot of focus on mental issues in science, I know they  
323 do things on eating disorders for example. Nutrition, in physical education you do physical  
324 education plus mental you know, you need a healthy body to have a healthy mind. You know,  
325 there are all these different aspects of this. For English in particular, we have always talked  
326 about youth issues. You know, what are the issues that young people face in various  
327 countries. In the UK there's you know, child poverty, teen pregnancy, loads of young people  
328 end up being criminals. You know, there is this disadvantaged group of the population. In  
329 America there is racism, discrimination based on the colour of your skin. We talked about  
330 Black Lives Matter. you know, so we indirectly address it in many, many different contexts.

331

332 I: Okay, so there is something you talk about indirectly or more directly in many different  
333 sorts of aspects your English teaching really.

334

335 R: Yes, that we have already done.

336

337 I: Despite the fact that its not been on the curricular-

338

339 R: No, it's because mental health is everywhere, so you sort of do it anyway.

340

341 I: Yeah. So you don't.. Because one of my questions is whether you regard this new  
342 interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate?

343

344 R: We've, I mean in terms of the new course plan we have been working on it since august.  
345 So teaching, we haven't done a whole year of this yet. so I think, whether I find it hard or not  
346 to incorporate so far, this is a transition year where a lot of the work we do is "oh okay, new  
347 competence aims, how do we.. " and then the course plan is so pragmatic, its so practical, its  
348 so... there are seventeen competence aims that deal with skills, and not a lot of content for  
349 example. And based on the competence aims you'd be forgiven for thinking that this kind of  
350 interdisciplinary stuff was not meant to be in there at all, because there is so little content. So  
351 we are trying to find a way to unite the overall idea of the new curriculum with the actual  
352 curriculum. That is the main challenge at this point. and the new exam that they have come up  
353 with is just.. Don't even get me started (\*).

354

355 I: (\*) Yeah, I am not going to.

356

357 R: my blood pressure will spike, and my mental health will suffer greatly.

358

359 I: I've heard it a few times like don't, don't get me started on it.

360

361 R: Lets not

362

363 I: No, lets not, that's fine. Do you feel that it is necessary that it is a competence aim, or that it  
364 is on the curriculum at all? Do you feel, um, is it too little too late, is it..

365

366 R: I think its an expression of how much school is meant to accommodate. Because we have  
367 to take care of every aspect of the human and so now it is left to schools to do a lot of the  
368 things that parents are meant to be doing, from my point of view. Taking care of your  
369 physical health, taking care of your mental health, these are things that you're meant to be  
370 able to do as a person. Not because your English teacher told you to, but because you are  
371 growing up and you have adults around that can guide you. And I realize not everybody does,  
372 and it does fall to us to do that, quite a lot. So, I, it feels a little arbitrary to me that these are  
373 the things they have chosen to focus on, and there are only three, and we only have two of  
374 them. And that this is one of them for us I think is a little strange, because surely, you know,  
375 saving the planet, environmentalism, surely that should have been there.

376

377 I: Yeah.

378

379 R: But it is not. Its just not, we haven't been able to find it anywhere. So, I don't know. Since  
380 we do so much on it indirectly already, its more of a matter of "okay this is a headline, what  
381 can we sort of attach it to that we are already doing". Which sounds a little regressive, but  
382 really that's reality.

383

384 I: yeah. So it's not really something you find that you sort of have to start over and try to  
385 accommodate it in a new way.

386

387 R: it's not brand new, no.

388 I: So you don't feel like you have to now, what can I say, because one of my questions is what  
389 you feel. let me rephrase. What do you feel needs to be done in order for you to feel that you  
390 have accommodated this topic? But do you feel that you already do you in some way?

391

392 R: accommodating the course plan fully, is impossible. Because the intention of the course  
393 plan is so wide and the new curriculum is just the sort of, the general part of the new  
394 curriculum is so wide, and so idealistic that you can't. You will never feel like you are doing  
395 enough. We have five hours a week, we have basic skills to practice and to work on. In my  
396 room this year I have people who arrived in Norway eighteen months ago to people who have  
397 been here since they were born. And national curricula don't really take the actual landscape  
398 of school into consideration. So, I am a little frustrated at how the subject specific and the  
399 general parts of the curriculum seem to be so disconnected from each other. And whether you  
400 do enough with the actual competence aims to fulfil the intentions of the general part... I don't  
401 know, ask me again in a year. So I just started.

402

403 I: Yeah, it is kind of hard, I guess, to ask you these questions so early on in the year. And it is  
404 more likely what you think is going to happen more than what you actually do because you  
405 don't know yet.

406

407 R: No, we don't know yet. We have made a year plan, and tried to sort of put what we already  
408 have into the new boxes to see if that fits. And some things fit and some things dent, so we  
409 have to come up with new material. Corona made sure that we couldn't go to courses to learn  
410 about new textbooks, prepare the new curriculum from (---) point of view. And so we started  
411 the year basically treading water, and they were not going to postpone this reform at all. They  
412 were just going to carry that out. And so there are a lot of teachers that are feeling like "I  
413 should be something more and something different, but I am not entirely sure what that is.  
414 And so well just try to make the old stuff fit the new moulds". And sometimes that works and  
415 sometimes it probably doesn't.

416

417 I: Yes, its a challenging year I can imagine.

418

419 R: Yes, in more ways than one.

420

421 I: Yes, there are a lot of things going on, and on top of that you are trying to figure out this  
422 new curricula and accommodate it as well as you can, I guess.

423

424 R: Yes, so we have been quite pragmatic about this and said "alright, fine, we will produce a  
425 compendium for the spring term. We will put texts there that we think belong there. This is

426 the transition here, lets just do the best we can. Leave it at that". And then the new exam form  
427 hit and everybody went... "well okay".

428

429 I: (\*) yes, another topic. So I guess, trying to transfer this into literature teaching; do you feel  
430 that there are any advantages to maybe practicing literature in relation to talking about mental  
431 health?

432

433 R: Oh yes, loads. Because, how many song lyrics do they know? Like a thousand, right? How  
434 many of those songs are about people's emotion, ideas, emotional state, yeah. Okay, your  
435 boyfriend breaks up with you, you go home and put on some sad music. You know, how  
436 many books are written, you know, in diary form, or blog form, or letter form. The themes in  
437 literature, the big themes like love and friendship, and family, all of those things, students  
438 find it easier to talk about these things based on fiction. They find characters that they can  
439 relate to, like Harry Potter for example where you can talk about feeling excluded. He has  
440 been a loner his whole life, he has been alone, and then he finds a place that accepts him and  
441 where he is like everybody else. That is exactly like my kids in music in year one feel. "I was  
442 always the weird kid playing violin when everybody else was at football cup, and now I come  
443 here and everybody is like me! Its super cool!". So its a lot easier to find characters to relate  
444 to, to find emotion to relate to, in fiction. When in fact you can read statistics that says 74% of  
445 all British teens between 14 and 16 have experienced depression, you know, last year. Made  
446 up fact. Disclaimer. But reading a story where a girl tells you how she is cutting her arm  
447 because she is so depressed, because her mom lost her job.. That makes an impact on them.  
448 Reading the numbers doesn't. So there is an emotional connection to literature and fiction,  
449 that they don't have to fact. And that gives them.. Its a place to vent and its a (---) that lets  
450 them talk about emotion without getting personal. And that's really important.

451 I: Yes, I agree a hundred percent (\*). That's why I'm writing this. So, have you ever tried  
452 using literature in that way, trying to, I guess you have in some sort of way as you say  
453 literature is like a personal development.

454 R: Yes, again, the perks. He talks about in the beginning about how "tomorrow is my first day  
455 of High school, and I am not looking forward to it". This is like literately months after they  
456 started the similar kind of school experience. You can talk about that and say "how do you  
457 identify with that. How do you identify with his feeling, sort of a little spacey, a little on the  
458 outside?". And then there is a little bit of a complicated relationship with the parents, a lot of  
459 them will have that. There is the girl with the reputation, you know, she wants to do better.  
460 You know, maybe there is something there. And then there is the gay guy, who is openly gay  
461 in the beginning of the nineties and that is really a huge problem for him. And how do we  
462 deal as a society. We've, you know, pride for example. We did pride here at school, and that  
463 wasn't entirely uncontroversial. So, how you know, and there are so many things in there that  
464 you can use to access mental health issues. You just don't call them mental health issues.

465

466 I: Right.

467

468 R. You don't (\*).

469

470 I: But you still talk about them as...

471

472 R: absolutely, yeah. But they are things from the book and they are also things from real life.  
473 So that works.

474

475 I: Exactly. So without saying "now we are going to talk about mental health", you are.

476

477 R: You don't do that, because then they go "oh, that's a little dangerous". But if you say "how  
478 is Charlie feeling? Can you use some adjectives to describe his feelings?". "Okay, so he is a  
479 little scared, that's cool. He is a little nervous, yes. How many people felt scared or nervous  
480 on their first day here? You were down in the big aula, your names were called. ut your hand  
481 up if you had a little pit in your stomach that day. alright yeah, quite a lot of you did. I did  
482 too". So there's a conversation. And you're not talking about "mental health" all caps. But that  
483 is what you are talking about. It is also a good intro to the VIP program that I talked about  
484 earlier. I used "*Styggen på ryggen*", which is a Norwegian..

485

486 I: Song?

487

488 R: Yeah, um, Karpe! Which talks about how you carry around this creature on your back, this  
489 ugly creature on your back, whispering nasty things in your ear. Bringing you down, and it is  
490 really you doing it to yourself. And so that is a really good way into discussing mental health  
491 through rap, essentially.

492

493 I: yeah, so do you find it valuable? (\*) I guess we can both agree that that is what you-

494

495 R: (\*) yes I do, very valuable.

496

497 I: good. Well so I guess what is left for me to ask is whether there is anything that should  
498 have been said, or do you want to say anything that I didn't ask you, anything that you would  
499 like to add?

500

501 R: I'm just, I.. My big worry, moving forward, our society is going to be more and more  
502 factual, more and more pragmatic and that this whole dimension of literature disappears. and  
503 that is a great shame. because if there is anything these kids need, it is something to attach  
504 many emotion that they have to. And if they can do that, if they can identify with something  
505 or someone else who I looking like they are going through the same thing, and they can talk  
506 about that. I think that's catharsis and think its just hugely important for them. Especially for  
507 this age group of 16 to 18. They need that, and they need the community at school to come  
508 together in a safe environment and discuss that. and so I guess ill be the renegade and carry  
509 on doing it even if it isn't in the curriculum (\*).

510

511 I: Oh, I hope it stays forever. I do agree with you. I think its extremely valuable, which is also  
512 why I think it is so interesting to look into it. even though students might not find it  
513 interesting anymore, I think they have to (\*).

514

515 R. well, indirectly they do. They just don't like reading books.

## Appendix 10: Transcript of interview C

1 I: My first question is what are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the  
2 classroom?

3  
4 R: I think like primarily we are looking at the criteria we are given, I mean, reading literature  
5 is a criteria in itself, right? We are required to read, and understand and talk about literature,  
6 and then put it into context in terms of history and culture, and society from the country in  
7 which the story originates, be it from Africa or the United States or whatever. Also, in terms  
8 of language, language learning. Reading and writing about and talking about literature. But in  
9 terms of the new criteria, in terms of the... or maybe we can cover that later, we'll get to that.  
10 Context and form, that's what I'm thinking.

11  
12 I: Yeah, context and form. And when choosing what type of literature, or what type or work,  
13 you bring into the classroom, do you let your pupils partake in the decision making.

14 R: What do you mean?

15  
16 I: So when you are deciding what novel or short story to present to the class, or have them  
17 read, do you let them partake in deciding what type or text? Or if they are reading a book do  
18 you let them decide what type of book they want to read?

19  
20 R: I think because they are so topic specific I feel that I should be the one making that  
21 decision, because I am the one who knows how it is going to fit into the whole context. But  
22 some times they do get choices. For example, if the topic is, as you know, black America,  
23 then they can choose different novels from different times, within the last 60-ish years, right.  
24 So we have one traditional, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and then one contemporary with *The Hate*  
25 *U Give*. So I mean, I think.. I try to keep reigns on the topic part of it, but then also allow  
26 them to choose. But yeah, no, I think I am the main decision- maker here.

27  
28 I: Yeah, so do you kind of make the umbrella theme, subject, decided for them, but then they  
29 can choose between one or two, as you say.

30  
31 R: Yeah, I like for them to have choices, but I feel like I am the only one who knows  
32 specifically where we are going, where we are going with this, right? I can give them an  
33 overview of what my ideas are and what my objectives are, but I can't really make them look  
34 for it as well as I do in terms of the exam, and you know.. So that's why I try to keep a focus  
35 on that I am going to choose. And try to give them some choices, right. And also, when the  
36 point is just to read and analyse literature, I think I would be more open to let them choose. (--  
37 -) But for vocational classes they all like have five books to read from, to choose from. Yeah.

38 But if I was walking towards something, so it needed to fit into specific countries, society  
39 issues, then I would have been more, like.. Choose books for them, because its like they want  
40 to read a book, then yeah, they can choose (---).

41

42 I: Yes. And as you say, there is a practical aspect of this as well, because it has to fit into a  
43 theme, and it also has to fit in with how you work with the literature in class as there are  
44 many students and you more likely will work on it before you are reading, during the reading  
45 and after the reading in terms of interpreting it and talking about it. So what is your kind of  
46 process with the work, say you are reading a larger book, what is the process you go through  
47 with before the reading, during the reading, and after the reading? Is there some sort of ritual,  
48 more or less?

49

50 R: I think it depends on the topic, but yes, I do have one. What I usually do is I start with an  
51 introduction to literature; "Right, this is what we are going to work with, work with literature.  
52 This is how to analyse literature and what we are looking for." Those objectives are going to  
53 be represented in the assessment towards the end. So, I make a unit, a literary unit. So, we  
54 start with why we are doing this, what's the point, and how we are going to do it. So, the  
55 analysis and the objectives need to be in place. And then I like to tend to start with a "why do  
56 we read literature?". So that it is kind of a way of convincing them, "this is a good idea, this is  
57 something you should spend time on". So, that's where we start. And then I give the  
58 background to the novel. Like with, for example, the Hate u Give, where we talk about the  
59 historical treatment of African Americans and try to bring it to what it is today. So, we make  
60 connections to the Black Lives Matter movement, the Black Panther movement. We look at  
61 relevant terms, like double consciousness and code-switching, which is how the character in  
62 the Hate U Give has two personalities, depending on where she is. And then we go to that of  
63 reading the book, and we use the book to kind of take us through the, right, so we'll stop If  
64 there is a chapter related to something particular. We'll stop, do more lessons on that, and  
65 then we will work our way through the book. Doing some writing tasks along the way, to  
66 make the reflect. To make them keep a progress, and then guide us towards an assessment.  
67 Usually, in my case, an oral assessment.

68

69 I: Okay.

70

71 R: Because I think books work well in terms of conversation. So, they can write a book  
72 report, but its not the same thing. Books tend to.. They can have different opinions, they can  
73 interpret it differently, and so I think a good assessment is to make it an oral assessment. So,  
74 its a unit, but it going to, depending on the length and complexity of the book, it can be six  
75 weeks. Like, a proper five to six weeks, for like a proper-. And then we do a literary unit, with  
76 literary analysis, and language and then issues, and politics and everything, baked into one.  
77 So we cover loads of different competences. So that is what I am thinking.

78

79

80 I: Yes. It makes sense. And do you find that during this, you said 5-6 weeks period or so, do  
81 you find that students are motivated to read? Do they read; do they enjoy the reading? Do you  
82 have any opinion on that?

83

84 R: It depends on what we are reading, I mean in terms of the book we are reading right now,  
85 in the second grade, which is *The Hate U Give*. I feel like they are there because we have the  
86 election going alongside it, and things are happening. And we can talk about the Black Lives  
87 Matter movement, and, I mean, in the midst of talking about the book, a couple of weeks ago,  
88 there was a verdict in the case against the police officers who killed Breonna Taylor, and they  
89 were let go. Free of charge, basically. And it also marked the 55-year anniversary for the  
90 same verdict against the people who killed Emmett Till, so then we had, like, a historical line  
91 that we could look at. Which was incredibly relevant to what was going on about the book,  
92 and I think that did something with their motivation, it had a positive effect. But I have  
93 always had five- or six-weeks units with books that the students hated from the beginning and  
94 then, yeah, motivation was tricky. I tried *Pride and Prejudice*, I tried it once. (\*) It won't  
95 happen again. *Regency* is not what they are interested in. I found out.

96

97 I: Yeah. So, would you say that finding, I guess you found a good way of motivating your  
98 pupils in terms of making it relevant to the times we are in right now, but do you find that  
99 there are any other challenges to, kind of, reading literature in general, in class?

100

101 R: I mean the challenge is that some people just don't read. and if they weren't doing that,  
102 some people read books and they have their library card, and they are used to reading. they go  
103 through (---), and those people are not really the challenge. There are people that go through  
104 life without reading a single book, it's not their cup of tea, right? And they don't enjoy sitting  
105 there. That is why we do the whole "why should you read literature", right, to try to capture...  
106 To try to get those people with us.

107

108 I: Exactly.

109

110 R: But, it is tricky. Because it is a thing they tend to like, or they don't. So, its a pretty good  
111 idea to choose a book where there is a film. So they won't necessarily get through the whole  
112 book, but they won't fail. So, its like a safety net. So that can be a challenge. It doesn't depend  
113 as much on the book as it does on the fact that some people aren't reading. It doesn't really  
114 matter what you do. But in terms of that, by the way, people who aren't readers, I feel like it is  
115 easier to get them interested in graphic novels. You can get *Pride and Prejudice* as a graphic  
116 novel. Made by Marvel and the whole thing. So if you really look into this, you can get them  
117 involved, if you choose a graphic novel. So that can be a solution, as well.

118

119 I: is that something that you have used before? A graphic novel?

120

121 R: Yes. Because then of course you don't have just, like, text. You need to draw the  
122 information out of the text, but there are some people who are struggling with, like, basic  
123 English text. They can't really do that. But, if they have speech bubbles, and they have

124 drawings and illustrations and facial expressions. Then you have something called "making  
125 an inference" which is when you combine the textual information with body language, facial  
126 expressions from the drawings and illustrations, even if you take away the written word, you  
127 can still figure out what people are feeling and what is going on. Because you are making an  
128 inference, by using the information you have available. Which can work quite well for low-  
129 level learners as well, because now they have two sources of information. So if they are  
130 struggling with the reading part, they have an image, right. So, yeah, just to give you an idea.

131

132 I: exactly, it sounds like a good idea! I feel like I have heard that from a few people. I don't  
133 know if they actually use it, but they consider it to be a useful resource. I think many will  
134 explore eventually.

135

136 R: Yes. There are many, like, high- quality graphic novels. Like, you don't have to choose  
137 silly, nonsense, humour graphic novels, you know. And I have recently been introduced to-, I  
138 haven't really read graphic novels myself, but I try to find some for my students. I have been  
139 introduced to loads of different graphic novels regarding LGBTQ, for example. So you can  
140 use that as a point of departure to talk about different issues, because they cover such a wide  
141 range of issues. I am not really talking about comic books, but graphic novels. It could be an  
142 idea.

143

144 I: Yes, that is really interesting. And you mentioned initially that you told your students why  
145 we read. Could you elaborate more on what you think is important, and is the reason why we  
146 read?

147

148 R: Its.. well first of all there are scientific reports on the benefits on reading, on people, right.  
149 So everything from exactly in terms of numbers how our vocabulary increases from reading,  
150 there are reports on this, if you refer to reports, on how it can make us less stressed, and how  
151 it can improve focus. There is scientific research that back it up. There are specific numbers  
152 and percentages of how much, I mean it is not going to be an exact science, but how much it  
153 increases vocabulary and reduces stress. And then you can get more philosophical about it  
154 and talk about how you can use comparisons, to try and compare ourselves to them. And also  
155 this whole, which is the same (---) used in computer games in education, that uniqueness in  
156 being able to be in someone else's shoes. So fortunately, nobody knows what it was like to be  
157 an African American and being pulled over by a police officer, because in the US that is a  
158 potential life-threatening situation, right. It is impossible for us to experience, because that  
159 doesn't really happen to us. But if you read *the Hate U Give*, for example, you can try, and it  
160 is written from a first-person perspective, which is really helpful in terms of walking in  
161 someone else's shoes. And try to get involved in how that really feels, right? If it is a well  
162 written novel, you get into it, right. So, I'm thinking that is one of the arguments I use. I guess  
163 I've just reading about the stuff happening to other people, read a first-person novel and then  
164 imagine "that is us", now we have to navigate the situation, that we will hopefully never  
165 experience. So that is something I say. Scientific numbers, numbers and reports, and benefits.  
166 Looking at, and also the more like mass perspective. That is what I have chosen to focus on.  
167 And I also try to- I have like a first slide which is "are you a reluctant reader?", and the

168 second slide is "still not convinced?", and then you kind of need to address those people who  
169 don't enjoy reading, right? They are not going to enjoy the experience, regardless of how this  
170 is going to decrease their stress and increase their vocabulary, they just don't read. And then I  
171 try to show them how to read in a way that will make them get this book. Like we talk about  
172 different reading strategies; skimming, scanning and close reading, for example. Give them  
173 starting tasks where they don't need any prior knowledge, but they can find out a lot about the  
174 book by reading very little, and suddenly they are in the novel, they have already started  
175 working on it. So, that's how I try to approach it.

176

177 I: Yes, that sounds like a good way to do it. And I guess- because my next question is more or  
178 less related to what you have already said, but I want to ask it anyway, in case you maybe  
179 find something else you will answer. If not, we will just move on. But the question is; which  
180 competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of literature? And you have  
181 kind of elaborated on why we read literature, but is the answer any different to this question?

182

183 R: I guess not, but I can kind of summarize the main issues of reading literature. (---),  
184 language learning, increasing vocabulary, it helps reading works from native speakers in  
185 terms of being able to speak grammatic English. Grammar, we can look at colloquial  
186 language, we can use it for dialogue. We use it in terms of, because it is a good thing to be  
187 able to analyse a text, we need that, right. It doesn't have to be *Pride and Prejudice*, but we  
188 need to be able to decipher what a text is all about, and to have a look at the features, and the  
189 devices that are used to create an impact, right. And we need to now how that works, right.  
190 For our own (---) written word reading. We also use it as a gateway to talk about English  
191 language countries, in terms of history, society and culture. Because in stead of learning about  
192 the issues, we look at them from a first person perspective, for example. So I think that is the  
193 summary of what I mentioned earlier.

194

195 I: yeah, good. and kind of the last question before talking more specifically about the  
196 interdisciplinary topic. Do you find that there is a specific genre, a specific theme, you find  
197 that the students are more motivated to read?

198

199 R: I don't quite like.. Its not that I have, like, one genre that I feel like.. So, graphic novels, I  
200 know that I am a bit into them at the time, because I feel like they work and that I get more  
201 students through a graphic novel than I would an ordinary novel. So I feel like graphic novels  
202 are something id like to explore more in the future. I know there are loads of literary potential  
203 in computer games. I am not a gamer, so I don't really know how to approach it, but I know it  
204 is there. I have read the articles and I think there are lots of goodness to be found. So, maybe  
205 the next step is to get into it. Maybe ignore the fact that I really don't think it is interesting,  
206 and see if I can find something that they might find interesting. But I think, if you can connect  
207 what you are reading to something that is going on in society right now, that they know of.  
208 Because instead of starting something that is completely no difference to them, they can  
209 connect it to things they already know. We are already in this thing. I hope with the Black  
210 Lives Matter Movement, they already know what it is about, so they are already into this  
211 topic, we are not starting fresh. We can connect what you know from before, with what we

212 are going to do. That is why, with the "me too" movement, when it was-, I mean it is still  
213 there, but when it was really fresh and new, and it was spreading and it came to Norway, and  
214 we had terrible "me too" cases in Norway, we read a book called "disgrace". And its a South  
215 African book by Coetzee, if that is how you say it, which is about a university professor who  
216 believes, personally, it is written from a first-person perspective, that he is in a consensual  
217 relationship with one of his students. And it might not be true. So, like, in addition to learning  
218 about 1990s post- apartheid South Africa, we can connect it to what we already know, like the  
219 "me too" movement and they had their feelings, and they worked with and so you can make a  
220 connection. So I wouldn't necessarily say it is one particular topic, but that it is the topic of  
221 the day. That is where you can-, because then they already know, right? Not like, "now we are  
222 going to learn about something completely different", now I am just going to attach this to  
223 what everybody is talking about right now, right. So, in a year we look at, like, very serious  
224 real (---), like the presidential election with, like, an obviously racist president, white  
225 supremacist (---), it felt natural to choose that book instead of, for example, disgrace. so I think,  
226 just, the topic of the day.

227

228 I: Yes, so relevancy to what the students, kind of, see in their everyday life.

229

230 R: Yes, because it feels like there's relevance, right? (---) So they see the relevance. Its just a  
231 different approach to learning about something, like, known to them. Makes it easier to get  
232 them into the book too.

233

234 I: But that's a really good answer, because, as you say, its not a specific genre or a specific  
235 theme, but it's kind of what is on the plan today and what is on the news. Okay, so we are  
236 kind of finished with the general literature teaching aspects of this interview, so we will move  
237 on to the topic of the interdisciplinary topic. And so, I guess, my first question is; do you  
238 regard this new interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate?

239

240 R: The one about, like, developing life skills?

241

242 I: Yes, with good mental health as the main-

243

244 R: - I think that's more approachable, that is not the most challenging bit. I know, if you have  
245 read the history, the new competence aims of history, they aren't like official yet, but one of  
246 them was "through learning history, you are going to realize the meaning of life", and I think  
247 that is the most ambitious thing I have ever heard. And I would say that there is absolutely no  
248 expectation of teaching the students the meaning of life. So I think in terms of what actually  
249 came around for the English part, they are approachable and I do think that some will  
250 disagree. Some will say that this is not-, this should not be a part of it. It belongs to home, or  
251 it belongs to lower-level education, or, you can also say: "what kind of background do we  
252 have that will make us suited to teach people life skills?". Because they might think that that  
253 is a teacher thing, that we teach them life skills all the time. Like, why are we reading  
254 literature, are we just going to, like, read stuff in a book, and then try to analyse it and then  
255 read more things between the lines than what is actually there? Or do we read literature

256 because we want to get to know nuanced, dynamic characters that can remind us about  
257 ourselves, and that can create gateway into learning about other people and other cultures?  
258 And I think the book we are reading now, and I am going to use that (---), because that is one  
259 that I was thinking about right now. Life skills, because we are dealing with a character with  
260 several trauma, right? one from childhood, one from being, like, sixteen-ish, its like, they are  
261 talking about massive trauma. So we can't really read a story like this without talking about  
262 how we deal with trauma. Because the mother in the story, she's really like "I know  
263 everything is awful, but you have to go to school." "we know everything is awful, but you  
264 have to keep going, we know every thing is terrible and you don't want to, but there is a new  
265 day tomorrow". So we need to talk about how to deal with trauma, in order to move on. And  
266 we are not going to talk about life skills yet, but when it will make sense. Maybe we can find  
267 ourselves in the story, maybe they recognize that feeling of dealing with some dramatic event,  
268 and just going "no, no, I am just going to give up", but its not possible. So maybe they can  
269 find some sort of comfort in Star's story, when you think about where she ends up, at the end  
270 of the novel. The trauma is still there, but in a new face, right? So I think it would be a good  
271 idea in terms of literature, because you get more involved with the literary characters. They  
272 can read fact texts about (---), which we do. But I think life skills is one we can stick in with  
273 literary characters, I think its a good idea.

274

275 I: yeah, so I didn't really catch the last thing you said there. I think it was something about  
276 your microphone.

277

278 R: Oh yeah (\*)

279

280 I: (\*) You don't have to go back. I think you said something along the lines of using  
281 literature, the benefits of using literature.

282

283 R: That's the thing, like, because if we are not teaching them life skills, what are we really  
284 doing here? Because this is their last stop before they're proper adults, right? Or they are  
285 really, many people are going to move away from home, or they are going to get jobs, or  
286 maybe more education. Of course we are dealing with life skills, that is not new. It just says  
287 so in the plans now, but it is what we have been doing for a long time. That is why we have  
288 black marks for behaviour and organization, and there are consequences to what we do. I  
289 mean, its all life skills, it just hasn't been part of the plan in writing before. So its not  
290 something new. And I think the last thing I said, when my microphone had an issue, that is  
291 kind of, like, literature is so perfectly suited for dealing with things like that. Particularly, not  
292 like exclusively, but, I think particularly if you choose first person perspective novel. Maybe,  
293 like, *the Hate U Give*, or like *Disgrace*, then we are going to talk about unreliable narrators,  
294 but it has a purpose.

295

296 I: I agree. So... You have already answered my question about using literature as a way of  
297 talking about topics such as mental health, for instance. But you have already said that you...  
298 correct me if I am mistaken here, but you do actually value literature as a good resource for  
299 talking about these topics. And I guess you already do?

300

301 R: In terms of mental health, super delicate, right? you can't weigh into people's mental  
302 issues, because I have absolutely no background to be able to do that. I also think students can  
303 find it very controversial, and confrontational. And if so, you have struck them with anxiety.  
304 And it doesn't really work for them, if they just, if they tell them that that is going on, there is  
305 something about anxiety or depression, etc. Then lets talk about it, but then, "Now I have told  
306 you, and now it is over". And so, I think literature can be a good way to, kind of approach  
307 issues like that. A bit more gentle. Not confrontational, not "lets have the conversation about  
308 why you are struggling". Try to give them something to relate to, and sneak in lessons about  
309 how to deal with these issues, through literature. Because it is hard to deal with factual texts  
310 without being confrontational. But in terms of this you change it do "this is not a you issue,  
311 this is an us issue". Not even, like, Norwegian issue, this is a global issue. Its like... Which is  
312 also why I am thinking about competence aims regarding democracy and participation, and  
313 critical systems of decision making... They are in an age group which is all about activism,  
314 right, so.. Yeah, I think literature is a good gateway, that is the word I wanted to use,  
315 gateway.

316

317 I: Yeah, gateway! Good one (\*).

318

319 R: (\*) yeah.

320

321

322 I: Yeah, it really is. So yeah, you have already kind of, on your own, managed to answer most  
323 of my questions regarding this topic right here. So, I guess my last question is; Will you be  
324 changing your practice in the future in accordance to these new topics?

325

326 R: No, I don't think so, because, like, its super arrogant to say that I think I'm already there,  
327 but I think I'm already there.

328

329 I: Yes, that's fair.

330

331 R: So, like, when you see them black on white, it's like "this is too much, and how can they  
332 put all of this responsibility on us, and like, politicians are hopeless". And then you kind of  
333 realise "oh, it's already in the fabric of what I'm doing". So, there is no need to stress out  
334 about it. So, I wouldn't, no. What I really would like though, to put a request into the  
335 universe... Because what I think is interesting, and what maybe you will find interesting in  
336 terms of literature, is our vocational classes, right? Because they have the same competence  
337 aims to a large degree, but they also have loads of competence aims related to their  
338 profession. So, like, that is something I would like to explore. How to use literature in terms  
339 of their professions and see if I can make connection there. Because I think it is tricky,  
340 because I don't really know anything about being an electrician or work on an oil platform. I  
341 don't really know that. So, that would be my dream. To be able to use literature, to be able to  
342 cut that increased demand for vocational English, and to be able to combine that. Because it

343 seems too theoretical, but I think using literature in that sense could be fun. But I don't know  
344 any books by electricians. I really don't.  
345

## Appendix 11: Transcript of interview D

1 I: Firstly, I am going to be asking a bit about your current teaching practice in terms of  
2 literature. And so, my first question is: what are the criteria you consider when choosing  
3 literature for the classroom?  
4

5 R: Okay, which is what we talked about. Authenticity, and that doesn't necessarily mean that  
6 it can't be fiction, but that it is human expression, where you are meeting... Unfortunately,  
7 when I did my *hovedfag* [master thesis] I wrote about- there's a philosopher, he just died in  
8 February, his name is George Steiner, because when I was doing my *hovedfag* [master  
9 thesis], as you know, you are supposed to enter into dialogue with all the critics. They don't  
10 care what you think, but they need you to-, anyways I had chosen this author who happened  
11 to never have gotten married, and she had lived with another woman. She was born in 1872  
12 and she died in 1947. So what happened when I was working on this in.. the nine-tees, late  
13 nine-tees, early two thousand, and this is the world you are studying in, critical theory had  
14 come in. And nobody looks at texts anymore as sort of a heart-to-heart experience. But they  
15 looked at it with glasses of feminism, or post-colonial, so they were looking for things. And  
16 so the idea here is that they were treating the text as something to be analysed, and then to  
17 make a diagnosis. And so I actually used time in class with my students to talk about what  
18 this philosopher, George Steiner, tells us. That we need to un-clothe ourselves in our  
19 meetings with texts. And that means that there is a moral aspect of the author being authentic,  
20 and the reader being authentic. And then what you do is you meet. And what you are doing  
21 then is a heart- to- heart meeting. And so, I tell this to my students, and in fact we did it this  
22 week, and I think they looked at me like "what is this woman talking about?". But when I  
23 choose my texts, that is what I'm looking for, is this authenticity. And it can very well-,  
24 Hemingway is fantastic-, and it can very well be fiction. But there is still something authentic;  
25 "this is my truth, and here it is. And you do with it as you please, I don't demand that you  
26 change the world, or..." But just this meeting. So, whenever I am choosing texts, I am looking  
27 for authentic authors, that we can meet in this sense of being un-clothed, because that meeting  
28 can change us. It can make these massive differences, and that is what I am hoping it will do.  
29 I remember, just as an example, we were reading James Joyce's *The Dead*... And we were  
30 reading it together, it's a really long, difficult text, half the class was not paying any attention,  
31 they didn't get it. And then there was another group, we were so moved by this that we all  
32 started to cry. It's a beautiful text. And I had... I was having to read it, because first I let the  
33 students read, but it was taking too long and the bell was going to ring, so I was jamming  
34 through the text. And then I just said "(students name), I can't continue, you have to keep  
35 reading". And then she says, "I can't, I can't read!", and then it goes to (students name), "you  
36 read" "no I can't". I think (student's name) was the one, she's got also the brain of a scientist,  
37 that was able to overcome her emotions and finish the text. That was way back in 2015.  
38 Imagine that! Everybody reading James Joyce, who's been dead for decades, and being so  
39 emotionally involved in this epiphany he has with his wife. And that is like, the potential of

40 those texts is massive. So that's what I'm looking for. Not to make everybody start to sob, but  
41 just- actually, because I've done that text with students before and we did not all break down,  
42 so there was something in the classroom that day... Probably rainy Bergen outside the  
43 window and it was all grey.

44

45 I: (\*) yes.

46

47 R. But that idea of Joyce opening up, and then we were opening up. it doesn't mean that that  
48 will happen with all the students, because, as I said, half the students were like looking at us  
49 (\*), with our emotional baggage. But that potential. So that is what I'm looking for, I'm  
50 looking for authenticity.

51

52 I: Yeah... And so, I guess we are going to jump a bit over to-, when working with literature,  
53 do you let the students partake in what you are to read?

54

55 R: usually not. I know there was a time where *elevmedvirkning* [pupil participation], that used  
56 to be in the earlier 2000s, that was sort of a catch word. And anytime I would ask them  
57 about *elevmedvirkning* [pupil participation] or *elevvurdering*[pupil assessment], they would  
58 just be like, they don't know the subject, they don't know the potential. So they would always  
59 be... Actually, that's not true. Because this year I have got a group of kids who aren't that  
60 strong, I asked them, because we were going to have a *blokkdag* [subject day] and I thought  
61 "you know what, I could do four hours of tough work at the beginning, and then we can  
62 watch a film", because that is part of it for literature, that we need to analyse. And so, I  
63 thought "you know its so early"-, because I know what film we are going to watch, we  
64 watched a film about Bobby Sands, who is one of the hunger strikers in Ireland, fantastic,  
65 fantastic movie. We also watch either Hamlet or MacBeth, depending on what Shakespearian  
66 plays they choose, but I only give them a choice of two. But I'm like, because we had  
67 our *Blokkdag* [subject day] in August already. And so, I ask, "what do you want to watch?"  
68 and there is a group of kids who love Christopher Nolan. And so, they were like "oh can we  
69 see a Christopher Nolan film?". And I just looked at their enthusiasm, and half the class were  
70 like "who is Christopher Nolan?", and I go "okay", and I knew he had done *Dunkirk*. And  
71 then I think, "Okay, let's see *Dunkirk*", and they go "eh, we want to see *Inception*". And I  
72 didn't, I hadn't seen it, and I thought "okay, all right fine". You know what, we spent two  
73 maybe three weeks analysing *Inception*.

74

75 I: Wow!

76

77 R: Yes, because you are in somebody's dream, you're in somebody's subconscious, you don't  
78 know where you are! So, we had to look at the end, is this a happy ending? Or is this a, sort  
79 of, non-conclusive ending, because that little thing is spinning at the end, and that is what she  
80 used to determine if it was real or if it was in somebody's subconscious. And so, we discussed  
81 this for-, our whole course got sub railed because-, so yes, I do let them. But as far as other  
82 texts go, and when I'm thinking of that I'm thinking of written text, because we don't have a  
83 lot of time. I usually-, but-, you know what, I think I am doing myself a disservice. I think I'm

84 more receptive to their input, but a lot of times I think its just "you guys, we are reading this  
85 text, like it or not".

86

87 I: But when you are choosing a text, if you don't necessarily let them decide, do you take into  
88 consideration what types of themes or genres they might like, and do you have an opinion of  
89 what that might be?

90

91 R: ...No... not really. *Inception*, that's a good-, I think films, I am going to be a lot more-. But  
92 a lot of times, I know, even though it sounds-. For them it can be leaves (---), but then we  
93 have got the question here, what about the kids that don't have the kids that the-, and a lot of  
94 kids take English because they think "Oh, I can speak English" and they think they are going  
95 to be reading their books and write essays. Not essays, which is writing *oppgave* [task] 2. I  
96 lose those kids. but I still don't feel like they think "oh my gosh, English is such a waste of  
97 time". I almost feel like they are looking in from the outside and understanding that there is-.  
98 But what it is missing, is it from a culture? Is it a depth of understanding? Is it exposure? Is it  
99 language skill? I think that they could be just as confused in a Norwegian class. So, I don't  
100 necessarily think-. I'm an introvert... and I think that I teach, unfortunately, for the introverts.  
101 Because they meet these authentic people in the small setting where they can digest and  
102 analyse and look and think. And the extroverts, I think that they want to look at music videos.  
103 And I love my extroverts, and I am always thankful for them in my class, because they ask  
104 the crazy questions and they dig *Inception*, you know, so much is happening. But my danger  
105 is that I am reaching out to those kids, the introverts, who are, by nature, intellectual. And  
106 that's really what literature is! If it can be called literature, if it's going to be edifying, which  
107 is that word I started with. that is the danger, that you are going to be losing the weaker  
108 students. I don't want to call them "weaker" because they are not weaker, they just have a,  
109 maybe an inability.

110

111 I: yeah, I understand what you mean, and I understand your use of the word. I think it's the  
112 right word, it just sounds bad (\*). I think we understand what you mean by saying it as well.

113

114 R: And what I try to do is find a film where they can achieve that same exposure, but they  
115 don't have to work so hard to get it. Which is the film *Hunger* about Bobby Sands. They just  
116 have to sit there, and teenagers today love to learn through film, because it's just lazy learning  
117 but yet it can be really powerful. So as a teacher we have an amazing tool there. They don't  
118 have to pain through pages and discipline, and vocabulary struggles. So, I'm on the lookout  
119 for that too, but the problem about films is that we don't have time. We have 90 minutes and  
120 then we are going to finish watching this really moving movie next week? It's just ridiculous,  
121 not good.

122

123 I: and so, you have already talked a bit about how you work with literature and interpreting  
124 and working in groups I think you mentioned. But could you elaborate a little more on the  
125 process of-, say you were reading a novel or short story, how do you work with it before the  
126 reading, during the reading and after the reading? Do you have a certain way of doing it?

127

128 R: What I do is I have got this brochure and I have worked on it now for 15 years, its a 40-  
129 page brochure, and- because I don't use books. It's got everything for rhetorical devices to  
130 how to analyse a novel, short story or a film. So that they always have these recipes on how to  
131 analyse. So, this year we started with Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. And so, my  
132 whole point there was that we were just going to be doing a literary analysis, where we were  
133 going to be looking at setting, mood, characterization, plot. Because what a lot of our time is  
134 spent on linguistic analysis where we are looking at *språklige virkemidler* [literary devices].  
135 And you can do that with anything, it doesn't have to be literary, it can be speech, whatever.  
136 So that's why I thought-. So, whenever we do anything, I am satisfying the teaching  
137 requirements and I am preparing them for the exam, so we are not just going to read a book  
138 and then respond to it. George Steiner, the philosopher I was talking about, he said the way to  
139 respond to art is not to analyse it, but to play it. If it's a song or a music piece, you play it.  
140 That is your interpretation of it. And so, on my thesis, when I was writing it, believe it or not,  
141 at the University of Bergen, one of my chapters was a chapter on fiction. I wrote fiction. I  
142 invited all the characters from my author to come and talk to me in this field in the middle of  
143 the night in Nebraska about her life. Something happened in her life while she was writing, so  
144 I had her characters from before this pivotal experience and after, to come and talk about it.  
145 And so, I just let them, they sort of came out of nowhere, and I thought "I am on a limb, this  
146 is insane!". But this is what George Steiner said that true interpretation is to respond by being  
147 creative. So, I did this, and it was fantastic, I had (---) and a woman who died two years ago,  
148 they were my sensors. And I got through with it, because they were older and willing to go  
149 with that idea, a response that was authentic can be a creative response. So, when I do this  
150 with my students, I want to keep that response intact. When they read James Joyce; "who am  
151 I"? Because I don't think they will do that cognitively, in a really self-conscious way, I think  
152 they will do it intuitively. When they see that this man is always taking his wife for granted  
153 and he finds out after this party that she has always been in love with this young boy that died  
154 of (---). When she exposes this to him, his wife who has been married to him for 22 years  
155 absolutely loved that man, and he knows that their relationship isn't that. So, it's almost like-  
156 So, you can read his, but I think, naturally, you will think "is my relationship with people  
157 authentic? Am I abusing them, or am I manipulating them?". So, I just think that that meeting  
158 will ask you, even though you are not aware of it, "who are you? What is your responsibility?  
159 What is your reaction to meeting others?". So, I think that is what literature has the capability  
160 of doing, but I think a lot of it is intuitive. You will feel it emotionally without exactly  
161 knowing what it is you are responding to.

162

163 I: And whilst we are on the topic of reading literature, I wanted to ask you what you think-,  
164 what competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of literature?

165

166 R: Empathy, self-understanding, which is what comes into-, I think when you see someone's  
167 authentic expression, if its fiction or if its biography, or autobiography, I think that meeting  
168 with the other at that level has just a human, empathetic understanding, self-understanding.  
169 Maybe self-forgiveness, just being easy on yourself. I think that is what the potential is.

170

171 I: Yes. Okay, so that really concludes the first part where we talk about your current  
172 teaching practice, and so I would like to take us over to talking about the interdisciplinary  
173 topic that I mentioned earlier. So my first question is; do you regard this  
174 new interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate?  
175

176 R: ... No, when we got the *læreplan* [curriculum], one of the things that I complained about in  
177 English is that they didn't have *identitesutvikling* [identity development], because I thought  
178 that it is so important, and then I was so happy when that came in. And then it came in with  
179 this *tverrfaglige* [interdisciplinary], and they even mention *trygg identitet* [safe identity] and I  
180 thought "bingo". This is great, because that whole idea of an identity, we build up our identity  
181 in relations with others, and we build our identity with the text as other. So, I saw this, and I  
182 just thought "jippi", I was really happy about it.  
183

184 I: Yes, and does your current practice to some extent already accommodate this topic?  
185

186 R: Yeah, I would say so. I would say this *nye læreplan* [curriculum], for VG3 *Engelsk*  
187 [English], we are not going to start using it until 2022. I would defiantly say that it is closer to  
188 my way of teaching I am so thankful for the Norwegian *læreplan* [curriculum], they are so  
189 open for creative interpretation. And that is another reason I look at people and go "why  
190 would you want a book? They are giving you *carde blanche* [complete freedom], go have  
191 fun!". And so, this whole idea of these *læreplaner* [curriculum], are just, to me, they are just  
192 a gift for creativity in the classroom. *Dybdelæring* [in-depth learning], especially now, you  
193 know nobody says you have to do "this", so you can say-, its open for interpretation. So no, I  
194 don't think it's challenging at all. I think we are moving in a direction where we have more  
195 freedom as teachers.  
196

197 I: And so, I guess you have said that you to some extent already accommodate this, right, and  
198 so what would you say that would be required for you to be able to say "now I have  
199 accommodated them". What is expected from you as a teacher, do you think?  
200

201 R: Are you thinking now of *folkehelse og livsmestring* [Health and Life Skills], in particular?  
202

203 I: Yes.  
204

205 R: ... what would be... because its *tverrfaglig* [interdisciplinary], the danger is that it is just  
206 going to *koke bort I grøten* [Norwegian expression]. Because, last year, I-, have you seen  
207 Chernobyl?  
208

209 I: Yes.  
210

211 R: yes, so I was like "our students need to see this". So, I thought, you guys, we have to do  
212 this *tverrfaglig* [interdisciplinary]. So, we used four days and we did-, we had the  
213 physics teachers deal with the physics of this stuff, we had the chemistry teacher, history  
214 teacher, politics-. Yes, it was like "this is so important". So, we would show one episode, and

215 then whatever that episode needed of clarification, Boom. That teacher would go in there.  
216 And its like, if I wasn't the one, I'm not *jeg skryter ikke av meg selv I det hele tatt* [not  
217 bragging about myself, at all], but my colleagues were like "uuh". Because it's something  
218 extra. Everybody has to change their *læreplan*, [curriculum] we have to change classrooms,  
219 it's a big pain in the butt. So, when I'm thinking about the *tverrfaglige* [interdisciplinary], if  
220 the school as an institution doesn't get behind them, the individual teacher might just think  
221 "okay, how am I going to interpret this" or "nobody's done anything about this, I'm just going  
222 to let it go". SO that is an issue. Because it is *tverrfaglig* [interdisciplinary], who is going to  
223 take responsibility for that work? Its super difficult in the classroom because the *timeplaner*  
224 [schedules], the physical environment space, its really difficult to determine these things.  
225 Plus, too, it very infrequently that teachers work *på tvers* [across subjects]. If you are working  
226 together as a group, you are talking about administrative issues. And then you get stuck in  
227 you English *faggruppe* [subject group], but then everybody is at different levels. That's  
228 not *tverrfaglig* [interdisciplinary], *det er bare engelsk* [it's just English]. So, this is an issue. I  
229 don't know how they are going to solve this one. But ill look at this and I'll go and think  
230 "okay, *livsmestring* [life skills]. *Egen identitet* [their own identity]." And I'll just... Even  
231 though I can-. Actually, I'm going to-. Your question is "how am I going to say check, I've  
232 done this". And my question is: "I'm going to do it because I am already doing it, and I know  
233 that I can just take existing practice and text and just plug it in and say, "this is what I did".  
234 But as far as *tverrfaglig* [interdisciplinary] goes, that might cause a lot of teachers to just let it  
235 slide.

236

237 I: Yes, I'm afraid so, and I think you are right. But would you ever consider using literature as  
238 a way of taking about, for instance, topic of mental health?

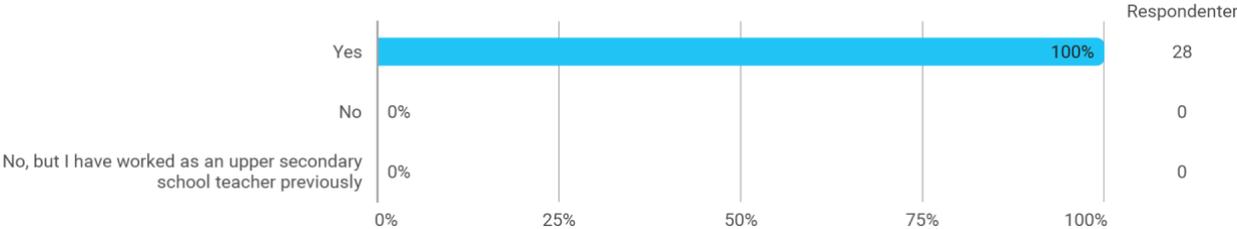
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240 R: Yes, and I was thinking about that, because I looked through the texts that I use and e use  
241 one text, Catherine Mansfield's Bliss. She was a very disturbed young woman. She dies very  
242 young. I think this text was written about 1921, so its modernism. it's a great text for  
243 modernism. So, we read her biography and you're pretty much like "wow". She was bisexual,  
244 she was constantly changing partners, written out of the will by her parents. She had this  
245 erratic behaviour; she was probably bipolar. And then we look at the character of Bertha in  
246 the text, it's a piece of fiction, but you can see so much of... Because Bertha falls in love with  
247 one of her female guests that she is inviting over for dinner. But it turns out that her female  
248 guests that she falls in love with is having an affair with her husband. So, the whole thing  
249 goes, okay I'm willing to have a sexual encounter with you, and then she finds out her  
250 husband is actually sleeping around her back. So that text opens up this whole idea of  
251 psychological health. To look at this woman, and then we are going to talk about it in class,  
252 and we get to talk about how this is apparent in the text and how it also is a really good  
253 evidence of modernism. Where they sort of let all this stuff out. So I would say, already when  
254 I look at these... The snows of Kilimanjaro, he has got this wife who refuses to talk to him  
255 about death. She has already lost a husband, here he is dying. And she only wants to talk  
256 about all these superficial things. *Psykisk helse* [mental health]. What is their need? so what  
257 I'm saying is that any authentic text is going to open up for, "what is a healthy response?  
258 What do we see in this couple that is going to create this anger and frustration in this dying

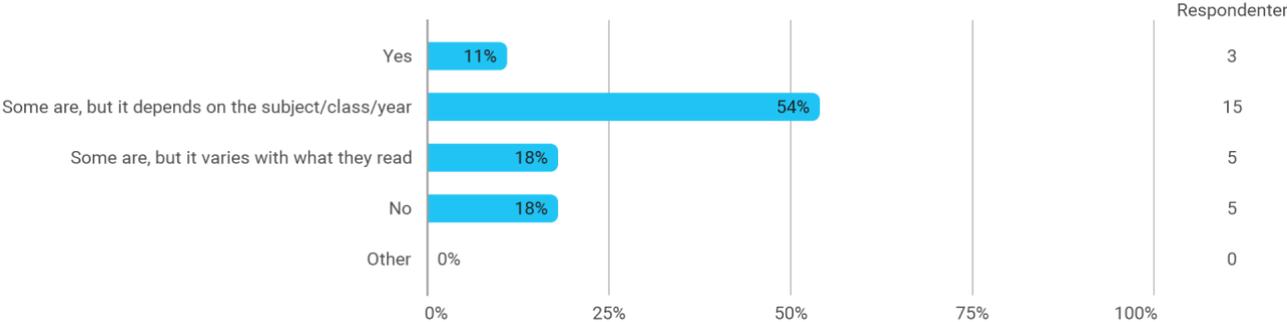
259 husband?". Because his wife won't accompany him to the outer limits, towards death. And his  
260 existential needs. So real texts are going to open up for real *identitetsutvikling* [identity  
261 development] or real questions about *psykisk helse* [mental health]. But it's not going to do it  
262 in a necessarily clinical way. Where we are going to be looking at diagnosis. But once again,  
263 the Catcher in the Rye. That kid is having a nervous breakdown because nobody will talk to  
264 him about his dead brother. And this is *psykisk helse* [mental health] through literature. Why  
265 is he so frustrated? Why is he grieving? What is he longing? He is longing for authentic  
266 relationship. Authenticity from the people around him. So, I feel that by choosing the right  
267 text, and the right text meaning authentic text, this *psykisk helse* [mental health] and  
268 then *identitetsutvikling* [identity development], a real text is going to ask you "who are you?".  
269 What is your responsibility? What are your possibilities? So, they are going to meet these  
270 opportunities, these people that I have given them to meet, and they are going to interact with  
271 them. And it might be implicit, but honest to God-. And we know this by looking at  
272 neuropsychology when you read stories, when you go to movies, the part of your brain that  
273 lights up are identical to the parts that light up if you are experiencing them first-hand  
274 yourself. So that means that the potential of literature. This is the power of storytelling, the  
275 power of literature.

# Appendix 12: Responses to the questionnaire

1. Do you as of today work as an upper secondary school English teacher?



2. Do you experience that pupils are motivated to read English literature?



3. If you feel that pupils are NOT motivated to read English literature, what do you think could be the reason(s) for this?

- I think students are not motivated to read English literature for several reasons. They are used to being on screens, they enjoy films and videos because they are instantly gratifying, they are impatient, but also I think they are being told that reading books is for those especially interested. It is made out to be a very fringe activity, which I think is very sad. Reading is for everybody!
- They are not used to reading and/or reading literature
- Some pupils simply do not read much, and are convinced, despite their lack of experience, that they do not like it. So they are not motivated to read in general, and even less motivated if it is in English.
- Some students aren't avid readers in the first place, and would never think to pick up a book outside of school. Naturally, this is not the best point of departure for reading novels in class. Some may also look at literature as something that is dull, far removed from their reality and of little interest to them. The challenge, then, is to meet these perceptions before you start reading, f.ex. by assigning YA books, stories connected to something happening right

now, or books with characters they may see themselves in.

- Because they may not have done it properly before. Or simply because we are all different.
- Some do not like to read, and some do not have enough knowledge of the language
- Not all students read literature other than in school.
- I work at a vocational school and their motivation for English in general is lacking. The main reason they are not motivated to read English might be that they perform poorly in English and that they like to be practicing their trade and not sit still and read.
- The pupils are not motivated to read (literature) in general, not just English literature. I think it is because it is easier to reach for the phone than it is to sit down with a book.
- They do not like reading?
- They have never developed the habit of reading either on-line or actual books. They see reading as a long winded way of engaging with a story and would much rather watch a film. Having grown up with computers and graphics they do not seem to have developed the habit of listening to a story, either being read to them or reading themselves and making up their own pictures for it.
- Low-level students struggle with basic skills in English and find a lot of the material as challenging. They simply give up. Burned out students do not see the value of English as a future occupational skill. They prefer to watch movies and be passive learners. If an inner motivation is not present, there is not much to do about it. If I knew the reason, I would do something about it. However, it is important to get them hooked with topics they find interesting. Reading a whole book or even a few chapters is out of the question. Excerpts of literature work well.
- They find it difficult. They do not enjoy reading, regardless of what kind of literature.
- They are not used to reading literature in general outside of school
- They are not used to Reading. So many students have never read a book that we have to coax them into Reading the short versions of literary works.
- They are too young, and are busy with other things.
- Gaming
- It depends on the type of literature. Most students like reading short stories and poems too (once they've started and it's a good poem), while quite many students dread reading novels.
- Usually depends on individual interests. People are different.
- I felt that they are reasonably motivated
- Some students struggle with reading and resist reading texts whatever the kind. Some students have been convinced either by a bad experience or by fellow students that reading is boring. This might be helped by clever choices of texts and slightly manipulative marketing.
- Dyslexia

- They don't like reading, they would rather watch the film.
- Some are tired of school.  
Some chose English because "they had to"  
Some think reading a novel or a short story is too time consuming.
- Many pupils have not read much by the time that they are in upper secondary school, and so the task of reading, especially long texts feels quite daunting.
- Negative experiences. not interested.
- - literature is no longer a usual leisure activity  
- it has to 'compete' with so many other entertaining media: the social media, streaming platforms etc  
- they have grown unaccustomed to reading longer texts, lacking the endurance

#### 4. What are the criteria you consider when choosing literature for the English classroom?

- I need literature to be relevant in terms of subject matter, but also level of language and length of book will play into my decision.
- That students should learn AND enjoy it
- That the stories are good, without being too complicated or difficult. If I am reading entire novels with them, I try to choose one where there it has been turned into a (good) film, as there are usually some pupils who will not be able to read an entire novel, not matter how short or easy it is. That way they can read the first chapters and then we can watch the film.
- Is it in accordance with the competence aims (f.ex. "drøfte et utvalg av litteratur og sakprosa fra tiden etter 1950 og fram til i dag" from international English)

Is it related to topics we have been working with/are going to work with?

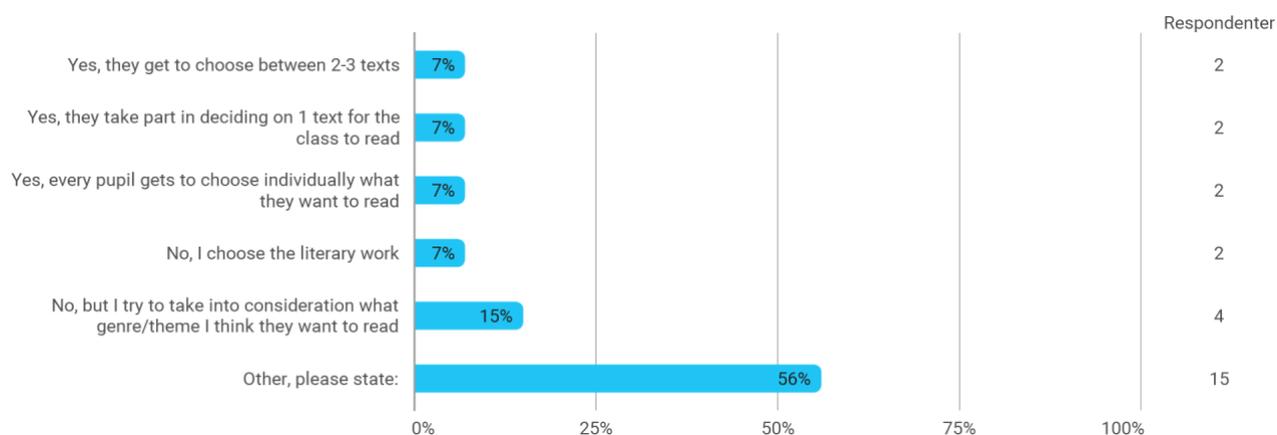
Is it accessible for different level learners?

- Something that engages both me and them. And that can be explored in an interesting way in a form of analysis
- - Does it fit the curriculum?  
- Is this too advanced for my pupils?  
- Does this contain very sensitive topics, and are any of my pupils uncomfortable with this?  
- Which novel do they wish to read out of these 3-5 titles?  
- Do I have the time for a long novel, or a short one?  
- Is this actually a good book?
- - language: will my students understand the words used  
- topic: is the topic likely to stir any interest with them  
- curriculum: does the text help us shed light on topics mentioned in the curriculum
- If I do, the pupils can choose for themselves to maximize their potential joy for reading.

When it comes to penum texts I choose what they are to read, with the option of 'short-cut' texts for those who struggle. They respond better to shorter texts with explanatory pictures what we can discuss.

- Competance aims.  
Try to make it relevant, or find stories the pupils can relate to  
Pupil's language level
- Rather egocentric, but I hope my choices resonate with the students: songs by e.g. Bruce Springsteen and the Smiths, prose mainly speculative fiction like Margaret Atwood, Patrick Rothfuss and William Gibson.
- Will the students engage with it?  
Is there a film version so we can later on watch it?  
Is it a 'classic' piece of literature that has stood the test of time.  
Does the school have enough copies of it?
- Based on competence aims and related topics in the subject.
- Relevant topic. Important Author. Easily available. Not too difficult Language.
- level: will they understand the words used?  
topic: is it relevant to my group? is it relevant in light of the curriculum?
- First of all we start out being able to choose their own book in English. We go to the school library where we have a project where the librarian shows an array of books in all genres, showing video clips from the film versions, or she reads a section from a book to inspire. They have to choose a book, and read it and write a review and give a rating (roll the die). However, maybe half of the class does the assignment even though it counts quite a bit toward their grad since it encompasses so many learning goals.
- Has to be quite dramatic.
- Relevance (to both the curriculum and the pupils' interests), language and form/genre (diversity is important, in my view)
- It should be a variety: exciting, long, short, easy, difficult, rewarding, etc., and often something the students wouldn't choose themselves. It also has to fit the topics we're working with and in accordance with literature.
- Either "how does this fit in with what I want them to learn" or "will they read this/ work with this/ what do they want", always "how much time is it going to take?",
- Relevance, quality and level
- Suitable for the agegroup/suitable level of difficulty vs class and whether or not i
- If the text is available in audio.  
How long is the text? Is the level suitable (vocabulary and language)? Is it a topical theme or sth that will engage the class?
- If there is a film version of it for the students to watch after they have read the book, or for those who don't make it through the book.
- Depends:  
In VG1 I try to find a novel that is popular. In VG2 and VG3 I have to consider the national curriculum.
- I choose literature, in order to accomplish the goals in question 5.
- That it is relevant to the subject/ topic or that we can work with language related to the text.
- - availability of class sets at school  
- textbooks  
- gut feeling: texts I think will have an appeal  
- interesting themes or stories  
- the length of the texts, target group should be considered: vocational or academic?  
- my own preferences

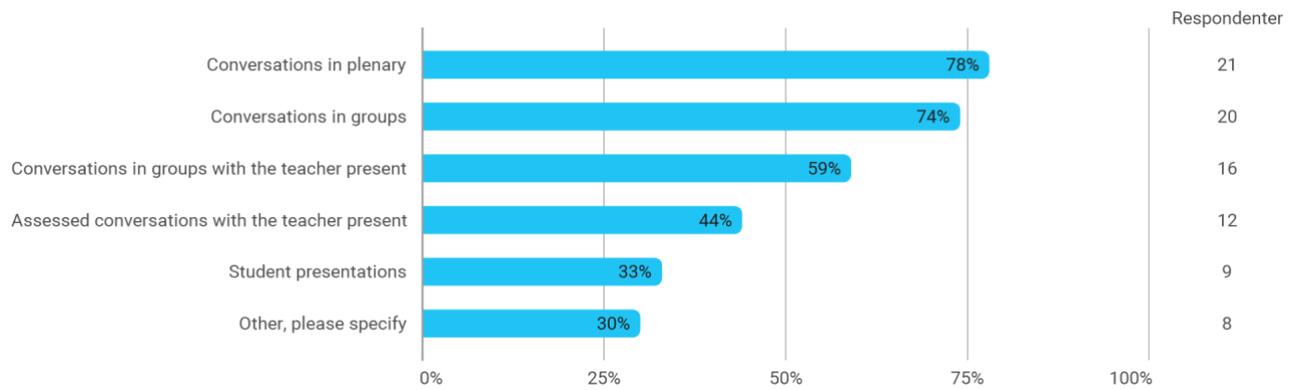
5. Do you provide your pupils with options when deciding what to read in the English classroom?



Do you provide your pupils with options when deciding what to read in the English classroom? - Other, please state:

- Usually it's one of the above, but it depends on the year/level/composition of the group.
- they have chosen from 3-5 texts, but because of fagfornyelsen I will open up even more
- I let them choose from a menu, but also accept suggestions from them
- It very much depends on the class. If there are "readers" among them I would ask for their advice on genre and so on. Otherwise, I would choose the texts.
- Not yet this year, because we have a reading campaign right now, and there they can choose.
- This year I have let a class chose for themselves one book and then I will decide the other. Choices limited by my final point of the previous answers.
- It very much depends on the class. If there are "readers" among them I would ask for their advice on genre and so on. Otherwise, I would generally choose the text. I have, sometimes, read multiple texts with them, and then given them a choice of which to analyse further.
- Sometimes they choose individually, sometimes i choose.
- Sometimes they choose, and sometimes I do
- Sometimes they get to choose individually, sometimes as a group, sometimes I decide
- Sometimes.
- Varies - sometimes we all read the same texts and sometimes the students get a collection to choose from (within a "topic" - e.g. shortstories set in India.)
- It depends. For instance, when reading a novel the pupils will choose from a sample or from school library. A short story is often chosen by teacher.
- It depends, sometimes I let them choose a novel themselves, sometimes they get to choose one novel for the entire class, and sometimes I choose.
- A variation of the above

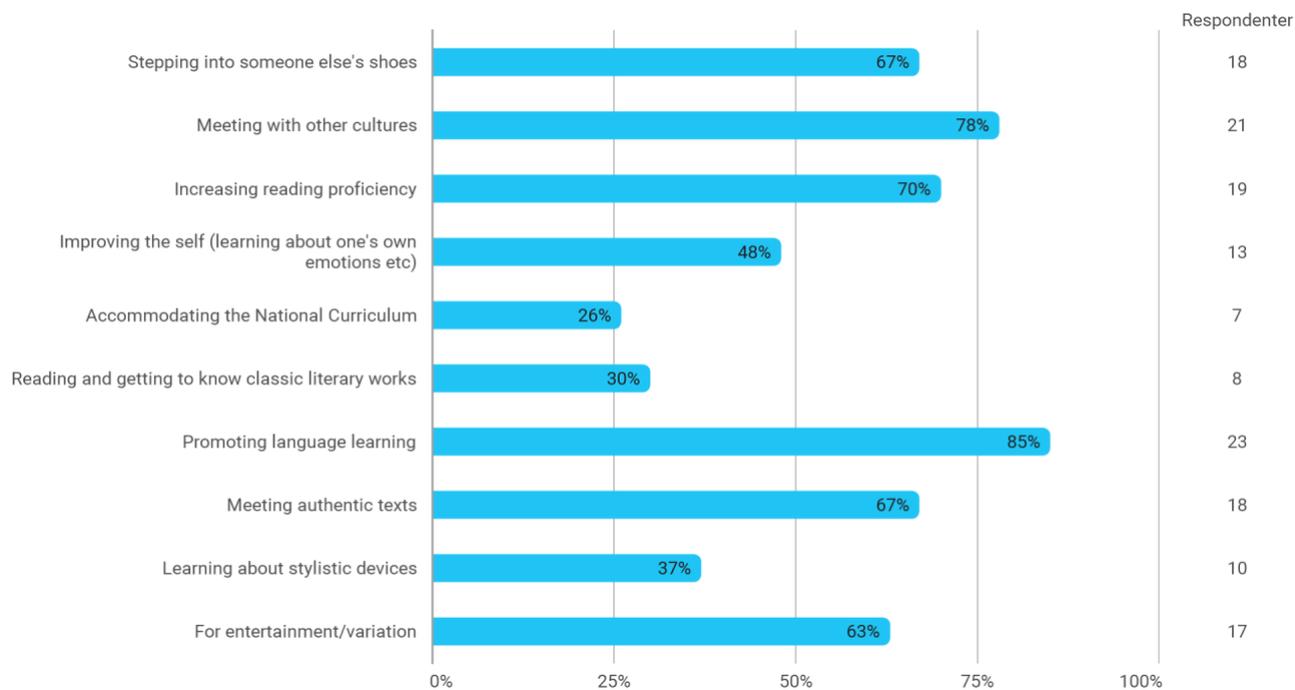
6. Which of the following options do you use the most when interpreting literature in the English classroom?



Which of the following options do you use the most when interpreting literature in the English classroom? - Other, please specify

- Written analysis
- I normally give them time to prepare in 2s or small groups before we discuss it together. I sometimes make each group responsible for a specific question/part of the analysis and have them start their topic in plenary
- Writing assignments
- Considered, written text.
- Tasks, then conversation in plenary.
- I normally give them time to prepare in 2s or small groups before we discuss it together. I sometimes make each group responsible for a specific question/part of the analysis. They then take the initiative in the plenary discussion on their assigned topic.
- Individual work as well. Again, varied working methods!
- Written tasks
- Varies. More or less all of the above including written tasks to help them reflect..
- Working with language

7. In your opinion, what are the most important reasons for students to read English literature?



## 8. Which competences do you think can be enhanced through the reading of English literature?

- Everything. It helps with vocabulary, general understanding of language, it gives a different perspective on the history of humanity...it makes them better writers and helps them understand other perspectives and ideas. It's hard to overestimate reading.
- almost all
- Insight into human nature, cultures and society, critical thinking and ability to put words to their ideas and feelings. And of course it benefits their language learning and development.
- All of the above, really. It depends on what your aim is.
- All relevant competences
- Writing competence and self-awareness. Awareness of other cultures
- I am not sure if I understand the question correctly, but in reading/working with literature you potentially activate many of the competences one seeks to enhance in the English classroom: reading, listening, talking, writing, expanding vocabulary, culture, history, you develop as a person when faced with other people's destinies etc
- writing proficiency will hopefully increase
- bruke mønstre for uttale i kommunikasjon

uttrykke seg nyansert og presist med flyt og sammenheng, idiomatiske uttrykk og varierte setningsstrukturer tilpasset formål, mottaker og situasjon

bruke kunnskap om sammenhenger mellom engelsk og andre språk eleven kjenner til i egen språklæring

bruke kunnskap om grammatikk og tekststruktur i arbeid med egne muntlige og skriftlige tekster

lese, diskutere og reflektere over innhold og virkemidler i ulike typer tekster, inkludert selvvalgte tekster

lese og sammenligne ulike sakprosaetekster om samme emne fra forskjellige kilder og kritisk vurdere hvor pålitelige kildene er

skepe yrkesrelevante tekster med struktur og sammenheng som beskriver og dokumenterer eget arbeid tilpasset formål, mottaker og situasjon

beskrive sentrale trekk ved framveksten av engelsk som arbeidsspråk

utforske og reflektere over mangfold og samfunnsforhold i den engelskspråklige verden ut fra historiske sammenhenger

diskutere og reflektere over form, innhold og virkemidler i engelskspråklige kulturelle uttrykksformer fra ulike medier, inkludert musikk, film og spill

- Improving vocabulary, improving writing skills (texts as inspiration)
- Using appropriate strategies in language learning, text creation and communication. Read, discuss and reflect on the content in different types of texts, including self-selected texts.  
Read, analyze, and interpret English language fiction.  
Explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world.
- Both receptive and productive skills.
- Almost everything.
- Not sure if I understand the question correctly..  
They advance their reading skills and listening skills (we tend to listen/read out loud).

They also broaden their vocabulary and see how sentences are structured.

I very much enjoy linking pieces of literature to the historical and cultural setting in which they were created

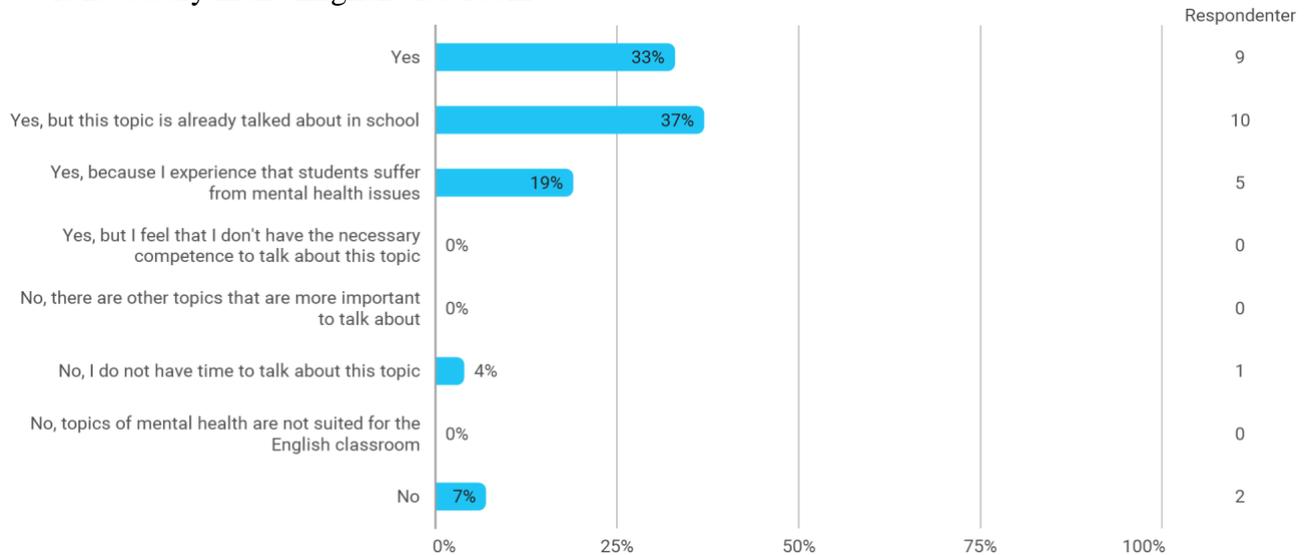
- All language competencies plus Learning about the world, life, others...
- Everything.
- It can widen a pupil's vocabulary and increase their essay-writing abilities
- All the above, and each reason can be broken into smaller bits as well.
- Reading proficiency, grammar knowledge, general flow of language, increase vocabulary, increase topic knowledge,
- Reading, sentence structure, vocabulary, cultural aims, self esteem
- PS! You can learn about your own emotions by stepping into someone else's shoes.

Most competences can be enhanced through the reading of literature if you find the "right" texts.

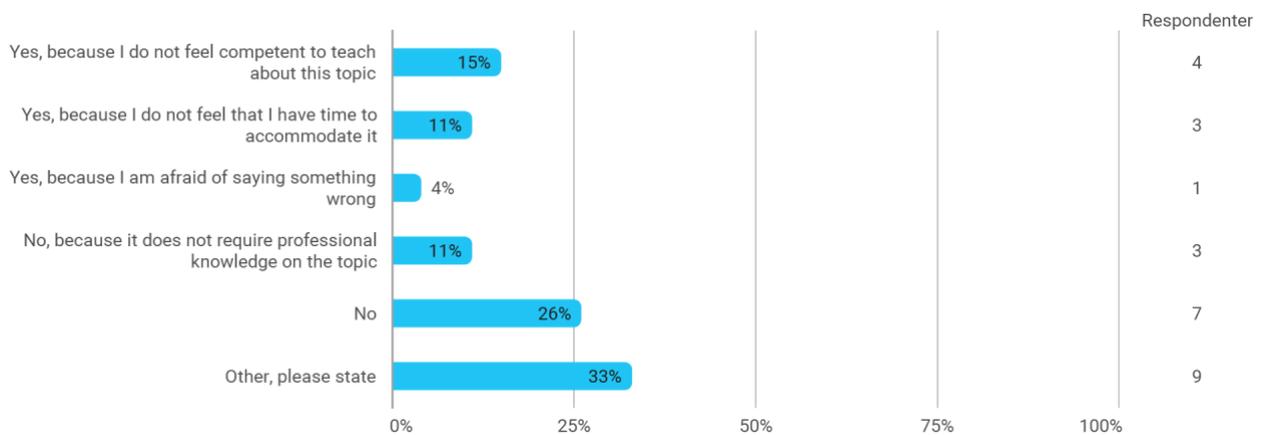
- For example vocabulary and writing skills.
- Writing  
Understanding English  
Cultural understanding
- All of the above.
- Learning language, both formal and informal. Learning expressions, sentence & text structures, idiomatic expressions, how to vary the language, grammar. Learning about language features and literary devices. Learning how to analyze and discuss literature.

- -learn how to navigate through big chunks of text
- adding to their linguistic and cultural knowhow

9. With the National Curriculum renewal came new interdisciplinary topics, stating: "The school must provide the students with the relevant knowledge in order to promote good mental health as well as physical health". Do you feel that this interdisciplinary topic is necessary in the English classroom?



10. Do you regard this interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate in the English classroom?

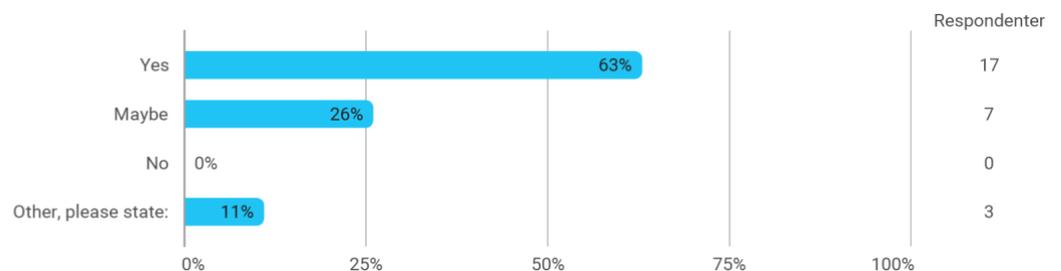


Do you regard this interdisciplinary topic as challenging to accommodate in the English classroom? - Other, please state

- yes, but I leave the challenging part of this topic to the pros
- Not really, but I also teach psychology
- No, and also, the pensum books deal with this subject
- The Smiths have worked well in my experience. Morrissey's lyrics seem to be therapeutic.

- It is to an extent a challenging topic, but by using the other teaching the students have on the subject it is quite simple to fit it into the English lessons.
- Yes and no, but reading allows for bettering mental health and before we start reading for our book project we go through scientific studies that show the health effects of reading. The students find it interesting and we are able to draw on that when we read, and when the students find it hard to motivate themselves to read. We give time in class to read.
- We can discuss texts and talk about mental and physical health in class, but there can be too much of it when it is an interdisciplinary topic! The students find it boring and repetitive. Also, too much talk of mental and physical health is not a) what a teacher is trained for b) not super relevant for the subject and c) parents' main responsibility
- The dealings with the topics will have to be on a very "general" level. I am not qualified to give expert health advice, but general "common sense" is ok to point out (e.g. it is a good idea not to work on your hands at 3 a.m. if you want to stay healthy and be able to do what you need to do at school.) Giving advice on physical and mental health in the classroom may give the students the impression that teachers are the ones to ask for individual guidance on these topics and we are not qualified for that and should not pretend to be either.
- Either yes or no: Yes, because sometimes the situation requires me to know more than I know, and no, because sometimes it doesn't require professional knowledge on certain topics.

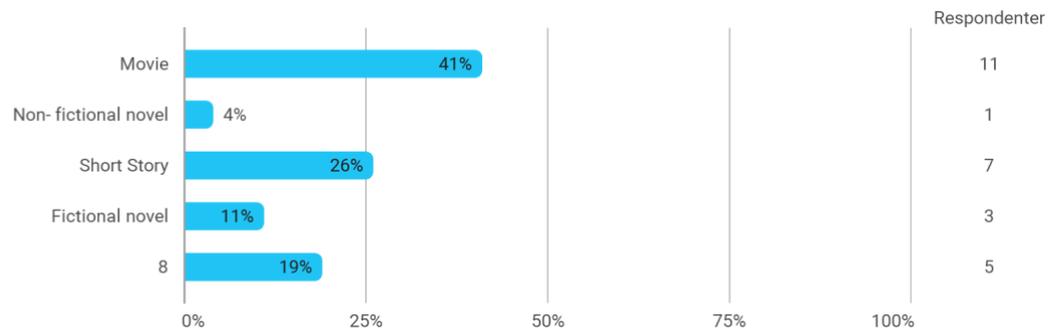
11. Do you consider literature as a good resource for talking about mental health topics in the English classroom?



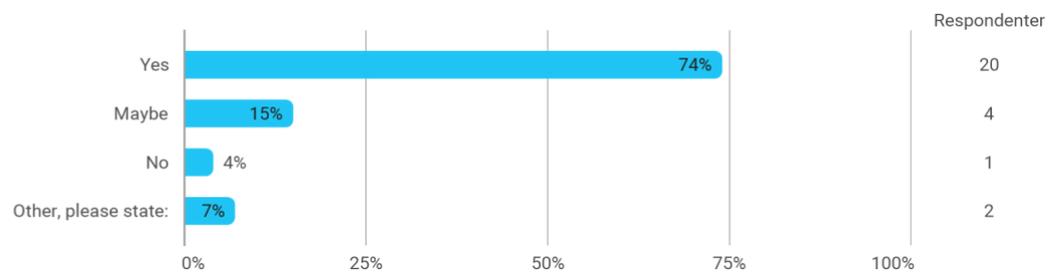
Do you consider literature as a good resource for talking about mental health topics in the English classroom? - Other, please state:

- Definitely, especially when reading texts on the subject.
- Can be/Sometimes, but important to keep a distance too it
- It can be, if you students are healthy in the first place - but you have to tread carefully as there usually are plenty of students struggling with various problems and sometimes talking about things related to their problems in class proves "too much" for students who barely have the ability (energy, motivation, etc) to stay in the classroom for the duration of the lesson in the first place. Eventhough there are no fingers pointed, they may feel as if they are the topic of the day.

12. What type of literary medium would you regard as the most valuable for talking about topics of mental health?



13. Would you consider using/continue using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own English classroom?



Would you consider using/continue using literature as a resource for talking about mental health topics in your own English classroom? - Other, please state:

- Yes, if I have too, but mental health is and should be a minor topic in English.
- Yes, but very carefully chosen ( I need to know my students fairly well). E.g. I would not choose a text about loss of family members/friends or the health struggles after a rape if I know any of my students are dealing with that.