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Master's Thesis

The teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary school after the implementation of the LK20, from the perspectives of English language teachers

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Abstract

The aim of this master's thesis has been to gain insight into how English language teachers view and address idiomatic expressions in the classroom after the LK20 curriculum came into effect. The LK20 curriculum, in contradistinction to the previous LK06 curriculum, explicitly stipulates that pupils are to be able to use idiomatic expressions when communicating in English. Considering the limited amounts of studies conducted in Norway about this topic after the recent implementation of the LK20, I have found it an interesting topic of research.

In order to investigate the individual experiences, opinions, and insights of teachers concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions, this thesis implemented a qualitative approach. The study conducted as part of this thesis was conducted in an upper secondary school, and the research data was collected through a semi-structured group interview with three English language teachers.

For this master's thesis, I have sought to gain insight into how much emphasis is put on the comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions amongst language teachers in the Norwegian upper secondary English education. Furthermore, I wanted to explore whether the implementation of the LK20 curriculum has influenced the focus teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary school. The findings of my research indicate that how the individual teacher defines idiomatic expressions could influence how relevant they find them for the English language classroom. Furthermore, the study found that teacher beliefs concerning the applicability of idiomatic expressions in communicative settings could have an effect concerning the extent they are addressed. Moreover, the research data indicated that the teachers experienced there to be a focus on teaching British and American idiomatic expressions despite this not being expressed by the curriculum. Furthermore, the teachers expressed the perception that the teaching of idiomatic expressions typically found within a British or American variety of English could possibly hinder successful communication when pupils find themselves interacting with people who are not native speakers of English. I found that my initial understanding and perceptions concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions in the English language classroom diverged from the data collected from the interview. The findings showed that the extent and way the LK20 competence aim concerning the use of idiomatic expressions as part of language communication is addressed is more complex than I thought. Moreover, working with this

thesis has made me more aware of the influence that the perspectives and beliefs of teachers have in terms of how the different aspects and competence aims of the curricula are addressed.

Sammendrag

Målet med denne masteroppgaven har vært å få innsikt i hvordan engelsklærere som underviser på videregående skole forstår og adresserer idiomatiske uttrykk i klasserommet etter at det nye LK20-pensumet trådte i kraft. I LK20- pensumet blir det eksplisitt slått fast, i motsetning til det tidligere LK06-pensumet, at elever skal kunne bruke idiomatiske uttrykk når de kommuniserer på engelsk. Tatt i betraktning at det ikke er gjennomført mange studier i Norge om dette emnet i lys av implementeringen av LK20, så har jeg funnet det et interessant forskningstema for denne oppgaven.

For å opparbeide meg et innblikk i lærernes individuelle erfaringer, meninger, samt innsikt når det kommer til å undervise idiomatiske uttrykk i klasserommet så fant jeg at en kvalitativ tilnærming ville være mest hensiktsmessig. Studien som ble utført som en del av denne oppgaven ble gjennomført i en videregående skole, og forskningsdataene ble samlet inn gjennom et semistrukturert gruppeintervju med tre engelsklærere.

Til denne masteroppgaven har jeg søkt å få innsikt i hvor stor grad forståelse og produksjon av idiomatiske uttrykk vektlegges blant språklærere i engelskopplæringen. Videre ønsket jeg å undersøke om implementeringen av den nye LK20- læreplanen har påvirket fokuset lærere legger på undervisningen av idiomatiske uttrykk. Funnene fra min forskning indikerer at hvordan den enkelte læreren velger å definere idiomatiske uttrykk kan påvirke i hvor stor grad de finner dem relevante for engelskfaget. Videre fant studien at lærernes tro angående anvendbarheten av idiomatiske uttrykk i situasjoner der elevene kommuniserer med andre ved bruk av det engelske språk kan påvirke i hvor stor grad slike uttrykk blir adressert. Forskningsdataene indikerte videre at lærerne opplevde det de beskrev som et fokus på å undervise i britiske og amerikanske idiomatiske uttrykk til tross for at dette ikke kommer til uttrykk i læreplanen. Videre delte lærerne oppfatningen om at et fokus på britiske og amerikanske idiomatiske uttrykk i undervisningen kan potensielt hindre vellykket kommunikasjon i de situasjoner der elever bruker det engelske språket for å kommunisere med personer som ikke har engelsk som førstespråk. Etter å ha gjennomført forskingsintervjuet mitt fant jeg at mine innledende oppfatninger angående undervisning av idiomatiske uttrykk i engelskundervisningen avvek fra dataen jeg samlet inn fra intervjuene. Funnene fra intervjuet viste at både omfanget og måten LK20 kompetansemålet som refererer til bruken av idiomatiske uttrykk er mer sammensatt og komplekst enn jeg først trodde. Arbeidet med denne oppgaven har gjort meg mer bevisst på hvilken innflytelse lærernes perspektiver og

oppfatninger har når det gjelder hvordan de ulike aspektene og kompetansene i læreplanen blir adressert.

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I also wish to express my immense gratitude to my parents for their endless understanding, patience, and encouragement throughout the multiple late-night conversations and phone calls when the stress of writing this thesis simply became too much for me to handle on my own. I would like to thank my twin sister for sharing her own experiences concerning the many frustrations of writing a master thesis, reminding me that I am not the first, nor the last student to experience the stress, thoughts, and insecurities that comes with the writing process. Lastly, I would like to thank my brother for never remembering the topic of my thesis. This has been strangely comforting during the times when I have convinced myself that my thesis has been the most monumental and important thing to ever exist, and it has reminded me that writing this master's thesis has not been as crucial as it might have seemed at times. Thank you!

The process of writing and researching this thesis for the last year and a half has been an educational and rewarding process for me. Through working with this project, I have gained insight and knowledge concerning the process of writing a thesis and I find that I have obtained valuable experiences concerning the process of conducting a qualitative research interview.

Ylva Dagsdóttir

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1. Introduction

It has been stated that most English speakers utter approximately 20 million idioms per lifetime or about 7000 idioms per week (Cooper, 1999, p. 233-234). Consequently, one could propose the argument that idiomatic expressions could prove to constitute a significant presence in everyday communication and interaction in English. In 2020, a new national curriculum, the LK20, was implemented in all Norwegian schools. Amongst the changes that came into effect as a result of the implementation of the new LK20 curriculum was the explicit mention of the term "idiomatic expressions" as part of a competence aim (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, pp. 10-12). This rephrasing resulted in a curriculum where knowledge concerning the correct and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions constitutes a specific competence aim in upper secondary English education. One of the competence aim found within the LK20 now specifies that after completing the Vg1 vocational education program or the Vg1 program for general studies, pupils should be able to "express himself or herself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, recipient, and situation" (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, pp. 10-12).

Most of the previous research concerning the knowledge of idiomatic expressions regarding second and foreign language learning has mainly been engaged with studying the acquisition and development of idiomatic competence amongst learners (Liontas, 1999, p. 435). However, research concerning the pedagogical concerns for teaching idioms and the perspectives and experiences of language teachers have to a great extent been left unexplored. Hence, I would propose that this thesis could be regarded as an exploratory research study that could partake in filling this research gap through the means of a qualitative research interview with English language teachers in Norway. As a result, the study conducted as part of this thesis does not build on an existing or developed previous study, nor does it set out to create or establish a new theory within this field of research. In this thesis, I will be looking into the teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary schools in Norway after the implementation of the new curriculum LK20 from the perspective of teachers. I will also be exploring whether the LK20 has affected the way English language teachers relate to and work with idiomatic expressions in the classroom.

1.1 Why focus on idiomatic expressions?

One of the main motives as to why I have chosen to focus my research on the teaching of idiomatic expressions is firstly a result of the curriculum changes from LK06 (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2013), to the new and now current curriculum, the LK20. In the new LK20 curriculum knowledge concerning the use of idiomatic expressions is explicitly stated for the first time as part of a competence aim for upper secondary English education (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). Considering the immense influence the curriculum, as a national steering document, has on teachers and their educational practices, I would argue for it to be of value to explore whether the focus on idiomatic expressions amongst teachers has changed after the implementation of the LK20.

Secondly, idiomatic expressions have been argued to constitute a challenging aspect of language acquisition amongst L2 learners. A reason for this is that the term 'idiomatic expression', in a traditional and arguably simplified understanding, refer to an expression "whose meaning cannot always be readily derived from the usual meaning of its constituent elements" (Cooper, 1999, p. 233). Consequently, determining the intended figurative and idiomatic meaning of an unknown phrase when only looking at the literal meaning of the individual words could prove challenging. To give an instance, if one were not familiar with the figurative meaning of the idiomatic expressions *kick the bucket, bite the dust,* or to *meet one's maker,* one could find it demanding to understand the intended meaning behind utterances where such expressions are applied. This is because one is not aware that the figurative meaning of the idiomatic expressions, which refers to the action of dying suddenly, often transcends the literal meaning of the phrases. As a result of the unpredictability of the figurative meaning of many idiomatic expressions, they are argued to present a special language learning problem for almost all groups of language learners (Cooper, p. 233).

However, despite the ostensible challenges second and foreign language learners might come across concerning the understanding and acquisition of idiomatic expressions found within a target language, idiomatic expressions have been argued to constitute an important aspect of language fluency as well as a central aspect of communicative and sociolinguistic competence. As Weinreich argued in 1969, "idiomaticity is important for this reason, if for no other, that there is so much of it in every language" (Weinreich, 1969, p. 23). In addition, language and culture have been argued to be closely connected as language embodies and transfers culture,

making it so that learning a second language and learning a second culture are often intricately intertwined with each other (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 956). Knowledge and awareness concerning the use and meaning of idiomatic expressions and figurative language, with idiomatic expressions acting as a major component of native-like communication, could therefore enable language learners to understand the thoughts, emotions, and views of the speakers of the target language, as well as assisting learners in the process towards acquiring better communication strategies in their L2 (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 953).

Knowledge concerning the linguistic features of a language could therefore be argued to not be sufficient for successful intercultural communication but must be supported by an awareness of "sociocultural context, tendencies, conventions, and norms in which the communication takes place" (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 953). Furthermore, idiomatic expressions have been described by Alptekin to be culturally significant (2002, p. 58). Alptekin argues that a focus on idiomatic expressions in L2 acquisition would prove valuable if one were to successfully acquire accurate forms of the target language (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58). Further, teaching idiomatic expressions in an L2 classroom could also provide pupils with insight and knowledge concerning how to use these forms in given social situations in the target language (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58). Therefore, a focus on the role of idiomatic expressions in L2 English language acquisition could prove valuable when interacting with native or fluent speakers of the target language.

Idiomatic expressions have been argued to frequently occur in spoken and written English (Cooper, 1999, p. 233-234) as they carry a significant cultural and sociolinguistic meaning (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58). Consequently, it could prove imperative for successful language communication that language learners acquire some knowledge concerning the use and comprehension of idiomatic expressions in order to be prepared for different forms of discourse. One of the main agents responsible for foreign language acquisition in Norway is the educational sector with teachers at the forefront and the national curriculum as a steering document. The national curriculum, as previously mentioned, was revised, which resulted in a curriculum change from the previous LK06 to the now effective LK20 curriculum. One of the changes made to the new LK20 upper secondary English language education was the choice to explicitly mention the term 'idiomatic expressions' in the English subject curriculum for both the Vg1 vocational education program and the Vg1 program for general studies. I found it quite interesting when first going through and comparing the LK20 to the previous LK06 curriculum, that one of the changes made when creating the new curriculum was to

incorporate the term ‘idiomatic expressions’ as part of a specific competence aim. One could thus propose that with the LK20, knowledge concerning idiomatic expressions is now explicitly recognized as a part of pupils’ linguistic, cultural, and sociolinguistic competence.

However, when looking into how idiomatic expressions are defined in dictionaries and research literature, one will find that there is more than one way that idiomatic expressions have been defined. As an example, one understanding of an idiomatic expression defines it as “an expression in the usage of language that is peculiar to itself either in having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements or in its grammatically atypical use of words” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). There are, however, other definitions of idiomatic expressions. One of these definitions states that idiomatic expressions could be understood as the language “peculiar to a people or to a district, community, or class: dialect” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The LK20 does not provide a definition of the term idiomatic expression, nor explain what understanding of the term was used when developing the curriculum. As a result of this, and the multiple ways that one could define an idiomatic expression, how teachers should define an idiomatic expression in terms of the LK20 curriculum becomes rather vague. I, therefore, find it interesting, as well as relevant, to research how English language teachers relate to idiomatic expressions, taking into consideration the implementation of the LK20 curriculum, as it might have consequences in terms of how teachers address them in the classroom.

1.2 Research questions

As a result of the implementation of the new curriculum, teachers are now obliged to direct their teaching to comply with the new guidelines and ideologies reflected in the LK20 curriculum (Myklevold & Speitz, 2021, p. 27). I would argue that it could prove valuable to explore how this curriculum change might have had an effect on how English teachers relate to and work with idiomatic expressions in the English language classroom. In order to gain further insight into this topic of research, I composed two research questions:

(1) How much emphasis is put on the comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions amongst language teachers in the Norwegian upper secondary English education?

(2) Has the implementation of the LK20 curriculum influenced the focus teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary school?

This study aims to gain further insight into the focus and emphasis placed on the teaching of idiomatic expressions in the Norwegian upper secondary English language education from the perspective of teachers. Furthermore, I seek to explore whether the LK20 has influenced the way English language teachers relate to and address idiomatic expressions in the classroom.

1.3 English language education and learners in Norway

In this thesis, I will be referring to the pupils of Norwegian upper secondary school, in terms of English language education and learning, as "L2 learners or speakers of English". The reason for this is the high English proficiency in Norway, combined with an increased use of the English language outside of the classroom, and the argued influence the English language has in terms of the identity repertoire of pupils, which has resulted in research suggesting that English is no longer considered to constitute a "foreign" language to Norwegians (Rindal, 2020, p. 31). Norwegian adolescents are exposed to English in a vast variety of different contexts, platforms, and situations and thus make use of English for a number of various purposes (Rindal, 2020, p. 31). According to Rindal, even though Norwegian adolescents do not necessarily rely on, nor need English to partake in successful communications with each other, there is still a large possibility that English can still "reflect who they are and what they want (Rindal, 2020, p. 31). Consequently, categorizing English in Norway as a foreign language or as a second language could be argued to not accurately reflect the status of English in Norway today as the perception and use of English in Norway and within the English school subject seems to be changing or transitioning (Rindal, 2020, p. 31). As Norwegian speakers and learners of English are moving further away from the ideas of what is commonly argued to constitute the descriptors of English as a foreign language (EFL), whilst simultaneously not "fitting" within the descriptors and traditionally defined requirements of English as a second language (ESL), English in Norway remains someplace in between (Rindal, 2020, p. 31).

Therefore, Rindal proposes the term “L2 English”, as opposed to “EFL” or “ESL”, when discussing English language teaching in Norway. The reason for this is that the term “L2 English” is argued to emphasize that the English language in Norway could be considered an additional language and not necessarily the pupil’s second language, or a foreign language (Rindal, 2020, p. 32). The term “L2 English” could therefore be applied in order to refer to both nations in which English is an official second language or countries where English is learned through the education sector, without referring to the proficiency of the speakers (Rindal, 2020, p. 32). Consequently, by referring to Norwegian pupils as “L2 English learners” one avoids the labels that “assign rights to a language” as one does not have to “reproduce the traditional distinctions of EFL and ESL in which Norwegian learners fail to fit”, nor use the dichotomic terms “native” and “non-native” that increasingly fail to appropriately represent the range of English used in the world” (Rindal, 2020, p. 32). Rindal further argues that the term “L2” also includes pupils in the Norwegian classroom who “have Norwegian as an additional language, i.e., students who speak another language than Norwegian at home, and who might have started learning Norwegian later in life” (Rindal, 2020, p. 32).

In this thesis, I will therefore be using the term “L2 English” when referring to speakers and learners of English in the Norwegian upper secondary school. This is because I find it to be a term that describes the positions of English in Norway more accurately and nuanced than the terms “EFL” (English as a foreign language) and “ESL” (English as a second language).

1.4 Thesis structure

This master thesis consists of five chapters including this introductory chapter (1) where I have presented the topic of this thesis and my motivation for choosing it. In the next chapter (2), I will present the theoretical framework and relevant previous research for this thesis and the study conducted as part of this thesis. In the following chapter (3) I will present and explain the methods I have used in order to answer the research questions of this thesis. In chapter 4, I will present and discuss the findings of my research in light of the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2. Lastly, in chapter 5, I will provide the concluding remarks of my research as well as suggestions for further research.

In the next chapter, I will start by presenting an overview of the theoretical framework concerning the conceptualization of idiomatic expression. In this section, I will be presenting different definitions of idiomatic expressions in order to create a theoretical foundation regarding how I have chosen to define idiomatic expressions in this thesis. As a result of there being multiple different ways in which idiomatic expressions have been defined within this field of research, I found it to be of importance to specify what definitions I have chosen to work with for this thesis.

2. Theoretical framework and previous research

Before discussing the research questions of this thesis, it would be relevant to first present the theory and the previous research which will become relevant when addressing the findings from my qualitative research. In the following chapter, I will outline different conceptualizations of idiomatic expressions as well as the research I will be building my thesis and research on. In this chapter, I will also be exploring the linguistic aspects of idiomatic expressions as well as their argued cultural and sociolinguistic aspects. Furthermore, I will be exploring some of the previous research concerning the pedagogical concern for the teaching of idiomatic expressions as well as research arguing why one should teach idiomatic expressions as part of L2 English language education. Additionally, I will be looking into the role of idiomatic expressions in terms of L2 acquisition as presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (Council of Europe, 2020), and the new national Norwegian curriculum: the LK20 (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). In these sections, I will be looking into how these two documents view idiomatic expressions in terms of foreign language learning as well as discuss the influence these documents have concerning L2 English education.

2.1 What is an idiomatic expression?

The terms *idiom* and *idiomatic* do not have one singular definition as there are multiple possible aspects and approaches to these terms. In *McGraw-Hill's American Idioms Dictionary*, Spears argues that "a phrase or sentence linked to a meaning that is different from the literal meanings of its component words is described as idiomatic and is called an idiom" (Spears, 2007, p. v). However, there are definitions of idioms that argues that this is not the only manner in which one could define it. When looking into definitions of the term *idiomatic*, one will find that the term could be applied when one refers to something relating to or conforming to *idioms*, or when one is referring to something which is "peculiar to a particular group, individual, or style" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The Merriam-Webster dictionary provides three definitions of *an idiom*. The first definition, as presented in the introduction of this thesis, is similar to the definition of an idiom as presented by Spears (Spears, 2007, p. v). It describes that the term *idiom* could be used when referring to "an expression in the usage of language that is peculiar to itself either in having a meaning that cannot be derived from the

conjoined meanings of its elements or in its grammatically atypical use of words" such as the phrases *up in the air* or *give away* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The second and third definition, however, describes a different understanding of an idiom. Instead of placing the focus on specific expressions where the meaning of the phrase is not deducible from the individual lexical items, they argue for a broader definition of what constitutes an idiom. As can be found within the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, idioms can also be defined as "the language peculiar to a people or to a district, community, or class" as well as the "syntactical, grammatical, or structural form peculiar to a language" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Wallace, in a similar manner, when analyzing the different definitions of the term 'idiom', highlighted that the dimension of meaning, also referred to as the 'semantic' dimension, and the dimension of grammatical context, the 'structural' dimension, are two distinguishable dimensions of idioms (Wallace, 1979, p. 63).

Further, an idiom is defined as "a style or form of artistic expression that is a characteristic of an individual, a period or movement, or a medium or instrument" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This definition accommodates a broader understanding of what constitutes an idiom if making a comparison to the first definition I presented in this section. This is because this definition, amongst other aspects, includes the expressions of individuals as an idiom instead of exclusively narrowing the scope to collectively conventionalized expressions. Consequently, the term 'idiom' could be applied in reference to a specific style or form of artistic expression in literature, speech, or music that is considered characteristics of an individual or period or movement and not just expressions such as *kick the bucket, hit the books,* and *cut corners.*

As a result of the multiple ways in which one could interpret and understand the term 'idiomatic expression', it would prove necessary to address how I have limited the understanding I will be working with in this thesis and the research conducted as part of this thesis. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, for this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the aspect of idiomatic expressions which refers to an expression where the meaning is not deducible from the meaning of the individual words. Examples of such expressions are *head over heels, left out in the cold, between the devil and the deep blue sea, jump the gun,* or *crying for the moon.* One reason for this is that the creators of many upper secondary English language textbooks follow this definition when explaining and creating tasks concerning idiomatic expressions. As a result of the significant influence of the national curricula, as well as teaching materials such as textbooks, has in terms on how they define, and address idiomatic

expressions, might have a major influence concerning how, as well as to what extent, teachers choose to incorporate idiomatic expressions into their teaching practices.

In the upper secondary English textbook *Access to English: Engelsk vg1 studieforberedende program* (Burgess & Sørhus, 2013) there is one task directly aimed toward idiomatic expressions. As part of the task, idiomatic expressions are defined to constitute "sayings that should not be translated literally because it carries another meaning" (Burgess & Sørhus, 2013, p. 104). Throughout the textbook, idiomatic expressions such as *under the radar, happy as a lark, to make a buck, and the leader of the pack* is used in running text. Furthermore, in the textbook *Citizens: Engelsk for studieforberedende utdanningsprogram VG1* (Andersen et al., 2020), created to conform to the LK20 curriculum, one can find one task specifically related to idiomatic expressions. Within this task, it is explained that an idiomatic expression is "an expression that we can't understand from the meanings of its separate words but that has a separate meaning of its own" (Andersen et al., 2020, p. 145). Similarly, the tasks related to idiomatic expressions in the textbooks *Access to International English* (Anthony et al., 2012) and *E1: fellesfaget engelsk, vg1: studieforberedende utdanningsprogram* (Bakke et al., 2020) construct their tasks concerning idiomatic expressions following the same definition of idiomatic expressions as the first two textbooks, *Access to English (2013)* and *Citizens (2020).*

In the following section, I will be further exploring the definition of idiomatic expressions on which I have chosen to build my thesis and research.

2.2 The Dimensions of Idiomatic expressions

The use of Multi-Word Sequences (MWSs) has in recent years attracted attention from Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers due to the important role it plays in terms of language processing and language production (Tavakoli et al., 2020, p. 508). The term 'multi-word sequences' is often understood as quite a broad term referring to various forms of lexical strings and combinations of words "that appear together highly frequently in a target language" (Tavakoli et al., 2020, p. 508). Idiomatic expressions (such as, *kick the bucket, bite the bullet, hit the sack*) are considered to be the prototypical example of a multiword phrase (Siyanova-Chanturia et al., 2011, p. 777). However, with multi-word sequences being a catch-all term, it could also be used when referring to phrasal verbs (e.g., *hung up, call off*), binomials (e.g., *bride and groom, ladies and gentlemen*), proverbs (e.g., *birds of a feather flock*

together), and lexical bundles or *n-grams* (e.g., *and so on, one of the, I don't know*)" (Tavakoli et al., 2020, p. 508). Attempts to provide a categorical, single-criterion definition of idiomatic expressions have been argued to be to some degree misleading and after the fact (Nunberg et al., 1994, p. 492). Thus, scholars seem to be in a state of disagreement concerning how one is to specifically define an idiomatic expression, as well as how they differ from nonidiomatic expressions. An overall tendency when it comes to defining what identifies idiomaticity in language structure conveys the impression that an idiomatic expression is a complex expression "whose meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of its elements" (Weinreich, 1969, p. 26).

Swinney and Cutler similarly argue that idiomatic expressions, in their simplest form, are "a string of two or more words for which meaning is not derived from the meanings of the individual words comprising that string" (Swinney & Cutler, 1979, p. 523). Therefore, the idiomatic meaning of *kick the bucket* has nothing to do with the literal meanings of the word's "kick" or "bucket" (Swinney & Cutler, 1979, p. 523). Thus, idiomatic expressions "defy traditional concepts of syntactic and semantic analysis" (Swinney & Cutler, 1979, p. 523). This understanding of an idiom can also be found within the Oxford English Online Dictionary, which defines an idiom as:

> A form of expression, grammatical construction, phrase, etc., used in a distinctive way in a particular language, dialect, or language variety; *spec.* a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from the meanings of the individual words (Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary, n.d).

However, another element that has been argued to constitute a central characteristic of most idiomatic expressions is ambiguity. Swinney and Cutler argue that grammatical, and well-formed, idiomatic expressions such as "kick the bucket," have an "acceptable literal reading for the word string which is derivable by traditional syntactic semantic analysis as well as an idiomatic reading which cannot be derived from such analysis" (Swinney & Cutler, 1979, p. 524). If one were to conduct an analysis of the meaning of the phrase *kick the bucket* in a setting where the speaker's intention and the context suggest a literal understanding, one would not logically conclude the meaning of the phrase to be the act of dying. Sam Glucksberg also argued the case that all idiomatic expressions carry at least two meanings. One meaning of an idiomatic expression is argued to be the linguistic meaning of the word and phrases themselves, whilst the other meaning is argued to be the stipulated, idiomatic meaning

(Glucksberg, 2014, p. 23). The component words of some phrases, such as *spill the beans*, have acquired idiom-specific meanings, making it so that a linguistic analysis of such phrases will result in an interpretation that is consistent with the stipulated, idiomatic meaning (Glucksberg, 2014, p. 23). Another aspect that distinguishes idiomatic expressions from different kinds of conventionalized language and expressions concerns whether the meaning of the phrase or expression can be determined based on the meaning of the words within the phrase or expression (Irujo, 1986, p. 288).

Irujo similarly stated that an idiomatic expression is a conventionalized expression whose meaning "cannot be determined from the meaning of its parts" (Irujo, 1986, p. 288). As a consequence of this understanding, Irujo argues that idioms differ from other figurative expressions such as similes and metaphors due to the fact that idioms have conventionalized meanings (Irujo, 1986, p. 288). Thus, it is argued that a native speaker of English will immediately recognize the phrase 'pulling your leg' as an idiomatic expression, making the meaning figurative and thus translates to "I was teasing you", whereas one would have to deduce one's own meaning from a metaphor such as 'I was greasing your mind' (Irujo, 1986, p. 288). Through time, a phrase gradually could achieve idiomaticity as its figurative meaning becomes conventionalized (Cacciari, 2014, p. 27). There must therefore be a collective effort over time in order for a specific phrase to become conventionalized and to be considered an idiomatic expression.

Despite multiple efforts to provide an unambiguous definition of what constitutes an idiom, it is argued that this could be a difficult task. According to Nunberg et al, idiomatic expressions, in linguistic discourse as well as in lexicographical practice, constitute an ambiguous and imprecise category, defined on one hand by prototypical examples like the English idiomatic expressions *kick the bucket, take care of NP (*noun phrase*), or keep tabs on NP* (noun phrase) and by "implicit opposition to related categories like formulae, fixed phrases, collocations, cliches, sayings, proverbs, and allusions-terms" on the other hand (Nunberg et al., 1994, p. 492). Thus, what phrases specifically constitute an idiomatic expression could differ depending on what definition one follows.

2.3 The L2 learner perspective of the linguistic and cultural aspects of idiomatic expressions

Found within the *Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary* is an additional definition of an idiom which goes on to describe the cultural character and significance of idioms stating that they are "the specific character or individuality of a language; the manner of expression considered natural to or distinctive of a language; a language's distinctive phraseology" (Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary, n.d). The *Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary* further elaborates on the cultural-, country-, and people-specific aspects of idiomaticity by stating that "the distinctive form of speech of a particular people or country" and "a dialect or variety of a language" (Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary, n.d). Idioms are therefore also argued to function as "a form of a language limited to or distinctive of a particular area, category of people, period of time, or context" and a form of expression, phrase, or grammatical construction which people use "in a distinctive way in a particular language, dialect, or language variety" (Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary, n.d). Thus, knowledge concerning the history, culture and specific characteristics of a certain language or people could be of great importance when developing idiomatic competence.

Yağiz and Izadpanah claimed, in their paper *Language, Culture, Idioms, and Their Relationship with the Foreign Language,* that the various manifestations of conventionalized language, such as idiomatic expressions, compose an important as well as an omnipresent aspect of language use (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 953). Further, it is argued that cultural aspects and elements of a country, or group of people, are reflected in idiomatic expressions (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 953). The proposed reason for this is that idiomatic expressions appear to constitute an aspect of language which could be of benefit when decoding customs, cultural beliefs, social conventions, and norms (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 953). Alptekin, in a similar manner to that of Yağiz and Izadpanah, argues that the act of acquiring knowledge about or learning a foreign language becomes "a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers" (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58). Thus, acquiring knowledge concerning idiomatic expressions becomes a central aspect of L2 acquisition and the development of one's sociolinguistic competence. The definition of 'social competence', as presented by Alptekin, proposes that the term is used to refer to the social rules of language use and involves gaining

an understanding of the different social- and culture-specific contexts which are argued to impact the norms, values, beliefs, and behavior patterns of the language in question (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58). Yağiz & Izadpanah similarly argued that it is through language, and linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar rules, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and interpretation that one can maintain cultural elements and values such as folklore, literature, lifestyle, traditions, values, history, and science (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 955).

Considering the argued connection between figurative language, as well as conventionalized language and culturally influenced aspects of the culture of a country, society, or a community of people one could propose the argument that knowledge concerning the correct and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions is an important aspect of successful communication with native or fluent speakers of a language.

Similar to Yağiz and Izadpanah, as well as Alptekin, Liontas has become a visible figure in terms of research concerning the role of idiomatic expressions in L2 language education. In his works, he also presents and discusses the sociolinguistic aspect of idiomatic expressions. In a 1999 publication, Liontas extends on the four major components of communicative competence as defined by Canale and Swain in 1980 (Liontas, 1999). According to Canale and Swain, as presented by Liontas, communicative competence can be divided into four components: (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence (Liontas, 1999). In his paper, Liontas maintains that idiomatic competence, which he describes as the ability to "understand and use idiomatic expressions appropriately in a cultural manner similar to that of a native speaker" could be considered to constitute a part of one's "sociolinguistic competence" (Liontas, 1999, p. 441). The notion of sociolinguistic competence has been defined as "the ability to recognize and produce socially appropriate language in context" (Lyster, 1994, p. 263).

For L2 learners of English, idiomatic expressions could prove to constitute a particularly difficult aspect of language and communication to grasp. This is a result of the figurative dimension of idiomatic expressions as the meaning of such expressions diverges from the usual meaning of the constituent elements (Cooper, 1999, p. 233). Furthermore, idiomatic expressions have been argued to be a challenging aspect of language and communication to grasp for L2 learners as they are often recognized as incongruous, and in some instances not abiding by the conventional rules of grammar (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 954). Some idiomatic expressions have also been argued to be complex or difficult to understand if one

does not possess the information necessary to comprehend or decipher the figurative or culturally rooted aspects of their meanings (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 954). Hence, idiomatic expressions are often resistant to a literal translation of their lexical constituents from one language to another. Another reason supporting the argument stating that idiomatic expressions constitute a stumbling block for L2 language learners has to do with the fact that they are found to reflect the history, culture, conventions, or customs of a different culture or society (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 955).

According to Tomalin and Stempleski, the 'Classical-Humanist' models of language teaching usually centered around the teaching of high culture, also referred to as 'big C' culture (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013, n.p). 'Big C' culture has been argued to comprise culturally significant elements such as history, geography, institutions, literature, art, and music, as well as the ways of life within the target culture (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013, n.p). Tomalin and Stempleski further argue that the study and teaching of 'big C' culture, and especially the study of British, American, and Canadian life and institutions, has been recognized as a "traditional part of school curricula in Europe and North America" (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013, n.p). However, it has been established by Tomalin and Stempleski that one would, in later years, have had to recognize that the subject itself has broadened in terms of what elements are to be recognized as relevant and significant when teaching on the topic of culture (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013, n.p). Whereas 'big C' culture still constitutes a central and relevant aspect of language teaching, the teaching of 'little c' culture, which has also been referred to as 'behavior culture', has been argued to have an increased role in language teaching (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013, n.p). 'Little c' culture has been broadened to include culturally influenced beliefs and perceptions which are often expressed through the use of language and the cultural behaviors which of the host community (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013, n.p).

In their book *Teaching and Learning English Interculturally*, Dypedahl and Lund promote the argument stating that the teaching of idiomatic expressions in a second or foreign language classroom could provide learners with insight into 'small c' culture, considering their status in everyday communicative situations (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, pp. 12-13). Furthermore, idiomatic expressions could also provide insight and knowledge into *big C culture,* as they often are shown to be rooted in history and have become common or shared frames of reference in the target language (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, pp. 12-13).

Consequently, L2 learners of English will not only have to become acquainted with the linguistic and grammatical aspects of idiomatic expressions as well as having to navigate the cultural aspects of idiomatic expressions when communicating with native speakers of a language. Amongst the proposed reasons why idiomatic expressions should be taught to English language learners, Liontas proposes that it facilitates the unique opportunity to "teach both language and culture from a multitude of sociocultural perspectives, leading to learners' development and attainment of idiomatic competence" (Liontas, 2017, p. 7). Thus, through a focus on what social function the use of idiomatic expressions fulfills in daily discourse, English teachers can enhance students' knowledge "of how culture permeated and dictates linguistic behavior" (Liontas, 2017, p. 8). Furthermore, teaching idiomatic expressions in the L2 classroom can encourage learners to "see the world through the eyes of the people whose language and culture they seek to learn" (Liontas, 2017, p. 8).

As can be viewed thus far, idiomatic expressions are argued to consist of both a linguistic dimension as well as a cultural and sociolinguistic dimension. Acquiring competence concerning the correct and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions could therefore further provide language learners with skills and knowledge relevant when obtaining a higher level of linguistic and communicative competence and cultural and sociolinguist competence. Considering the multiple dimensions of idiomatic expressions, they have been argued to constitute an important aspect of language learning as they make up a prominent feature of authentic language use (Weinreich, 1969, p. 23).

In the following section, I will present some of the reasons argued concerning why idiomatic expressions should be included in L2 language curriculums.

2.4 Idiomatic expressions and L2 Curriculums

'Big C' culture, which was elaborated on in section 2.3, has benefitted from a clearly identified curriculum of topics to be covered, as well as textbooks that address these different topics. However, the culturally influenced behaviors which constitute 'little c' culture have had a tendency to be treated in an anecdotal, peripheral, or supplementary way, depending on the interest and awareness of the individual teacher and student (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, n.p). The study of culture has been argued, in later years, to have been broadened to include culturally influenced beliefs and perceptions often expressed through language, with idiomatic

expressions being presented, by Dypedahl and Lund, as an example of a 'little c' cultural element (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, pp. 12-13). In 2013, Tomalin and Stempleski argued that whereas the emphasis on 'big C' elements of culture has been a traditional part of school curricula, a focus on 'little c' culture has not been equally present within school curriculums as well as within textbooks (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, n.p). However, Liontas strongly argues for the importance of teaching idiomatic expression as part of L2 language education (Liontas, 2017).

Whilst Liontas argues that knowledge concerning the correct use of idiomatic expressions is not an absolute necessity if one aims to communicate effectively, he does describe the appropriate and correct use of idiomatic expressions as "marks of a competent speaker" (Liontas, 2017, p. 8). He further argues that there are multiple benefits that L2 learners can acquire from idiomatic expressions being taught in the L2 classroom (Liontas, 2017, p. 8). Liontas goes on to further describe what he argues to be five of the most important benefits of teaching idiomatic expressions in the L2 classroom. In the following figure, I have illustrated the five main reasons Liontas argued for teaching idiomatic expressions in the L2 classroom.

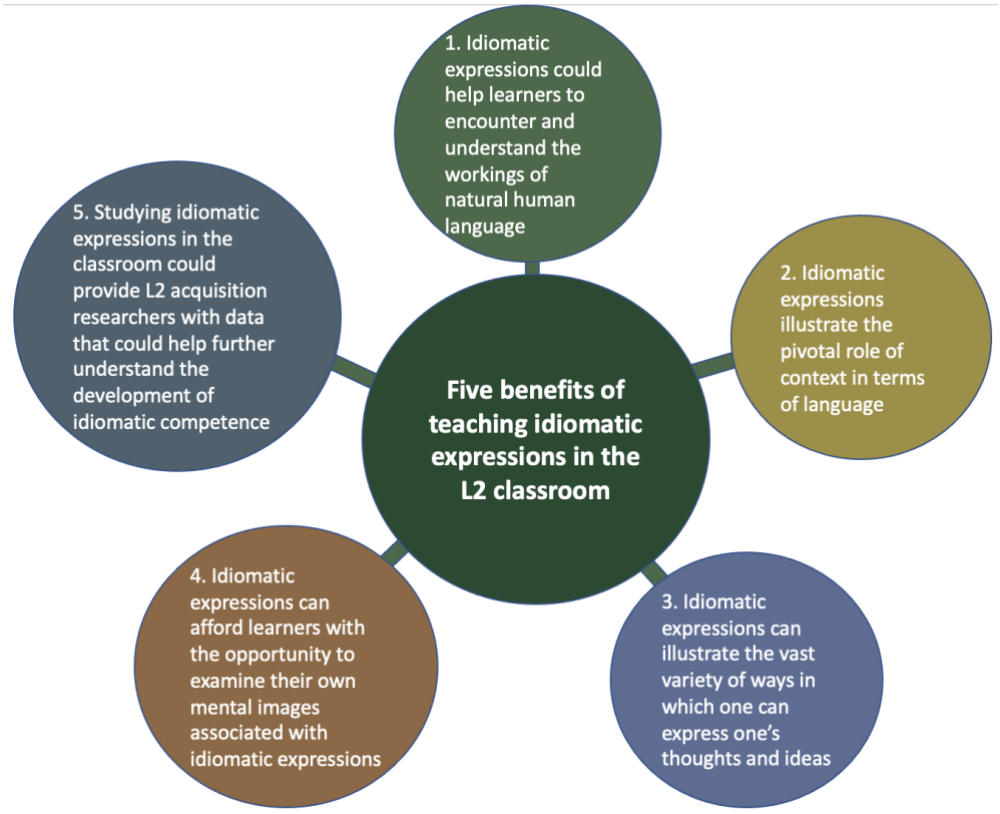


Figure 1. The five main benefits of teaching idiomatic expressions in the L2 classroom (Liontas, 2017. pp. 9- 16).

The first reason, as argued by Liontas, is described to be a result of the argument that idiomatic expressions "help learners to encounter and understand the workings of natural human language" as idiomatic expressions help learners "gain a deeper knowledge of the creative expression of human thought and language development over time" (Liontas, 2017, p. 9). Considering that all idiomatic expressions have their origins in the structure and nature of human communication and are thus rooted in peoples' history, politics, sports, and culture, it has been argued that they constitute an omnipresent aspect of natural human language and communication (Liontas, 2017, p. 9). Thus, through teachers systematically providing language learners with opportunities to encounter different idiomatic expressions as part of their language education, the learners will be provided the opportunity to acquire new and broader perspectives on life as one gain insight into "different cultural realities through the eyes of the people who create and use these turns of phrase" (Liontas, 2017, p. 9).

The second reason why idiomatic expressions should be taught as part of second and foreign language education concerns the possibility for learners to go beyond "the literal meaning of idioms and see the pivotal role that context plays in the understanding of idiomatic expressions (Liontas, 2017, p. 11). As previously mentioned, idiomatic expressions have both literal meanings and conventionalized figurative meanings founded in the culture and history of the people speaking the given language. Whereas the literal meaning of an idiomatic expression can be established through a combination of syntactic, and semantic analysis, the figurative meanings of idioms can only be retrieved from memory, presuming that such meaning has already been established as part of the mental lexicon (Liontas, 2017, p. 11). Consequently, considering the impact of context, Liontas argues that if the figurative meaning of an idiomatic expression is to be considered both transparent and meaningful for second and foreign language learners, they must be provided with a substantial context in order for the process of determining this meaning to be achievable (Liontas, 2017, p. 11). As a result, it is argued that pupils should be encouraged, as part of their language learning, to work with and discuss idiomatic expressions for the purpose of discovering their figurative and cultural meanings (Liontas, 2017, p. 11). This would further result in pupils encountering the significant role of context when comprehending and interpreting idiomatic expressions when they do not have a direct counterpart in other languages the pupil knows (Liontas, 2017, p. 11).

It should however be emphasized that, according to Liontas, the production of idiomatic expressions does not necessarily result in the comprehension of idiomatic expressions (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). In addition, it does not follow that the pupils who are able to correctly decipher the figurative meaning of an idiomatic expression are able to use the same expression appropriately and accurately in varied sociocultural situations (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). Thus, for idiomatic competence to develop over time, "cultural understanding must be promoted in various ways so that students are sensitive to other cultures and are prepared to live more harmoniously in the target-language community" (Liontas, 2017, p. 14).

Further, the third reason for teaching idiomatic expressions in the L2 classroom pertains to having the pupils produce idiomatic expressions similar to the manner in which native speakers use them (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). The reason for this, according to Liontas, is that such a requirement will enhance learners to master the correct and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions and thus facilitates the process of internalizing the cognitive binding and mapping of idiomatic expressions (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). Alongside this competence comes the realization of the vast variety of ways in which one can express one's thoughts and ideas (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). Many pupils may feel inept when using idiomatic expressions in a second or foreign language. As a result, they might often find themselves in a position where they find it to be challenging to articulate exactly what they want to express in a clear and precise manner (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). It is for this reason that Liontas argues for the teaching of idiomatic expressions in L2 language education as idiomatic expressions succinctly express ideas through powerful and colorful figures of speech which do not have to be "inferred and interpreted anew each time they are used by a member of linguistic community" as they are "frozen in time" (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). Thus, the teaching of idiomatic expressions could provide language learners with the ability to express complex ideas and thoughts whilst using a limited number of words (Liontas, 2017, p. 14). Consequently, a clear understanding of the specific uses of idioms and the "function they perform in extended discourse has been shown to improve students' motivation to learn and use idiomatic expressions and may also result in improved language skills" (Liontas, 2017, p. 15-16).

The fourth reason arguing for the importance of teaching idioms proclaims that idioms "afford learners with the opportunity to examine their own mental images associated with idiomatic expressions and the conceptual metaphors mediating their figurative meanings" (Liontas, 2017, p. 16). L2 acquisition research concerned with the mental associations and access to the meanings of idiomatic expressions have to a great extent not been explored (Liontas, 2017, p.

16). Multiple aspects of L2 idiom comprehension remain a substantially less investigated topic within the context of L2 acquisition (Liontas, 2017, p. 16). Therefore, if the teaching of idiomatic expressions were to be included in L2 curriculums, researchers would gain access to data that could provide further insight into relevant topics of research which has not yet been extensively explored. For instance, researchers could explore what images second and foreign language learners visualize in their minds when they hear or read an idiomatic expression, whether they conceptualize the literal meaning of an idiomatic expression before the metaphorical, or whether both meanings are accessed simultaneously.

The fifth reason for teaching idiomatic expressions, as argued by Liontas, furthers the previous argument, that the acquisition of idiomatic expressions amongst L2 learners has not been a topic of extensive research interest. As a result, he argues that the study of idiomatic expressions in the classroom could provide L2 acquisition researchers with data that could help "build a systematic program for the development of idiomatic competence in second language learners" (Liontas, 2017, p. 16). Thus, obtaining an adequate amount of data concerning the production of idiomatic expressions and the acquisition of idiomatic competence within the L2 classroom could result in significant advancements in a wide range of linguistic issues (Liontas, 2017, p. 16). Insight and data gained from such research could result in advancements concerning the ways in which idiomatic expressions are taught and handled in the L2 curriculum (Liontas, 2017, p. 16). Furthermore, it could provide insight into the manner in which teaching materials such as textbooks reflect the use of idiomatic expressions, as well as how one should assess and test the performance of language learners in the matter of the use of idiomatic expressions (Liontas, 2017, p. 16).

Despite the many stated reasons as to why L2 language curriculums should implement the teaching of idiomatic expressions, previous research has suggested that there are some disagreements amongst L2 language instructors pertaining to the relevance of teaching idiomatic expressions to pupils at lower levels of L2 language proficiency. In 1999, Liontas conducted a series of interviews with language instructors regarding the teaching of idiomatic expressions in the L2 language classroom. Responses provided by the survey and interviews illustrated that many of the instructors viewed idiomatic expressions to be a necessary and important aspect of language use both in terms of successful communication as well as sociolinguistic competence (Liontas, 1999, p. 439). This can be seen in some of the responses found in Liontas's dissertation. During Liontas's interviews', one of the participating language instructors stated that "if a program's objective is to learn or teach language so that learners

can function in an appropriate sociolinguistic context, idioms must be taught" (Liontas, 1999, p. 439). Another participant of the study argued that idiomatic expressions constitute a colorful aspect of language and are "important not only for the understanding of the TL (target language) culture but also in the practical understanding of native speakers, newspapers, advertisements" (Liontas, 1999, pp. 439-440). Another participant stressed that "idioms are important not only for communicative function but also provide a window into the cultural mindset of native speakers" (Liontas, 1999, p. 440). Another survey participant, according to Liontas, pointed out the pragmatic dimension of idiomatic expressions and idiomatic competence in relation to authentic communication by stating that "I think it's important because people use idioms constantly when they talk. You can learn all aspects of grammar, but real conversations, with real people, is different" (Liontas, 1999, p. 440). Some of the participants further commented on the importance of idiomatic expressions in terms of fluency and stated that conceptual fluency cannot be achieved without competence concerning the correct and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions (Liontas, 1999, p. 440).

As can be viewed from the findings of the interviews, many of the opinions and attitudes reflected in the responses from the language instructors concerning the linguistic and communicative dimensions and the cultural and sociolinguistic dimensions of idiomatic expressions, coincide with multiple theoretical accounts of idiomatic expressions previously presented in section 2 (Alptekin (2002), Yağiz & Izadpanah (2013), Liontas (1999), and Dypedahl & Lund (2020)). However, some of the instructors correspondingly expressed views that argued that idiomatic expressions constitute a less relevant aspect of language learning at lower levels (Liontas, 1999, p. 438). As expressed by one of the instructors from the dissertation, "idioms aren't necessary for daily communication! When a co-conversationalist uses an unknown idiom, an L2 learner can always ask for clarification (except when reading, I suppose). So, it's more important to teach basic vocabulary and grammar first" (Liontas, 1999, p. 438). Another instructor similarly noted that "they [idioms] are important, but not as important as using other grammatically correct structures", whereas another instructor expressed the same attitudes, albeit less specifically, by stating that they think "there are other items, especially at lower levels, that are more essential" (Liontas, 1999, p. 438). I will further elaborate on this point in the following section regarding the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Considering the five listed reasons for integrating idiomatic expressions into every L2 curriculum, I found it to be relevant to explore some of the main influencing factors concerning

how teachers relate to idiomatic expressions. One of these factors is the Norwegian teaching curriculum. Considering the significant influence that the teaching curricula, as a national steering document, has on the teaching practices, I find it relevant to explore how documents influence the development of the LK20 view on the position of idiomatic expressions as part of language learning and proficiency. Thus, in the following sections, I will examine how the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the LK20 view idiomatic expressions.

2.5 The role of idiomatic expressions in L2 acqusition as expressed by The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) argues that idiomatic competence is necessary for language learners and users if they are to achieve communicative competence as well as appropriate and efficient language production and processing (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 129-137). The reason for this argument is that the Council of Europe proposes that idiomatic expressions constitute a relevant aspect of both linguistic competencies as well as sociolinguistic competence (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 129-137). In this section, I will be exploring how the CEFR views idiomatic expressions in connection with L2 education and language learning.

I would argue for it to be of value to present a short overview of the way the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages developed by the Council of Europe, organizes language proficiency. This is because the CEFR is described to have a significant impact on multiple elements and aspects of language education in Europe, such as teacher education programs, foreign language teaching, assessment, as well as the development of language teaching curricula, textbooks, and examinations (Alderson, 2007, pp. 659-660). When taking into account the considerable impact that the CEFR, it would prove difficult for people engaged in language education, especially in Europe, to completely disregard the existence of the CEFR. Consequently, considering the immense impact of the CEFR as a central document in terms of language education, as argued by Alderson, one could argue that the CEFR perform the function of an influential steering document in terms of language education in Norway as well (Alderson, 2007, pp. 659-660).

For the purpose of gaining a deeper insight into the factors which could have contributed to, and influenced, the development of the LK20 in terms of idiomatic expressions, it would therefore prove valuable to explore how the CEFR describes the purpose and place of idiomatic expressions in language education. This is because the CEFR describes what knowledge and skills language learners should obtain in order to be able to successfully communicate with other language users (Council of Europe, 2021). As a result, the descriptions concerning what skills and knowledge constitute the foundation for successful language communication become highly relevant when creating and developing the general guidelines for the new Norwegian English language curriculum. The way the CEFR conceptualizes, as well as addresses, the position of idiomatic expressions in terms of communicative language competence could be of importance in terms of understanding how the LK20 curriculum was developed. To gain insight into what understanding of the position of idiomatic expressions as part of the L2 classroom has influenced the development of the LK20 curriculum, it would prove valuable to explore the CEFRs descriptors of communicative language competence.

The CEFR describes communicative language competence as competence that consists of three different descriptors: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence, as seen in *Figure 2*.

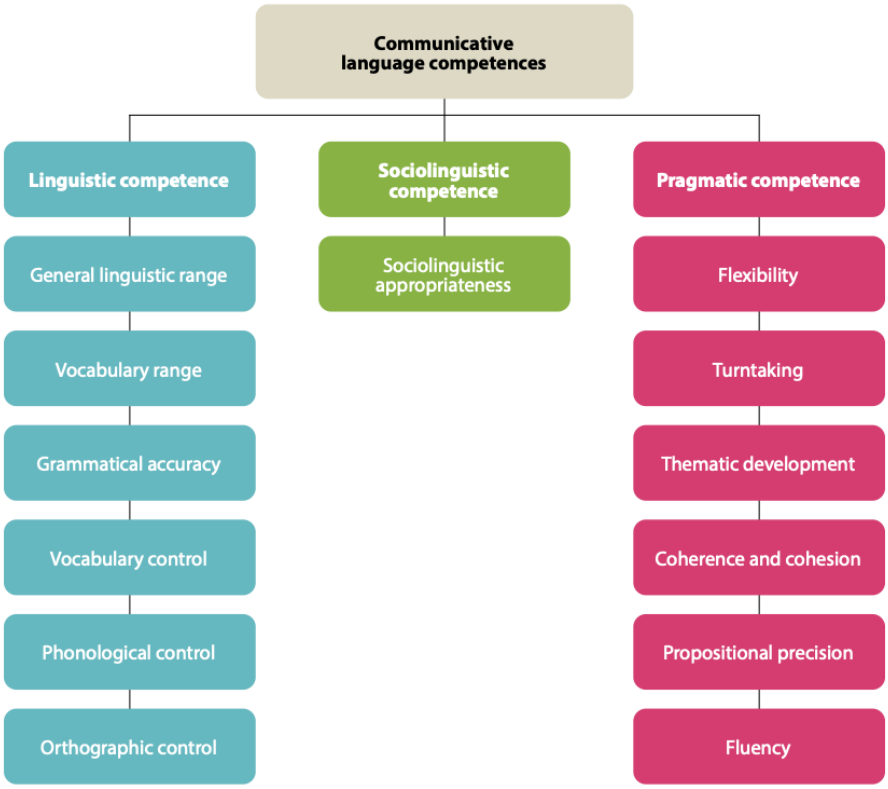


Figure 2. Communicative language competence as defined by the CEFR (Council of Europe 2020. p. 129).

In terms of exploring how the Council of Europe views the role of idiomatic expressions as part of language learning and communicative language competence, I will be focusing on the linguistic, and sociolinguistic aspects of communicative language competencies. This is because these are the descriptors of communicative language competencies in which knowledge and competence concerning the use and understanding of idiomatic expressions are explicitly mentioned. Within the descriptors of "linguistic competence", knowledge concerning idiomatic expressions is described to constitute an aspect of the speakers' "vocabulary range" (Council of Europe 2020, p. 129). The Council of Europe describes in the CEFR that 'vocabulary range' refers to the breadth and variety of expressions applied by language users (Council of Europe 2020. p. 131).

Further, the CEFR organizes language proficiency into six levels ranging from A1 to C2, with C2 as the highest level of proficiency. The levels are defined through "can-do" descriptors, which can be regrouped into three broad levels: "Basic User" (A1, A2), "Independent User" (B1, B2), and "Proficient User" (C1, C2). When analyzing the descriptive scale outlining the competence and level of language proficiency of the six CEFR- levels of language proficiency, one finds that the descriptors of 'vocabulary range' (*Figure 2*), one will find that knowledge concerning idiomatic expressions only becomes relevant when one has reached a C1 and C2 level of competence (Council of Europe 2020. p. 131).

	Vocabulary range
C2	Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.
C1	Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions; little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies. Can select from several vocabulary options in almost all situations by exploiting synonyms of even words/ signs less commonly encountered. Has a good command of common idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; can play with words/signs fairly well. Can understand and use appropriately the range of technical vocabulary and idiomatic expressions common to their area of specialisation.

Figure 3. The CEFR descriptors for 'Vocabulary range' (Council of Europe 2020. p. 131).

As seen within the C1-competence level (*Figure 3*), it is stated that language learners and speakers within this level of competence have "a good command of common idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; can play with words/signs fairly well" as well as "understand and use appropriately the range of technical vocabulary and idiomatic expressions common to their area of specialization" (Council of Europe 2020. p. 131). Within the C2-level of vocabulary range, it is specified that the speakers and learners have "a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning" (Council of Europe 2020, p. 141). As can be seen in *Figure 3*, the CEFR suggests that knowledge and competence regarding the use and understanding of idiomatic expressions becomes a relevant aspect of one's vocabulary range at the two highest levels of proficiency. According to the CEFR- defined levels of proficiency, this would suggest that the knowledge concerning the correct understanding as well as appropriate use of idiomatic expressions are both competencies that characterize and exemplifies a "Proficient User" of a language.

The second descriptor of communicative competence concerns the notion of "sociolinguistic competence" (see *Figure 2*). Within the CEFR, sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge and skills required in order to successfully manage the social aspects and dimensions of language use (Council of Europe 2020, p. 136). Further, it is presented that language is a sociocultural phenomenon that deals with linguistic markers of social relations, such as politeness conventions, register differences, as well as dialect, and accent (Council of Europe 2020, p. 136). In order to develop one's sociolinguistic competence, it is argued that one needs to develop "sociolinguistic appropriateness". Sociolinguistic appropriateness, as a part of sociolinguistic competence, places idiomatic competencies, as well as employing idiomatic expressions, allusive language, and humor, at the C1 and C2 levels of language proficiency (Council of Europe 2020, p. 137).

	Sociolinguistic appropriateness
C2	Can mediate effectively and naturally between users of the target language and members of their own community, taking account of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences. Has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning. Appreciates virtually all the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by proficient users of the target language and can react accordingly. Can effectively employ, both orally and in writing, a wide variety of sophisticated language to command, argue, persuade, dissuade, negotiate and counsel.
C1	Can recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts; may, however, need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. Can understand humour, irony and implicit cultural references and pick up nuances of meaning. Can follow films employing a considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage. Can adjust their level of formality (register and style) to suit the social context: formal, informal or colloquial as appropriate, and maintain a consistent register. Can frame critical remarks or express strong disagreement diplomatically.

Figure 4. The CEFR descriptors for 'Sociolinguistic appropriateness'. (Council of Europe 2020, p. 137).

At level C1 on the scale for sociolinguist appropriateness, it is outlined that one should be able to "recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts" in addition to the ability to "follow films employing a considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage" (Council of Europe 2020, p. 137). Whilst level C2 specifies that learners and speakers of a language at this level have "a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning (Council of Europe 2020, p. 137). As can be observed from the descriptors of vocabulary range, the CEFR similarly proposes that the correct understanding and use of idiomatic expressions are characteristics of a highly competent language learner and user (Council of Europe 2020, p. 137).

When exploring the CEFR, it can be noted that knowledge concerning idiomatic expressions has been established, by the Council of Europe, to constitute an important aspect of both one's linguistic competence as well as one's sociolinguistic competence. This coincides with the theory presented in chapter 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3, where idiomatic expressions are argued to have a linguistic aspect as well as a cultural, historical, and sociolinguistic aspect. A command and knowledge of idiomatic expressions are expressed by the CEFR to constitute a part of one's linguistic range in terms of spoken language at a C1 and C2 level, stating that the user or

learner of a language at this level of proficiency has a "good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialism" (Council of Europe 2020, p. 183).

Further, if consulting the descriptors of the different levels of language proficiency, as conceptualized and defined by the CEFR, one can note that knowledge concerning the use, understanding, and overall command of idiomatic expressions, is established to constitute competencies that can be found amongst the two highest levels of proficiency. The C levels of competence are the highest level of language proficiency within the CEFR scale, thus resulting in the possible understanding that competence concerning the correct and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions becomes relevant for language learners only at a higher level of proficiency. Similar views concerning the relevance of idiomatic expressions in L2 language education were presented by Liontas (1999). In his publication, he argues that many secondary and post-secondary language instructors speak "against the methodological teaching of idioms in beginning and intermediate language classes" as L2 learners will often struggle with the discrepancy between the literal and the figurative meanings of idiomatic expressions (Liontas, 1999, p. 438). This view concerning the position of idiomatic expressions in L2 language education coincides with the views which are expressed within the CEFR.

One can, in addition, find similar views concerning the position of idiomatic expressions in foreign language education expressed in the interviews conducted in Liontas's 1997 survey (Liontas, 1999) (see chapter 2.4). During his interviews, it was found that some of the language instructors, similarly to the CEFR, argued that whereas idiomatic expressions are an important aspect of language use and communication, they are "not as important as using other grammatically correct structures" (Liontas, 1999, p. 438). Additionally, idiomatic expressions were also argued not to be "necessary for daily communication" as some instructors stated that, at lower levels of language learning, there are other communicative items that are more essential (Liontas, 1999, p. 438).

When exploring the CEFR, one can see that the framework highlights the importance of idiomatic competence both in terms of appropriate and efficient language production, but also in terms of accurate language processing. The CEFR further describes that competence and knowledge concerning the social and cultural aspects of idiomatic expressions become necessary in order for language learners to successfully navigate the social dimensions of language use. However, despite the argued linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of idiomatic expressions as seen when exploring the CEFR, the framework describes knowledge and

proficiency concerning idiomatic expressions as a feature that becomes necessary in order to achieve the highest levels of communicative competence. Considering the influence that the Council of Europe has in terms of how the subject curricula in Norway have been developed, I would argue for it to be of great relevance to have explored the CEFR as one would arguably gain more extensive insight into the choices made when creating the LK20. In the next section, I will be looking into how the Norwegian upper secondary curricula approach the topic of idiomatic expression in terms of L2 education.

2.6 The LK20 and Idiomatic Expressions

When inspecting the new LK20 curricula and the descriptors, core elements, and competence aims presented for English language education, one finds elements of language learning and language use that one could argue to coincide with the descriptors of communicative competence as described by the CEFR. The two documents both emphasize the importance of a linguistic as well as a cultural understanding of language when communicating with people on a local as well as a global scale. The LK20 emphasizes that the English subject should help pupils "develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns" and use English to "communicate and connect with others" (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 2). However, I would argue that the CEFR and the LK20 outline the place and purpose of idiomatic expressions in L2 education in slightly different manners.

The LK20 does not provide a definition of the term 'idiomatic expression'. As previously explored, there is more than one way to define what type of expression constitutes an idiomatic expression. Idiomatic expressions have been argued to belong to an ambiguous and imprecise category of expressions where the difference between related categories like formulae, fixed phrases, collocations, cliches, sayings, proverbs, and allusions-terms have been described as well as argued, but not clearly or directly expressed nor defined (Nunberg et al. 1994, p. 492). This results in a situation where the interpretation of the competence aim, as well as how to teach idiomatic expressions, becomes rather ambiguous and open for the individual interpretation of teachers. However, considering the way the LK20 competence aim has been phrased, there seems to be a focus on the linguistic aspects of idiomatic expressions. When analyzing the competence aim, the use of idiomatic expressions is argued to constitute an aspect of linguistic competence with elements such as fluency, nuanced and precise language

use, and varied language being highlighted (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, pp. 10-12). These are all elements of idiomatic expressions which have been stated within the previously presented definitions of idiomatic expressions in this thesis (see chapter 2).

An example of this can be found in the works of Weinreich, who argued the importance of idiomatic expressions for language learners as they constitute a prominent feature of authentic language use (Weinreich, 1969, p. 23). As a result of this, teaching idiomatic expressions in L2 education could result in a greater level of fluency and communicative competence among learners. The curricula also coincide with what is argued by Yağiz & Izadpanah, who expressed that knowledge and awareness concerning the use of idiomatic expressions in the target language would assist language learners with obtaining better communication strategies as one would gain a better insight into the thoughts, emotions, and views expressed by speakers of the target language (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 953).

If consulting the descriptors of the different levels of language proficiency as conceptualized and defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language, one can note similarities with concern to how the CEFR and the LK20 curriculum determine the place and purpose of idiomatic expressions in terms of L2 language education. As previously explored, the CEFR defines knowledge and skills concerning the use of idiomatic expressions to be part of one's communicative competence, both in terms of linguistic competence and sociolinguistic competence (Council of Europe 2020, p. 129). However, considering how the LK20 has phrased the competence aim, one could argue that it mainly places emphasis on the linguistic aspect of idiomatic expressions and not the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects. When comparing the LK20 competence aim to the description of linguistic competence as provided by the CEFR, one can note that both documents place emphasis on the importance of idiomatic expressions in terms of varied, nuanced, and precise language, and appropriate language use depending on the situation. Notwithstanding the additional sociolinguistic feature of idiomatic expressions expressed by the CEFR, as well as by research provided by sources such as Yağiz and Izadpanah, Liontas, Weinreich, Alptekin, and Nunberg et al., the LK20 competence aim does not explicitly mention nor address the sociolinguist and cultural dimensions of idiomatic expressions. Whereas the importance of the English language as a global lingua franca is present throughout the descriptors of the curriculum, the competence aim concerning the use of idiomatic expression does not make a direct connection between the use of idiomatic expressions present in the English language and global and intercultural communication.

Within the descriptions of the basic skills for the English subject, it is presented that the pupils should be able to adapt their language to different purposes, receivers, and situations, both formal and informal (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). Furthermore, pupils are to be able to adapt their language and communication strategies to a variety of receivers with varying linguistic backgrounds (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). In the *Relevance and central values* section of the curriculum and the descriptions of the core elements of the English subject, the focus on cultural understanding and communication with people both locally and globally is accentuated (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). One of the main objectives of the English language subject could therefore be argued to be to help the pupils "develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns" (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). The purpose of this is to help pupils become confident users of English by providing them with knowledge and experiences of different societies and cultures in order to promote successful communication with people from around the world (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020).

According to Munden and Sandhaug, Norwegian pupils are more likely to use the English language in order to communicate with someone who is not a native speaker of English, than they are to use English to communicate with an American or a Brit (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 75). They further argue that estimates suggest that the likelihood of pupils speaking English to a non-native speaker is continuously growing year by year (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 75). This change in focus can be seen reflected in revisions made to the curriculum change from the LK06 to the LK20. According to Speitz and Myklevold, the tradition of focusing on the United Kingdom and the United States, which can be viewed in the LK06, is not continued in the LK20 (Speitz and Myklevold 2022, p. 303). In the LK06, Speitz and Myklevold argues that the main "geographical and cultural focus used to be on Great Britain, the USA, and other "English-speaking countries"" (Speitz and Myklevold 2022, p. 303).

Munden and Sandhaug further argue the case that it is no longer relevant nor necessary for pupils learning English today to sound as if they come from a country where English is a native language (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 75). The reason for this is that pupils will most likely find themselves using English as a lingua franca in a commutative setting with non-native

speakers of English rather than with native speakers (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 75). Instead, they place the focus on the importance of teaching pupils' good strategies for "making themselves understood and for understanding others" (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 75). Considering the fact that English has become a lingua franca and is no longer the unique property of countries where English is a native language, it is argued to be of great importance for learners of English, as well as native speakers of English, to be able to adapt how they speak and listens when using English to communicate with people from other countries (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 75). Therefore, the type of communicative strategies and language taught in the classroom becomes central in order to promote successful and effective communication using English as a lingua franca amongst L2 pupils.

However, whereas the LK20 curriculum does not explicitly state what idiomatic expressions are to be taught as part of the English course, the idiomatic expressions presented in the textbooks, both previous as well as more recently published, are predominantly British and North American. As a result, this specific competence aim could be understood to be limited to the idiomatic expressions used within the English language varieties spoken within the United Kingdom and North America. Idiomatic expressions have been argued to be a feature of language which carries significant cultural and social significance and could therefore maintain cultural elements and values such as folklore, literature, lifestyle, traditions, values, history, and science (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 955). Consequently, one could put into question the transferability of these idiomatic expressions in the matter of global communication where English is used as a lingua franca. It could therefore be argued that there is a discrepancy between the social, cultural, and history-specific features and dimensions of idiomatic expressions, and the focus on the role of English as a global language of communication as highlighted in the English LK20 curricula. One could therefore argue the possibility that the competence aim concerning idiomatic expressions could, to some extent, result in a downplay of the English subject objective of cultural understanding, global communication, and English as a lingua franca, through creating a focus on teaching the idiomatic expressions spoken within the United Kingdom and North America.

On the other hand, one could argue that a focus on teaching pupils the role of idiomatic expressions and the linguistic and sociolinguist aspects of idiomatic expressions in relation to Great Britain and North America, could result in them obtaining an understanding of the importance of idiomatic expressions in terms of successful communication. Further, the pupils could apply this knowledge when faced with communicative situations with people of

different linguistic, social, or cultural backgrounds. Through a focus on developing pupil's language awareness and knowledge of English as a system, teachers could further promote the pupil's development of language awareness and knowledge of English as a system. This could extend to pupils learning to identify connections between English and other languages they might know, which has been determined to constitute a core element of English language education by The Norwegian Department of Education and Training (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020).

2.7 From Theory to Practice

This chapter of the thesis has attempted to provide a brief summary of the literature relating to the many dimensions of idiomaticity, and the multiple ways in which idiomatic expressions have been defined within the field of linguistic as well as sociolinguistic research. The previous sections have, in addition, provided insight concerning the role of idiomatic expressions in second and foreign language learning. In this section it has been explained how the Common European Framework of Reference for Language view the role of idiomatic expressions in terms of linguistic and communicative competence amongst second and foreign speakers of a target language. Furthermore, I have explored how the LK20 curricula emphasize idiomatic competence in terms of English language education at an Upper Secondary level. Additionally, I have looked into why Liontas, a prominent researcher within the field of idiomatic competence and the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions in the L2 classroom, argues that foreign language curriculums should include idiomatic expressions and why teachers should incorporate the teaching of idiomatic expressions into their teaching practices.

The aim of this study is to gain further insight into the emphasis placed on the teaching of idiomatic expressions from the perspective of teachers after the implementation of the LK20 curriculum, as well as explore whether it has had an influence on the way teachers relate to and work with idiomatic expressions in the classroom. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will present the methods used to gain the data which will provide further insight into these research aims.

3. Method

3.1 Choice of method

Because I wanted to investigate teacher perspectives regarding the changes made to the LK20 curriculum concerning idiomatic expressions, thus exploring a human phenomenon, I chose a qualitative approach consisting of a semi-structured interview. This choice of research method is consistent with arguments made by Brinkman and Kvale, who states that one of the main purposes of a qualitative research interview is to "understand themes of the lived and daily world from the subjects' own perspectives" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 33). I also chose a qualitative approach because I wanted to explore the personal perspectives and experiences of teachers. Furthermore, Brinkman and Kvale argue that one could obtain a more nuanced description and account of the subject matter by applying qualitative research methods (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 33). I therefore found this approach to be relevant for my thesis as I want to gain insight into the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of teachers concerning the new LK20 curriculum.

Furthermore, according to Hannabuss, a qualitative research method would allow me to gain further insight into how teachers have chosen to address idiomatic expressions as part of their teaching practices (Hannabuss, 1996, p. 23). Considering the qualitative method of research, the knowledge and descriptions concerning specific situations disclosed in the interview are to be considered opinions established as a result of the personal experiences of the teachers being interviewed. Thus, the insight collected from the teachers is a result of the viewpoints of the informants and is therefore not to be considered as general opinions of all teachers (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 33).

Considering that the objective of my research is to investigate how teachers address idiomatic expressions as part of L2 language education, I concluded that a semi-structured interview design would suit my research well. On the subject of semi-structured interviews, Longhurst argues that this method of research will allow for the interviewees to explore issues and topics they feel are relevant, and which reflect their views and experiences concerning the research topic (Longhurst, 2003, p. 143). Furthermore, according to the works of Longhurst, a semi-structured interview would allow me to gain insight into the experiences and knowledge of the interviewees without me becoming too directive, whilst still being able to keep the interview

focused on the topic (Longhurst, 2003, p. 143). A semi-structured interview further allowed me to plan and conduct an interview following a predetermined list of questions whilst still ensuring a level of flexibility. Moreover, according to Brinkman and Kvale, a semi-structured interview would make it possible for me to ask the teachers follow-up questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 34). This would allow the teachers to explore and discuss unpredicted topics of discussion and thus share insight on approaches that I did not account for when I constructed the interview guide (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 34).

In addition to choosing to make the qualitative interview semi-structured in design, I also made the choice to interview the teachers as a group rather than through individual interviews. This is because a semi-structured interview design combined with a group interview setting allowed for the teachers to discuss, compare, contrast their experiences, and discover new aspects of the topics they were describing through them gaining insight into the experiences and perspectives of the other participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 34). Thus, taking these accounts for interviews as a method of research into consideration, I argue that the interview conducted in this thesis created an arena where the teachers were able to further provide valuable insight into the established research aims of the thesis. However, one should also acknowledge, when discussing the findings of the interview, that group interviews may produce "group think" which could discourage "individuals who hold a different view from speaking out in front of the other group members" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 432). This could thus result in one narrative becoming more prominent throughout the interview.

3.2 Selection and recruitment of participants

In order to start the data collection and research process, I had to get my research application approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). In the application process, I described the aim, purpose, and reason for the study I had planned as part of my thesis. After getting the project approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, the next step of the data collection process was to find teachers which would agree to partake in an interview and then conduct the interview.

The teachers chosen to partake in the teacher group interview were based on two criteria's: firstly, they had to be working as English upper secondary teachers in Norway. Secondly, the teachers partaking in the study had to have had experience teaching both the previous LK06 curriculum, as well as having been introduced to the new LK20 curricula. The reason for this

is that I wanted to gain insight into teacher experiences concerning how, or whether, the changes made to the LK20 curriculum have affected the teaching practices of teachers. Because many teachers fulfil these two criteria, the main objective of the teacher recruitment process was to find teachers who would agree to participate in the qualitative group interview. Thus, for the interview-based study to be feasible, I had to acquire a group of upper secondary teachers who would agree to partake in the study and agree to have their answers and reasoning mentioned and discussed in the thesis.

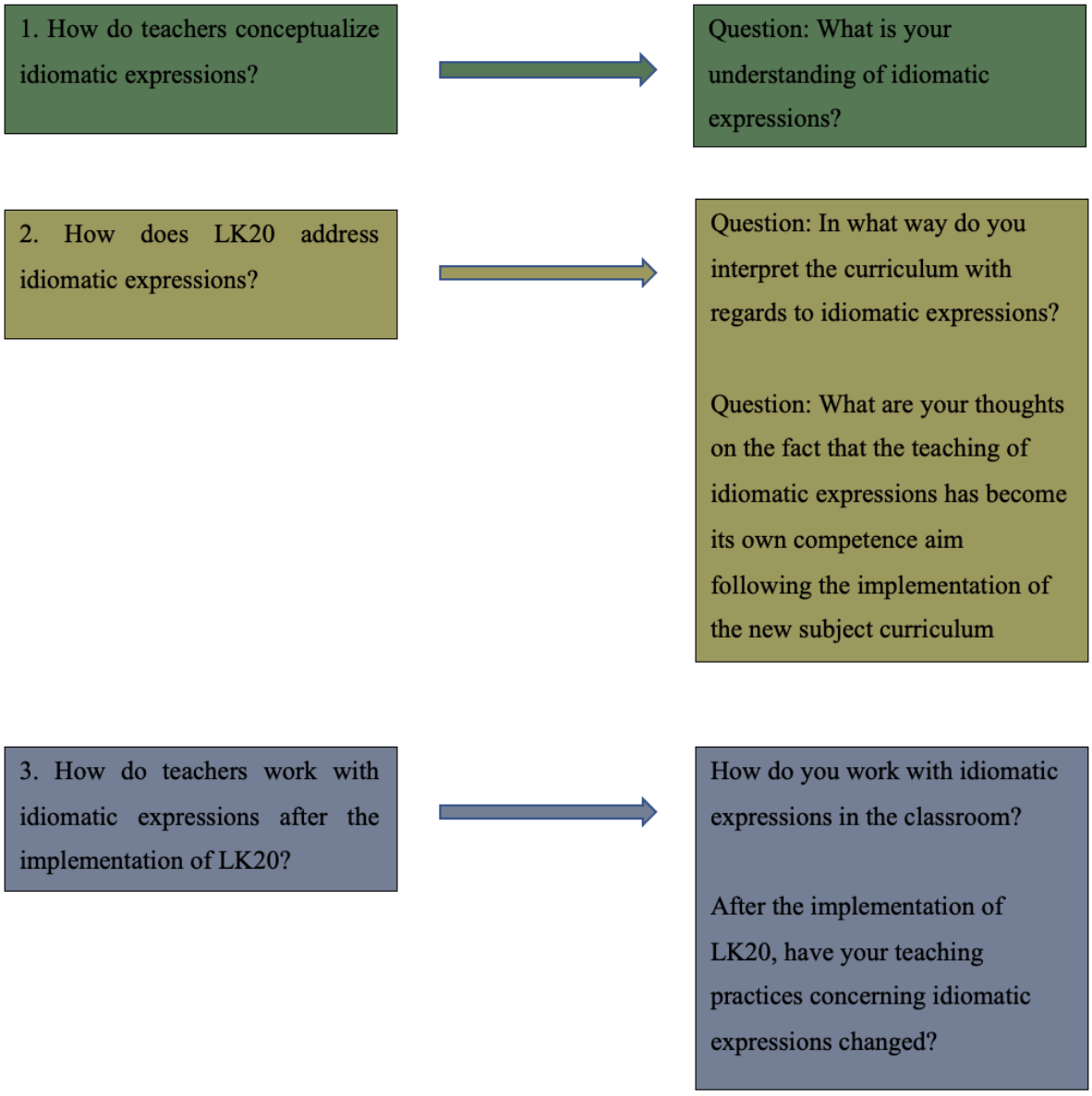
The schools which were contacted and asked whether they wanted to partake in the study were all upper secondary schools in Norway. The schools were contacted directly through an email sent to the principal of the school. In the email, I included information concerning the aims as well as the purpose of my research, what participation in the research would entail, formalities concerning the storing and use of the information obtained as a result of the interview, and relevant contact information for further information regarding the project. This letter of information can be found in the appendix (appendix 1).

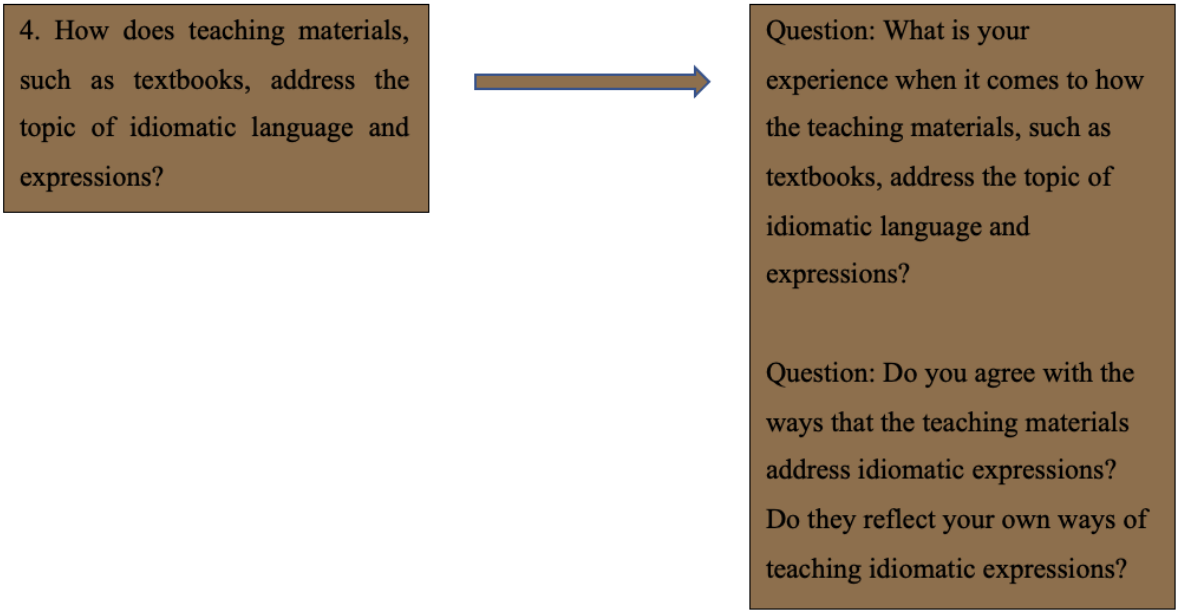
The teachers who agreed to partake in the study worked at the school which first established contact and expressed interest in the study and had teachers who also voiced an interest in the research project and who would agree to participate in an interview. Three teachers with a combined total of more than 56 years of teaching experience of the English language subject at an upper secondary level partook in the group interview and shared their experiences concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions. Before conducting the interview, the participants were given information that explained the background and purpose of my study. The teachers were informed about what participating in the study would entail, what I would do with the information collected from the interview, and how I would ensure that the information collected would be anonymized and their identity would be held confidential. In the case that the participants would have further questions regarding the research, I included my contact details in the letter of information.

3.3 Interview design and data collection process

Before conducting the interview, I decided to construct an interview guide. An interview guide has been argued by Maxwell to be a way in which one as an interviewer can ensure that the relevant topics for one's thesis are covered during the interviewing process (Maxwell, 2018, p. 27). In order to make the interview as comprehendible and clear as possible, I decided to

structure the interview into four sections, with each section focusing on a specified topic of discussion. In the figure below (Figure 5), an overview of each of the four topics of discussion from the interview guide is presented alongside the questions asked in each of the four sections.





(Figure 5. A chart overviewing the four main topics of discussion for the interview and the questions found within each section of the interview guide).

In the first section of the interview, I sought to gain an overview concerning how the teachers partaking in the interview conceptualize, define, and understand the term 'idiomatic expressions. For the first question, I decided to construct an open-ended question where the objective was to gain insight into the teachers understanding of idiomatic expressions, with the phrasing of the question being: *What is your understanding of idiomatic expressions?* With this question, I wanted to provide the respondents with a frame of reference for their answers whilst still placing minimum restraint on their answers by not providing them with definitions that could affect or influence their personal and original understanding of idiomatic expressions. Considering that the LK20 does not dictate how teachers should understand the term 'idiomatic expression', as well as considering the multiple ways that the term 'idiomatic expression' has been defined, as can be seen in the background chapter of this thesis, I wanted to leave this question as open as possible. By doing this, I am able to better understand how the teachers partaking in the study address this competence aim in the classroom.

However, in the case that the teachers' understanding of an idiomatic expression would differ significantly from the definitions provided by dictionaries and multiple theoretical accounts which were addressed in the background section of this thesis, I will be showing overview of how other sources have defined idiomatic expressions and ask for their comments and opinions on them. The reason for this is not to test, nor correct, the knowledge and understanding of the

teachers when it comes to idiomatic expressions. If their definitions stand in stark opposition, or greatly diverge, from previously established definitions, I wanted to understand what aspects of the other definitions they agree or disagree with as well as understand why they agree or disagree with them.

The second section of the interview guide addresses the contents of the LK20 concerning idiomatic expressions. I wanted the teachers to discuss and share their experiences working with the LK20 competence aim. Furthermore, the objective of this section was to explore how the informants interpret the LK20 curriculum with regards to idiomatic expressions and gain further insight into the informants' perspectives and experiences concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions. Consequently, in the beginning of this section of the interview, I presented the interviewees with the LK20 competence aim affirming that pupils are to be able to use idiomatic expressions when communicating in English.

Considering the research objective of the second section of the interview, I found it to be of benefit for the questions to be open-ended instead of fixed-alternative questions. The reason behind this choice was to allow for more flexibility and in-depth discussions of the research topic. Furthermore, I aim to understand in what way the teachers interpret the LK20 curriculum concerning idiomatic expressions. I therefore chose to phrase the question in an open-ended manner rather than asking whether they agreed with a pre-defined understanding of the curricula. This is because it has been argued that open-ended interview questions could result in one gaining a truer understanding of what the interviewees believe (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 416).

The third section of the interview further expands upon the second section as it elaborates on the teaching of idiomatic expressions after the implementation of the LK20. However, for this section I wanted the focus to be on the specific teaching practices pertaining to how idiomatic expressions are addressed in the classroom. Considering this objective, I decided to phrase the first question of this section as an open-ended question asking: *How do you work with idiomatic expressions in the classroom?* With this question, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the teaching practices of the teachers, but without influencing their answers with preconceived or predefined notions concerning how other people have argued how one should teach idiomatic expressions. Further, I sought to gain insight into whether the interviewees thought that their teaching practices concerning idiomatic expressions have changed after the implementation of the LK20. However, when exploring this topic, I had no

intention to imply, nor suggest, that the teaching practices of the interviewees had in fact changed as a result of the implementation of the LK20. Consequently, I decided to present the teachers with the following question: *After the implementation of LK20, have your teaching practices concerning idiomatic expressions changed?* By phrasing the question in this manner, Cohen et. al. argued that one would be allowing for the participants to further elaborate on their answers with follow-up questions (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 416). Thus, whether, or not, the teachers shared that they had made changes to their teaching practices because of the LK20 competence aim, I would be able to ask follow-up questions that would further explore their answers and reasoning concerning their teaching practices.

The fourth, and final section of the interview guide concern questions relating to the teachers' experiences when it comes to how different teaching materials, such as textbooks, address idiomatic expressions. Considering the lack of a definition concerning how to understand and define idiomatic expressions in the curriculum, I wanted to gain insight into whether the teaching materials available to the teachers were used as guidelines or a framework concerning how, or if, the teachers address and work with idiomatic expressions.

The group interview was originally planned to take place in person, however, due to restrictions as a result of Covid-19, it proved preferable to conduct the interview via Zoom. This change concerning the formalities of the interview setting and environment resulted in an interview where the participants sat together in one room sharing one computer and a web camera whilst being interviewed. All the teachers who partook in the interview worked at the same school. Despite these limitations, I would argue that the insight gained from the descriptions, experiences, and perspectives provided by the interviewees will result in a deeper, however not generalized, understanding of the topic of research. In order to ensure that the participants felt more comfortable with the interview setting, I made the choice to conduct the interview in Norwegian. The reasoning behind this choice was that I thought that by having the participants discuss the different topics in Norwegian, the interview setting would feel more natural and thus make the situation and the participants more relaxed.

In order to set the stage for the interview and to create an environment that would encourage the interviewees to describe their points of view, I initiated the interviewing process by introducing myself and describing the purpose and aim of my research project. I chose to do this as it has been argued that an introduction of the purpose of the interview could make what one wants to find out and research, clearer (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 154). Following the

introduction of the interview and the objective of the interview, I explained the function and purpose of the sound recorder by stating that the interview would be recorded and stored using *Nettskjema Diktafon*. This is because the sound files collected needed to be encrypted and stored on a safe server approved by the NSD to ensure and protect the privacy and anonymity of the interviewees (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 154). After asking whether any of the participants had any further questions, I started the interviewing process. The interviewing process took place over the course of an hour and all the participants sat through and partook in the conversation during the timeframe of the interview. After having completed the interview, recorded the answers, and stored the sound files on a safe online server, I started the prosses of transcribing the interview.

3.4 Transcription, translation, and analysis of the interview data

One central aspect of the post-interview stage of my research concerned working with transcribing the interview for the purpose analyzing the interview data that I have collected. There are several methods that can be applied when documenting the answers provided by the interviewees. Considering that the human memory is "prone to partial recall, bias, and error", it has been argued that interviewers could eliminate this reliability threat by relying on "other more permanent records of what was said" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 215). As a result of this, I decided to sound record the interview in order to enhance the reliability of my research. Through a sound recording the interview, I ensured that I obtained the participants' verbatim linguistic formulations. This choice would therefore, according to Brinkmann and Kvale, rule out the possibility of me making errors such as forgetting, misinterpreting, or incorrectly quoting the statements made by the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 206). Furthermore, the audio recording allowed me to listen to the interview several times, thus gaining the most accurate documentation of the statements made by the interviewees. I transcribed the interview data myself by listening to the recorded sound files on the encrypted online server and writing down the responses articulated by the teachers. I chose to transcribe the interview because it made the process of coding and analyzing the data easier and more transparent. Thus, through audio recording and transcribing the interview, I could make sure that the data that I had used to explore and discuss the findings of my research were as consistent and trustworthy as possible.

Considering that the interview in this study is qualitative as well as semi-structured in design, in order to provide me with the flexibility to explore new topics by asking follow-up questions, it would be rather unlikely that another researcher could repeat the interview with different teachers and having it yield the same answers. However, in order for this research to be as transparent and trustworthy as possible, I will include the transcript of the parts of the interview that I am addressing when discussing the findings, so that the data will be available for other people to analyze and interpret from their point of view.

With the intended use of the interview transcript being to explore the research questions of this thesis, as well as to report and discuss the participants' accounts, experiences, and opinions on these topics, I chose to transcribe the interview verbatim. However, I chose to exclude frequent repetitions of non-lexical fillers such as "mmhh", "ahh", "um", and "uh", laughter, and consecutive repetitions of the same word or phrase. The reason for this is that these aspects of spoken language will not contribute to the overall objective of the thesis, as the purpose of this interview is to report the subject's accounts of a topic rather than being the basis for a detailed linguistic or conversation analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 208). Subsequently, by omitting descriptions such as pauses, repetitions, and tone of voice from the transcriptions, I modified the conversation into a transcript reflecting a literary style. By transcribing and converting the interview into a written transcript, Brinkmann and Kvale argued that the communication of the descriptions and meanings of the insight and statements of the participants would become as clear as possible for everyone engaging with the research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 213). Thus, by transcribing the interview, the research data I obtained as a result of the interview will become accessible for people to read, assess, and study for themselves. Furthermore, the research data will become available for comparison with similar or further exploration within this field of research.

When going through the transcriptions and analyzing and discussing the research data obtained through the interview, I used the data collected from the two first sections of the interview (see *Figure 4*) to discuss the first research question. For the first research question, I wanted to gain insight into how much emphasis is put on teaching idiomatic expressions in general amongst the teachers partaking in the interview. In these first two sections, I wanted to become aware of, as well as establish, how the teachers conceptualize idiomatic expressions, in addition, to understanding how they interpret the LK20 competence aim regarding idiomatic expressions. In the last two sections of the interview, sections 3 and 4, the objective was to find out whether the LK20 competence aim addressing the teaching of idiomatic expressions has influenced the

way the teachers address idiomatic expressions as part of their teaching practices. Considering that the interview was designed and completed in a semi-structured way, not every element, discussion, and response provided by the teachers proved to be as relevant considering the purpose and objective of my research. Consequently, not every aspect of the interview is presented and discussed in the following chapter.

4. Findings and discussion

In this chapter, I will be presenting and discussing the findings obtained from the qualitative group interview I conducted with three upper secondary English language teachers. The findings presented in this section illustrate the teachers' opinions, previous experiences, points of view, and reasonings concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions in the English language classroom. In this study the data collected from the group interview will be presented and discussed in view of the research questions of this thesis as well as the theory and previous research presented in chapter 2. First, I will present and discuss the interview data which concerns the first research question: (1) *How much emphasis is put on the comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions amongst language teachers in the Norwegian upper secondary English education?* Following this, I will be presenting and discussing the findings from the interview pertaining to the second research question: (2) *Has the implementation of the LK20 curriculum influenced the focus teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary school?*

In order to create a foundation for the discussion of my research questions, I will be presenting and discussing transcribed and translated excerpts from the teacher interview. When presenting the excerpts from the interview, the speakers will be referred to as **Teacher 1, Teacher 2,** and **Teacher 3** in order to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants.

4.1 How much emphasis is put on the comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions amongst language teachers in the Norwegian upper secondary English education?

In the second chapter of this thesis, I explored the multiple possible aspects of, and approaches to, the term's *idiom* and *idiomatic.* As there is a wide variety of definitions in terms of how to define an idiomatic expression, 1 wanted to gain insight into how the teachers I interviewed understand and perceive the term 'idiomatic expression'. Furthermore, it has been argued that the beliefs teachers have about different content will influence the knowledge they choose to teach to their pupils (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 472). Hence, the beliefs teachers have regarding the definition of an idiomatic expression, as well as the place and relevance of these expressions in terms of L2 language teaching, could have an impact on the emphasis they chose to place on idiomatic expressions. The teacher interviews conducted as part of this thesis

could therefore provide insight into how some teachers relate to, view, and address idiomatic expressions in the classroom.

When asking the interview group what their understanding of an idiomatic expression is **Teacher 2** and **Teacher 3** answered that:

> **Teacher 2:** Idiomatic expressions transgress beyond just idiomatic expressions, expressions, and sayings, so it [their understanding of what constitutes an idiomatic expression] kind of flows a little. In terms of my teaching, it [idiomatic expressions] does not necessarily mean just those expressions whose meaning cannot be immediately deduced from only looking at the word combination. There is a whole range of idiomatic language use made available, so I have not made a distinction between what one could, from a strictly linguistic point of view, call an idiomatic expression and other expressions one could use in order to gain a natural and fluent speech such as fixed expressions, expressions which can be found in Norwegian as well.
>
> **Teacher 3:** I share a similar opinion. When I hear that term, I think most of all of idiomatic expressions. But what **Teacher 2** says adds maybe even more to it.
>
> **Teacher 2:** So, for example, when I have taken into consideration the curriculum as a starting point, I have also considered expressions such as phrasal verbs to be a part of the category of idioms. It [phrasal verbs] has in common with idiomatic expressions that it is not always possible to determine directly what they mean unless you have learned it as a phrase, as they are fixed compositions.

(Excerpt 1)

From the excerpt (Excerpt 1), **Teacher** 2 argues that their perception of an idiomatic expression transgresses beyond how some sources define them, in that **Teacher 2** expresses that they also include other linguistic element to belong under the term 'idiomatic expression'. **Teacher 2** further notes that they have not made a clear distinction between what they refer to as "what one could, from a strictly linguistic point of view, call an idiomatic expression" and other expressions such as phrasal verbs when teaching. **Teacher 2** does not further state explicitly what definition or understanding of an idiomatic expression they are referring to in the excerpt above. However, they express that, in terms of their personal teaching practices,

idiomatic expressions are not limited to those expressions whose meaning cannot immediately be deduced from analyzing the combination of words.

Considering that the teachers received a short overview of the project outlining the purpose and research aim of the thesis before partaking in the interview, one should take into consideration they would have had the time to research the topic as well as consider their teaching practices before the interview. The project description did not contain a definition of, nor describe the different understandings of an idiomatic expression that I have addressed as part of this thesis. Consequently, I found the understanding of an idiomatic expression, as presented by **Teacher 2**, to be an interesting point of discussion.

How **Teacher 2** defines an idiomatic expression could be argued to share similarities with what Tavakoli et al. (2020) described as multi-word sequences (see chapter 2.2). Multi-word sequences are described as a quite broad and catch-all term and are often used when referring to various forms of lexical strings and combinations of words that are considered to appear frequently together in a target language (Tavakoli et al., 2020, p. 508). Similar to the understanding of an idiomatic expression as expressed by **Teacher 2,** the term 'multi-word sequence' can be seen used when referring to phrasal verbs, proverbs, lexical bundles, and idiomatic expressions (Siyanova-Chanturia et al., 2011, p. 777) & (Tavakoli et al., 2020, p. 508). Thus, based on the interview and the teaching practices of **Teacher 2**, there seems to be a focus on teaching the concept and workings of multi-word sequences as well when addressing idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, the teaching of idiomatic expressions, as described by **Teacher 2**, seems to be taught as part of a broader understanding which encompasses a variety of different, but similar, linguistic concepts. **Teacher 2** further expresses that in terms of their teaching practices, idiomatic expressions are not necessarily limited to just pertaining to "those expressions whose meaning cannot be immediately deduced from only looking at the word combination" (translated from the verbatim quote made by **Teacher 2** in Norwegian; "slike utrykk som ikke kan utledes umiddelbart av ordkombinasjonen"). The understanding of an idiomatic expression that **Teacher 2** expresses here stands in contrast to the understanding of an idiomatic expression as argued by people such as Irujo, Swinney and Cutler, as well as Burgess and Sørhus (see section 2.2). In his work, Irujo states that an idiomatic expression could be viewed as a conventionalized expression where the meaning of the expression "cannot be determined from the meaning of its parts" (Irujo, 1986, p. 288). Similarly, Swinney and Cutler argue that idioms have an "acceptable literal reading for the word string which is derivable by traditional syntactic

semantic analysis as well as an idiomatic reading which cannot be derived from such analysis" (1979, p. 524). Burgess and Sørhus, in a similar manner, argue that an idiomatic expression is a saying "that should not be translated literally because it carries another meaning" (2013, p. 104). Furthermore, within the Oxford English Online Dictionary, an idiomatic expression is described as a group of words where the meaning of the expression is not "deducible from the meanings of the individual words" (Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary, n.d).

Considering that the teachers expressed some disagreement with the understanding of an idiomatic expression as presented in the quotes above, I wanted to gain further insight into what aspects of the definitions they disagreed with. When presenting some of the sources I have used in my thesis and asking the teachers about their opinion on them, the teachers shared that they found this understanding of an idiomatic expression to be a little narrower than the one they are working with. One reason for this is that they argued that many phrasal verbs will not fall under the definitions of idiomatic expressions as presented above.

> **Teacher 2:** So…because the definitions that you present states that idiomatic expressions are "not deducible from the meanings of the individual words"?
>
> **Interviewer:** Yes, so it is a little narrower than the one that you are working with?
>
> **Teacher 2:** Yes, it is a little narrower, because there [the definition presented by the interviewer], for example, only a few phrasal verbs will fall under this definition, while other phrasal verbs will not.
>
> **Teacher 2:** It [idiomatic expressions] is not defined in the curriculum either, right? I have at least not seen it being explained or defined anywhere.

(Excerpt 2)

From the responses provided by **Teacher 2** and **Teacher 3**, I noted that a broader understanding of an idiomatic expression than the one that I presented during the interview has been applied in their teaching practices. When looking through the responses given by the interviewees, I found that the teachers, as expressed by **Teacher 2** in excerpt 2, follow a significantly broader definition of an idiomatic expression than the definition followed by most of the theoretical accounts and previous research I have explored in previous sections. However, the teachers did not express a complete rejection or declination of the definitions I

presented during the interview. Nevertheless, the teachers expressed that they found that other multi-word units such as phrasal verbs constitute a relevant element to include when teaching idiomatic expressions.

Phrasal verbs have been argued, by people such as Gairns and Redman, to constitute a linguistic element often singled out and kept separate from idiomatic expressions in language-teaching materials (2011, p. 5). Whereas idiomatic expressions have been defined as "groups of words whose meaning is different from the individual words", phrasal verbs, on the other hand, have been argued to "consist of two and occasionally three words: a base verb and at least one particle (preposition or adverb)" (Gairns & Redman, 2011, p. 5). However, some phrasal verbs have been argued, by Gairns and Redman, to be idiomatic as the intended meaning of the verb and particle is not the same as the meaning of the base verb (Gairns & Redman, 2011, p. 5). Consequently, it is further argued that the act of teaching idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs together and combining them in language teaching has a linguistic rationale as well as a possibly greater pedagogical rationale (Gairns & Redman, 2011, p. 5). The reason for this is that a focus on both phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions in L2 education is argued to yield a greater number of expressions often used in the target language (Gairns & Redman, 2011, p. 5). Thus, a focus on combining the teaching of both phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions, instead of singling out one of them for specific attention, has been argued to provide language learners with a greater number of opportunities to observe and learn how these fixed expressions are used in in the target language, as well as provide insight into how the pupils can use them correctly themselves (Gairns & Redman, 2011, p. 5).

Within the LK20, by contrast, the term 'idiomatic expression' is singled out for specific attention in the L2 English language teaching, whereas other multi-word sequences or units are not explicitly stated or mentioned within the curriculum. However, a similar perspective to what is expressed by Gairns and Redman can be found in the teacher interview. During the interview, the teachers expressed, as seen from excerpt 1, a tendency to merge the teaching of different multi-word units such as phrasal verbs, collocations, and fixed expressions with the teaching of idiomatic expressions. This is despite the LK20 curriculum not explicitly communicating the teaching of different multi-word sequences or units other than idiomatic expressions. However, the curriculum does not further outline how teachers are to define the term 'idiomatic expression'. As a result, the teachers have a great deal of autonomy in the matter of how to define and address idiomatic expressions in the classroom.

4.2 Has the implementation of the LK20 curriculum influenced the focus teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary school?

As presented in section 2.4, Tomalin and Stempleski argued that the culturally influenced behaviors and elements which are often expressed through the use of language, have not been considered an equally traditional part of school curriculums in Europe (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, n.p). As a result of the emphasis placed on 'big C' elements of culture, these topics are often clearly expressed and easily identified within different curriculums and textbooks (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, n.p). Whereas the different elements of 'little c' culture, such as idiomatic expressions, have not benefitted from the same identifiable topics to be covered within the curriculum (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, n.p). However, considering that the LK20, unlike the LK06, explicitly stipulates that pupils' are to be able to use idiomatic expressions as part of their linguistic repertoire, I found it interesting to explore how teachers relate to this change. When asking the teachers whether their teaching practices concerning idiomatic expressions changed after the implementation of the LK20, the responses indicated that the teachers had not been aware of this specific change in the curriculum until some external source had informed them of it. When asked about this curriculum change, **Teacher 2** and **Teacher 3** stated that:

> **Teacher 2:** I can say something about it because it was a bit funny that you sent your project description because I have a friend who is an English teacher somewhere else in the country… have you seen? she asked me when the curriculum came, have you seen that the curriculum has incorporated something about idiomatic language. If she had not made me particularly aware, I would not have done anything, I would not have changed anything in practice. But because she started asking about this with the idiomatic expressions, I have made some small changes.
>
> **Teacher 3:** I had not noticed the curriculum change until I got the email from you [the interviewer] I think at least, I have to be honest and say that I may not be as concerned with the curriculum as one maybe should be […]. The curriculum is some somehow a bit distant.

(Excerpt 3)

Observable from the responses provided by the teachers, the transition from the LK06 to the LK20 curriculum, which resulted in a competence aim directly concerned with the teaching of idiomatic expressions, reflects that this specific aspect of the competence aim might have gone unnoticed by English language teachers. Two of the teachers share that they became aware of the mention of idiomatic expressions in the LK20 only when it was pointed out to them by a second or third party.

The interviewees further expressed that despite the previous curriculum not having explicitly stated the term 'idiomatic expression', it could have included it more implicitly with a less explicit and more indirect manner of articulation. When asked how they interpret the current curriculum in connection to the competence aim regarding idiomatic expressions **Teacher 1** and **Teacher 3** argued that, from their experience, the teaching of idiomatic expressions was embedded in the previous LK06 curriculum.

> **Teacher 1:** My interpretation of it [the curriculum and the competence aim regarding idiomatic expressions with regards to language], with the previous curriculum… has it not been something about the pupils being able to adapt their communication to different situations? But I interpret it a little bit as a specification of that.

(Excerpt 4)

> **Teacher 3:** They have formulated it a little differently […]. I think that it is a little like what we discussed earlier with it [teaching idiomatic expressions] being a slightly more precise competence aim now than it was before, but that it has actually been embedded in the curriculum before, but that it may not have been presented in the same way then.

(Excerpt 5)

As seen from the excerpts above, idiomatic expressions could have been addressed by teachers when following the previous LK06 curriculum despite the term 'idiomatic expressions' not being explicitly stated as part of a competence aim. As argued by Tomalin and Stempleski (2013) **Teacher 2** and **Teacher 3** (see excerpts 4 and 5) similarly identify that, from their experiences, the teaching of the 'small c' culture element of 'idiomatic expressions' has not been explicitly nor clearly expressed within previous curriculums. Whereas the teaching of idiomatic expressions could have been implicitly embedded within the curriculum, it has only been identified as a competence aim within the LK20. As a result of the absence of clearly

stated and covered ‘small c’ cultural elements within many English language curriculums and textbooks, Tomalin and Stempleski argued there to be a tendency of treating such cultural elements in an anecdotal, peripheral, or supplementary way (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, n.p). Furthermore, they argue that if ‘small c’ cultural elements were addressed at all in English language education, it is to a great extent dependent on the interests and awareness of teachers and students (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, n.p). Thus, there might be a weaker tradition concerning the teaching of ‘small c’ culture elements such as idiomatic expressions. This could be seen in connection to the competence aim regarding idiomatic expressions almost going unnoticed by the teachers and could influence the emphasis teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions.

In the following section, I will be looking into how teachers teaching English in Norwegian classrooms today view and work with idiomatic expressions in light of the LK20 curriculum specifically mentioning the ‘small c’ cultural element idiomatic expressions.

4.2.1 Has the implementation of the LK20 had an influence on the teaching practices of the interviewees?

In order to obtain data that could provide insight into my research question concerning whether the LK20 has influenced the focus teachers place on idiomatic expressions, I asked the interviewees the question; *After the implementation of the LK20, have your teaching practices concerning idiomatic language changed?*

Teacher 2 expressed that they have made some changes to their teaching practices concerning idiomatic expressions as a result of the implementation of the LK20.

> **Teacher 2:** One thing that I have done is that I have made the students more aware of such expressions when we work with texts or listen or watch movies or talk together. It is in a way to bring awareness to it. We have also talked about so-called phrase loans from English which have crept into Norwegian that I hear that the students use, and then we talk a bit about it. For example, students use expressions such as “it is not rocket science”, which is an idiom from the English language. Or they use the expressions “free lunch”, “yes you can borrow my dictionary, but it is not a free lunch”. So, it can be heard, and we can talk about it. I probably don’t correct their written or oral texts and productions differently, but I now use the term idiomatic expressions,

> which I did not use very much before. Because… I have English in grade 1 and 2 and there I have also made some small changes. A bit like I said previously, but there I have also worked more consciously with phrasal verbs and more consciously with collocations such as verbal collocations, but I do not know if it falls completely under your idiomatic expressions. But I have talked a lot about phrasal verbs because they are…phrasal verbs fall a bit under your definition, because we work a lot with formal and informal language so we have explored that some phrasal verbs are fairly neutral while other phrasal verbs are informal and should be replaced with another word… another verb. So that is really what I have done that has been new or a change. I have used the term idiomatic expressions, and I have been a little more aware of it […] so there has been a little more awareness and a little more emphasis on idioms.

(Excerpt 6)

According to **Teacher 2**, the implementation of the LK20, resulted in them making some specific changes to their teaching practices. However, they did share, as previously presented, that had they not been informed about the explicit mention of the term 'idiomatic expressions', they would maybe not have noticed this part of the curriculum, and thus not changed their teaching practices accordingly. After being made aware of the explicit mention of idiomatic expressions, **Teacher 2** expressed that they have made some concrete changes to their teaching practices in order to conform to the LK20. Out of the changes made, they highlighted two specific ones that they have brought into the classroom. Firstly, **Teacher 2** stated that they have been working towards making the pupils more aware of multi-word sequences such as phrasal verbs, collocations, verbal collocations, and idiomatic expressions. The second change they have made is that they now explicitly mention and use the term 'idiomatic expressions' in order to bring more awareness to them. The explicit mention of the term 'idiomatic expression' is a change that **Teacher 2** expressed was a change they consciously made after the implementation of the LK20.

Whereas **Teacher 3** expressed that they had not noticed the change in the curriculum (see excerpt 3) concerning idiomatic expressions until I reached out and asked for an interview which would be centered around their experiences with the teaching of idiomatic expressions before and after the implementation of the LK20.

> **Teacher 3…** if I change something [concerning their teaching practices] then it is perhaps more governed by new textbooks or new exams, also new things that in a way directly affect everyday life. The curriculum is some somehow a bit distant.

(Excerpt 7)

As opposed to **Teacher 2, Teacher 3** expressed that they had not made explicit nor direct changes to their teaching practices regarding idiomatic expressions. They express that they have mostly continued the same teaching practices and programs regarding idiomatic expressions as they had before the LK20 came into effect. However, that is not to say that they have not or refrained from teaching idiomatic expressions. As addressed previously, in section 4.2, when asked about their thoughts on the fact that the teaching of idiomatic expressions has become its own competence aim, **Teacher 3** expresses that it has been their experience and impression that the teaching of idiomatic expressions has implicitly been a part of the previous curriculum. **Teacher 3** further stated that the topics and teaching points they decide to include in their teaching practices might, to a greater extent, be governed by the implementation of new textbooks or the contents of exams rather than by the curriculum. If referring to Figure 4 presented in section 3.3, I wanted to find out what experiences the teachers had in terms of how the teaching materials address idiomatic expressions. Unfortunately, this did not result in a great deal of data as I found the teachers opinions about this topic to be less voiced. However, as can be observed from excerpt 7, Teacher 3 expressed that they find themselves to be more governed by textbooks or exams in terms of the elements they place a focus on in the classroom.

Teacher 1 shared their experiences of the new exams and stated that they have observed that the exam questions have been reworked to conform to the new competence aims defined by the LK20. The experiences **Teacher 1** had with the new exams came from a trial version as well as a recent exam some of their pupils completed.

> **Teacher 1:** What we saw with the new exam post LK20 both the trial-version and also in the one some of the pupils sat through this autumn, I found that it was quite many cases where the pupils were asked to say the same things, but in different ways, and if possible, through using idioms. It seems as if there is, at least in with the listening tasks in the part of the four-part exam, about twenty to twenty-five tasks where many

> of them contain specific short listening text that are simply about knowing some examples of such things.

(Excerpt 8)

From the experiences shared by **Teacher 1**, it was expressed that the competence aim regarding the use of idiomatic expressions is reflected within the new exam. If referring to the statement made by **Teacher 3** in excerpt 7, this change found to be present within the new post LK20 exam format could affect whether they would find a focus on idiomatic expressions to be of relevance when teaching.

From what they found when reviewing the exam, there were multiple cases where the pupils would have to show that they were able to express the same point using different word combinations, but also by using idiomatic expressions. The expressed notion that the use of idiomatic expressions has been incorporated into the upper secondary English exam, as well as the LK20 curriculum, could thus result in a greater emphasis being placed on idiomatic expressions. As expressed by **Teacher 3,** the curriculum might in some instances be experienced by teachers to be somewhat distant in terms of their everyday teaching practices. Both **Teacher 2** and **Teacher 3** shared, as previously discussed, that they had not noticed the change in the curriculum which explicitly stipulates that pupils should be able to use idiomatic expressions before having it being pointed out by someone else. Therefore, the specific mention of the term 'idiomatic expression' in the LK20 might not be enough to get teachers to incorporate the teaching of idiomatic expressions in the classroom. As previously discussed, **Teacher 3** stated that if they were to change aspects of their teaching practices, it would, to a greater extent, be steered or influenced by either the introduction of new teaching materials such as textbooks or by new guidelines concerning methods of evaluation, such as exams.

4.2.2 What factors could influence the emphasis and focus teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions?

The interviewees argued there to be multiple different factors that could influence to what extent idiomatic expressions are being taught by teachers in the L2 English language classroom. As stated by **Teacher 3**, they expressed that they are not as concerned with the curriculum as they maybe should be. One possible reason why reform initiatives such as the LK20 are not enacted with consistency and conformity by every teacher following the

curriculum has been proposed to be a result of the different beliefs held by teachers (Levin, 2015, p. 50). According to Levin, teacher beliefs are argued to "influence how and why they may or may not change their practice to incorporate new curriculum, adopt new instruction strategies, or take up new initiatives" (Levin, 2015, p. 50). If applying this argument to the experiences and insight provided by the teachers one could propose the argument that teacher beliefs concerning the relevance and place of idiomatic expressions in L2 language teaching could affect to what extent they are being addressed. As can be viewed from the following excerpt (excerpt 9), the aspect of the English language education that teachers' place emphasis on might differ depending on the personal beliefs of the individual teacher. This notion was expressed by **Teacher 2** in the following excerpt.

> **Teacher 2:** When I started as a teacher I was very interested in languages, to teach language and expressions and phrases and words and things like that. But, so… in the beginning it is quite typical… but then later, I joined the international English teachers' association, in the section called language. But gradually I became more and more interested in the other aspects of the English subject, namely culture, politics and history and discussing interesting questions in English and I became more concerned with the content and culture […] so I was more linguistically focused the first years I was a teacher and then gradually I think other things were more fun and more important in life than that…

(Excerpt 9)

In the excerpt above, **Teacher 2** presents their own experiences concerning the influential role of the individual teachers' interests and beliefs regarding the different topics and elements of the English subject they decide to address in the classroom. Drawing upon their own personal experiences obtained through teaching English at an upper secondary level, **Teacher 2** expresses that the aspects of the English subjects which they have been interested in have changed during the time they have spent teaching. As shared by **Teacher 2**, when they first started teaching, their focus was primarily on the linguistic aspect of the English subject. However, they explain that they gradually started to gravitate more towards the cultural, political, and historical aspects of the subject, before starting to move towards a greater focus on language again.

What the teacher believes to be more important in terms of contents of the English language subject might differ depending on the individual teacher. As can be viewed from the excerpt, **Teacher 2** shares that the elements and aspects of the English subject which they have decided to focus on have shifted or changed during the years that they have been teaching. **Teacher 2** points out that their focus shifted from a linguistic focus with different aspects of language such as expressions, phrases, and vocabulary acquisition being the central point of the subject, to an increased focus on the cultural, political, and historical aspects of English subject. These tendencies coincide with the theories expressed by Fives and Buehl (2012) and Levin (2015) concerning the influence that teacher beliefs have on the different bodies of knowledge the individual teacher choses to introduce their pupils to (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 472). Consequently, some teachers might place a greater emphasis on the teaching of the linguistic and grammatical aspects of the English subject, whereas others might find a focus on the cultural, social, and historical aspects of English to be more relevant. The emphasis placed on idiomatic expressions could therefore vary as a result of the beliefs of the individual teacher.

Additional factors which might influence the emphasis teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions are explained by the teachers in the excerpts below. When discussing their experiences as teachers and what factors might influence the teaching methods, they argue that the response they get from their pupils, as well as the pupils' needs, have an effect on what they as teachers chose to focus on.

> **Teacher 2:** And another element is the response you get from the students and it varies a bit right, because in some classes there might be a greater need for, or more response when, working with language, while with other students you can get more response on topics, exciting social themes or exciting literary texts or film analysis so it has a bit to do with the response you get from the students as well and it can change from class to class and year to year.
>
> **Teacher 1:** The last dimension to bring it in is the respondents we have out there in the classroom, how they will react to what they are exposed to contra what teachers are trained to familiarize themselves with. Because I think that gap will be able to get bigger and bigger.

(Excerpt 10)

In excerpt 10, **Teacher 1** and **Teacher 2** both argue that the responses and reactions they get from the pupils influence the choices they make in the classroom concerning what topics and themes they address and what teaching methods they choose to apply. Consequently, considering the autonomy of teachers concerning how to address the competence aims, idiomatic expressions might not be addressed in a uniform manner amongst all English language teachers. Thus, the context, methods, and, as seen in section 4.1, the lexical items included when teaching idiomatic expressions could greatly vary from teacher to teacher. Furthermore, as will be explored in the next section, the emphasis placed on idiomatic expressions could vary by cause of the beliefs of the individual teacher concerning the applicability of idiomatic expressions.

4.2.3 Should the LK20 competence aim regarding the use of idiomatic expressions be problematized?

Despite the expressed increase in focus concerning the teaching idiomatic expressions as a result of the LK20 (see section 4.2.1), some of the teachers simultaneously expressed that an increased focus on idiomatic expressions in English language education could be viewed as problematic. During the interview, some of the teachers expressed that a focus on teaching idiomatic expressions that are native to the English language could be considered to be problematic. One reason which was expressed in order to support this argument was that the LK20 places a focus on global communication with English being used as a lingua franca. Consequently, a focus on English or American idiomatic expressions could be problematic when the objective of the English language education is for the pupils to be able to communicate with people regardless of their cultural or linguistic background.

When asked what their thoughts were regarding the fact that the teaching of idiomatic expressions has become its own competence aim following the implementation of the new subject curriculum LK20, **Teacher 3** stated that in their experience, the teaching of idiomatic expressions has been embedded in the curriculum before, however, phrased in a different and maybe more vague manner. In response to **Teacher 3's** comment concerning the fact that the term 'idiomatic expressions' is now explicitly stated within the LK20, **Teacher 2** expressed a point of view questioning the competence aim by stating that;

> **Teacher 2:** So, what exactly are we going to teach the students? To sound like a slightly lax native speaker with lots of idiomatic expressions? Because idioms are not neutral, idiomatic expressions often belong to a culture and a language form, so that is my objection, at least I miss a discussion about what kind of English our students should speak and who they should speak to. Because I think that a student who becomes very good and using a lot of idiomatic expressions, will also encounter a global situation and then it can actually lead to communication problems. So the goal is that they should be able to communicate globally. On the other hand, it is kind of a signal that we should try to create native speakers of our students and that is not unproblematic. So one would like to imagine that the goal was that you should function in a kind of... so, no language is neutral but here you try in a way to use the native speakers as a template and not global English which can work in all situations. Because when we talk about, and I think that is a problem, because when we talk about idiomatic expressions, there are idiomatic expressions that are used more in the UK, there are also idiomatic expressions that are used more in the US, but should the objective really be to sound like an American? Is that not a bit problematic when communicating with someone from Japan or Jamaica?

(Excerpt 11)

From this excerpt, I noted that when discussing the teaching of idiomatic expressions, the teachers express the belief that the idiomatic expressions which the LK20 competence aim refers to are British or American. Thus, when presenting their experiences concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions, the teachers discuss them with a perception suggesting that the idiomatic expressions which are to be taught as part of the subject are those traditionally found within a British and American variety of English.

This notion can be observed in the excerpt above (excerpt 11) where **Teacher 2** proposes the argument that the explicit focus that the LK20 places on the teaching of idiomatic expressions are not unproblematic. The expressed reason for this argument is that a focus on the English idiomatic expressions spoken in the United Kingdom and in the United States could counteract the focus the LK20 places on intercultural communication. One of the main objectives of the English subject has been argued to be to help pupils to develop an "intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns" (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). Considering this objective, **Teacher 2** argued

that a focus on American and British idiomatic expressions could constitute a problematic aspect as the objective of the LK20 English language education is not to create native speakers of English.

Furthermore, it was expressed by **Teacher 2** that the teaching of American and British idiomatic expressions could possibly result in pupils experiencing problems with successful communication when having to use English as a lingua franca. During the interview, the teachers expressed what they believe to be a discrepancy between the focus that the LK20 places on global and intercultural communication using English as a lingua franca and the teaching of American and British idiomatic expressions. The cause of this perceived discrepancy is seemingly a result of their impression dictating that the idiomatic expressions which are to be taught, in order for the pupils to accomplish the competence aim, are to be the ones found within American and British English.

However, if one were to examine the LK20 and the competence aim stating that the pupils should be able to use idiomatic expressions, one will notice that the curriculum does not define the term idiomatic expression, nor does it dictate what idiomatic expressions are to be taught as part of the L2 English language education. The LK20 curriculum does therefore not instruct teachers to restrictively place a focus on English and American idiomatic expressions. The lack of specification within the LK20 concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions leaves English language teachers with a great deal of autonomy and self-determination in terms of how to ensure that their pupils reach the competence aim. As a result, the perceived focus on teaching English and American idiomatic expressions, as expressed by the teachers, is not rooted in the LK20 curriculum or the competence aim. Thus, the influencing factor behind this tendency expressed by the interviewees is something other than the LK20 curriculum.

Notwithstanding the fact that the LK20 does not specify that the idiomatic expressions taught in the English subject ought to be British or American, the teachers express that they are still very much influenced by American and British tradition despite acknowledging the focus the new curriculum places on the global aspects of English. This can be seen in the excerpt below.

> **Teacher 3:** Because I am still very much influenced by British and American tradition and history, as it is very central even though one is to focus on the global.
>
> **Teacher 2:** But at the same time, I suspect that it might be done a bit unconsciously through that one views, without being aware of it oneself, British and American

English as the norm and the standard, so one speaks a bit "with two tongues" saying yeah yeah it is global communication and it is lingua franca and all that, but are idioms suitable in a lingua franca? I think that should be questioned.

Teacher 3: It seems like it's a goal to create native speakers, either British or American. I may not have thought so much it before, but I probably have a bias there, almost trying to create some small Americans.

Teacher 2: With American idioms.

(Excerpt 12)

From this excerpt **Teacher 3** expresses that they find themselves to be, to a great extent, influenced by British and American tradition and history when teaching English. Simultaneously, they acknowledge that they are aware that the central focus of English language education is to create and teach the English language from a global and intercultural perspective. They go on to further argue that they find there to seemingly be a goal within the English language education to steer the pupils into obtain language skills resembling that of either native speaker of British or American English. In addition, they communicate that they have experienced their teaching practices to reflect a bias towards American English. **Teacher 3,** with the final comment of the excerpt, expresses that a bias towards English or American English could result in them trying to create native speakers. Thus, if an English teacher was to be under the impression that a British or American variety of English was the standard to which pupils should adhere, this perception could influence what kind of idiomatic expressions they would choose to include in their teaching.

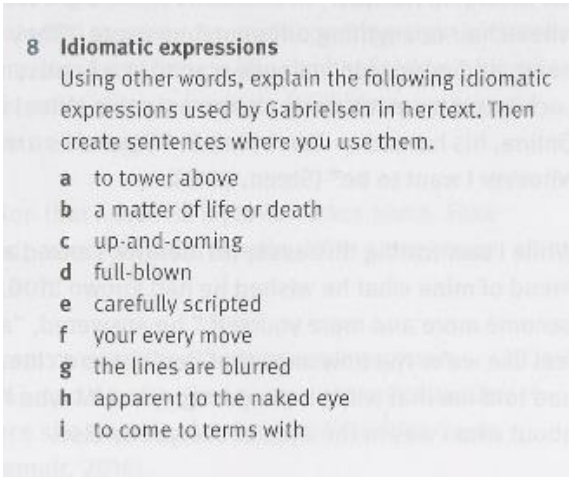
However, if going through the LK20 and examining the descriptors of the central values, core elements, basic skills, and competence aims of the English language subject, one will find that it does not focus on, or mention, that teachers should place a focus on a British or American variety of English. Instead, the LK20 states that one of the central values of the subject is to provide the pupils with "the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background", "help the pupils to develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns", and to make sure that the pupils gain knowledge about language, communication patterns, lifestyles, ways of thinking and global social conditions through an exploratory approach (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). From the excerpts

found within the descriptions of the central values of the LK20, it becomes clear that one of the main values of the English language subject is the development of communicative competence making it so that the pupils will have the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully use English to communicate with people of all cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds.

The descriptors of the core elements pronounce that language learning refers to the development of "language awareness and knowledge of English as a system, and the ability to use language learning strategies" (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). This aspect of the core elements thus places a focus on the pupils gaining knowledge about the English language as a system as well as them gaining insight into different strategies of language learning. The descriptors of the core elements do not specify what variety of English is to be considered the standard. However, it is stated within the core elements that the pupils are to acquire language and knowledge of culture and society through "reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English" (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). According to the LK20, this will further result in the pupils developing intercultural competence, which will enable them to "deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns" (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020).

Thus, if looking into the LK20 in terms of English language acquisition, the pupils are expected to acquire knowledge about the English language and different communicative patterns through an exploratory approach and multiple different mediums, with the purpose being successful communication with people of all cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, I found the curriculum to not dictate or outline that English language teachers should choose to regard a British or American variety of English to be the template or standard for the pupils to obtain. However, during the interview, the teachers expressed what they described as an experienced unconscious bias towards regarding British and American English as the norm and standard for English language education. This is despite acknowledging the focus that the LK20 places on the global aspect and purpose of English language education. Within the previous excerpt, **Teacher 2** states that viewing British and American English as the norm or the standard for English language teaching might be done unconsciously by the teachers. There could, therefore, be other underlying factors influencing the teaching choices, perceptions, and beliefs of English language teachers.

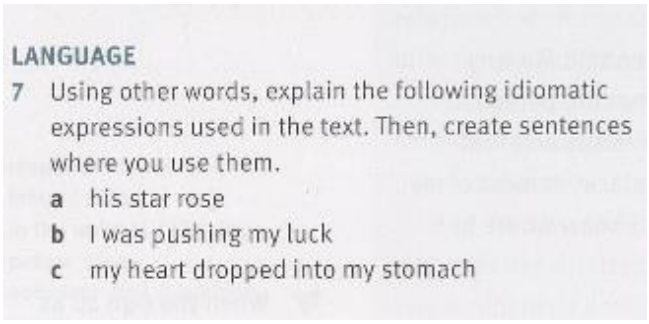
When looking into the four Norwegian English language textbooks; *E1: fellesfaget engelsk, vg1: studieforberedende utdanningsprogram* (2020), *Citizens: Engelsk for studieforberedende utdanningsprogram VG1* (2020), *Access to International English* (2012), and *Access to English: engelsk vg1 studieforberedende program* (2013) I found there to be a significant focus on idiomatic expressions traditionally found within the British and American varieties of English. Examples of this can be viewed within the following excerpts from the textbook *E1: fellesfaget engelsk, vg1: studieforberedende utdanningsprogram (*2020).



8 Idiomatic expressions

Using other words, explain the following idiomatic expressions used by Gabrielsen in her text. Then create sentences where you use them.

a to tower above
b a matter of life or death
c up-and-coming
d full-blown
e carefully scripted
f your every move
g the lines are blurred
h apparent to the naked eye
i to come to terms with

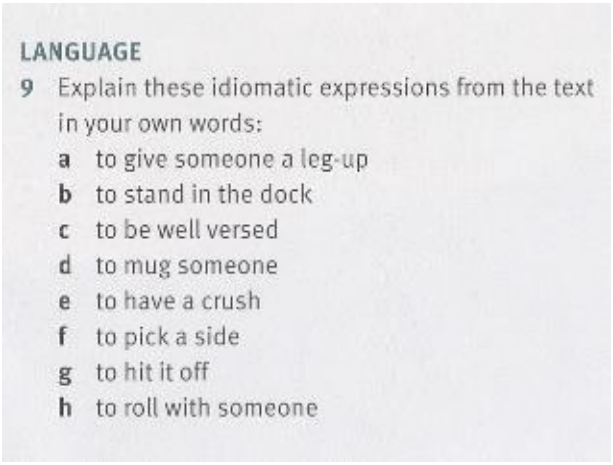


LANGUAGE

7 Using other words, explain the following idiomatic expressions used in the text. Then, create sentences where you use them.

a his star rose
b I was pushing my luck
c my heart dropped into my stomach

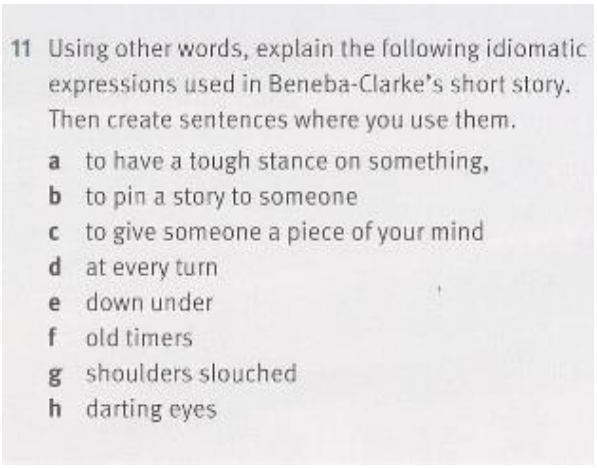
(Bakke, Birkeland, Oltedal, Underwood, 2020, pp. 12 and 30).



LANGUAGE

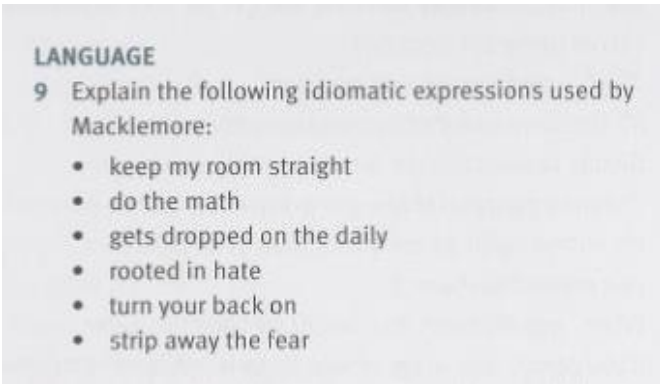
9 Explain these idiomatic expressions from the text in your own words:

- **a** to give someone a leg-up
- **b** to stand in the dock
- **c** to be well versed
- **d** to mug someone
- **e** to have a crush
- **f** to pick a side
- **g** to hit it off
- **h** to roll with someone



11 Using other words, explain the following idiomatic expressions used in Beneba-Clarke's short story. Then create sentences where you use them.

- **a** to have a tough stance on something,
- **b** to pin a story to someone
- **c** to give someone a piece of your mind
- **d** at every turn
- **e** down under
- **f** old timers
- **g** shoulders slouched
- **h** darting eyes



LANGUAGE

9 Explain the following idiomatic expressions used by Macklemore:

- keep my room straight
- do the math
- gets dropped on the daily
- rooted in hate
- turn your back on
- strip away the fear

(Bakke, et.al. 2020, pp. 105, 120, and 230).

The idiomatic expressions presented within these excerpts are ones frequently used within a British or American variety of English. Some tasks in other textbooks are centered around finding English equivalents of Norwegian idiomatic expressions or finding Norwegian equivalents of common British or American idiomatic expressions. However, the overall tendency of the textbooks listed in the paragraph above indicate a focus on idiomatic expressions which occur frequently within American and British varieties of English.

Another possible reason for the experienced influence from British and American English, culture, and history might be rooted in elements and values of the previous LK06 curriculum. Speitz and Myklevold argue that the tradition of placing a focus on the linguistic, as well as the different cultural aspects of Britain and the United States, in terms of the Norwegian English language education, has changed with the transition from the LK06 to the LK20 (Speitz and Myklevold 2022, p. 303). If comparing the LK06 to the LK20, Speitz and Myklevold argues that the former curriculum created a focus on teaching the English language for the purpose of the pupils being able to discuss different social and cultural aspects and values in Great Britain, the USA, and other English- speaking countries, with the term *English-speaking countries* often being understood to refer to countries in which English is recognized as a primary language (Speitz and Myklevold 2022, p. 303). The LK20, however, expresses a less narrow scope in terms of what countries, cultures, and ways of life are to be in the center of English education as well as what communicative situations teachers are to prepare the pupils for (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). In contrast to the LK06, the LK20 uses words such as "intercultural understanding" stating that the English subject should provide pupils with the skills necessary for cultural understanding and communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020).

Considering the expressed experiences and opinions of the interviewees, idiomatic expressions make up a complex and complicated aspect of English language education. Whereas English is the target language, the societal, historical, and cultural focus has, with the implementation of the LK20, shifted away from a tradition focusing on the United Kingdom and the United States, as argued by (Speitz and Myklevold 2022, p. 303). With the LK20, there is now a focus on cultural understanding and communication with the English-speaking world using English as a lingua franca (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). Considering that idiomatic expressions comprise both a linguistic element as well as also making up an omnipresent part of a culture, Liontas argued that teaching idiomatic expressions would present teachers with the unique opportunity to combine the teaching of both language and culture (Liontas, 2017, p. 7). As a result, the teaching of English idiomatic expressions is considered to greatly benefit L2 learners when using the English language to communicate with native or fluent speakers in an authentic communicative setting (Yağiz & Izadpanah, 2013, p. 954). However, as expressed by the interviewees, the LK20 now places a focus on using English as a lingua franca for the purpose of global communication. Thus, the

teachers expressed the need to question the suitability of teaching English idiomatic expressions when using English as a lingua franca, considering the culture and history-specific aspects of idiomatic expressions.

The focus placed on Great Britain and the United States in the previous curriculum, as argued by Speitz and Myklevold (2022, p. 303), as well as the many English and American idiomatic expressions in multiple English language textbooks, could possibly provide insight into the experienced influence of these countries, even after the implementation of the new LK20 curriculum. Whereas the LK06 was concerned with pupils gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully communicate using the English language, one of the main social, cultural, and historical focal points of the LK06 was centered around the UK and the US. However, with the LK20, the teachers are required to provide the pupils with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary for them to gain insight into different cultures and be able to successfully communicate with people of all cultural and linguistic background with English being used as a lingua franca.

This is not to say that the curriculum does not allow for teachers to teach their pupils about the UK and the US. However, considering the phrasing of the LK20 when comparing it to the LK06, teachers are no longer obligated center their teaching around the UK and the US as the term “English speaking country” introduces more freedom for the teachers to choose what to focus on.

4.2.4 Teaching idiomatic expressions in vocational studies

The conversation during the interview also brought about the sharing of experiences concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions in connection to vocation studies. During the section of the interview concerning whether they believe their teaching practiced in particular regarding the teaching of idiomatic have changed after the LK20 came into effect, **Teacher 2** brought forth some experienced working with this topic with pupils studying vocation studies.

> **Teacher 2:** I do not have vocational studies this year, but I had vocational studies last year. And when it comes to learning idiomatic expressions working with advanced vocabulary, one of the students, in a joking manner, said that it was just a waste of time because they found that they are going to speak English with people from Poland in the workplace and cannot talk like that. So the intention behind the students comment

was that one have to speak a little more basic on construction sites or for electricians if they are to work on a construction site and use English… that's what we kind of sell them in a way, the fact that they will need English in a global labor market. So if they are going to speak English in a workplace here in Norway, they must not use too advanced English vocabulary because then they will not understand, so it is much more important, the pupil said jokingly, that they learn to speak as simply as possible, as there is no point to it as they are not going to talk to Brits exclusively. And I think that it was a funny comment in connection with teaching English in vocational classes.

Interviewer: If looking into the Common European Framework for Reference of Language idiomatic expressions are only mentioned at the two highest levels of proficiency, C1 and C2.

Teacher 2: Precisely, and that says something about the students, we would like the students to be able to use more and more advanced language. What we don't do is to see if they can also manage to communicate with people who speaks English at a much lower level than themselves and that the students should bring with them knowledge from A1, A2, B1, B2 levels of proficiency and be able to do as is says in the curriculum, that they should be able to adapt to the situation. However, what is written here is not that you should adapt to the situation by simplifying, what we have here is that you should adapt to the situations based on the level of formality, so formal and informal, right.

(Excerpt 13)

In the excerpt, **Teacher 2** reflects on a situation concerning a comment made by a student when they were teaching English in a vocational class. In the situation presented, **Teacher 2** presents a situation in which, a pupil stated, in what **Teacher 2** describes to be a bit of a joking manner, that they experience the act of learning idiomatic expressions as part of the English language education to be a "waste of time". The reason for this is that the pupil finds the probability of them using English for the purpose of communicating with non-native speakers of English to be a more probable situation than them communicating with native speakers of English. Thus, when using English as a lingua franca to communicate with non-native speakers, the pupil argued that elements of an advanced vocabulary, such as idiomatic expressions, would not be something that they would make use of. The perceived intention

behind the pupils' comment was, according to **Teacher 2**, to explain that when using English as a lingua franca, implementing elements of an advanced vocabulary such as idiomatic expressions, which are only mentioned at the C1 and C2 CEFR levels, could possibly hinder successful or efficient communication in a multicultural and multilingual place of work. Some of these comments and experiences coincide with the previously presented result of the research interviews conducted by Liontas in 1999.

Similar to some of the opinions and experiences of the interviewees of the study conducted by Liontas, the experiences presented by **Teacher 2** express the notion that idiomatic expressions constitute a less relevant aspect of language learning when one is to use English to communicate at a lower level of proficiency. In the interviews conducted by Liontas, some of the participating language instructors expressed that for L2 language teaching, idiomatic expressions did not constitute one of the most relevant aspects of language instruction, especially at lower levels (Liontas, 1999, p. 438). As can be understood from the interaction between **Teacher 2** and the former pupil of theirs, the focus that the LK20 places on the use of idiomatic expressions could be questioned. One of the presented reasons for this is the argument that idiomatic expressions account for a less relevant aspect of successful communication in many authentic communicative settings, in which pupils might find themselves having to use the English language as a lingua franca. The pupils studying vocational studies were brought up as an example for this argument. The interaction **Teacher 2** had with one of their pupils studying vocational studies presents a situation in which a pupil has formed the impression that actively using English idiomatic expressions at a place of work when using the language as a lingua franca to communicate with colleagues could cause significant communicative hindrances and miscommunications. Thus, for the purpose of successful, precise, and unambiguous communication, some of the experiences and opinions presented during the interview reflect the notion that idiomatic expressions could become a hinder when communicating with people at a lower level of proficiency than themselves or when using English to interact with people who are not native or fluent speakers of English.

In the excerpt above, **Teacher 2** expresses an understanding of the LK20 curriculum suggesting that it states that the pupils should be able to adapt to different communicative situations based on their level of formality and not based on the different levels of language proficiency amongst other speakers. If examining the descriptions of the *Basic Skills* of the LK20, it reads that developing oral skills in English means "using the spoken language gradually more accurately and with more nuances in order to communicate on different topics

in formal and informal situations with a variety of receivers with varying linguistic backgrounds" (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). In addition to placing a focus on the ability to adapt one's communicative strategies to the level of formality in order to successfully communicate on different topics, it is also stated that the pupils should be able to communicate with a variety of receivers with varying linguistic backgrounds. The term "linguistic background" is defined by Aron to refer to the fundamental understanding of the principles of the language in question (Aron, 1922, p. 75). The pupils are therefore also expected to be able to adapt and modify their language to successfully communicate with people with varying linguistic backgrounds, whilst at the same time be able to gradually use the English language more accurately and with more nuance. In the excerpt above, **Teacher 2** argues that whereas it is expected that the pupils are able to increasingly use more advanced language, there is not a focus on assessing whether they are also able to successfully communicate with English speakers who find themselves at a lower level of language proficiency than themselves. They further argue that the curriculum does not state that the pupils should be able to adapt to a communicative situation by simplifying one's language, but rather stresses that pupils should adapt to the situation based on its level of formality.

However, within the LK20, the focus on adapting one's language to the receiving part of a communicative situation or setting is stressed on multiple occasions. If looking into the LK20, the competence aim with reference to the use of idiomatic expressions states that the pupils should be able to express themselves in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence through the use of idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). The curriculum further outlines that the pupils should be able to adapt their use of these skills to the purpose, the receiver, or the communicative situation the pupils might find themselves in by choosing suitable strategies (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020). Hence it could be argued that pupils might, as presented in the excerpt above, find themselves in a communicative setting where the purpose, receiver, and communicative situation would suggest that the best communicative strategy would be to not use advanced linguistic elements such as idiomatic expressions.

Furthermore, with the curriculum being a national steering document, teachers are required to work towards preparing the pupils for a wide variety of communicative settings, situations, and levels of formality, as well as a variety of receivers. As pupils develop skills in English and learn to use the language more accurately and nuanced, the curriculum states that the

pupils will also have to develop the skills and strategies needed to adapt their langue to allow for successful communication with a vast variety of receivers with different linguistic backgrounds (The Norwegian Department of Education and Training, 2020, n.p). Following this competence aim, one could argue that the pupils are also expected to be able to successfully adapt and express their intended communicative content in a situation where the receiver has a proficiency level which might be lower than their own.

4.3. Findings summary

Overall, this chapter of the thesis has, in light of theoretical framework and previous research, discussed the data obtained through the group interview. This chapter has explored how three English language teachers address idiomatic expressions in their teaching practices after the LK20 subject curriculum came into effect. The interview has been focused on gaining an insight into whether the implementation of the LK20 curriculum has had an influence on the teaching practices concerning idiomatic expressions. The research data yielded insight into the experiences and opinions concerning how the teachers view the place of idiomatic expressions in the classroom. The main findings uncovered from the group interview concerning this research aim were the following. 1. Teachers might not aware that the teaching of idiomatic expressions has become a competence aim, 2. There are multiple factors which could influence the emphasis teachers place on idiomatic expressions, 3. The teachers found there to be a focus on teaching British and American idiomatic expressions. They further argued that this focus could counter the focus that the LK20 places on global communication where English is used as a lingua franca, and 4. Some of the teachers argued that using advanced language features, such as idiomatic expressions, could counteract successful and efficient communication in a multicultural and multilingual workplace.

In the following chapter, I will conclude my research by answering the research questions of this thesis, present the implications and contributions of my findings, and give my suggestions for further research.

5. Conclusion

As part of this master's thesis, I have investigated how idiomatic expressions are addressed by teachers in upper secondary English language education after the implementation of the LK20 subject curriculum. I chose to focus on this topic of research as the LK20 contains a competence aim explicitly stating that pupils are to be able to use idiomatic expressions when communicating with others and expressing themselves in English. Considering the research aim of my thesis, I composed two research questions:

(3) How much emphasis is put on the comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions amongst language teachers in the Norwegian upper secondary English education?

(4) Has the implementation of the LK20 curriculum influenced the focus teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary school?

In the following paragraphs, I will be presenting an overview of the main findings of my qualitative research.

When exploring the first research question, I found that the emphasis teachers place on the comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions varied as a result of multiple different factors. From the data, I found that one of these factors concerns how teachers decide to define idiomatic expressions. Some of the teachers expressed an understanding of idiomatic expressions which was broader than multiple existing definitions presented by people such as Cooper (1999), Burgess and Sørhus (2013), Spears (2007), Weinreich (1969), or dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster, or the Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary. The interview data showed a tendency to include various forms of lexical strings or multi-word sequences such as phrasal verbs (e.g. *ask around, break in, get together, work out),* or lexical bundles (e.g. *on the other hand, in my opinion, in order to)* when teaching idiomatic expressions. However, whereas it is argued that idiomatic expressions constitute a separate aspect of multi-word sequences it has also been proposed that other multi-word sequences, such as phrasal verbs, could be considered idiomatic (Gairns & Redman, 2011, p. 5). Furthermore, having teachers combine the teaching of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs has been argued to have linguistic, as well as pedagogical, benefits (Gairns & Redman, 2011, p. 5) (see section 4.1).

Thus, how teachers define idiomatic expressions could have an impact concerning the emphasis teachers place on them in the classroom. If teachers define various forms of figurative lexical strings and combinations of words as idiomatic expressions, there could be a greater emphasis placed on them when teaching (see section 4.1). However, as the curriculum does not provide a definition of idiomatic expressions, exactly how teachers should define them varies from individual to individual.

In terms of the emphasis that the teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions, the interview data, presented in section 4.2.2, illustrates that another element influencing what elements they decide to address in the classroom is the needs and responses of pupils in different situations and study programs.

Another factor which was argued to influence the emphasis placed on the teaching of idiomatic expressions is the individual beliefs of the teacher (see section 4.2.2). Despite the curriculum explicitly stating that pupils should be able to use idiomatic expressions when communicating in English, the interview data indicates that the beliefs and interest of the individual teacher could influence the emphasis they place on idiomatic expressions. This was further supported by Levin (2015), as he argued that one reason as to why reform initiatives are not "taken up or enacted with fidelity by every teacher" could be a result of the beliefs held by the individual teachers (Levin, 2015, p. 50). Thus, if following the argument presented by Levin, the beliefs held by the teachers concerning the relevance or place of idiomatic expressions could influence how, as well as whether they decide to change their teaching practices to incorporate the changes made to the LK20 curriculum.

Furthermore, in section 4.2.3, I discussed the data suggesting that some of the teachers expressed that they found a focus on idiomatic expression to possibly counteract or contradict the focus that the curriculum places on global communication with English as a lingua franca. The reason for this argument was found to be rooted in the teachers' perception that the curriculum places a focus on idiomatic expressions found within a British or American variety of English. Thus, these idiomatic expressions were argued to hinder successful communication when using English to communicate with non-native speakers of English. However, as was found when exploring the curriculum, it does not specify which idiomatic expressions are to be taught. However, as can be found when looking at the interview data, there are other factors which could have influenced this collective perception. The teachers could have been influenced by the manner in which the textbooks address idiomatic expressions as the

idiomatic expressions used in the textbooks I explored (see chapter 4.2.3) all placed a focus on idiomatic expressions typically associated with a British or American variety of English. Furthermore, considering the fact that all three of the teachers were colleagues, they could have influenced or shaped each other's perception concerning the teaching of idiomatic expressions.

Moreover, as discussed in section 4.2, the interview showed that the competence aim concerning idiomatic expressions could have gone unnoticed by the teachers. All the teachers that partook in the interview stated that they had not noticed this adjustment concerning idiomatic expression in the LK20 curriculum before having it mentioned by a second or third-party person. Consequently, whether teachers address idiomatic expressions in the classroom could be on account of their knowledge and familiarity with the LK20 curriculum. However, the interview showed that the teachers expressed a perception indicating that the teaching of idiomatic expressions has been present in previous curricula, however not explicitly stated.

To recapitulate, in terms of the first research question, the interview showed that in the matter of the emphasis placed on the comprehension and production of idiomatic expressions amongst the teachers, there are multiple factors which could influence this. Some of the factors expressed in the interview concerns the beliefs of the individual teacher, whereas other factors pertain to whether they were aware of the curriculum change, or how they understand the term 'idiomatic expression'.

Secondly, with the second competence aim, I sought to gain insight into whether the implementation of the LK20 curriculum influenced the focus teachers place on the teaching of idiomatic expressions. Despite the teachers expressing that they did not immediately notice the change in the LK20 curriculum, they expressed that they did introduce changes to their teaching practices after being made aware of the curriculum change (see section 4.2.1). However, the extent to which idiomatic expressions are addressed in the classroom seems to rely on the teachers' perceptions concerning the relevance and applicability of these expressions in connection with language communication. The findings from the interview, which were addressed in section 4.2.3, showed that some of the teachers experienced idiomatic expressions to be a less relevant aspect of language teaching if the objective is for the pupils to be able to successfully communicate with other speakers regardless of their linguistic background. However, the teachers further express that they had made some changes to their teaching practices to comply with the LK20, with the focus being on awareness and knowledge

concerning idiomatic expressions (see Excerpt 6, section 4.2.1). Similar to the research conducted by Liontas (1999), which was addressed in section 2.4, the teachers similarly expressed, see section 4.2.4, that there are more essential communicative features to focus on at lower levels than idiomatic expressions.

5.1 Implications and contributions of the findings

This study has shed light on how a group of upper secondary teachers view and address idiomatic expressions as part of English language education. The main implication of this study is that despite the curriculum stating that pupils should be able to use idiomatic expressions, it does not provide teachers with a framework outlining how the term 'idiomatic expressions' should be defined. Moreover, the curriculum does not outline what idiomatic expressions are to be taught. As a result of this, the study showed that the teachers have a great deal of autonomy in terms of how to define and address idiomatic expressions in the classroom. Considering the multiple arguments concerning how idiomatic expressions should be defined as well as what lexical elements should be included when addressing them in the L2 classroom, how idiomatic expressions are presented to pupils can vary based on the teacher's perception.

Furthermore, this study has shown that the way teachers define idiomatic expressions with regards to the LK20 competence aim addressing idiomatic expressions has an influence concerning how relevant they perceive the teaching of idiomatic expressions to be. If taking these findings into consideration, one could question whether this challenge concerning the lack of clear definitions of terminology found within the curriculum could extend to other linguistic terms as well. From the findings of this thesis, it can be noted that the autonomy teachers' have concerning how to define different terms within the curriculum affect the elements they chose to teach, how relevant they find them, as well as how they chose to address them. This could result in the same terms and competence aims being interpreted in a vast variety of ways by teachers depending on factors such as the influence of their colleagues, their teacher education programs and the beliefs of different teacher educators, teaching materials, and the individual beliefs of the teachers. Thus, I find this to be an important matter to be aware of.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

The study conducted and presented as part of this thesis only offers research data obtained through one qualitative group interview with three teachers. As a result, my primary suggestion for further research would be to widen the scope of the research and conduct additional interviews with a larger group of participants in order to gain a broader perspective on the topic. With a larger sample of participants, one will be able to gain a more complete and extensive insight into the teaching of idiomatic expressions in upper secondary school. Another suggestion for further research that arises from this study is to look into how, as well as which, idiomatic expressions are being taught in schools. In the present study, it was found that the teachers participating in the interview experienced there to be a focus on teaching idiomatic expressions used within a British or American variety of English. It could thus prove valuable to conduct further research exploring the underlying factors behind this perception, and whether these experiences expressed by the teachers is ingeminated or supported by other English language teachers. Furthermore, considering that the teaching of idiomatic expressions has not been explicitly stated in previous curriculums, but was written into the LK20, it would prove interesting to research how this competence aim is addressed by teachers in practice.

Furthermore, as expressed in the previous section (section 5.1), the lack of definitions of linguistic items within the curriculum has resulted a great deal of flexibility amongst teachers regarding how to define, and thus apply, these terms in the L2 classroom. Accordingly, I find it to be of value to further research teachers understanding and application of the linguistic terminology found within the curriculum and the possible effects of this.

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Appendix

Appendix 1- Information letter

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

"Idiomatic expressions in Upper Secondary School after the implementation of the new curriculum LK20"

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hvordan innføringen av den nye læreplanen LK20 har påvirket læreres arbeid med idiomatiske utrykk i engelskundervisningen. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet mitt med dette prosjektet er å undersøke hvordan innføringen av den nye læreplanen LK20 har påvirket læreres arbeid med idiomatiske uttrykk tatt til betraktning at det å kunne bruke idiomatiske utrykk er et læreplan-mål som ikke har blitt presisert i den tidligere læreplanen LK06. Ettersom bruk av idiomatiske utrykk nå har blitt en del av den nye læreplanen for den videregående opplæringen, der læreplanmålet utrykker at elever skal kunne "Express himself or herself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation" (UDIR, 2021), ønsker jeg å intervjue lærere som underviser på dette nivået og tilegne meg innsikt angående hvordan dette har påvirket undervisningspraksis. Resultatet av intervjuet vil forhåpentligvis si noe om hvordan lærere nå, etter innføringen av LK20, arbeider med idiomatiske uttrykk i engelskundervisningen. Dette forskningsprosjektet inngår i en masteroppgave for en lektorutdanning i språkfag.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Høgskolen i Innlandet er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta fordi du jobber som lærer i engelsk på en videregående skole og din institusjon har takket ja til å bidra i prosjektet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta innebærer det ett intervju der kun lyd blir tatt opp. Lydfilene vil oppbevares på Nettskjema diktafon, og er godkjent av NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata) for å ivareta personvern. Lydfilene slettes etter transkribering.

Det er frivillig å delta

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 prosjektansvarlig student og eventuelt veiledere som vil ha tilgang på dataene. Lydfilene som samles inn gjennom intervjuene vil oppbevares på Nettskjema diktafon, og er godkjent av NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata) som vil sørge for å ivareta personvern og lydfilene slettes etter transkribering. Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon ettersom jeg ikke kommer til å inkludere personlige opplysninger i oppgaven.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er mai/juni 2022. Alle personopplysninger om deg, navn på samtykkeskjema samt lydfilene samlet inn under intervjuet vil makuleres og slettes ved prosjektslutt. Dine bidrag gjennom intervjuet vil ikke kunne person identifiseres i masteroppgaven.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan 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 behandlingen 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 Høgskolen i Innlandet har NSD – Norsk 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:

Høgskolen i Innlandet ved *Ylva Dagsdottir (student)- mobil: 41487215 eller på epost ylva-dag@hotmail.com, Sylvi Rørvik: sylvi.rorvik@inn, Hege Larsson Aas: hege.aas@inn.no.*

Vårt personvernombud: Anne Sofie Lofthus på epost forskning@inn.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 (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Sylvi Rørvik

Hege Larsson Aas *Ylva Dagsdottir*

(Forsker/veileder) (Master student)

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *[sett inn tittel]*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

å delta i intervju

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

---

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 2- Teacher Interview Guide

In this interview I would like to gain further insight into:

- How do teachers conceptualize idiomatic expressions?
- How does LK20 address idiomatic expressions?
- How do teachers work with idiomatic expressions after the implementation of LK20?
- How does teaching materials, such as textbooks, address the topic of idiomatic language and expressions?

(Conceptualize the study, "Idiomatic expressions in English language teaching after the implementation of LK20").

Section one- Conceptualizing Idiomatic expressions

1. What is your understanding of idiomatic expressions?
2.

Section two- Idiomatic language after the implementation of LK20

Express himself or herself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation. (UDIR, 2021).

1. In what way do you interpret the curriculum with regards to idiomatic expressions?
2. What are your thoughts on the fact that the teaching of idiomatic expressions has become its own competence aim following the implementation of the new subject curriculum LK20?

Section three- Teaching practices concerning idiomatic expressions before and after LK20

1. How do you work with idiomatic expressions in the classroom?

2. After the implementation of LK20, have your teaching practices concerning idiomatic expressions changed?

Section four- Teaching material changes as a result of LK20

1. What is your experience when it comes to how the teaching materials, such as textbooks, address the topic of idiomatic language and expressions?
   1.1 Do you agree with how idiomatic expressions are addressed in these teaching materials? Why? Why not?
   1.2 Do they reflect your own ways of teaching idiomatic expressions?