



## English Didactics in Norway: A Propaedeutic or Parasitic Discipline?

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### Abstract

Since English didactics has a relatively short history in Norway, exploring its nature, scope, academic identity, definition, status, and *raison d'être* is an ineluctable necessity. This article sets out to answer a simple yet fundamental question about English didactics: Is English didactics a propaedeutic discipline or a parasitic discipline? We argue that English didactics is warranted to address three interrelated issues if it purports to establish itself as a propaedeutic discipline. First, English didactics needs to demarcate and delimit its disciplinary boundaries with other adjacent disciplines which feed into it. Second, delineating the ontological axioms and epistemological underpinnings as well as the methodological apparatus which distinguish English didactics from other closely related disciplines is warranted. Third, through invoking intellectual capital and scientific findings of other disciplines, English didactics must aim to generate its own novel theoretical and practical knowledge. This article calls for more attention to expounding and theorizing English didactics than currently conceptualized.

*Keywords:* English didactics, propaedeutic discipline, parasitic discipline, adduction fallacy, reduction fallacy

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## Introduction

English didactics is a young yet emerging area of scientific and professional inquiry in the Norwegian context. Even though English studies enjoys a relatively long past in Norway, English didactics as an academic discipline has a very short history. English didactics has been gaining momentum in leaps and bounds over the past 30 plus years. Nonetheless, it is not an overstatement to say that it is in its formative years and still does not show characteristics of maturity. This means, among other things, that it behooves us to critically reflect upon and constantly ponder several pivotal questions about English didactics, viz. Is English didactics a science or an art of the English teaching-learning process? If it is a science, what kind of science is it? Is English didactics a human science or a social science? How does English didactics define itself vis-a-vis other cognate disciplines? Which one is a priority for English didactics: English teaching-learning theory, English teaching-learning practice, or both? What are the milestones that English didactics has achieved since its inception in Norway? What is the nature of knowledge that English didactics seeks to generate? What theoretical trends, practical orientations, methodological heuristics, scientific research programs, and organizing conceptual grounds currently are, or historically have been, popular in English didactics? What is the disciplinary terminus of English didactics? How could Norwegian academics eschew disciplinary fragmentation of English didactics over time? What is the connection between English didactics and *Bildung*-centered didactics? What is the subject matter and specific epistemic content of English didactics: learning English, teaching English, or a nexus of learning and teaching English? How should English didactics discourse community identify themselves: as researchers, practitioners, or something else? Is English didactics an idiographic or a nomothetic science? What prevailing paradigmatic way of thinking informs and guides English didactics today? How to reconcile between scientific facts and pedagogical praxis in English didactics? What is the knowledge base that English didactics purports to generate and disseminate? What is the relationship between English didactics and other school subjects such as Norwegian didactics? Is there a researcher-practitioner divide in English didactics? Is there a theory-practice void in English didactics? What should the content of English didactics curricula be? Is English didactics responsive to important societal and public expectations? What kinds of research questions should English didactics be addressing? What kinds of problems should English didactics be finding a solution to? What role do curricular concerns and thinking play in fashioning English didactics? Does English didactics furnish a theory of practice or a theory for practice? How likely is it that English didactics becomes bifurcated to two independent enterprises, that is, scientific English didactics versus practical English didactics? What is the relative place of English didactics in Norwegian universities and the academy? How much disciplinary knowledge of English didactics is, or should be, impacted by extra-academic influences of governmental bodies such as the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir)?

This is an indicative, and not intended to be exhaustive, set of open questions which should be entertained if English didactics intends to be an autonomous and

accountable discipline with potential societal relevance, academic appeal, and practical implications in Norway. On this note, some researchers have endeavored to define what English didactics is (Rindal & Brevik, 2019b), what English is (Rindal, 2014), how English is approached in Norway as a school subject and a language (Rindal, 2020), history of English didactics in Norway (Simensen, 2011, 2018, 2020), development of the school subject English (Gundem, 1990), and state of the art developments in English didactics (Rindal & Brevik, 2019b). Yet, (meta) scientifically predicated questions are given short shrift in the extant literature. Similarly, the impact or implications of meta-scientific questions thus far has not been the subject of inquiries in any systematic and coherent way. Within present space limitations of a single article, therefore, our argument focuses on only one fundamental meta-scientific question: Is English didactics a propaedeutic or parasitic discipline? More specifically, three sub-questions that we would like to entertain are a) how English didactics - a practice-mediated and scientific domain of knowledge - defines its disciplinary watersheds with other parent disciplines such as English linguistics, general didactics, English literature, second language acquisition, English language teaching, educational psychology, and so forth b) what are the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions in which English didactics is anchored and c) what are, or better what should be, the properties and distinguishing contributions of English didactics to generating new parcels of scientific and professional knowledge, frameworks, categories, and concepts as a coherent epistemic whole that its audience, including researchers, students, and practitioners, could invoke, however tangentially but deliberately, in their research inquiries and pedagogical practices.

It is our contention that addressing this seemingly taken-for-granted array of questions will emancipate English didactics from being viewed as a portmanteau discipline which is a handmaiden to its parent disciplines. More importantly, leaving these questions unanswered is not conducive to attaining the status of a propaedeutic discipline that identifies, analyses, and serves the practical and concrete needs of teaching and learning English in Norwegian educational settings. Nor will English didactics provide a powerful intellectual impetus and scientific standing to researchers who have opted for it as their scientific field of inquiry if we fail to recognize the importance of constant theorization, reshaping, and (re-)demarcation of its scope and status. In this article, we will first set forth to briefly explore the status quo of English didactics in Norway and propose a unitary dynamic systems framework for a revisionary understanding of English didactics. Then, in order to gain insights for English didactics in the Norwegian context, we will move on to make a short excursus into three main feeder disciplines which contribute to English language teaching internationally. In the third section, we will enunciate English didactics from a three-pronged meta-scientific perspective highlighting intrinsic and extrinsic goals of English didactics, the types of knowledge it establishes, and two fallacies that lie in wait for English didactics. Finally, we conclude the article by offering some reflections on English didactics as a propaedeutic discipline.

## **1. English Didactics in Norway: One Static Figurehead, Three Dynamic Faces**

In this section, we set out to argue that English didactics in Norway has tended to concern itself with three interrelated yet distinct types of activities 1) a scientific discipline in the Norwegian academy, 2) an academic teacher education program of studies in Norwegian universities, and 3) a professional praxis in Norwegian schools. This implies that the term English didactics ipso facto has been approached from various perspectives and perceptions and thus has been subject to different interpretations over time. Still, from another vantage point, it could be argued that English didactics, by its nature, conceivably has branched into three intertwined and multilateral activities by and for academics, students, and practitioners. These three groups reckon with and contribute to English didactics for various reasons, but also appropriate output of English didactics to inform their respective scientific, academic, and professional engagements. It should be emphasized that these three knowledge-based activities are not the same, notwithstanding the fact that they pertain to similar and valid bodies of knowledge. The intended purposes, target audiences, expedient means, types of knowledge, substance of experiences, institutional status, conceptions of knowledge, putative contexts of operation, organized practices, and system of facts or ideas that they are concerned with are differentiated enough to be considered distinct but complementary dimensions of English didactics.

Viewed as a scientific discipline in its own right, English didactics can, and should, be considered an empirical and theoretical area of inquiry which deals with English teaching-learning processes and practices within educational settings as its locus. There is no reason, however, why English didactics should not broaden its focus of inquiry to go beyond the confines of educational settings and investigate how English language learning, and even English teaching, is realized, or could better be realized, in the wild. Second, English didactics is an institutionalized academic field of study in many Norwegian universities and teacher education programs that students undertake to earn qualified English teacher status and subsequently embark on teaching English in Norwegian schools. Third, English didactics seeks to provide relevant theoretical pronouncements and concrete practical frames of reference which are, or should be, made compatible, indeed, congenial with the quintessential and real concerns, preoccupations, constraints, and questions of practicing English teachers in educational settings as part of their professional praxis that entails dealing with learning and teaching English as a school subject.

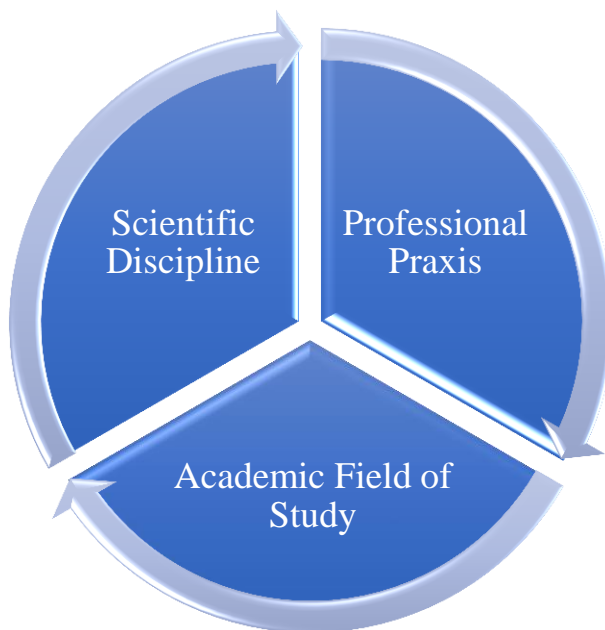
We would propose to look at English didactics as a dynamic, progressive, open, adaptive, and unitary nested system which consists of three interconnected parts that themselves could be viewed as a nested dynamic system par excellence. Each of these sub-systems of English didactics are in constant interaction with other sub-systems and any change, deliberate or otherwise, in one sub-system and its underlying processes and knowledge base will lead ineluctably to changes in the other specialized sub-systems and their attentive processes and practices. For instance, if problem situations arise with English teaching praxis in Norwegian schools, or with gaining new competences and pedagogical English knowledge by

English teachers at tertiary master's level to keep up with implementing new English subject curricula, or in meeting legislative requirements designated by governmental bodies such as the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir), then English didactics, as an academic field of study at teacher education programs in Norwegian universities, will undergo changes which originate at school level. Accordingly, academics and teacher educators at Norwegian universities whose engagement is centered on English didactics will change in step with the other two changing and evolving sub-systems of the English didactics system.

Our unitary systems approach to English didactics implies that three sub-systems hold an organic and interpenetrated connection with one another while enjoying constitutive relationality with one another. This position obviously contrasts with looking at these three dimensions of English didactics as discrete and isolated components without any chain of internal relations holding them together. The three constituent parts of English didactics, in line with the proposed conceptualization, should not be beholden to be juxtaposed in a linear and unidirectional fashion. To put this another way, none of the three constituents of English didactics, we maintain, is granted with unidirectional ebb and flow of influence on, and absolute priority over, the other two components. Otherwise, a chasm, for example, would be occasioned between the repository of scientific knowledge and disciplinary canons that academics generate and what English teachers actually do or are expected to do in classroom settings. Another entailment of perceiving English didactics as a coherent, nested, and dynamic whole, but which has three intricately interconnected sub-systems and undergoes constant changes, is that English didactics is contextualized in a wider social, cultural, political, and ideological milieu rather than being considered a purely academic discipline or a skilled practical activity per se which neither influences nor is responsive to the wider socio-cultural, historical, political, educational, or even ideological doctrines of the Norwegian context. Viewed from this perspective, English didactics not only is a self-organizing albeit interlocking system par excellence with its internal dynamics and mechanisms, but also it is a dynamic and adaptive open system which is influenced by and subjected to external forces and perturbations, and over time exhibits a tendency to equilibrium by virtue of being inextricably embedded in a larger system and adapting to changing circumstances. That is, a web of external inputs and influences are constantly exerted on intra-system dynamics and realities of English didactics by a broad range of social, political, cultural, educational, national, and historical constraints and contingencies of the Norwegian context in conjunction with global structural relations, global social order, global economy, global citizenship, and indeed global discourses of neoliberalism, democracy, social justice, social change, social identity, and so forth (Fairclough, 1999; Pennycook, 2017). On the other hand, looking at English didactics as a self-consistent, indiscernible, and autonomous system means that synergistic and labile interactions between its sub-systems and its ongoing changes ought to be viewed as a seamless totality which grants English didactics a functionality which is invariably and qualitatively more than a mere summation of those sub-systems in isolated and piecemeal fashion.

**Figure 1**

*Dynamic Systems of English Didactics in Norway*



As shown in Figure 1, an internal relationality holds between the three constitutive components of the cycle of knowledge in English didactics and thereupon it is viewed qua an integrated and dynamic ensemble. This, in turn, will permit one to consider ongoing processes, interactions, flows, and the concomitant dynamicity of the tripartite totality rather than focusing on isolated, static, decoupled, and self-contained knowledge constituents. In line with our proposed systemic view of English didactics, a dialectical relationality holds between the three bodies of knowledge (i.e., the scientific discipline, the academic field of study, and professional praxis) and indeed reciprocal determination and relational confluence between those knowledge components is the sine qua non of English didactics. According to this conceptualization, each knowledge component of English didactics, and by the same token English didactics itself, changes with time and hence the past and future of English didactics and its knowledge constituent parts relate to and are actualized in their present state in a specific time and place. The arrow of the knowledge systems of English didactics accordingly moves from the past to the present to the future, displaying a tendency towards a state of dynamic equilibrium over time. This means that English didactics adjusts in response to, and incorporates, changes - both endogenous and exogenous ones - which each of its three knowledge components undergo in order to self-maintain some kind of punctuated balance between those sub-systems while granting unity and continuity to its interconnected and integral knowledge domains system. In this scenario, to

have a full picture of the flux of English didactics, we are warranted to survey its history, delve into its present status, and envisage its future direction. In the next section, we shall discuss representative feeder disciplines to English language teaching with a view to garner fresh insights about English didactics.

## **2. Feeder Disciplines of English Language Teaching**

In this section, the three main feeder disciplines which contribute to the formation and operation of English language teaching (hereafter ELT) internationally are discussed briefly. We do not intend to depict a comprehensive nor chronological picture of ELT nor of English didactics here. The reason behind choosing not to put forward a historical account of ELT, nor for that matter teaching modern languages, is that there is comprehensive published research which has catalogued this (see Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Kelly, 1969; Lodeman, 1887). Similarly, the history of English didactics in Norway has been surveyed by other researchers (e.g., Gudem, 1990; Simensen, 2007, 2011, 2018). Because of space constraints, only three representative feeder disciplines of ELT are discussed here. These feeder disciplines, once incorporated into English didactics, will forge and have a transformative impact on its breadth and depth at “both the micro and macro levels” (Crandall, 2000, p. 34) - meaning not only in the discipline itself but also in practical instructional praxis, professional lives of English teachers, English teacher education programs, and attentive research agenda. Here, the term ELT is used when we refer to teaching and learning English as understood at an international level, whereas English didactics pertains to the de facto usage of the term in Norway.

The first discipline upon which ELT draws is theoretical linguistics - or the scientific study of language - whose aim is to establish the nature of the human language faculty and human linguistic ability. To elaborate, according to Chomsky (1965), linguistics is an inquiry that is primarily concerned with the intrinsic linguistic knowledge of “an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly” (p. 3). The focus of linguistic inquiry has been centered on syntax, which is a set of rules that explains how words are combined to form grammatical sentences. While the nexus between theoretical linguistics and ELT may appear distant or invisible for some practitioners, the former lent the latter investigations, methods, and discoveries (Corder, 1973). For instance, there was use of a data collection method called linguistic fieldwork in the preparations of new language training courses for American military personnel during WWII. Through linguistic fieldwork, theoretical linguists systematically determined basic information about target languages such as vocabulary and the morphological, phrasal, and syntactic structure from the native speakers of the target languages. Such information was then utilized to initiate, plan, and develop foreign language training programs for those American soldiers (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Wilkins, 1999). Another collaborative connection between linguistics and ELT was more visible, and stronger than would be experienced today, when highly-trained theoretical linguists in the US after WWII were hired to study the similarities and differences between the forms and structures of non-English speaking learners’ native languages and those of English and discovered that such similarities and differences impacted the process, level of difficulty, rate, and degree of success in learners’ English language learning processes. Such systematic comparisons helped prepare English language courses for non-English speaking learners who shared the

same mother tongues (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Wilkins, 1999). In addition, the differences in features between English and the learners' mother tongues were repeatedly emphasized in lesson planning, teaching materials design, and classroom practices in the US. The comparison has afterwards been coined "contrastive analysis" (Lado, 1957), which insinuated the application of linguistic knowledge and analysis expertise resulting in "Applied Linguistics." Therefore, the term "Applied Linguistics" was first known as a synonym for contrastive linguistics (Wilkins, 1999) and later for teaching English as a second and / or foreign language (Cook, 2003). While what has been presented so far outlines the chronological, causal development between linguistics and ELT, linguistics, as a scientific discipline, defines and controls the construction of knowledge about language and therefore language teaching, in many cases, through its initial influence on Applied Linguistics (Pennycook, 2017).

This leads to our introduction of the second feeder discipline, termed Applied Linguistics, upon which ELT is primarily based. The post-WWII era witnessed the consistent influence of Applied Linguistics in the teaching of second and foreign languages (Kramsch, 2015; Wei, 2014). Defined as the "theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue" (Brumfit, 1997, p. 39) or, similarly, an "academic discipline concerned with the relation of knowledge about language to decision making in the practical world" (Cook, 2003, p. 125), Applied Linguistics has broadened its domain of inquiry and scope of application with which linguistics is neither the only nor the primary feeder discipline concerned (Davies, 2004, 2007; Kramsch, 2015; Shuy, 2015; Widdowson, 2005, 2006; Wilkins, 1999). There are several language-related real-world problems that people (of course, English language teachers and learners included) experience for which applied linguists can help provide practical solutions. As highlighted by Schmitt and Celce-Murcia (2020, p. 1), "applied linguistics is using what we know about (a) language, (b) how it is learned, and (c) how it is used, in order to achieve some purpose or solve some problem in the real world". One example of the knowledge of language is "phonocentrism" (Pennycook, 2017, p. 135), a linguistic belief in the preeminence of oral language, which was adopted early by Applied Linguistics. The pedagogical implications of phonocentrism includes the discovery of the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, and Communicative Approaches; all prioritize oral language learning. The second type of knowledge, i.e., how language is learned, will be presented under SLA below, while the third one reflects the need for pragmatic competence or "the knowledge necessary for appropriately producing or comprehending discourse", "the knowledge of how to perform speech acts", and "the knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions which govern language use" (Bachman, 1990, p. 42). Based on these three types of knowledge, applied linguists can provide general practical guidance upon which English language teachers can draw for pedagogical practice (Kramsch, 1995, 2015). As concluded by Cook and Wei (2009, p. 4), the "applied linguist is there to serve [English language] teacher's needs". However, it should be remarked that, due to its widened scope and multidisciplinary status, Applied Linguistics should not be equated exclusively with teaching English as a second and / or foreign language (Cook, 2003, 2015; Cook & Wei, 2009; Widdowson, 2006). Nevertheless, its scope includes applied and practical knowledge and combined, these maintain the balance between theory and practice (Pennycook, 2017).



As one sub-field of Applied Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition (hereafter SLA) is the third important discipline whose findings have significantly benefitted language pedagogy enterprise including ELT (Ellis, 1997; VanPatten, 1992a, 1992b). According to Ellis (2015), SLA is the field of inquiry that explores “acquisition or learning of any language other than a learner’s first language that can take place in both second and foreign language contexts” (p. 19). The “second language” in SLA focuses not only on acquiring the second language but also on “any language learned after the L1 has been learned”, be it the third or fourth language, and so on (Gass et al., 2020, p. 3). In consideration of, in response to, recent developments in Applied Linguistics, the field of SLA has broadened its scope to include understanding “... the processes by which school-aged children, adolescents, and adults learn and use, at any point in life, an additional language, including second, foreign, indigenous, minority, or heritage languages” (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 19). What the foregoing shows is that “second language” includes any *additional* language on top of, and subsequent to, first language that a person learns and uses throughout his / her lifespan. In the Norwegian context, studies of SLA broadly explore how Norwegian native speakers acquire languages other than Norwegian or how Norwegian nonnative speakers acquire Norwegian. Therefore, the scope of inquiry within SLA does not include first language acquisition of Norwegian (i.e., L1 Norwegian), nor does it include Norwegian didactics as such (for Norwegian L1 curricula with a historical and disciplinary orientation, see Ongstad, 2015, 2020).

For Gass et al. (2020), SLA is expected to answer questions of, for instance, “how second languages are learned”, “what is learned of a second language and, importantly, what is not learned”, “why English language learners do not achieve the same degree of proficiency in a second language as they do in their native language”, and “why some individuals appear to achieve native-like proficiency in more than one language” (p. 3), where a second language is broadly referred to as “any language(s) learned after the L1 has been learned” (p. 7) whether it be a second or foreign language. Briefly, Ellis’s (2015) definition indicates the setting factor (i.e., either second or foreign language contexts), while Gass et al. (2020) seek to explain what is internalized and what the outcomes possibly are. It is worth mentioning that settings where people acquire a second language include either natural (i.e., informal, naturalistic, or untutored) or instructional (i.e., formal or guided) settings.

Some ongoing, controversial topics which are of interest to both SLA researchers and practitioners include age-related factors in the success of English language learning (Birdsong, 1999; Singleton & Pfenninger, 2018), roles of mother tongues in second language acquisition, comprehension, and processing (Paradis, 2007), and roles and necessity of consciousness in English language learning (DeKeyser, 2003; Schmidt, 1990). Indeed, research on age as a factor in English language learning is of practical importance in that it can inform not only language teachers about appropriate learning objectives and classroom activities but also educational policy makers about at what age one should be encouraged to start learning a second language (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Spada & Lightbown, 2020).

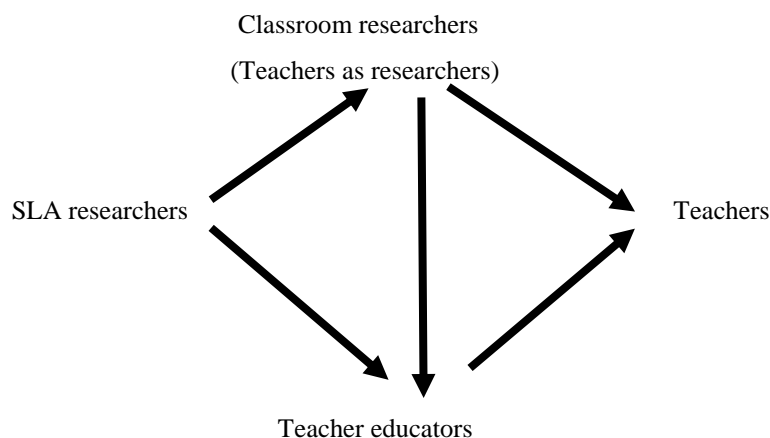
Gass et al. (2020) and Kramsch (2003), however, remind us that the main goal of SLA is not necessarily intended to improve second language pedagogy but to

understand the process (i.e., developmental stages) one goes through and the outcomes (i.e., developing knowledge and skills) one accomplishes when learning a second language. Consequently, second language pedagogy receives scant attention from SLA researchers if it does not influence such process and outcomes. As this article emphasizes ELT and English didactics, we are compelled to briefly introduce here a sub-field of SLA, namely, Instructed Second Language Acquisition (ISLA), which explores “any type of L2 learning or acquisition that occurs as a result of the manipulation of the L2 learning context or processes” where the manipulation includes “an attempt, either by teachers or instructional materials, to guide, facilitate, and manipulate the process of L2 acquisition” (Loewen, 2020, pp. 580-581). In fact, the manipulation is composed of “a wide range of instructional approaches, methods, strategies, techniques, practices and activities” (Housen & Pierrard, 2005, p. 2) that the teacher plans and implements either inside or outside the classroom.

Like Applied Linguistics, its precursor, SLA (and therefore ISLA) deals with real-world issues and problems. That is, this subject of inquiry continues to provide English language teachers with ways to systematically look into problems identified in English classrooms (e.g., “why doesn’t a learner learn English successfully?”, “why don’t all learners achieve the same (high) level of English language proficiency?”, “why do some language-related errors persist in learners’ productions”, etc.) and with optimal practical solutions to such questions regarding the practice of ELT (Kramsch, 2003; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Tarone, 2015). Such questions confirm that, from its inception, SLA has had a strong connection with second language pedagogy (Ellis, 2010, 2021). Ellis (2010) further emphasizes that “arguably, SLA is still at heart an applied rather than a pure discipline” (p. 183) and introduces how SLA research activities can intimately connect practitioners with researchers, practice with theory, and SLA as a field with teacher educators (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Framework for Examining SLA – Language Pedagogy Nexus (Ellis, 2010, p. 190)*



The three disciplines that feed ELT, introduced briefly above, are among several other disciplines whose investigations, methods, and discoveries help and continue to help ELT set up its goals and directions, expand its depth and breadth, and become truly multidisciplinary. Language, by nature, is an immensely complex system; as a result, knowing, acquiring, and using a language is a complex, socio-cognitive process. The same is true for learning English for non-English speaking learners due to numerous factors, some of which are language-related (i.e., a mother tongue and an English language structure) while many are not (e.g., age, motivation, intelligence, attitudes, aptitude, personality, cognitive capacity, educational policy, etc.). As a result, numerous disciplines are warranted to give us a better picture of English language learning and teaching processes and practices and to assist us in coming up with ways to optimally improve both ELT and English didactics. In addition to those three feeder disciplines, there are others whose scientific investigations have influenced how we understand language, language learning, and language teaching directly, or indirectly, through those three disciplines. For instance, the sociolinguistic approach to ELT addresses questions of whether a foreign language should be formally taught and, if so, which language or dialect, whom to teach, and how much to teach (Ferguson, 2006), while extending its inquiry to cover, for instance, identities (Benson et al., 2013; Block, 2014; Norton, 2016), race (Kubota & Lin, 2006), genders (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004; Hruska, 2004), or multilingualism (Canagarajah, 2006; García & Sylvan, 2011; May, 2013), etc. Psycholinguistically-informed ELT deals with questions of when to teach (i.e., learner age, discussed above) and, broadly, how to teach English. “How to teach English” from a psycholinguistic perspective provides pedagogical practices that enhance, for instance, linguistic input (e.g., frequency, salience, and redundancy) (Ellis & Collins, 2009), learners’ motivations in English language learning (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012), and learners’ declarative memory, procedural memory (Ullman & Lovelett, 2018) and working memory (Wen, 2012).

It should be acknowledged that “English” as in English didactics in the Norwegian context, as elaborated by Rindal (2014) and Rindal and Brevik (2019b), has been influenced by a whole gamut of beliefs and premises about language proposed by linguistics through Applied Linguistics. The other constitutive element, “didactics”, as in English didactics, according to Gundem and Hopmann (2002), includes action, reflection, practice, and theory, all rooted in educational sciences (i.e., *utdanningsvitenskap*) and educational research (i.e., *utdanningsforskning*), into the subject. In a similar vein, English didactics in Norway has been fashioned by, and nestled itself between, the Anglo-American tradition of “curriculum studies” and the continental European tradition of “Didaktik” (e.g., see Gundem, 1992, 2008; Hopmann, 2015; Ongstad, 2021; Westbury et al., 2000). Yet, Didaktik still tends to be “the main tradition of didactics and has had the longest and most profound impact” (Gundem, 2000, p. 242) while being invoked as a general theory for subject pedagogy (i.e., *fagdidaktikk*) in the Norwegian teacher education and schooling tradition (Gundem, 2008; Gundem et al., 2003). Didaktik is defined traditionally as a relatively static interconnection that holds “between an educational content (what) and its methods (how) and legitimation (why)” (Ongstad, 1999, p. 173).

Besides, English studies in Norway has experienced what we propose to dub a *didactical turn* over the past three decades or so. By didactical turn in English studies we purport to signify a collective and sustained endeavor by scholars, researchers, teacher educators, policymakers, and even teachers to redefine and reconceptualize the nature of English learning and teaching, its ontological status and epistemological grounding, its conceptual frame of reference, its methodology of teaching and learning, its associated professional praxis, its curricular documents and guidelines, its textbooks, and not least, its methodological rules and methodical instruments which are employed to investigate processual trajectory of teaching, learning and using English in the Norwegian context both within educational settings and in social milieu (for a historical survey of English didactics in Norway see Lund, 2002; Rindal & Brevik, 2019a). Accordingly, English studies in Norway has become an a priori didactical discipline which sets out to cast light on dynamic and complex interrelationships which concatenate school, society, and academy by dint of English learning-teaching nexus and accordingly offers a system of synthetic propositions and spatio-temporally novel solutions that are pedagogical-practical in character - that is, they are a set of descriptive and explanatory statements with didactical overtones about mediated activity of English learning-cum-teaching that stand in fundamental coherence and harmony with a proliferated body of empirical facts that are gleaned, ordered, interpreted, and disseminated. This suggests a strong connection is forged and evolved over time between English as a discipline, teacher education program of study, and professional praxis as we have argued here. However, research on English didactics in Norway has been predominantly classroom-based and school-bound, reflecting the scope of the subject, i.e., “the teaching (and learning) of English, including theory and practical applications”, that Rindal and Brevik (2019b, p. 419) define. In addition, Rindal (2014) reminds us of the sociolinguistic aspect of English and the global role and spread of English (e.g., English as Lingua Franca) that not only has influenced English didactics curricula in Norwegian schools but also has induced a wide variety of mutative changes in English language use in Norway.

While English didactics in Norway presumes the accumulative and multisource knowledge of the subject can be applied pedagogically, as any body of scientific and professional knowledge is expected to be applied in some way in order to be socially, politically, culturally, and institutionally responsible, we believe that such customarily assumed applicability and multisource outlook do not necessarily warrant the field of English didactics to be applied nor transdisciplinary per se. With a view to interdisciplinary input and the feeder disciplines to ELT discussed in brief herein, we determine that English didactics in Norway has a three-fold task if it purports to be in consonance with cognate academic disciplines such as ELT. First, it must appropriate the evidence, propositions, theoretical persuasions, intellectual content, and conceptual apparatus provided cross-disciplinarily by the feeder disciplines and intra-disciplinarily by its own sub-fields to construct a comprehensive, synthetic, and self-consistent conception of the English learning-teaching processes and practices. Second, it must put forward effective ways of individualizing its own unifying principles and tenets to concrete and actual practices, affording both regularity and particularity to English teaching and learning

practices and processes. Third, English didactics must examine its own methods of discovery and research techniques and procedures in order to establish itself as a rigorous scientific and professional discipline with its own distinctive aim, function, significance, transdisciplinary ideals, topics, problems, transcendental purview, and indeed unified and unifying knowledge systems. In this way, knowing what we know about English didactics and knowing how we know in English didactics, two interdependent sides of the same scholarly activity, are given due credit. In the next section, we turn to a brief discussion of three meta-scientific perspectives concerning English didactics.

### **3. Meta-Perspectives on Scientific Discipline of English Didactics**

In this section, we aim to put forward some arguments regarding English didactics from a three-pronged meta-scientific perspective. It is our contention that examining the normative features and metatheoretical underpinnings of English didactics due to their considerable impact on processes and practices of empirical investigations is pivotal for establishing a correspondence, *inter alia*, between universal explanations and particular instantiations, general knowledge and specific knowledge, and more importantly theory and practice. To this end, first we discuss the intrinsic and extrinsic goals of English didactics, then move on to know-that and know-how as two distinct types of knowledge that English didactics must attempt to generate, and finally two fallacies in English didactics are examined.

#### **3.1. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Goals of English Didactics**

It is our contention that English didactics in the Norwegian context - if it intends to eschew being considered a peripheral and dilettantish area of inquiry and to make scientific progress - has no option but to commit itself to a constant (re)articulation of its intrinsic goal to understand and explain the teaching and learning of the English language coupled with defining, anticipating, solving or at least thinking through the real-world problems or utilitarian concerns related to teaching and learning English in educational milieus. Our position is that the epistemic goal of knowledge-enhancement and the extrinsic goal of problem-solving and answer-providing of English didactics do not necessarily stand in exclusive disjunction with one another. English didactics needs to entertain both types of knowledge to develop adequate theoretical-practical models and procedures to account for the complexity and dynamics of English learning-teaching phenomena without continuing to thrive on the basis of reducing its knowledge base to one or the other. Rather, both intrinsic and extrinsic goals of English didactics stand in an independent but complementary relationship to one another, establishing in tandem a systematic and organized body of knowledge about quotidian, and oftentimes disarranged, experiences of teaching and learning English.

Intrinsic and extrinsic goals of English didactics - when viewed through the lens of a propaedeutic discipline - arguably are inseparable aspects of doing English didactics and jointly yield insights which would be impossible otherwise. Consequently, if English didactics as a fledging specialized discipline intends to make steady and inexorable theoretical or empirical progress without being inhibited, it must generate a systematized and new body of factual knowledge and

make a set of interrelated factual propositions about English teaching and learning that hold across the board. Accumulating an incremental repertoire of scientific facts and substantiated observations is brought about by foregrounding the empirical side of investigations in English didactics. On the other hand, the scientific progress of English didactics is not viable simply by the mere accumulation of scientific facts, observational evidence, and empirical data unless a body of theories and theoretical frameworks are engaged to unify, explain, analyze, collate and hence establish systematic connections, provide adequate interpretations, and draw informative conclusions about clusters of empirical observations, generalizations, data, and facts.

The scientific growth of multi-dimensional yet unitary dynamic systems of English didactics in terms of producing quality, new theoretical and practical knowledge by virtue of using scientific methods and innovative patterns of enquiry is contingent upon accumulating knowledge which is motivated by its intrinsic goal of discovering and establishing general novel facts about the English learning-teaching processes. On the other hand, given one of its core functions that defines it as the kind of discipline it is, it is quite reasonable to argue that English didactics caters for relevant and particular practices by reference to unique and contingent educational realities too. One may grant that pursuing the intrinsic theoretical interests and extrinsic practical goals of English didactics as a purposive knowledge-seeking activity, as advocated in this article, entails focusing on the actual, consistent, and relevant influence of English didactics on changing the surrounding educational, scientific, and practical activities at a given time and place. On the other hand, English didactics is supposed to center its focus on the substantive problems and concerns of English teaching-learning situations which are identified, lifeworld solutions which are proposed, and practical actions that are recommended. Therefore, dealing with concrete problems of a theoretical nature and theoretical problems of a concrete nature with varying degrees of generality and generalizability are both sides of the same goal that English didactics should pursue. In the next subsection, we will sketch some aspects of the knowledge base of English didactics.

### **3.2. Know-That Knowledge and Know-How Knowledge About / of English Didactics**

Another meta-scientific observation about the nature of the systematic fund of knowledge that English didactics generates and wields is relatable to a distinction that is made by Gilbert Ryle (1945, 1949) about two different kinds of knowledge, that is, *knowledge-that* and *knowledge-how*. Knowledge-that is knowledge of facts and propositions, knowing that something is the case whereas knowledge-how is a knowledge one knows how to do something. In other words, knowledge-that is acquiring information, facts, and truths that are imparted to us and can be declared propositionally while knowledge-how is a skill, a procedural ability or a battery of dispositions to skillfully act and do things (Ryle, 1945). We submit that English didactics should germinate both *knowledge that* various theoretical accounts and studies yield and *knowledge how* practical preoccupations and cases of classroom practices of English teaching and learning can be addressed. We do not, however, propose to claim that these two knowledge categories inevitably are exclusive of one another. Contrary to the prevailing view, knowledge-that and knowledge-how are

two complimentary standpoints that jointly form the scientific and systematic knowledge base of English didactics and, in turn, bring organization and order to the flux of observational evidence and subjective experiential data that are collected about a rich matrix of English teaching and learning processes and practices.

From the vantage of the framework proposed here, English didactics goes beyond the province of pure theoretical knowledge (i.e., know-that) that consists of context-free assertions, factual propositions, empirical generalizations, and value-free laws with universal validity. Likewise, English didactics transcends the domain of pure practical skill (i.e., know-how) that consists of context-dependent observations, experiential precedents, value-laden exigencies, and coherent interpretations. Although know-that knowledge and know-how knowledge that English didactics affords are distinguished here, it is arguably the case that the relation between them when it comes to the English teaching-learning nexus is mutually constitutive. Following from this, coalescing these two kinds of knowledge - seeking general laws and commonalities and engaging with concrete structured patterns and particularities - brings about an emergent scientific and professional knowledge termed English didactics. Accordingly, English didactics deals with objective qualities of generalizable descriptions, stateable regularities, existential assertions, and universal principles about austere scientific study of English learning and teaching processes. Equally important, English didactics is bestowed with demonstrative qualities of effectiveness and meaningfulness about the real and experienced world of the English classroom and the attentive practical activities and orientations. In other words, English didactics sets itself a two-pronged task of articulating factually *what is* and evaluatively *what ought to be* English learning-teaching processes and practices.

Scientific progress of a theoretical or practical nature of English didactics, admittedly, could be accomplished by simultaneous accumulation of factual knowledge and accounting for that factual knowledge in a recursive fashion over time. Whereby, English didactics would be well-positioned to make scientific generalizations and develop novel theories and conceptual models about English-related phenomena while not losing sight of the context-specific and locally situated particularities and unique idiosyncrasies that are part and parcel of dealing with any culture-cum-human oriented activity such as learning and teaching English in the wealth and fullness of sociohistorically-fashioned educational ambients. Admittedly, the knowledge-that and knowledge-how of English didactics complement and do not supplant one another and their co-agentive interplay and relational unity obviates the inveterate division between context of discovery (i.e., theory) and context of application (i.e., practice) in English didactics.

Additionally, combining knowing-that with knowing-how profitably yields insights which are relevant and useful to the particular context and actualities of the English teaching-learning process while honoring objective descriptions, scientific explanations, parsimonious principles, theoretical generalities, and the empirical verifiability of data across specifiable contexts of the English learning-teaching enterprise. Indeed, our proposition that English didactics is warranted to reckon with both knowledge-that and knowledge-how in concert with one another exemplifies

the fact that neither knowledge-that nor knowledge-how alone is adequate to provide a veridical account of the English-oriented practices, issues, needs, concerns, and problems associated with the English teaching-learning processes. It is perhaps uncontroversial to claim that the *materia medica* of English didactics is engendered by a dialectical interchange between the centrifugal push of the generality and the centripetal pull of the particularity of its scientific knowledge claims. Similarly, a proposition could also be made about the (seemingly) inexhaustible realities of English learning-teaching processes and practices, wherein a harmonious fusion of propositional knowledge (i.e., knowledge about universal) and practical knowledge (i.e., knowledge of particular) is entailed. Following on from this discussion the next sub-section discusses two instances of defective reasoning about the relationship between English didactics and its foundation disciplines.

### 3.3. Adduction Fallacy and Reduction Fallacy in English Didactics

Another meta-scientific point that needs to be recognized pertains to the issue that doing English didactics, like any other form of doing science, is a human activity with all its complex factors and multifaceted aspects and is thereby susceptible to postulating confounding suppositions and taking fallacious ideas for granted. We propose that English didactics in Norway has a proclivity for committing two fallacies: a) the adduction fallacy and b) the reduction fallacy. By adduction fallacy, we mean the assumption that English didactics does not have an autonomous identity, characteristic principles, and distinguishing ethos as a scientific and professional discipline *sui generis*, but is a miscellaneous and discernible aggregate of metatheoretical, theoretical, conceptual, analytical and methodological categories which are imported and added in an unmediated and indiscriminate fashion to the field from its discipline-bound progenitors including general didactics, English linguistics, English literature, second language acquisition, and so forth.

Considered in line with the adduction fallacy, English didactics nominally is a disciplinary rubric, yet is devoid of the juggernaut of synthesis that is capable of interrelating and fashioning all insular inputs and discrete academic scholarship from other contributing disciplines into an integrative and architectonic whole to be used by researchers, students, and practitioners. English didactics therefore is not considered a coherent nor mediatory academic field with a grand paradigmatic umbrella and *sui generis* scholarly agenda which simultaneously unifies and differentiates its distinct characteristics. Rather, English didactics, according to the adduction fallacy, is viewed as a heteronomous and heterogenous field of inquiry whereby exogenous disciplines impose their necessarily fragmentary and discursive knowledge - or what we might venture to term “conceptual blinders” - unilaterally on all elements of the polythetic reality of the English teaching and learning processes and practices. Correspondingly, English didactics does not have its own unifying ontological, epistemological, conceptual, and methodological *bona fides*. But, as an amorphous and degenerative field with porous boundaries and a nebulous academic agenda, English didactics is constituted entirely and exclusively by the myriad discrete disciplinary domains it is dependent on for its *modus operandi*. Consequently, there is no flow of knowledge from English didactics to its diverse



and transgressive feeder disciplines, nor is any novel and original corpus of knowledge generated by English didactics on its own as such.

By reduction fallacy, we mean the assumption that English didactics is viewed as reducible wholesale to, or even is identical with, its split-off foundation disciplines such as English linguistics, English literature, second language acquisition, general didactics, and so on. In this way, each of the parent disciplines which contributes to English didactics serves as a synecdochic representation of it whereby English didactics loses its autonomous identity with no defining criteria of its own. This usually means English didactics is ontologically reducible to, or is nothing more than, the scientific domain of general didactics, for example. Therefore, observational techniques, research methodologies, theoretical frameworks, conceptual apparatus of, for example, general didactics could adequately describe, understand, and explain the subject matter, quotidian concerns, and problematic situations which fall within the scientific and professional domain of English didactics. In effect, the misguided idea of the reduction fallacy presupposes English didactics and its associated knowledge base are isomorphic, if not ontologically identical, with each one of its major contributing disciplines. The differences and specificities between English didactics and its feeder disciplines, the argument goes, are eliminated, or regarded as irrelevant.

One derivative corollary of the reduction fallacy is that categories, observations, findings, empirical facts, methods, and phenomena concerning the English language learning-teaching enterprise can be accounted for and deduced from those of the feeder domains of knowledge such as general didactics, English linguistics, second language acquisition, English literature, and so forth. Another ramification of the reduction fallacy is that English didactics is explainable in terms of the theoretical concepts and scientific terms of epistemically prior disciplines such as English linguistics, general didactics, educational psychology, English literature, second language acquisition, etc. This aspect of the reduction fallacy means that English didactics does not have its distinct repertoire of concepts and terms and, by the same token, issues and problems that it identifies and addresses are not fundamentally at variance with those of the adjacent disciplines that English didactics relies on for its scientific and professional insights. The last practical consequence of the reduction fallacy is that English didactics could not provide its own factual, useful, and nuanced solutions to actual practice-oriented problems and theory-anchored issues. Relatedly, practical problems and theoretical issues of English didactics must be identified, analyzed, catalogued, and encompassed in whole by one or more of its parent disciplines. The reduction fallacy hence casts serious doubts about the *raison d'être* of English didactics. By no means is it self-evident how, if at all, English didactics and its associated knowledge community will have an enduring presence in the Norwegian context if English didactics succumbs in the long run to adduction and reduction fallacies and their insidious effects. In Table 1, two paradigmatic vantage points about the parasitic connection between English didactics and its contributing disciplines qua two fallacies are summarized.

**Table 1**

*Two Positions on Parasitic Connection Between English Didactics and Its Feeder Disciplines*

Paradigmatic Perspective	Relation Between English Didactics and Its Feeder Disciplines
Adduction Fallacy	English didactics is nothing but an additive montage and side-by-side juxtaposition of English linguistics, English literature, general didactics, and second language acquisition, etc.
Reduction Fallacy	English didactics is nothing but English linguistics, English literature, general didactics, second language acquisition, etc.

In the following section, we draw some conclusions about English didactics.

#### **4. Concluding Notes**

The general aim of this article is to invigorate professional deliberations and disciplinary discourses concerning the scope and nature of English didactics in Norway and make it viable for researchers, teacher educators, and indeed (student) teachers to gain a deeper and more tenable understanding of the field that they pursue academically and professionally. The desire of the English didactics discourse community that our discipline should rank as an academic discipline with a scientific and professional posture is a palatable aspiration. Yet there are fundamental questions regarding English didactics and its associated disciplinary practices remaining to be addressed properly. We endeavor to entertain a simple albeit paramount question about English didactics viz., is English didactics a propaedeutic or parasitic discipline? We maintain that if English didactics as a transdisciplinary field fails to deal properly with some substantive issues including the said question, it will remain a parasitic discipline and knowledge enclave with neither epistemic authority nor professional autonomy whilst being dependent wholesale on other disciplines for its functioning, research inquiries, conceptual profile, and scientific practices. English didactics will not thereby gain status of a veritable propaedeutic discipline that - in the virtue of its epistemically coherent and unitary systems of knowledge - deals autonomously with the systematic investigation and solving of the whole spectrum of teaching-learning-driven problems and issues of practical or theoretical import.

We argue that English didactics must pay attention to features that reconfigure and demarcate its boundaries from that of possible competitor disciplines and therefore differentiate its authentic knowledge type from the encroaching types of knowledge of rival disciplines. Significantly, we contend that English didactics conceived as a propaedeutic discipline transcends the boundaries of its contributing disciplines including English linguistics, English literature, general didactics, second language acquisition, and so forth. Thus, in the Norwegian context, propaedeutic English didactics should, but currently hardly does, serve as a mediating function between a myriad of theoretical and practical disciplines and domains of knowledge and be able to define, address, and solve an array of English teaching and learning problems as they are encountered over time. In fact, we define English didactics as a

propaedeutic, transdisciplinary, practice-mediated, scientific, problem-focused, and synthetic field of inquiry that is generated to guide a complex of contextualized and purposive actions, autonomous and judicious educational decisions, principled professional judgments, and theoretical and empirical inquiries about the processual and socio-cognitive trajectory of learning and teaching English processes and practices in novel and innovative ways. We further suggest that English didactics, like any other academic discipline, ought to resolutely desist from committing certain fallacies with respect to its nature, scope of application, posited distinctions from other disciplines, scope of inquiry, and permeable academic boundaries and interfaces.

It is plausible to state that English didactics in Norway tries, albeit in an inchoate fashion thus far, to deal with imperative what, how, and why questions about organized English language teaching-learning processes and practices. However, we argue that English didactics in Norway must evolve into a scientific and professional fund of knowledge for discovering, synthesizing, and systematizing a matrix of conceptual systems, theoretical research programs, empirical investigations, core research findings, substantive discovery procedures, practical orientations, modes of thinking, scientific instrumentation, methodologies, and techniques rather than the current disparate areas of English studies that have dealt with English teaching and learning processes and practices in a piecemeal fashion and without honed focus. English didactics, we maintain, is expected to be an autonomous, mediating, and dynamic field with its distinct and differentiated yet inherent practical and epistemic problems and contextualized solutions broadly construed. In this light, English didactics does not cordon itself off. Instead, it reflexively engages and is in mutual transaction with an expansive array of disciplines, fields, and epistemes to cross-pollinate its scientific capital, disciplinary resources, and research traditions. Therefore, English didactics brings different areas of its triadic, unitary, and time-locked disciplinary knowledge systems (i.e., the scientific discipline, the academic field of study, and professional praxis) into a self-conscious dialogue and undergoes constructive epistemic transformations with other disciplines and fields while enjoying its own ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions and indeed a collectively sustained matrix of disciplinary goals and ideals. In addition, English didactics in Norway must focus on studying English learning-teaching discourse, which by its very nature is constantly changing and complex, to make productive use of both empirical findings and (meta) theoretical frameworks whereby its primary end-users in schools and academia will be able to augur, comprehend, reflect upon, and solve practical and intellectual issues across and relative to a wide range of circumstances.

Our thesis is that generating a new body of specialized knowledge and genuine practice about a wide range of issues pertaining to the English learning-teaching nexus, and with a coherent epistemic agenda, is the main differentia of English didactics from other cognate disciplines. More specifically, English didactics deals systematically with, and furnishes the wherewithal to solve, different kinds of unresolved problems and issues of practical concern about the English teaching-learning processes that are experienced in the rough and tumble of classroom life.

Moreover, English didactics settles its attention on theoretically conceived problems and theory-impregnated matters which originate from the field itself and its supporting transdisciplinary resources, wherein recursive deployment, entwined (r) evolution, and mutual fertilization of different realms of knowledge are actualized so as to provide a pluralistic and intra-inter-trans-disciplinary basis for addressing unsolved theoretical problems of English didactics. Finally, the article intends to bring into dialogue some (meta)theoretically predicated issues about English didactics, namely, the intrinsic and extrinsic goals of English didactics, knowledge-that and knowledge-how about / of English didactics, and finally the adduction and reduction fallacies. These fallacies, implicitly if not explicitly, jeopardize English didactics' academic identity and relegate its status to an infra-scientific one and accordingly keep it a parasitic rather than propaedeutic discipline. We hope that Norwegian scientific and professional communities who are affiliated with English didactics will pay increased attention to the reflective appraisal of English didactics in Norway and develop its disciplinary resources, tenets, maxims, categories, meta-discourses, presuppositions, and axioms.

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