May Olaug Horverak

Department of Nordic and Media Studies, Agder University

English writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary schools

Abstract

This article presents a study of current English writing instruction practices in a selection of Norwegian upper secondary schools and discusses how this draws upon ideas within genre-pedagogy. The data comprises individual and focus-group interviews, observation reports and some teaching material. The study shows that English teachers focus on teaching genre requirements and adjustment of language to task and context. However, despite agreeing on the importance of teaching how to write specific text-types and to adjust to the situation at hand, there seems to be different opinions about how detailed instruction should be. Some teachers fear that too explicit instruction may hinder creativity, while others emphasise the need to learn how to structure a text, and to open up for creativity within certain writing frames. In spite of the differences, the practices revealed in this study comply quite well with genre-pedagogy. From the findings in this article, it seems like there is a need to develop and make available teaching material in English to be used in writing instruction, and also to improve the English teacher education with regard to the teaching of writing.

Keywords: Writing instruction, genre-pedagogy, teaching-learning cycle, context and modelling

Sammendrag

Denne artikkelen presenterer en studie av engelsk skriveundervisning i et utvalg norske videregående skoler, og diskuterer hvordan disse praksisene samsvarer med sjangerpedagogikk. Innsamlet data består av individuelle og fokusgruppeintervjuer, observasjonsrapporter og undervisningsmateriale, og studien viser at engelsklærere fokuserer på å undervise sjangerkrav og det å tilpasse språk til oppgave og kontekst. Til tross for at det er enighet om at det er viktig å undervise i spesifikke tekst typer, og det å tilpasse skriving til situasjon, er det ulike meninger om hvor detaljert skriveundervisningen bør være. Noen lærere frykter at for eksplisitt instruksjon kan hindre kreativitet, mens andre understreker behovet for å lære å strukturere tekster i detalj, og åpner opp for kreativitet innen bestemte skriverammer. Til tross for ulikheter, så samsvarer praksisene presentert i denne studien i stor grad med sjangerpedagogikken. Ut fra funnene i denne artikkelen, kan en konkludere at det er et behov for å utvikle

og gjøre tilgjengelig undervisningsmateriale for skriveundervisning i engelsk, samt at det er et behov for å forbedre engelsklærerutdanningen når det gjelder opplæring i skriveundervisning.

Nøkkelord: Skriveundervisning, sjangerpedagogikk, undervisnings-lærings syklus, kontekst og modellering

Introduction

English has become a world language, and young people in particular are extensively exposed to the English language through various types of media. However, even though many of today's students in Europe speak and understand English very well, this does not mean that their writing skills are equally well developed. This is because writing a language entails something else than speaking it. Indeed, written text needs to be more precise than most types of spoken texts, which in turn requires paying attention to structure, forms and meaning of language in a different way when producing written texts. This means that students also need to learn about solving tasks in terms of content, audience, register and set goals (Hyland, 2009). This process is generally referred to as "knowledge transforming", and includes planning, organising, monitoring and revising language (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987; Shaw & Weir, 2007). One approach to this is offered by Australian genre-pedagogy with its focus on adjusting structure and language to purpose and situation of writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012). Although this is an approach developed in the context of first-language instruction, it is transferrable to the teaching of English in a Norwegian context as the writing process is much the same across contexts.

Norwegians generally have a quite high proficiency in English (Education First, 2012), which is reflected in the Knowledge Promotion curriculum reform of 2006, in which English is no longer defined as a foreign language. However, it is not really a second language when compared with how English is defined as L2 in countries where it is an official language (Graddol, 2006). Instead, it can be argued that English in Norway has an in-between status: it is neither a foreign nor a second language (Graddol, 1997; Rindal, 2012; Rindal & Piercy, 2013). In addition, with an increased use of English in higher education as well as in business and governance (Hellekjær, 2007, 2010), the need for advanced English skills in Norway is already high and still increasing. A recent study on higher educated government staff in Norway also reveals that there is a mismatch between the need and supply of occupational English skills (Hellekjær & Fairway, 2015). This study points out that the students' need for advanced occupational English skills needs to be systematically addressed in Norwegian universities.

As a result of declining PISA results, it was questioned whether the Norwegian school system succeeds in fostering the basic competencies that are internationally agreed on as important for young people in a long-term perspective (Kjærnsli, Lie, Olsen, Roe, & Turmo, 2004). This was addressed in the 2006 Knowledge Promotion curriculum reform, where there is an increased emphasis on the importance of developing basic skills, among these writing skills, and was even more strongly emphasised in the 2013 revision. In the revised 2013 English subject curriculum, writing competence is specified as “being able to express ideas and opinions in an understandable and purposeful manner ... planning, formulating and working with texts that communicate and that are well structured and coherent” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013). Some of the features of written language described in this part about basic skills are repeated in the English syllabus. “The aims of the studies are to enable students to write different types of texts with structure and coherence suited to the purpose and situation” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013). This formulation requires a type of teaching approach for writing instruction that focuses on genres or text-types, which is reflected in the material of this study. Genre-pedagogy offers such an approach to the teaching of writing.

Genre-pedagogy is based on Halliday’s tradition of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Cope, Kalantzis, Kress, Martin, & Murphy, 2012), which outlines systems of language choices and emphasises the functional aspects of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). An example would be how to create coherence in a text by choosing from cohesive links as pronouns and connectors. Another would be to choose either formal or informal language forms according to the situation in which the language is produced. Central in genre-pedagogy is a focus on setting the context and modelling genre features (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012; Hyland, 2004). These are the two first steps in the teaching-learning cycle presented by Hyland (2004, p. 128), and will be the main focus of this article.

This brings us to the research question of this article: *How is writing instruction in English carried out in upper secondary school in Norway seen from a genre-pedagogy perspective?* To answer this question, I have carried out individual interviews, as well as a focus group interview, and translated quotes that are included in this article. In addition, I have observed lessons dealing with writing instruction and investigated some teaching material the participating teachers were using. Genre-pedagogy and SFL is the basis for the interview guide, the observation notes and the analysis in this article. The material collected to answer this question is mainly from teachers of first year, upper secondary school students, as this is the last year of compulsory English teaching in Norway following 10 years of English teaching at the primary and lower secondary levels. This course is the minimum requirement in English to qualify for admission to higher education.

Writing in the L2

Worldwide, there have been quite many studies on second language writing in English, and one of the main findings of these is that L2 writers (second language) have more difficulty with organising material than L1 (first language) writers have. They also use more simple coordinate conjunctions and fewer subordinate conjunctions and lexical ties (Hyland, 2009; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Silva, 1993). Research on L1 writing skills in Norway has shown similar challenges. Quite many pupils find it difficult to organise and write argumentative texts (Berge & Hertzberg, 2005; Hundahl, 2010), and the main challenges are creating coherence in texts and knowing how to structure the arguments. Another challenge is the over-use of informal language. For writing instruction, this means it is necessary to focus on structuring, creating coherence and adjusting language to situation in writing instruction. These are also elements that are central in a genre-pedagogy, an approach that has been argued to be efficient in the teaching of writing factual texts (Walsh, Hammond, Brindley, & Nunan, 1990). Included in this type of approach is a focus on particular grammatical features typical of different types of texts.

Research on explicit grammar instruction in contexts where English is L1 has generally shown that this has little effect on writing skills, except for sentence-combining exercises (Andrews, Torgerson, Bevertson, Freeman, et al., 2004; Andrews et al., 2006; Andrews, Torgerson, Bevertson, Locke, et al., 2004; Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963; Hillocks, 1986). However, more recent studies have shown positive results from grammar teaching (Fogel & Ehri, 2000; Jones, Myhill, & Bailey, 2013). Furthermore, in contexts where English is L2, explicit instruction has generally been shown to be more efficient for improving writing skills than implicit instruction (Norris & Ortega, 2000), also in spontaneously written texts (Spada & Tomita, 2010).

A previous study has shown that Norwegian students are not necessarily prepared for higher education when it comes to English writing competence (Lehmann, 1999). An extensive assessment project carried out in lower secondary school in eight European countries in 2002 showed that Norwegian students of English have lower scores on written production than on reading comprehension, linguistic comprehension and oral comprehension (Bonnet, 2004). This shows that there is a need to focus more on English writing competence and writing instruction in Norway, in school and in teacher education. This has also been confirmed in a recent study of how newly educated English teachers in Norway perceive their competence. They felt that the English-teacher education had not prepared them sufficiently for teaching written text-production (Rødnes, Hellekjær, & Vold, 2014). This is supported by another recent study that investigated what type of writing takes place in EFL teachers' education (Lund, 2014). This study concludes that most writing functions as a means to ensure the students' learning progression, while there is

a need for a pedagogy that helps the students to become competent in working with writing in future classrooms. The present study, however, focuses on how some teachers in Norwegian upper secondary schools currently work with writing in the English classroom, and as such it mirrors what teachers actually do in the classroom, based on what competence the teacher education and classroom practices have provided.

Method

Design and data sources

To find out how English writing instruction is carried out in Norwegian upper secondary schools, this study uses a qualitative approach, with semi-structured interviews, including some pre-formulated questions and keywords (Silverman, 2011, p. 162). This was followed up by a focus group interview to see how English teachers reflect on issues related to writing instruction when discussing with others. In the tradition of qualitative studies, this research project was carried out as a multiple-case study, and the purpose was to get an in-depth understanding of current trends in writing instruction through looking at more cases (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). The interview-guide includes elements that are central in genre-pedagogy, such as the structuring of texts and adjusting writing to purpose and situation. The main topics were how English teachers teach writing and structuring of texts, how they work with tests and feedback, and how they see that the students develop during a year. Questions about genres and context and how to create coherence by using connectors, reference, and lexical cohesion were also included, elements that are central in text-production according to SFL. Teachers of both English and Norwegian were also asked to compare their approaches to writing instruction in the two subjects. The current article deals with the first two stages of the teaching-learning cycle as presented by Hyland (2004), setting the context and modelling how to structure texts and use appropriate language. The later stages in the teaching-learning cycle of working with texts and feedback practices are dealt with in a separate article (Horverak, in process).

To get a better impression of current writing instruction practices, the interviews were followed up by observations and collection of teaching material. The observations focused on the same elements as the interviews. There are many aspects of teaching writing, and using triangulating techniques may provide richer data about the complexity of the issue at hand (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 195).

Procedure - sampling and data collection

The inclusion criteria of the individual interviews were that the informants were English teachers in upper secondary school, and that they were teachers of

English to first-year students attending general studies. A total of 14 teachers participated in the study. A request to carry out the study was sent to the headmasters and section managers of the schools. The focus-group interview was carried out in an already established group of teachers meeting on a regular basis a couple of times during each semester, consisting of one representative English teacher from each school in the county. The leader of this group was contacted to request their participation in the research. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The project has been approved by the Data Protection Official for Research (NSD).

There were in total 13 observations of various activities related to writing instruction. Notes were taken during the observation, with special focus on elements mentioned from the genre-pedagogy approach. This means that it was a semi-structured observation where the agenda was to gather information to illuminate the issue of writing instruction. Most teachers added some reflections after the interview, or in connection with the observation. These comments were added to the material after the conversations. As the focus of the observation was on how the teacher carried out writing instruction, and what type of writing activities went on in the classroom, it was unproblematic to be an “observer-as-participant”, participating peripherally in the group’s activities (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 457).

The informants in this study were chosen by my contacting former colleagues and acquaintances. The sample was therefore limited to Aust- and Vest-Agder counties in the southern part of Norway. Though the informants were recruited through convenience sampling, the selection process was strategic to a certain degree (Cohen et al., 2011, pp. 229-230). The purpose of the selection was to get a varied sample from the population of English teachers represented. What type of schools teachers work at may influence their practices, so in order to get a best possible impression of various practices in teaching writing, different types of schools were also included.

The informants in this study come from different types of schools in terms of size and weighting of vocational and general studies. To briefly account for school structure, at the end of lower secondary school, pupils have to choose either vocational or general studies. Though both these types of studies are often located in the same schools, some upper secondary schools have more vocational studies, and some have primarily general studies. In the general studies, the students have 5 English lessons-a-week for one year before a possible exam. In the vocational studies, the students have 3 lessons-a-week the first year and 2 lessons-a-week the second year before a possible exam. The students of both types of studies have the same English subject curriculum and take the same English exam, though the subject is to be adjusted to the type of work the students are preparing for.

English teachers often have experience from teaching both types of students, but the main focus of this article is on teaching writing to students of general

studies. Table 1 below presents the distribution of the informants in terms of gender, age, first language, extent of higher education in English, length of work experience and school affiliation. The latter category merely gives information about what informants work at the same school.

Table 1

Distribution of the 14 informants on different variables

<i>Variable</i>		<i>Number of informants</i>	<i>Enumeration of informants</i>
Gender	Male	2	I 7, GI 5
	Female	12	I 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, GI 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Age	<30	1	GI 3
	30-39	4	I 3, 4, 8, GI 6
	40-49	3	I 1, 5, GI 5
	50-59	4	I 2, 6, GI 1, 4
	>59	2	I 7, GI 2
First language	Norwegian	13	I 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, GI 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
	Other	1	I 6
Higher education – credits of English	Minimum 60	2	I 4, GI 1
	Minimum 90	6	I 1, 2, 7, 8, GI 4, 6
	Minimum 150	6	I 3, 4, 8, GI 3
Work experience	1-5 years	4	I 3, 4, 8, GI 3
	6-10 years	2	GI 5, 6
	11-15 years	2	I 5, 6
	>15 years	6	I 1, 2, 7, GI 1, 2, 4
School affiliation	School 1	3	I 1, 2, GI 6
	School 2	2	I 3, 4
	School 3	3	I 5, 6, GI 1
	School 4	3	I 7, 8, GI 5
	School 5	1	GI 2
	School 6	1	GI 3
	School 7	1	GI 4

*I = Informant, individual interview

GI = Group Informant, focus group interview

When it comes to gender, the table shows that there is a majority of females in the group of informants. The age of the informants ranges from 30 to above 59 and is quite evenly distributed. Most informants have Norwegian as their first language, only one informant has another first language. Only two informants have only 60 credits, i.e. a year of English studies, the rest have more. Four of the informants have minimum 150 credits, meaning that they have a masters' degree in English. There are some recently educated teachers included in the study, but most teachers here have quite long experience. Four schools were

included in the first process of individual interviews. When the group interview was included, three more schools were represented. All the group informants come from different schools as the focus group interview was carried out in an already established group of collaboration between the different schools in a county.

Analysis

In the course of the analysis, the collected data is categorised according to the first two stages of Hyland's teaching-learning cycle (Hyland, 2004). This means that the analysis is driven by theoretical or analytic interests, defined as a deductive or theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 82-84). The subthemes have been developed through a coding process carried out in Nvivo, a software for qualitative analyses. This process was influenced by the theoretical aspects of genre-pedagogy and SFL.

A definition of theme is given by Braun and Clarke in their article about using thematic analysis: "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set" (2006, p. 82, italics by the authors). Together, the themes and subthemes form a hierarchical pattern of analysis. The model of themes and subthemes included in this analysis is based on the two first steps of Hyland's teaching-learning cycle, here thematised as "setting the context" and "modelling" (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Thematic patterning in the analysis

As can be seen in the figure, the first main theme, “setting the context” includes the two subthemes “Purpose” and “Genre”, elements that are mentioned by Hyland in his description of the teaching-learning-cycle. The first subtheme includes comments about what the informants present as the purpose of various writing exercises. The second includes comments about types of genres that are included in the teaching. The second main theme, “modelling”, includes the three subthemes: “Use of models”, “Coherence” and “Adjustment to situation”, central themes within genre-pedagogy and SFL that were also derived from the thematic analysis in Nvivo. The first subtheme, “use of models” includes comments and observations on whether and how teachers use models in school. The second subtheme, “Coherence” includes the two categories “structure” and “Cohesive links”, aspects that are important in relation to coherence according to SFL and that the thematic analysis also showed that the teachers emphasised. Hence, these are included as subthemes. Comments and observations regarding structure in general are placed in the category of “Coherence” - “Structure”. As the teachers commented on how to write introductions and how to build paragraphs in particular, the two subthemes “introduction” and “paragraphs” were included as a result of the thematic analysis. Comments and observations regarding cohesive links are generally quite specific, and sorted under the subthemes “Connectors”, “Reference” and “Lexical cohesion”. The subtheme “Connectors” concerns the use of conjuncts and conjunctions. “Reference”

comprises the use of various types of pronouns. “Lexical cohesion” refers to work with vocabulary within a certain domain or synonymy in this context. This categorisation under “Cohesive links” corresponds to the categories of cohesion outlined in SFL (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 532-576).

The subtheme “Adjustment to situation” includes the subthemes “Formality” and “Modality”, elements that are included in SFL as relevant to adjust language to purpose and situation. General comments and observations regarding “Formality” are categorised here. Based on the thematic analysis, the more specific categories “Contractions” and “Personal pronouns” were developed as subthemes of “Formality”, as many teachers commented on these issues. Details concerning what the teachers say about contracted forms are categorised under “Contractions”, and details about what they say about the use of “I” when writing formal texts are categorised under “Personal pronouns”. The second subtheme of “Adjustment to situation” is “Modality”, which includes practices and thoughts about including modal expressions of various types. The focus of the analysis is on the two first stages of the teaching-learning cycle, setting the context and modelling. How the grammatical issues presented here are included in the feedback process, is dealt with in another article.

There may be some unclear distinctions or overlapping between the categories. During the interviews, the questions about using reference and lexical cohesion to create coherence seemed unclear to the informants. These questions were sometimes understood as referring to choosing the correct word and pronouns for the correct situations rather than creating coherence. Another analysis performed by a second rater showed the same tendencies, as these questions and answers were generally assigned to the theme “Adjustment to situation”. The categories are kept as subthemes of “Coherence” in the analysis anyway as this corresponds to the theory of SFL, on which the interview-guide and analysis are partly based.

Results and analysis

The analysis is divided into two main parts: 1) setting the context and 2) modelling. The first part of the analysis presents how teachers set the context when teaching writing, dealing with the issues of what they say about purpose of writing and what type of genre they teach. The second part elaborates on how teachers exemplify features of various genres by using model texts and how they give instruction on linguistic elements that need to be considered in relation to writing specific genres. Although the writing instruction in different schools seems to comprise many of the same elements, there are still different opinions among teachers about how writing should be taught, which the following analysis will reveal. What individual informant (I) and focus group informants (GI) have expressed different opinions are identified in the parentheses.

Setting the context - writing purpose

The informants in the present study express that the main purpose for their writing instruction is that the students need to develop writing skills they will need in other contexts, such as higher education (I 3, 5, 6, 7, 8). Informant 3 points out that “if they are going to continue studying, they will always need being able to write a good, formal essay, no matter what subject it is”. Informant 5 focuses on the usefulness of being able to argue in general: “I try to say that they have to learn to argue a case in their lives, it is really important to say what one means, to express oneself”. However, only two informants focus on the function of the text when they talk about purpose (I 1, 4), understanding purpose in the same way it is understood in the genre-pedagogy tradition. These informants use words like “convince” or “present a case” to present the purpose of writing to the students. When it comes to more creative writing tasks, the teachers try to come up with some alternative reasons for learning to write. Informant 5 reports that she has told the students that writing stories may be personally developing. Informant 1 mentions that writing should be more of an experience, and not totally practical.

Setting the context - genres

The teachers in the current study report using a variety of genres in their teaching, but that the type of texts that dominates in their teaching is factual texts. The type of factual text referred to is usually some type of argumentative text, mostly referred to as an “essay” (I 3, 4, 7, 8, GI 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). What there seems to be consensus about in the collected material is that the students need to learn how to write a type of argumentative text with a topic for discussion in the introduction, and a conclusion in the end. Those informants who are both English and Norwegian teachers report that they use a similar approach when teaching writing in Norwegian (I 1, 2, 4, 5, 8). Some of the informants specifically mention that they compare the structure of the five-paragraph essay with the structure of Norwegian articles (I 4, 5, 8). This shows an interesting development within genre-teaching, as there seems to be an interdisciplinary standard developing across genre-terms in what is expressed by some of the teachers in this study.

When it comes to vocational studies, there is more emphasis on preparing the students for working life. Some of the genres mentioned are reports, letters, applications and CVs (I 2, 6, GI 1, 3). According to one of the focus-group informants, this is basically what they focus on in their vocational classes at their school (GI 3). Though the vocational students are first and foremost to be prepared for working life, one of the informants in the focus group reports a very positive effect of introducing the essay-genre in vocational groups:

I think, compared to before, that for some reason, I did not use the 5-paragraph essay earlier, but after I started with that, I notice improvement in..., well, it is easier for students to get the texts longer and have a proper structure and so. (GI 1)

In other words, this teacher points out a positive aspect of teaching vocational students how to write an essay. Even though it might not be relevant in the context of preparing these students for a vocation, it might support them to succeed in writing longer texts, as they are required to in tests and a possible exam.

Teachers also seem concerned about giving the students varied writing, and many use various types of creative or fictional writing exercises related to story writing (I 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 6, 8, GI 2, 4, 5, 6). The teachers vary their approaches from making the students write whole stories to parts of stories, or having them change the point of view. When the informants talk about creative writing, they report positive reactions from the students (I 2, 3, 8, GI 6). Informant 2 had given the students the beginning of a fairy-tale, and the students were to write the ending. She reports: “They were totally crazy. This is the most positive I have seen, it was wow, you are going to like this, you are going to like this”. One of the creative writing tasks that were observed during this study was the writing of a portrait interview of an African author. To do so, the students had to check out information about this author through different webpages, and imagine being in a setting in an African café. This seemed to be an inspiring writing task for the students, and it also opened up for comparing with the essay-genre. They were told that in the essay, personal opinions are quite central, whereas in the portrait interview, the information should be as neutral as possible. Through observing teaching strategies and interviewing the teachers, one thing that became clear was that students appreciate variation.

Modelling – use of models

There seems to be consensus among the informants that it is important to include example texts, or models, as part of writing instruction. The most emphasised type of model texts seems to be various versions of five-paragraph essays (I 3, 7, 8, GI 6). The main elements that are included are: 1) introduction with a presentation of the topic or scope of the essay, including a thesis statement or a question for discussion 2) the main part with three paragraphs, each with a topic sentence, some supporting details and a concluding sentence leading to the next 3) the conclusion which sums up the main points and answer the question for discussion or re-assert the main claim. To what degree the teachers went through different elements in model texts explicitly varied from teacher to teacher.

The most elaborate of the essay models presented included a more detailed description of the supporting details in the main paragraph (I 3). These are divided into “arguments”, “examples/textual evidence” and “discussion/counter-argument”. These three elements were to be included between the topic sentence and the closing comment in each paragraph. During the lecture that was observed in which this model was presented, the teacher commented on the element of “examples/textual evidence”, and said that this is often what is

missing. In addition, they got exercises to the model text, and were to reflect on the topic sentences, the arguments, the examples and the discussion/counter-arguments, and see how these were related to each other or supported each other. They were also to locate linking words and see how they were used. Finally, they were to fill in this essay in an essay map that provided boxes for the different elements.

Another observation of the use of models in writing instruction included a focus on two contrasting styles (I 1), in which an example of an objective text and an example of an expressive text were presented. First, the students were to study the text with expressive language and comment on linguistic issues, such as the use of adjectives. This was followed up by a time-limited writing exercise in which the students were to write a short text using expressive language. Second, they were presented with an objective text, and there was a focus on how this was different from the first one by having a more objective style. Following this, the students were to write a new text, this time using more objective language. The students responded positively to this type of writing practice, and this modelling approach made it very clear how there are different styles that may be used for different types of texts.

The kinds of materials used in writing instruction vary. One informant refers to a folder for essay-writing they have developed in their school where they have included example-texts (I 8). Another informant refers to an example-text he got from his son, who was attending another school (I 7), and a third informant mentions example-texts on NDLA (GI 6). In the group-interview, it is explicitly stated that it is a bit difficult to find example-texts, and that the textbooks do not provide any. Informant 4, a newly-educated teacher, also mentions this, and that she also missed advice on how to teach writing in her English-teacher training.

Modelling - coherence in factual texts - structure

There is also consensus among the informants that the students need to learn the global structure of texts, including an introduction, a main part and a conclusion, and that it is important to see issues from two sides. There also seems to be agreement about the students needing to learn some type of arguing, seeing an issue from different viewpoints, and that they are told to include either a question for discussion or a thesis statement (I 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, GI 2). Most of the informants also mention the need to include instruction on paragraph division and how to start a paragraph (I 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, GI 2, 3, 5). The term “topic sentence” is frequently used, and various types of topic sentences are demonstrated in the essay examples presented for the students.

There is some reservation expressed when it comes to using too rigid templates, though. Informant 7 says “they want to know how they are supposed to do it, it should be from A to B (...) I don’t like to teach that way, I like to draw a broader picture”. This teacher points at a critical argument for not using a

strict genre-pedagogy approach: “if you just use a template imitatively, then it is never totally wrong, but it might not be brilliant either”. Another informant counter this type of argument, as she thinks it is very important to give the students clear instruction of how to construct a text:

I have read many counter-arguments to teaching them this five-paragraph essay, that it prevents creativity, but the problem is that they cannot be creative and good at this if they do not know what they are to relate to. If they do not have a basic structure...I am very concerned about teaching them a basic structure, they have to know the basic structure first. Then they can be creative and develop, learn the basics first. (I 3)

One point that is made in the focus-group interview is that controlling the students' writing using boxes, or writing frames, may be very useful for weaker students. This may help them manage to write enough to pass an exam perhaps; “they kind of have a page of text they wouldn't have managed otherwise” (GI 1).

Modelling - coherence in factual texts - cohesive links

Coherence is a central aspect in official guidelines concerning writing, and is something the teachers in the current study generally focus on when teaching writing. Coherence in a text means unity in the content by using cohesive links, i.e. linking devices (Hasselgård, Johansson & Lysvåg, 1998, pp. 400-401). Most of the informants report that they work with connectors in relation to writing instruction (I 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, GI 3). When doing so, it seems like linking words are generally categorised according to semantic function. Some of the categories that have been included are addition, contrast, reason, result and summing up (I 3, 7). There is, however, little focus on using pronouns and lexical cohesion as cohesive links. This might be because students at this level generally have good knowledge of using pronouns as references, as well as quite extensive vocabulary, particularly the general studies students.

Modelling - adjustment to situation - formality

Formality of language is a topic that is considered important in writing instruction throughout the present study. According to the informants in the focus group interview, this is a particular challenge for Norwegian students:

This is something that Norwegian students have problems with, separating between the different levels of style. One has to use a lot of time to make them write in a language that suits the genre they write in, it often becomes too informal. (GI 2)

Another teacher in the focus group interview supports this, and gives an example of an experience she had with students using inappropriate language (GI 3). They were to write a creative text, and they used several swearwords. To get the students understand that this was unacceptable, she translated this for the

students and read it out loud, and the reaction was “oh, no, I cannot hand that in to my teacher”, which the teacher confirmed was a correct conclusion.

Some of the elements that are included when working with formality of language are to avoid slang, contracted forms, incomplete sentences and too personal a style (I 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, GI 5, 6). One of the methods used is to include practice on writing informal texts to make the students aware of the different styles. In one of the observed lectures, the teacher also made the students aware of how to describe the different informal elements to prepare them for this in a possible exam (I 1). According to the material collected in the current study, the distinctions between formal and informal language is something that needs to be prioritised in teaching.

The informants have different opinions about what is acceptable and not in formal texts. The teachers seem to agree that the students should avoid contracted forms. An element that there is more disagreement about is how personal the students should be. In the individual interviews, the dominant opinion is that the students should avoid using the first person personal pronoun “I” in general, except for in the introduction and conclusion. In the focus-group interview, the first comment of the use of “I” was “I say ‘go ahead’, of course, well, at upper secondary, it is totally okay to use “I” when writing, I don’t see a problem with that” (GI 5). Other group informants confirmed the attitude that it is okay that the students use “I” to some extent (GI 2, 4). This is modified later in the discussion when the same informants report telling the students they could use alternatives, like “people should” or something like that. It seems like this is something that is currently changing from a very strict attitude that “I” is not acceptable to a more open attitude that “I” can and should be used in certain parts of formal texts.

Modelling - adjustment to situation - modality

In the case of using modal verbs to adjust to the situation, there are different perceptions about the need to include this. Is it necessary to teach students about using words like “may”, “might”, “could” etc. to modify their statements? One of the informants states that this is something that comes naturally, that the students actually express a somewhat humble attitude to what they write, as the students generally write about topics that they are not too confident about (I 7). Another informant states that this is a problem, as students often think they have the truth; “and I have had students who write that people over 30 don’t know what a computer is” (I 8). The same opinion is expressed by another informant, saying that the students are very certain, and that they have to learn to express some doubt (I 3). Some of the informants report that they have not worked with this in relation to writing (I 1, 2, 4, 5, 6). When adjusting a text to a specific situation and purpose, expressing moderation is one element that might be

important to consider according to some of the reflections expressed in this study.

Discussion

The main purpose for writing instruction that the teachers in this study present is that the students need to be prepared for higher education. Still, the analysis reveals an underlying tension in the teachers' views on writing purpose. On the one hand, the students are to be prepared for an exam and later studies. On the other, writing is to have a value on its own and be something that the students enjoy. This means that while teachers mainly focus on writing argumentative texts, they also include some more creative writing tasks. When teaching how to write argumentative texts, the teachers report that they teach the students how to structure a text with an introduction, a main part and a conclusion. There is, however, some disagreement about how explicit instruction should be, and to what extent specific grammatical features, like the first person personal pronoun "I" should be handled. In spite of some differences, teachers seem to focus on many of the same features, like defining the contextual elements of purpose and genre, and modelling how to create coherence and adjust the language to a situation, which are important elements of a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching.

Much of what is revealed about writing instruction practices in upper secondary school in this study complies well with the requirements in the curriculum mentioned previously, that the students should learn to "write different types of texts (...) suited to the purpose and situation" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013). Contextual features such as purpose and genre requirements are elements pointed out as central in the material of this study, and these are also central elements in the genre-pedagogy developed in Australia. The teachers in this study generally model genres by pointing out some key features, like the division of texts into introduction, main part and conclusion. To organise ideas when structuring a text seems to be a challenge for Norwegian students of English, just like it is for other L2 learners as pointed out by Leki, Cumming and Silva in their synthesis of research on L2 writing in English (2008). Another challenging element pointed out in this synthesis was the use of conjunctions, which is also pointed out as a central element in writing instruction in the current study.

While the teachers in this study generally agree that instruction on how to structure a text is necessary, there is, however, some disagreement about how explicit the instruction should be. There are also different opinions about the need of including explicit instruction about expressing modality. Another issue of contention is how personal students should be when writing essays. Whereas some are very strict about using the first person personal pronoun "I", others

find it unproblematic that the students use a more personal style. There also seems to be consensus that the level of formality should be adjusted to the context of the writing, though what is understood to be formal enough is unclear. The informants agree that adjusting to the right formality level is one of the most challenging features for Norwegian L2 writers, so there might be a need to agree on what is expected when writing for example formal texts like essays.

Modelling by identifying key features of genres is a central element of English writing instruction in the current study. This is an important scaffolding activity in the genre-pedagogy tradition (Hyland, 2004, p. 132). Such a strategy could be seen as restricting the creativity of the students, though, as pointed out by informant 7. A too strict understanding of genres is one of the reservations of genre-pedagogy mentioned by Hyland (2004, p. 19). Kress, one of the developers of genre-pedagogy, points out that the understanding of genre presented by Martin within this tradition is too limiting (2012, p. 33). Martin describes genres as a type of staging-process where different elements within a text are identified (Martin, 2012; Martin & Rothery, 2012). The approach used by informant 3, where the students were to identify all the elements in essay-paragraphs is an example of such an approach, which has previously been argued to be efficient to teach the writing of factual texts (Walsh et al., 1990). This organisation of clauses in a text is what is called generic staging in the genre-pedagogy tradition (Martin, 2012, p. 124), investigating what elements, or stages, are included in different text-types and reproduce these stages when writing a text. Kress criticises such an approach to genre as it emphasises form and shows a “tendency towards authoritarian modes of transmission” (2012, p. 35). This may be a specification of the ideas presented by the teachers sceptical of using too strict templates for writing.

Even though this is too small a sample to make any statistical generalisations, it is possible to argue that the findings could be the same in other similar contexts. In her article ‘Generalising from Qualitative Inquiry’ (2009), Eisenhart refers to Guba and Lincoln’s term “transferability” as presenting an alternative to the traditional “generalisability”-term that is often associated with statistical significance. According to Guba and Lincoln, results are generalizable if the sample represents the population that one wishes to generalise to. Although the sample of this study is small, the group of informants still represents a varied group of English teachers. It might therefore be reasonable to expect that the findings presented here reflect the practices that exist in many other English classrooms in Norwegian upper secondary schools.

Conclusion

The focus of this study has been to find out how English writing instruction is carried out in upper secondary school in Norway when seen from a genre-pedagogy perspective. In order to achieve the goals set in the 2013 curriculum, the students need to learn how to write different types of texts, hence variation is important, not only because students appreciate it, but also because it is required that they learn various types of writing. It is also required that the students learn to structure the texts according to purpose and situation, which includes a focus on context, a relevant aspect within genre-pedagogy. As the competence aims in the curriculum are much in line with what a genre-pedagogy focuses on, it is perhaps not surprising that the practices of English writing instruction presented in this article comply quite well with a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing.

With regard to implications for teaching practices and future research, although many good writing instruction practices are revealed in this study, it seems like there is little systematic co-operation with regard to developing and sharing teaching material. It also seems like the practices of writing instruction are developed in schools, and that the teachers have had little input on this through their teacher education. From this, it seems like there is a need to develop and make available teaching material in English to ensure that more teachers have access to good example texts, as well as improving the English teacher education when it comes to the issue of writing instruction. More research is also needed about current writing instruction practices and about what type of teaching approach might support students in improving their English writing skills in a best possible way.

Referencer

- Andrews, R., Torgerson, C., Bevertson, S., Freeman, A., Locke, T., Low, G., . . . Zhu, D. (2004). The effect of grammar teaching (sentence combining) in English on 5 to 16 year olds' accuracy and quality in written composition: Review summary. University of York, UK.
- Andrews, R., Torgerson, C., Bevertson, S., Freeman, A., Locke, T., Low, G., . . . Zhu, D. (2006). The effect of grammar teaching on writing development. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(1), 39-55.
- Andrews, R., Torgerson, C., Bevertson, S., Locke, T., Low, G., Robinson, A., & Zhu, D. (2004). The effect of grammar teaching (syntax) in English on 5 to 16 year olds' accuracy and quality in written composition *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: Eppi Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.
- Berge, K. L., & Hertzberg, F. (2005). Ettertanker - og tanker om framtidas utfordringer *Ungdommers skrivekompetanse Norskeksamen som tekst Bind 2* (pp. 387-393). Oslo: Universitetsforl.
- Bonnet, G. (2004). The assessment of pupils' skills in English in eight European countries 2002: The European network of policy makers for the evaluation of education systems.

- Braddock, R. R., Lloyd-Jones, R., & Schoer, L. (1963). *Research in written composition*. National Council of Teachers of English. Illinois: Champaign.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2012). Introduction. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The Powers of Literacy, A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing* (pp. 1-21). London Washington: The Falmer Press.
- Cope, B., Kalantzis, M., Kress, G., Martin, J., & Murphy, L. (2012). Bibliographical Essay: Developing the Theory and Practice of Genre-based Literacy. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The Powers of Literacy, A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing* (pp. 231-247). London, Washington: The Falmer Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Education First. (2012). EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI). 3rd ed. Retrieved from <http://www.ef.no/epi/>
- Eisenhart, M. (2009). Generalization from Qualitative Inquiry. In K. Ercikan & W.-M. Roth (Eds.), *Generalizing from Educational Research: Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Polarization* (pp. 51-66). New York: Routledge.
- Fogel, H., & Ehri, L. C. (2000). Teaching elementary students who speak Black English Vernacular to write in Standard English: Effects of dialect transformation practice. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(2), 212-235.
- Graddol, D. (1997). The future of English. London: *The British Council*.
- Graddol, D. (2006). *English next* (Vol. 62): British Council London.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Hellekjær, G. O. (2007). The Implementation of Undergraduate Level English Medium Programs in Norway: An Explorative Case Study. In R. Wilkinson & V. Zegers (Eds.), *Researching Content and Language Integration in Higher Education* (pp. 68-81). Maastricht University Language Centre.
- Hellekjær, G. O. (2010). Lecture comprehension in English-medium higher education. *Hermes—Journal of Language and Communication Studies*, 45, 11-34.
- Hellekjær, G. O., & Fairway, T. (2015). The mismatch between the unmet need for and supply of occupational English skills: an investigation of higher educated government staff in Norway. doi: 10.1007/s10734-015-9882-x
- Hillocks, G. (1986). *Research on Written Composition - New Directions for Teaching*. Urbana: National Conference on Research in English.
- Horverak, M. O. (in process). Feedback practices in English and Norwegian upper secondary schools. *Nordic Journal of Modern Language Methodology*, 4.
- Hundahl, A. K. (2010). Mellom setning og tekst. Tematisk organisering i elvtekster fra 4. og 7. trinn. In J. Smidt, I. Folkvord & A. J. Aasen (Eds.), *Rammer for skriving. Om skriveutvikling i skole og yrkesliv* (pp. 51-64). Trondheim: Tapir akademiske forlag.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and Second Language Writing*. The USA: The University of Michigan Press.
- Hyland, K. (2009). *Teaching and researching writing* (2nd ed.). London: Longman/Pearson Education.
- Jones, S., Myhill, D., & Bailey, T. (2013). Grammar for writing? An investigation of the effects of contextualised grammar teaching on students' writing. *An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 26(8), 1241-1263. doi: 10.1007/s11145-012-9416-1

- Kjærnsli, M., Lie, S., Olsen, R. V., Roe, A., & Turmo, A. (2004). På rett spor eller ville veier? Norske elevers kompetanse i matematikk, naturfag og lesing i PISA 2003. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Kress, G. (2012). Genre as Social Process. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The Powers of Literacy, A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing* (2nd ed., pp. 22-37). London Washington: The Falmer Press.
- Lehmann, T. M. (1999). *Literacy and the tertiary student: why has the communicative approach failed?*, T.M. Lehmann, Bergen.
- Leki, I., Cumming, A., & Silva, T. (2008). *A Synthesis of Research on Second Language Writing in English*. New York: Routledge.
- Lund, R. E. (2014). Writing in EFL teachers' education. *Acta Didactica Norge*, 8(1), Art. 1, 18 sider.
- Martin, J. R. (2012). A contextual theory of language. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The Powers of literacy: a genre approach to teaching writing* (2nd ed., pp. 116-136). London, Washington: The Falmer Press.
- Martin, J. R., & Rothery, J. (2012). Grammar: Making meaning in writing. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The Powers of literacy: a genre approach to teaching writing* (2nd ed., pp. 137-153). London, Washington: The Falmer Press.
- Norris, J. M., & Ortega, L. (2000). Effectiveness of L2 instruction: A research synthesis and quantitative meta-analysis. *Language learning*, 50(3), 417-528.
- Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2013). English subject curriculum. Retrieved from <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/?lplang=eng>
- Rindal, U. (2012). *Meaning in English, L2 attitudes, choices and pronunciation in Norway*. (Ph.d.), Oslo.
- Rindal, U., & Piercy, C. (2013). Being 'neutral'? English pronunciation among Norwegian learners. *World Englishes*, 32(2), 211-229.
- Rødnes, K. A., Hellekjær, G. O., & Vold, E. T. (2014). Nye språklærere: fagkunnskap og faglige utfordringer. In E. Elstad & K. Helstad (Eds.), *Profesjonsutvikling i skolen* (pp. 170-190). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1987). Knowledge telling and knowledge transforming in written composition. *Advances in applied psycholinguistics*, 2, 142-175.
- Shaw, S. D., & Weir, C. J. (2007). *Studies in Language Testing*, 26, *Examining Writing*. Uk: Cambridge University Press.
- Silva, T. (1993). Toward an Understanding of the Distinct Nature of L2 Writing: The ESL Research and Its Implications. *TESOL Quarterly*(27), 657-677.
- Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Spada, N., & Tomita, Y. (2010). Interactions between type of instruction and type of language feature: A Meta-Analysis. *Language learning*, 60(2), 263-308.
- Walsh, J., Hammond, J., Brindley, G., & Nunan, D. (1990). Metropolitan East Disadvantaged Schools Program; Factual Writing Project Evaluation: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University, Sydney.