

Novice upper secondary teachers'  
qualifications for coping with writing  
instruction as part of teaching English as  
a Foreign Language

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# Abstract

The present qualitative study investigates to what extent novice university educated teachers of English feel prepared to teach writing at the upper secondary school level in Norway. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with seven novice teachers who teach English at Vg1 in upper secondary school programmes for general studies or at Vg1 and Vg2 in vocational education programmes. For comparison, the study also comprises interviews with two experienced English teachers who have participated in a writing project for upper secondary school teachers.

The interviews were conducted to investigate how a sample of novice teachers regard their subject knowledge in English with regard to the demands and challenges they face in their teaching. More specifically, the study investigates to what extent novice teachers' university second language teacher education (SLTE) has prepared them to teach writing that responds to the current and rather ambitious requirements of the English subject curriculum. The interviews with the experienced teachers were conducted in order to examine their experiences with a writing project. Another point of interest was to contrast their subject knowledge when it comes to writing, and the challenges they experienced in their teaching, with those of the novice teachers.

My findings show that teaching writing is considered to be the most challenging part of teaching English. The novice teachers find it especially difficult to help their students, who they claim already possess a rather high level of informal language proficiency, further develop their language skills and teach them to use more formal English and write academic texts. My findings also show that the novice teachers regret that their SLTE did not put more emphasis on developing language skills, on writing as a skill, or on how to teach writing. In addition, they find that the minimum requirement of 60 ECTS-credits in English for teaching at upper secondary level is insufficient preparation for their being able to teach confidently. My findings also show that English teachers, despite many years of experience, still find teaching writing challenging, and that participating in a writing project does not necessarily compensate for shortcomings in writing instruction in SLTE.

The findings also indicate that there is need for changes in SLTE to ensure more focus on student teachers' language development, their writing skills, and on how to teach writing. In other words, current SLTE must put more focus on enabling student teachers to teach writing. The findings also indicate that there is need for specially designed in-service courses for English teachers as well.

# Sammendrag

Målet med denne kvalitative studien er å undersøke i hvilken grad nyutdannede engelsklærere med universitetsutdanning føler seg forberedt til å undervise i skriving i den videregående skole. Undersøkelsen er basert på semistrukturerte intervju med sju lærere som underviser i engelsk på Vg1 på studieforbereende utdanningsprogram eller på Vg1 og Vg2 på yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogram. For sammenligning inneholder studien også intervjuer med to erfarne engelsklærere som har deltatt i et langvarig skriveprosjekt for lærere i den videregående skole.

Intervjuene gjorde det mulig å få et inntrykk av hvordan nyutdannede engelsklærere vurderer sin faglige kompetanse og hvilke utfordringer de møter i undervisningen sin. Studien undersøker hvorvidt universitetsutdanningen til de nyutdannede engelsklærerne har forberedt dem til å undervise i skriving på en måte som tilfredsstillende de forholdsvis ambisiøse kravene i læreplanen i engelsk. Intervjuene med de to erfarne lærerne ble utført for å få et innblikk i deres erfaringer med skriveprosjektet, i tillegg til hvordan de vurderer sin faglige kompetanse og hvilke utfordringer de møter i undervisningen sin, da sammenlignet med de nyutdannede.

Funnene viser at skriveundervisning er kanskje den aller mest utfordrende delen med å undervise i engelsk. De nyutdannede lærerne synes det er spesielt vanskelig å hjelpe elevene, som de hevder allerede har gode språklige engelskkunnskaper, til å videreutvikle sine ferdigheter og til å kunne bruke formell engelsk og skrive akademiske tekster. Funnene viser også at de nyutdannede lærerne savner fokus i utdanningen på å utvikle kommunikative språkferdigheter, spesielt skriving som en egen ferdighet og på å lære å undervise i skriving. I tillegg, 60 studiepoeng i engelsk, som er et obligatorisk minimum for å undervise i den videregående skole, blir vurdert som utilstrekkelig for å være trygg i en undervisningssituasjon. Funnene viser også at de erfarne lærerne synes at å undervise i skriving kan være utfordrende, og at et langvarig skriveprosjekt ikke nødvendigvis kompensere for mangler i utdanningen.

Funnene indikerer at det er et behov for endringer i engelsklærerutdanningen for å kunne sørge for mer fokus på lærerstudenters språklige utvikling, deres skriveferdigheter, og på hvordan å undervise i skriving. Med andre ord, engelsklærerutdanningen må fokusere mer på å forberede norske lærerstudenter til å kunne undervise i skriving i den videregående skole som tilfredsstillende læreplanens forholdsvis ambisiøse krav. Funnene indikerer også at det i tillegg er behov for etterutdanningskurs for engelsklærere.



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# 1 Introduction

While writing this master's thesis I have taken part in an on-going research project called "Språklærerutdanningene i Lektorprogrammet – fagutdanningene i norsk, engelsk og fremmedspråk og nyutdannede læreres utfordringer" [Language teacher education in the five-year teacher education programme – Norwegian, English and foreign languages programmes and challenges for novice teachers]. The aim of the research project is to investigate how novice teachers judge their professional knowledge in the school subjects Norwegian, English, and foreign languages, and what they find challenging in their teaching. As part of the research project interviews were carried out with four novice teachers from each subject. Of the twelve interviews in total, I conducted the four interviews with the English teachers, and these interviews are also used as data for my master's study. Later, I expanded upon this with additional interviews. The aim of the on-going research project (Rødnes, Hellekjær & Vold, in press), for which the preliminary findings are in the process of being published, is to form the basis of a larger survey. The interview guide I have used in this study was developed by the research group, and in 2013 I piloted the interview guide when writing an examination paper for a master's course.

The present study investigates to what extent novice English teachers at upper secondary level in Norway feel prepared to teach writing. It examines how they judge their subject knowledge in English, and what challenges they are faced with in their teaching – with a particular attention on writing. The study also comprises interviews with two experienced English teachers who have participated in a writing project for upper secondary school teachers, in order to examine their experiences with the writing project, as well as to compare their subject knowledge in English and the challenges they face – when it comes to teaching writing – with those of the novice teachers. Writing is an important skill to master, and as we will see in the next subsection, writing is a strongly emphasised in the English school subject in Norway.

## 1.1 The Knowledge Promotion and the basic skills

The Knowledge Promotion Reform (*Kunnskapsløftet*) was introduced in autumn 2006. It is a comprehensive curriculum reform and covers primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training. The Knowledge Promotion includes the Core Curriculum (*Generell del av læreplanen*), the Quality Framework (*prinsipper for opplæringen*), subject curricula

(*læreplaner*), distribution of teaching hours for each subject, and individual assessment. This reform forefronted five “basic skills”: the ability to express oneself orally, the ability to read, the ability to express oneself in writing, numeracy, and the ability to use digital tools. These five basic skills are adapted to all school subjects and are integrated in each subject curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2007). The reform defined the five basic skills as a prerequisite for all learning at school, work and in social life (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b).

### **1.1.1 The revised English subject curriculum**

In 2013 the English subject curriculum for the common core subject of English in primary and secondary education was revised (that is; for primary school, lower secondary school, and for Vg1 in programmes for general studies as well for Vg1 and Vg2 in vocational education programmes in upper secondary school). The revision was based on findings which indicated that work with the basic skills in schools was not being carried through as intended. Two reports by the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) and the Department of Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Oslo (ILS) – *Kunnskapsløftet – tung bør å bære* (2009) and *Underveis, men i svært ulikt tempo* (2010) – claimed that there was not adequate emphasis on the basic skills. In fact, the findings of the two reports showed that the introduction of the basic skills in conjunction with the Knowledge Promotion in 2006 did not lead to any changes in the teaching of oral skills, writing and numeracy. Indeed, teaching proceeded in much the same manner as before the reform. The aim of the revision of the English subject curriculum was therefore to clarify and strengthen the basic skills and make them more visible in the subject curricula. The main area in the 2006 syllabus, “communication”, was therefore in 2013 divided into two new main areas “oral communication” and “written communication” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2009; 2010; 2012b; 2013c).

### **1.1.2 Writing in the English subject**

As mentioned, the basic skills are strongly emphasised by the Knowledge Promotion curriculum, and even more so in the revised 2013 English subject curriculum. In fact, writing now plays a central role in the English subject curriculum. Furthermore, the English subject curriculum for Vg1 programmes for general studies and the Vg1 and Vg2 vocational education programmes, which I look closer at in my study, is rather ambitious when it comes



to writing. It gives special importance to the ability to write different types of texts and being able to adapt language to purpose and situation. The students are also expected to use and understand an extensive vocabulary, use patterns for orthography and word inflection, and use sources critically (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a) (I elaborate on this in section 2.2). Consequently, not only are students faced with high demands when it comes to writing, but teachers of English are also faced with high demands when it comes to the *teaching* of writing. This makes it essential that teachers have the knowledge required for teaching writing effectively on this level. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether novice English teachers in Norway actually feel they have the adequate knowledge that makes them able to teach writing effectively on an advanced level, and are able to help prepare their students for future higher education and working life.

For this study, it would, of course, also be useful to analyse recent exams for the English school subject with regard to their demands. However, because of time concerns and the scope of this study, I have had to refrain from doing so. Besides, the exams for the English schools subject are based on the English subject curriculum.

## **1.2 Relevant research**

Teacher education is a large area of research and extensive research has been carried out on teacher education (see for example Drew, 1997; Ilieva, 2010; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Lund, 2014; Orafi & Borg, 2009; Yayli, 2012) and on novice teachers (see for example Damsgaard & Heggen, 2010; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Farrell, 2012; Farrell 2013). Relevant research on second language teacher education in Norway has, however, focused on the four-year teacher education at university colleges and not the five-year teacher education at universities (Drew, 1997; Lund, 2014).

Drew (1997) and Lund (2014) have investigated how writing is included in teacher education programmes in Norway. Drew found great shortcomings in writing instruction in teacher education courses in English. His findings show that there was little emphasis on student teachers' language skills and that their linguistic development during their education is marginal. He highlights teachers' need for adequate linguistic and writing competence in order to be able to teach writing responsibly.

Drew (1997) also found that the teacher education courses, with their theoretical profile, do not match the English school subject, with its communicative focus. He also argues that one cannot assume that student teachers' language skills will automatically

develop during their education. This means there is a need for a comprehensive course in writing, specifically designed to prepare student teachers for teaching written English. Such a course, Drew argues, should focus on developing language skills, on written practice and practice in writing strategies, and training in evaluating written assignments – the latter, according to Drew, another neglected area in teacher education.

More recently, Lund (2014) investigates how writing is included in teacher education programmes for grades five to ten, where English is an integrated part, at thirteen teacher education institutions in Norway. Her focus is on how these institutions interpret and apply the national guidelines for teachers' education when it comes to writing. Lund's main finding is that writing is still not adequately prioritised in teacher education programmes. The national guidelines for teachers' education state that student teachers in these programmes are expected to be able to work with two dimensions of writing: to develop their writing skills (learn to write) and use writing as a tool in the process of learning language (write to learn). The student teachers are also expected to develop good writing skills themselves. Lund points out that the national guidelines do not, however, include any specifications on how to achieve these goals, and it is, therefore, up to each individual institution and course instructor how the students work with writing.

Lund (2014) argues that writing is central in student teachers' education, in the sense that written assignments are common and that written work is often used for assessment. Despite this, she found that the syllabuses do not provide the students with much information about assessment criteria, nor do they connect students' writing assignments to the specified learning outcomes. Lund also points out that the students are required to write a number of texts, which she claims are helpful for learning content, but there is little focus on how to write and how to teach writing. As Drew, she therefore calls for a greater focus on developing students' writing skills and their ability to teach writing. I will come back to these two studies in subsection 3.7.

### **1.3 Research question**

The above-mentioned studies focus on the four-year teacher education programmes at university colleges. However, comparable studies have not been carried out for the five-year university programmes, and this brings me to the research question of this study, which is: *To what extent do novice teachers of English, from the five-year university programmes, at upper secondary level in Norway feel prepared to teach writing?*

First, the study looks into how novice teachers regard their subject knowledge in English, and the challenges they face in their teaching. Second, the study seeks to investigate to what extent novice teachers' university education has prepared them to teach writing that corresponds to current demands in the English school subject. The study also comprises interviews with two experienced English teachers who have participated in a writing project for upper secondary teachers in order to examine their experiences with the writing project. Another point of interest was to contrast their subject knowledge when it comes to writing, and the challenges they experienced in their teaching, with those of the novice teachers.

## **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1, *Introduction*, provides the rationale and the research question for the study. The theoretical framework for the study is presented in two chapters: chapter 2, *Theory – Writing*, and chapter 3, *Theory – Second language teacher education*. Chapter 4, *Methodology*, presents the procedures and methods used for the study. In chapter 5, *Results*, the results and analysis are provided. In chapter 6, *Discussion*, I first summarise my findings, and next, I discuss my findings in relation to relevant theory and relevant studies. I then comment on the study's transferability. Chapter 7, *Conclusion*, gives an account of the implications of the study's findings and provides suggestions for further research.

## **1.5 Key definitions**

In this study I will use the term second language (L2) in a broad sense that includes both “second language” and “foreign language”. Second language teacher education (SLTE) will therefore also include both English as a second language (ESL) teacher education and English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). SLTE has become an umbrella term for language teacher education in TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages; i.e. teaching English as a second or foreign language) (Wright, 2010).

## **2 Theory – Writing**

### **2.1 What is writing?**

#### **2.1.1 A need for writing**

Writing is important in general, and an important aspect of second and foreign language education (Weigle, 2002). Weigle claims that being able “to speak and write a second language is becoming widely recognized as an important skill for educational, business, and personal reasons” (p. 1). Globalization and the development of English as a lingua franca has made second language (L2) writing important for professionals, such as business people, politicians, engineers, and lawyers – who often collaborate with their counterparts from different parts of the world. It is just as important for academics in many parts of the world, who experience an increasing pressure to write in English in order to be able to publish their research in international publications (Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper & Matsuda, 2009). Weigle (2002) links the current focus on writing to a shift towards “communicative language teaching” in both second and foreign language settings, which she explains as “language teaching as system of communication rather than as an object of study” (p. 1).

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) claim that the need for writing in modern literate societies is extensive, and often more so than what is realised. In everyday life one can find many varieties of writing, and the authors claim that people tend to employ a variety of forms of writing every day. Many varieties of writing may be seen as mundane or routine, but they are all in different ways representations of how to employ the power of written language.

#### **2.1.2 Second language (L2) writing**

While there are similarities between first language (L1) writing and second language (L2) writing, there are also differences between each corresponding group of learners because of broad variations in learner issues within these groups (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Matsuda et al. (2009) state that

Second language writers represent a wide range of characteristics and backgrounds, which are influenced by a variety of factors, including their native language proficiency and literacy development, how they have encountered the target language, and under what circumstances they have developed their second language and writing proficiency (p. 461).

In other words, there are great complexities in L2 writing instruction because L2 learners learn L2 writing for many different reasons and for being employed in many different situations.

L1 writing is important in childrens’ education and is “relatively standardized within a particular culture” (Weigle, 2002, p. 5). Children are explicitly taught to write the language they already speak and know, with the ultimate goal for most L1 learners to be able to participate in school, as well as many other aspects of society. For some, their career choice might also entail extensive writing. L2 writing differs because there is a much wider variety of situations and reasons for learning an L2, both for children and for adults (Weigle, 2002). Weigle suggests that one can divide L2 learners into at least five groups for better understanding of the different L2 learners and their learner needs and purposes. The five groups Weigle distinguishes between are displayed in the table below.

**Table 1** *Groups of L2 learners, their learner needs and purposes for learning.*  
Adapted from Bernhardt (1991) by Weigle, (2002, p. 6).

	Learners	Needs	Purpose
Children	minority groups members; e.g. in bilingual programs	academic ‘school’ writing skills	for survival
	majority group members; e.g. in immersion programs		for enhancement
Adults	minority group members, immigrant status	immediate functional literacy skills	for survival in the workplace
	quasi-temporary academic status		for advanced subject matter degrees
	majority language group members; e.g. traditional foreign-language learners	academic ‘educated’ language skills	for educational and/or job enhancement and/or interest

The first group comprises children from a language minority group, receiving education in the majority language. This group needs to learn a language that is used at their school, but not in their home. The second group consists of majority language speakers who are learning a second language. Both of these groups need writing skills in the L2 for academic reasons. The first adult group consists of immigrants in a new country, who need to learn writing at a basic level to be able to handle demands in the workplace. The second adult group consists of those who are abroad for advanced university studies. The third adult group consists of majority language members who are learning a second language for education or work, or for personal interest. These different groups, divided by age and type of learner, have different needs and purposes when learning to write in their L2. This variation in background, needs and purpose is much larger for L2 writers than for L1 writers (Weigle, 2002).

Studies have shown that there are differences in how first language and second language writers approach writing (Silva, 1993; as cited in Matsuda et al., 2009). Silva (1993, p. 669; as cited in Hyland, 2003) claims that “L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing” (p. 31). Second language writers often have more difficulties with writing than first language writers. Many L2 writers “are still in a process of acquiring syntactic and lexical competence” (CCCC, 2001; as cited in Matsuda et al., 2009, p. 462). The proficiency levels of L2 writers clearly influence their writing. L2 writers’ texts often include more errors and are often less precise than texts by L1 writers. Some L2 writers may have had less experience writing longer texts than with grammar and writing on sentence level. L2 writer also struggle more with “sentence structures, verb tenses, idiomatic phrases, and articles” (Matsuda et al., 2009, p. 462). Hyland (2003) lists the following differences one may find between L1 and L2 writing:

- Different linguistic proficiencies and institutions about language
- Different learning experiences and classroom expectations
- Different sense of audience and writer
- Different preferences for ways of organizing texts
- Different writing processes
- Different understandings of text use and the social value of different text types (p. 31)

However, Hyland (2003) also stresses the individual differences amongst L2 writers, which can influence their writing, and warns against seeing L2 writers as one homogeneous group.

### **2.1.3 Writing ability**

It is not easy to define writing ability since “the uses to which writing is put by different people in different situations are so varied that no single definition can cover all situations” (Purves, 1992; Camp, 1993; White, 1995; as cited in Weigle, 2002, p. 3). Writing can be understood as many different things, from writing letters and single words to writing extensive texts. The different groups of L2 learners will produce a variety of text types. Weigle (2002) claims that to look into what is meant by writing ability one must look at the types of writing that are relevant for the different L2 learner groups. She presents a model of different text types, originally created by Vähäpääsi (1982), which classifies text types according to two major categories: cognitive processing on the one hand, and dominant intention or purpose on the other hand. Three main levels of cognitive processing are distinguished: The first level (Type I), the least demanding, is to reproduce information. The second level (Type II) is to organize or reorganize information. The third level (Type III), the most demanding, is writing to invent or generate new information or ideas. This type of writing is also known as knowledge transforming and is a crucial part of academic writing. Six different dominant intentions or purposes are also distinguished between. These are: to learn, to convey emotions, to inform, to convince, to entertain and to keep in touch.

Weigle (2002) argues that this categorization of types of texts can be useful when we look at L2 learners’ writing needs. Both of the two children groups (presented in table 1), who are schooled in their L2, might need all the three types of writing (Type I, II and III). The second adult L2 learner group, who are abroad for advanced university studies, will also need all three levels of writing. The first and the third adult group (the immigrants in a new country and the majority language members who are learning a second language for education, work or for personal interest), however, have a more limited need for writing and will most likely need the two first levels of cognitive processing (Type I and II), both in the language classroom and in the real world. This demonstrates how varied writing needs for different groups of L2 learners are, since writing plays different roles for different L2 learners (pp. 10–13). Defining writing ability will therefore, according to Weigle (2002), depend on the particular context, the specific L2 writers and their writing needs.

### **2.1.4 Types of writing**

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) distinguish between writing without composing and writing with composing. Writing without composing can be making lists or filling out forms, while writing with composing “involves the combining of structural sentence units into a more-or-less unique, cohesive and coherent larger structure” (p. 4). The authors argue that this distinction is useful because what is regarded as academic writing includes composing. Writing *with* composing can further be distinguished into another two groups: knowledge telling and knowledge transforming, a distinction made by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987; as cited in Weigle, 2002). Knowledge telling can for example be writing narratives or descriptions – something that is already known to the writer (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). There is little revision or planning in this process, which involves putting thoughts on paper. Knowledge transforming, on the other hand, involves writing with more effort and skill and the writing is used to “create new knowledge” (Weigle, 2002, p. 33). The writer will not be sure of what the final product will be. The writing “constitutes a heuristic through which an information-transfer problem is solved both for the author and for his or her intended audience” (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 5). Grabe and Kaplan (1996) point out that in academic situations many students are supposed to learn to write for knowledge transforming. However, the authors claim that many students when entering university level have little practice in writing beyond knowledge telling.

### **2.1.5 Social and cultural context**

Weigle (2002) asserts that writing is not only a result of cognitive effort of an individual writer, but that one must see writing in its social and cultural context. Hyland (2003) claims that

While every act of writing is in a sense both personal and individual, it is also interactional and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose, reflecting a particular kind of relationship, and acknowledging an engagement in a given community. This means that writing cannot be distilled down to a set of cognitive or technical abilities or a system of rules, and that learning to write in a second language is not simply a matter of opportunities to compose and revise (p. 27).

Hamp-Lyons and Kroll (1997) state that writing is “an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose, and that is appropriately shaped for its intended



audience” (p. 8). Grabe and Kaplan (1996) argue that “writing should be viewed as a set of practices which are socially contextualized [...] rather than a single universal set of cognitive skills” (p. 17). Hayes (1996; as cited in Weigle, 2002) states that “[writing] is also social because it is a social artefact and is carried out in a social setting. What we write, and who we write to is shaped by social convention and by our history of social interaction” (p. 19). Sperling (1996; as cited in Weigle, 2002) states that “writing, like language in general, [is] a meaning-making activity that is socially and culturally shaped and individually and socially purposeful” (p. 19). The social aspects of writing are also emphasised in literature of academic L2 writing. Learning to write academically in an L2 involves more than just learning about grammar and vocabulary, or rhetorical forms that are common for academic writing (Weigle, 2002). Writing, in each discipline, can involve

examining the kinds of issues a discipline considers important, why certain methods of inquiry and not others are sanctioned, how the conventions of a discipline shape text in that discipline, how individual writers represent themselves in a text, how texts are read and disseminated within the discipline, and how one text influences subsequent texts (Spack, 1988, p. 38; as cited in Weigle, 2002, p. 20).

Writing may vary in different cultures because of “cultural preferences which make greater use of certain options among the linguistic possibilities” (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 184). The coherence of a text might also be influenced by culture (Weigle, 2002). Weigle (2002) claims that one’s ability to write, or one’s language use, demonstrates, to some extent, one’s ability to “function as a literate member of a particular segment of society or discourse community” (p. 22). Readers from different cultures have distinct background knowledge that influences their expectations to a text (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983; as cited in Weigle, 2002). One’s background knowledge is shaped by cultural factors, among other things, and one’s background knowledge seems to have a great impact on how one writes (Hyland, 2003). Culture and language and learning are inextricably connected (Kramersch, 1993; as cited in Hyland, 2003). Hyland (2003) explains how:

This is partly because our cultural values are reflected in and carried through language, but also because cultures make available to us certain taken-for-granted ways of organizing our perceptions and expectations, including those we use to learn and communicate in writing (p. 36).

Cultural differences, which might include differences in expectations, strategies and beliefs can lead to miscommunication, and Hyland (2003) therefore underlines the importance that teachers understand the differences L2 writers might bring with them in a learning context. Even highly proficient L2 writers may struggle to understand genres that are culturally constructed, as well as to understand and meet the expectations of the readers from the L2 culture (Matsuda et al., 2009).

### **2.1.6 Audience**

Keeping in mind one's audience is an important part of the writing process. Björk and Räisänen (2003) distinguish between two kinds of writing: writer-oriented writing and reader-oriented writing. This distinction is based on who the audience is. Writer-oriented writing is personal writing for oneself only, while reader-oriented writing is writing aimed for other readers with the purpose of communication. Writer-oriented writing is for exploring one's own ideas with use of informal language and includes notes and journal writing. Reader-oriented writing, on the other hand, is to a greater extent characterised by the employment of formal language.

Weigle (2002) claims that when writing for an audience, i.e. reader-oriented writing, one must apply a significant amount of cognitive activity, because one has to, simultaneously, keep in mind “information about the writing topic, information about the audience, and information about acceptable forms of written texts” (p. 18). Grabe and Kaplan (1996) state that the “audience is essential to the creation of text and the generation of meaning” (p. 207). The authors mention several factors one should take into account when considering one's audience:

whether or not: the reader is known; the reader is an individual or a group; the reader will evaluate the writing; the reader has approximately the same level of general knowledge; the reader knows a lot about the specific topic of writing; the reader will be empathetic; the reader has a different power status (p. 310).

Swales and Feak (1994; as cited in Paltridge, 2004) also emphasise the importance of audience in L2 academic writing. They claim that students need to think of their audience before they start writing. They point out that students need to have knowledge about what their audience expects and knows because this will affect their writing. Regarding academic

writing, the audience often knows more than the writer. In these cases “the writer’s purpose is usually to display familiarity and expertise in the particular area, beyond simply reporting on the research and scholarship of others” (p. 90).

### **2.1.7 Expert writers**

Weigle (2002) also distinguishes between expert and inexperienced writers, and claims that expert writers use different writing strategies than inexperienced writers. She points out that the ability to foresee one’s audience and create the text appropriately to one’s audience, without having the opportunity of immediate feedback from a conversation partner, separates expert from inexperienced writers. She claims that expert writers consider how much the reader knows about the particular topic, what needs to be explained in the text and what can be implicit for the reader. Weigle (2002) continues that in addition to taking into account their audience, good writers are characterised by spending more time on planning and revising their writing, as well as editing their texts. Like Weigle (2002), Collins and Williamson (1984; as cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) claim that better writers adapt their writing to their particular audience, while Hillocks (1986; as cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) state that less-skilled writers are less thoughtful and less aware of their audience. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) list the following that characterises good writers:

Good writers: plan longer; have more elaborate plans; review and reassess plans on a regular basis; consider more kinds of solutions to rhetorical problems in writing; consider the reader’s point of view in planning and writing; incorporate multiple perspectives into the drafting; revise in line with global goals rather than merely editing local segments; have a wide range of writing and revising strategies to call upon (p. 240).

### **2.1.8 What is academic writing?**

I have previously mentioned that academic writing has to do with knowledge transforming, which involves inventing or generating new information or ideas; or in other words, creating new knowledge. I also explained that learning to write academically in an L2 setting involves more than learning about grammar, vocabulary and rhetorical forms, as it also involves learning about social and cultural aspects of writing. Finally, I presented the importance of thinking of one’s audience and what the reader expects from the text, when writing.

Dong (1997) claims that academic writing “involves learning a new set of academic rules and learning how to play by these rules. These rules may change from discipline to

discipline, and the audience and the purpose of writing vary according to each writing context” (p. 10; as cited in Paltridge, 2004, p. 88). Paltridge states that when writing an academic text a student is influenced by a variety of factors:

the purpose of the text, the academic and cultural context of the text, the extent to which the writer is given advice on the positioning and organization of the text (Prior, 1995), the student’s perceptions of the audience of their text (Johns, 1997; Casanave, 2004), the discipline in which the student is writing, the values and expectations of the academic community at which the text is aimed (Johns, 1997; Newman et al., 2003; Swales, 1990), and the relationship between the text and other similar such texts (pp. 88–89).

## **2.2 Writing in the English school subject in Norway**

Writing holds a central place in the English school subject in Norway, as well as in all subjects in the Norwegian school system. It is as already mentioned one of the five so-called “basic skills”, which are “defined as basic to learning in school, work and social life”. They are called basic because they are “fundamental to learning in all subjects as well as a prerequisite for the pupil to show his/her competence and qualifications”. The Framework for basic skills defines and describes the functions of the basic skills. The subject specific curricula describe how the skills are integrated in the subject (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b).

### **2.2.1 The Framework for basic skills**

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*) has created the Framework for basic skills (*Rammeverk for grunnleggende ferdigheter*) to be used by subject curricula groups. The Framework for basic skills defines and describes the functions of the five basic skills (oral skills, reading, writing, digital skills and numeracy). The subject curricula are based on “a generic Framework developed to serve as a reference document for developing and revising the National Subject-Specific Curricula” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012a).

The Framework defines “writing” as being able to express “oneself understandably and appropriately about different topics and communicating with others in the written mode”. The Framework also states that writing is a tool for developing thoughts and other skills, such as: planning (utilizing different strategies and sources as well as revising texts), construct

(mastering spelling, grammar, sentence construction, cohesion and text binding), communicating (expressing oneself, being able to discuss and being able to adapt one's text to the situation) and reflecting and assessing (using writing as a tool for awareness of own learning) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012a).

The revision of the English subject curriculum in 2013 gave changes to some parts of the curriculum. The changes included a division of the former main area "communication" into two new main areas: "oral communication" and "written communication". The reason for this division was to clarify the basic skills and make the differences between oral and written competence more visible. For the same reason, there were also made changes in the competence aims in order to clarify and strengthen the basic skills (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013c). The aim of the revision was to make the basic skills more visible in the subject curriculum and to facilitate a systematic development of the basic skills to ensure a clear progression in the basic skills throughout the school years (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012b).

Two reports are brought up as part of the rationale for the revision of the curricula: *Kunnskapsløftet – tung bør å bære* (2009) and *Underveis, men i svært ulikt tempo* (2010). Both reports show that work with the basic skills was not taken seriously enough at schools. Work with oral skills, writing and numeracy seemed to be done in the same way as before the Knowledge Promotion Reform and its introduction of the basic skills in 2006. The findings in the reports suggest that the introduction of the basic skills did not lead to any particular changes (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2009; 2010). Making the basic skills more visible in the subject curriculum and dividing the main area communication into oral communication and written communication emphasises the importance of writing in the subject of English.

### **2.2.2 The English subject curriculum**

The English subject curriculum for the common core subject of English in primary and secondary education (primary school, lower secondary school and for Vg1 in programmes for general studies and for Vg1 and Vg2 in vocational education programmes in upper secondary school) is divided into six sections: purpose; main subject areas; teaching hours; basic skills; competence aims; and assessment. The English subject curriculum starts with expressing the purpose of the subject English. It begins with stating that "English is a universal language", needed for communication with people from other countries. We meet English in many areas:

“films, literature, songs, sports, trade, products, science and technology”, as well as on the internet, in education and in working life. The curriculum emphasises the need to be able to master English for international communication. This includes developing linguistic skills and the knowledge of how to use English in different contexts. The curriculum emphasises the importance of written and oral texts in language learning, as well as using learning strategies and setting goals for learning. Culture, in addition to language learning, is also an important part of the subject of English. This involves learning about different cultures in the English-speaking world and learning about how English developed into a world language. In other words, developing communicative language skills and cultural insight are the main purposes of the subject of English. This can contribute to facilitating international communication by promoting “greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds”.

The second part of the English subject curriculum is “main subject areas”. The subject of English consists of four main subject areas, which are: *language learning*, *oral communication*, *written communication*, and *culture, society and literature*. The main subject area *language learning* involves “knowledge about the language, language usage and insight into one’s own language learning”. The main subject area *oral communication* involves understanding and using English and being able to adapt the language to the situation and recipient. It also involves “developing a vocabulary and using idiomatic structures and grammatical patterns”, as well as “learning to speak clearly and to use the correct intonation”. The main subject area *written communication* involves “understanding and using English language through reading, writing and using suitable reading and writing strategies”. This includes reading and writing different types of texts in order to “experience greater understanding and to acquire knowledge”. Writing texts also involves being able to adapt the language, “developing a vocabulary and using orthography, idiomatic structures and grammatical patterns”, as well as “creating structure, coherence and concise meaning”. The main subject area *culture, society and literature* has to do with cultural understanding and involves learning about English speaking countries and English as a world language.

The next section, teaching hours, gives information about how many hours of English each school year has.

The following section is basic skills. The basic skills in the subject of English are: oral skills, being able to express oneself in writing, being able to read, numeracy and digital skills. The basic skills are integrated in the competence aims of the main subject areas.

The next section, competence aims, gives an overview of the competence aims that are to be reached “after the second, fourth, seventh and tenth years in primary and lower secondary school and after the first year in the programmes for general studies (Vg1) or after the second year of a vocational education programmes [*sic*] (Vg2)”. There are competence aims for each of the four main subject areas (language learning, oral communication, written communication, and culture, society and literature). All the competence aims start with “The aims of the studies are to enable pupils to...”.

Assessment is the last section in the English subject curriculum. This section gives information about the provisions for final assessment after year 10 and after the Vg1 programme for general studies and the Vg2 vocational education programme (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a).

### **2.2.3 Requirements for writing in the English subject curriculum**

Writing plays a central role in the subject of English and its importance is noticeable in the subject curriculum. Writing has been given emphasis in the subject curriculum by The Knowledge Promotion curriculum: written communication is one of the four main subject areas and “being able to express oneself in writing” is one of the five basic skills. Furthermore, the students may be selected for a written exam (as well as the possibility for being selected for an oral exam) for final assessment.

As previously mentioned, the main subject area written communication involves writing different texts and adapting the language to different situations and recipients. This includes “distinguishing between formal and informal written language”. Furthermore, the main subject area “involves developing a vocabulary and using orthography, idiomatic structures and grammatical patterns when writing. It also covers creating structure, coherence and concise meaning in texts”. The competence aims belonging to the main subject area written communication after the Vg1 programmes for general studies and the Vg2 vocational education programmes are:

*The aims of the studies are to enable pupils to*

- evaluate and use suitable reading and writing strategies adapted for the purpose and type of text
- understand and use an extensive general vocabulary and an academic vocabulary related to one’s education programme

- understand the main content and details in texts of varying length about different topics
- read to acquire knowledge in a particular subject from one's education programme
- use own notes to write texts related to one's education programme
- write different types of texts with structure and coherence suited to the purpose and situation
- use patterns for orthography, word inflection and varied sentence and text construction to produce texts
- produce different kinds of texts suited to formal digital requirements for digital media
- evaluate different sources and use contents from sources in an independent, critical and verifiable manner (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a).

The basic skill “being able to express oneself in writing” is explained as follows:

*Being able to express oneself in writing* in English means being able to express ideas and opinions in an understandable and purposeful manner using written English. It means planning, formulating and working with texts that communicates and that are well structured and coherent. Writing is also a tool for language learning. The development of writing proficiency in English involves learning orthography and developing a more extensive repertoire of English words and linguistic structures. Furthermore, it involves developing versatile competence in writing different kinds of generalised, literary and technical texts in English using informal and formal language that is suited to the objective and recipient (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a).

As can be seen, students in Vg1 programmes for general studies and Vg2 vocational education programmes face high demands when it comes to writing. Accordingly, the teachers also face high demands when it comes to teaching writing on this level. Students are expected to be able to adapt their writing to the purpose and situation, write different kinds of texts and use an academic vocabulary, as well as to evaluate and use different sources. They are expected to write coherent texts with focus on structure, and with correct orthography and word inflection. There is an emphasis on being able to produce a variety of different texts, i.e. being able to adapt one's writing to the purpose and situation: “evaluate and use suitable reading and writing strategies adapted for the purpose and type of text”, “write different types of texts with structure and coherence suited to the purpose and situation”, and “produce



different kinds of texts suited to formal digital requirements for digital media” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a).

To sum up, being able to write in a second language is regarded an important skill in many different areas of society. The importance of writing is also reflected in the English subject curriculum. Writing requires knowledge about grammar, vocabulary, rhetorical forms and the use of one’s cognitive skills, and is also influenced by the social and cultural context. Having to adapt one’s writing to the purpose and situation also means to think of one’s audience. These demands resemble descriptions of expert writers, which was described earlier in this chapter (2.1.7).

# 3 Theory – Second language teacher education

The term “second language teacher education” (SLTE) was coined by Jack C. Richards (1990) to cover the preparation of L2 teachers – both their training and education (Wright, 2010). Richards (1990) states that “the intent of second language teacher education must be to provide opportunities for the novice to acquire the skills and competencies of effective teachers and to discover the working rules that effective teachers use” (p. 15). SLTE has later become an umbrella term for language teacher education in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) (Wright, 2010).

Second language teacher education (SLTE) has gone through considerable changes in the last decades (Wright, 2010). Two issues – an internally initiated change and external pressures – have contributed to the development of the field of SLTE. The internally initiated change involves a gradual change in the understanding of the knowledge base and instructional practices. External pressures, such as globalisation and the increasing need for a command of English skills worldwide, have influenced the field of SLTE in the sense that it has led to a demand for new language teaching policies, for standards, and for larger central control over SLTE and teaching (Burns & Richards, 2009).

The field of TESOL is also fairly new, dating from the 1960s. Approaches to teacher training at that time involved short training programmes and certificates with a focus on practical classroom skills. TESOL bases its foundation on academic knowledge and theory from applied linguistics, which also dates from the same period. The relationship between practical teaching skills and academic knowledge and theory in SLTE programmes has been under debate ever since. Today, the field of SLTE is influenced by sociocultural theory and theories about teacher cognition (Burns & Richards, 2009).

## 3.1 The knowledge base of SLTE

The knowledge base of SLTE has, as suggested above, been reconceptualised the last few decades. The knowledge base involves three areas: the content of the SLTE programme: “*what L2 teachers need to know*”, the pedagogies of the SLTE programme: “*how L2 teachers should teach*”, and “the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned, or *how L2 teachers learn to teach*” (Johnson, 2009b, p. 21).

Traditionally, the knowledge base of SLTE consisted of two strands: one focusing on

academic knowledge about language and language learning (*knowledge about*, or content knowledge) and the other on teaching skills and pedagogic issues (*knowledge how*) (Burns & Richards, 2009). This knowledge base has to a great extent been based on how learners acquire a second language, and little emphasis has been put on how one learns to teach an L2 or on how L2 teaching is practiced (Johnson, 2009b). Therefore, Freeman and Johnson (1998) argued for a knowledge base that should also include the content of L2 teaching, or “what and how language is actually taught in L2 classrooms as well as teachers and students’ perception of that content” (p. 410; as cited in Johnson, 2009b, p. 22) – also called “pedagogical content knowledge” (Schulman, 1987). Reflective teaching, classroom research and action research are now included in many TESOL and SLTE programmes, and contribute to expanding the traditional knowledge base (Burns & Richards, 2009). The content of L2 teaching, or pedagogical content knowledge, “positions L2 teachers as users and creators of knowledge that constitutes the activity of L2 teaching” (Johnson, 2009b, p. 22). Schulman (1987) states that pedagogical content knowledge “represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adopted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8).

SLTE has also been affected by the rapid growth of English worldwide, which has led to professionalization of English Language Teaching (ELT) and the impact of “communicative language teaching” (CLT) (Wright, 2010, p. 261). The level of professionalism in ELT is much greater than earlier: “ELT is seen as a career in a field of educational specialization; it requires a specialized knowledge base obtained through both academic study and practical experience; and it is a field of work where membership is based on entry requirements and standards” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 2).

## **3.2 Sociocultural theory**

A sociocultural perspective views teaching as “creating conditions for the coconstruction [*sic*] of knowledge and understanding through social participation” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 6). In this perspective learning to teach

is based on the assumption that knowing, thinking, and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations. Teacher learning and the activities of teaching are understood as growing out of

participation in the social practices in classrooms; and what teachers know and how they use that knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretative and contingent on knowledge of self, setting, students, curriculum, and community (Johnson, 2009a, p. 13).

Traditionally, teacher learning has been viewed as a primarily cognitive issue – something that takes place in the individual’s mind, but a rethinking of SLTE programmes has had much to do with the focus on the nature of teacher learning. Within this sociocultural perspective there is added focus on learning occurring in a social context. That is to say, teacher learning involves examining “the mental processes involved in teacher learning and acknowledges the ‘situated’ and the social nature of learning” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4).

### **3.3 Language teacher cognition**

Teacher cognition research, which comes from the field of general education, has gained increased interest in the field of SLTE (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 5). Teacher cognition involves “what teachers think, know, and believe” (Borg, 2009, p. 163). Second language teacher cognition has grown rapidly since its emergence in the 1990s. A reason for this “has been the realization that we cannot properly understand teachers and teaching without understanding the thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that influence what teachers do” (Borg, 2009, p. 163). Teacher cognition has also contributed to the understandings of the process of developing as a teacher. It should also be mentioned that prior language learning experiences are a prominent topic in language teacher cognition. Previous experiences with language learning shape the student teachers’ beliefs about teaching and influences their teaching practice (Borg, 2009).

### **3.4 Teacher identity**

A sociocultural perspective also involves the aspect of teacher identity. Teacher identity involves “what it means to be a language teacher”; the development of identity through social interaction (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 5). The professional identity of language teachers is claimed to have a considerable effect on how teaching is carried out in the classroom (Ilieva, 2010). In her article, Ilieva investigates how teacher education programmes arrange for non-native ESL (English as a second language) teachers to develop professional identities and “become pro-active educators”. Ilieva argues for the need for TESOL programmes to focus on the expansion of ones’ identities as a teacher.

Kanno and Stuart (2011) also argue for the need to include a more thorough understanding of the development of teacher identity in the knowledge base of SLTE (p. 249). They claim that the development of a teacher identity is “the central project in which novice teachers are involved” (p. 249). To explain and understand the changes in novice L2 teachers’ classroom practice, one cannot only look at their knowledge development, they argue, one must also examine their evolving teacher identity to entirely understand why particular changes take place in their teaching. In their study, Kanno and Stuart investigate how novice L2 teachers learn to teach and how they develop identities as professional language teachers. The study shows that the formation of novice teachers’ identity and their changing classroom practice are linked: “practice shapes identity, whereas identity, in turn, affects practice” (p. 245). According to the authors, because of this relationship between identity and practice, if one is changed, the other will be affected.

For student teachers to be able to claim membership in the community of teachers, they must be able to use the appropriate social language, since language expresses one’s membership in a discourse community. Student teachers’ professional language use is a fundamental part of their development as teachers, as well as an indicator of their development, which also might contribute to discover the process of teachers’ identity formation (Yayli, 2012).

### **3.5 The importance of teachers’ language skills**

The use of English is increasing in higher education, science and in working life, which makes it ever more important to master English on an advanced level (Hellekjær, 2012). English teaching and English language teachers are central to this development with the “consequently increasing demand worldwide for competent English teachers and for more effective approaches to their preparation and professional development” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 1). Darling-Hammond (1998) claims that teachers’ knowledge and what teachers do are important influences on what their students learn. She states that “a number of recent studies suggest that teacher expertise is one of the most important factors in determining student achievement” (p. 6).

Thornbury (1997) defines teacher language awareness as “the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively” (p. x; as cited in Andrews, 2007, p. 23). Teacher language awareness involves both subject matter knowledge and language proficiency and how it impacts language

teaching (Andrews, 2007). Andrews (1999a) claims that language teachers need high levels of both implicit and explicit knowledge of grammar in order to be able to facilitate effective communication in the classroom (as cited in Andrews, 2007). Language teachers' "effectiveness as communicators is directly linked to their adequacy as models for their students" (Andrews, 2007, p. 28). Wright and Bothlio (1993) state that: "the more aware a teacher is of language and how it works, the better" (p. 292; as cited in Andrews, 2007, p. 181).

A consequence of the ever more widespread use of English is that more language learning happens outside of schools. Young Norwegians are exposed to a lot of English, via films, computer games, music and TV-games, as a consequence of the global spread of English and its increased status in Norway (Rindal, 2013). According to Hellekjær (2012), because of all the English Norwegian students are exposed to, many Norwegian students develop quite advanced language skills, but primarily informal oral skills. He claims that the English subject should be changed in order to meet this development because it is important that the English subject corresponds to the students' improved language skills. Hellekjær (2001) argues that this also affects what to expect from teachers and language teacher education. Student language teachers have to master English at a more advanced level, and be able to teach advanced oral and written English.

Hellekjær (2001) questions whether the English teacher education in Norway prepares student teachers adequately and whether they acquire sufficient language skills to be able to teach and to be language models for their students. He states that "a general and overriding requirement would be the ability to teach English with a degree of fluency and accuracy adequate to let the teacher function as a linguistic 'role model', and to feel comfortable when using the language". He adds that "the same would be the case with regard to written English" (p. 192). Hellekjær points out the lack of emphasis on student teachers' oral and written proficiency during their English teacher education as problematic, and he claims that high levels of fluency and accuracy, both in oral and written English, is essential for business, teaching and academic purposes. He further states that "each and every professional user of English will of course need to attain the highest possible of communicative competence in English. The future teacher will need to be able to speak English fluently and comfortably for teaching purposes" (p. 197). The teacher will also need to be able to "write advanced texts, in different genres and registers [...] in order to teach his or her pupils to live up to the requirements of current and future syllabuses" (p. 197).

Orafi and Borg (2009) also claim that teachers' language skills are decisive for whether teachers master challenges in their profession. Teachers' limited language skills are problematic for teaching communication skills. Nunan (2003) state that "poor English skills on the part of teachers as well as inadequate teacher preparation make it very difficult, if not impossible for many teachers to implement CLT [communicative language teaching] in their classrooms" (p. 606; as cited in Orafi & Borg, 2009, p. 251).

Disturbingly, Drew (1997) also found significant deficiencies in writing instruction for student teachers of English at a Norwegian teacher education institution (a university college):

in view of the fact that the period of study represented one academic year, with teaching in a number of disciplines, including grammar, literature and communication, that one may reasonably expect would enhance linguistic development, both overtly and covertly, the students' rate of progress throughout the year, in terms of cohesive, syntactical and lexical sophistication, may be characterised as marginal (p. 131).

More recently, Lund (2014) found that there are still deficiencies in writing instruction in SLTE in Norway, and she claims that there is little emphasis on development of student teachers' writing skills.

### **3.6 Novice teachers' feeling of preparedness**

Damsgaard and Heggen's (2010) study examines how teachers evaluate their education and further qualifications in their profession. The novice teachers who participated in the study did not see themselves as fully qualified. Indeed, the study shows that the teachers regard their education to be of little relevance for their competence needs as teachers. They claim that their education does not have sufficient focus on how to develop their students' competence in the different subjects, or how to engage with different students in the classroom. Furthermore, the teachers claim that theoretical knowledge was emphasised during their education. They considered the part of their education where they "learnt to be teachers" as most important part and that it was during their teaching practice where they learnt the most. The study also shows that there is little done to further develop novice teachers' competence, which can compensate for what the teachers felt was lacking during their studies.

Several other studies show that novice teachers consider their teaching practice as most useful in their teacher education (Damsgaard & Heggen, 2010; Faez & Valeo, 2012). Faez and Valeo (2012) found that novice teachers' feeling of preparedness increased with the more experience they gained in the classroom. The authors argue for an integrated practicum in the SLTE programme, rather than being a separate course. According to the authors, "an integrated practicum may help novice teachers make sense of their teacher education more holistically and be better able to adapt to classroom contexts outside of their immediate experience" (p. 466). However, Farrell (2013) claims that just the amount of teaching experience does not necessarily transform into expertise. In order for teaching experience to transform into teacher expertise, teachers need to reflect, consciously and actively, on their experiences.

More collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools is recommended (Farrell, 2012; Faez & Valeo, 2012). Farrell (2012) points out that most novice teachers have no further contact with their teacher educators, and often face challenges in their new schools without much guidance. Farrell (2012) calls for a bridging period that he calls "novice-service language teacher development"; a focus on bridging the gap between teacher education and the first years of teaching, and to ensure better support and preparedness for novice teachers. In order for student teachers to become better prepared for their first years as teachers during the SLT preparation programmes, Farrell (2012) suggests that all preparation courses should include reflective activities, which connects the subject matter of the course to teaching in the first year. He also proposes a supplementary course, which looks into the first years of teaching and with the aim to prepare future teachers to better handle challenges during their first years of teaching.

### **3.7 Writing instruction in SLTE in Norway**

In his study "Future teachers of English: a study of competence in the teaching of writing" (1997), Drew found that SLTE courses have great shortcomings in writing instruction. He claims that to be able to teach writing

teachers will need to have both a linguistic and an educational competence. They will need to have reached an acceptable level of writing competence themselves, will need to have an understanding of the nature of writing, and will need to be equipped with strategies to promote the writing development of their pupils (p. 3).



Drew found that there is little emphasis on the student teachers' language skills during their education and that the student teachers' linguistic development during their SLTE courses was marginal. He points out the significant paradigm shift in L2 educational practice in the last decades: a shift from learning *about* a language, or the "grammar-translation" approach, to focus on *communication* in the target language. However, he found that the SLTE courses still have a theoretical profile. He is critical to the lack of emphasis on the students' language development during their courses:

Although it may be virtuous to study grammar, phonetics, literature and civilisation, one must question the validity of over-indulging in theoretically-biased studies if many learners lack a basic grasp or feeling of the language they are learning, if the language development component of English courses is undermined, and if one assumes that language develops automatically because learners *study* language and literature. This cannot be assumed because it does not universally work this way in practice (p. 218).

Another one of Drew's (1997) findings is that writing in SLTE courses is not connected with writing in schools. He claims there is an "insufficient harmony" of content and learning strategies between teacher education courses and teaching in schools (p. 220). He further claims there is need for a comprehensive course in writing in SLTE in order to prepare the students for teaching written English. Drew (1997) calls for a course that includes "genre awareness, familiarity with writing strategies, and evaluation of written work" (p. 219). In addition to academic writing, he suggests that to use writing as a "true medium of communication in interaction with others" might be advantageous for student teachers to experience during their education (p. 220).

The evaluation of written English was according to Drew (1997), another neglected area in SLTE. He claims that this area needs more focus in order for teachers to be able to give adequate feedback to their students on their written work. Drew adds that teachers' competence in evaluation and giving feedback relies on their own writing competence: "A poor level of written proficiency is likely to lead to uncertainty in how to assess a pupil's writing performance, at worst in neither being able to appreciate positive features of language and content nor being able to discern errors" (p. 221).

Based on his research, Drew (1997) proposes the following, which he claims should be a part of a SLTE course in order to prepare teachers adequately to teach written English:

- A stronger language development component
- Written practice and communication in a wide range of genres
- Techniques on how to use and exploit literature in the L2 classroom, and link it to written production
- Practice in using process writing strategies
- Instruction in computer assisted language teaching
- Ways of promoting pupil autonomy in class
- Training in the evaluation of written English (pp. 220–221)

Lund's (2014) study investigates how students at SLTE courses that are part of the integrated teacher training programme for grades five to ten in Norway, work with writing. Her study shows that writing is still not prioritised in SLTE.

Lund (2014) points out that the national curriculum in Norwegian schools expects learners of English to both develop writing skills (learn to write) and to use writing as a tool (write to learn), and that the national guidelines for teachers' education state that SLTE student teachers should be able to work with these two dimensions of writing in their future jobs as teachers. She adds that the national guidelines for teachers' education require that the student teachers themselves develop good writing skills in order to function as good language models in their classrooms. The students are expected to be able to write "correct, fluent, coherent and functional texts in different contexts and genres", that students "know about norms for academic text production and proper referencing", that they know about "text structures and linguistic devices", "different genres and their characteristics" and learn about "reading and writing processes" (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2010; as cited in Lund, 2014, p. 5, Lund's translations).

Lund (2014) states that writing is seen as central in the SLTE courses in the sense that obligatory written assignments are common, and that the final mark for a course is often based on written work. However, the guidelines do not specify how the students should work to achieve these goals. This is up to the institutions that offer SLTE courses. The local syllabuses are not specific about what kinds of content and what types of texts are expected from the students either, and they provide little information about criteria for assessment. Reid & Kroll (1995; as cited in Lund, 2014) claim that the criteria for good writing have not been communicated well enough to students by teachers. Hyland (2007, in Lund, 2014) argues for a "visible pedagogy" in the teaching of writing, meaning that the requirements for

writing and the expected outcomes are made specific. Lund (2014) claims that there is a need for such “visible pedagogy”, as it would be advantageous for the student teachers, both for their own writing and for their future teaching of writing (p. 14).

Lund (2014) found that the obligatory writing assignments are directly connected to the content of the courses, and she claims that these assignments are helpful for the learning of content (p. 13). However, she claims there is little emphasis on learning *how* to write, both when it comes to learning how to write themselves during their studies, but also how to teach their future students how to write.

Lund (2014) claims that the main purpose of the written assignments seems to be for the course instructors to be able to check students’ command of course material and to function as a tool for assessment. The work with writing does little to provide the students with insight into how they can work with writing in their future classroom or with insight into various purposes of writing. She suggests that a reason for this could be “the common understanding in foreign language education”; that writing is almost taken for granted and seen as such an obvious part of language education that there is little need for further specification (p. 16). Lund (2014) concludes that focus on the *students’* needs with explicit criteria and expected outcome of writing tasks is needed, both for the students themselves, as well as for their future teaching.

This brings us to the present study, which is to investigate to what extent novice, university educated English teachers at upper secondary level in Norway feel prepared to teach writing. The study seeks to examine how the novice teachers regard their subject knowledge in English and what challenges they face in their teaching. The study also comprises interviews with two experienced English teachers who have participated in a writing project in order to examine their experiences with the writing project, as well as how they regard their subject knowledge in English – when it comes to writing – and whether or not they face similar challenges in their teaching as the novice teachers. To my knowledge, such a study has not previously been carried out, with the exception of Rødnes, Hellekjær and Vold’s (in press) project, of which my thesis is part.

# 4 Methodology

The aim of this qualitative study is to examine to what extent university educated English teachers at upper secondary level in Norway feel prepared to teach writing. To investigate this topic, I chose to interview seven novice teachers who teach English at upper secondary level. I have also chosen to interview two experienced English teachers, also at upper secondary level, who have participated in a writing project. They were included to examine their experiences with the writing project, as well as to examine to what extent their experience with teaching writing stood in contrast to the seven novices, or whether they experienced the same problems. In the following chapter I will present the methods I have used for this study, starting with the research design and then the process of gathering and analysing the data. Finally, I will comment on the study's reliability, validity and transferability.

## 4.1 Research design

### 4.1.1 The data I wanted to gather

By interviewing novice English teachers I wanted to examine to what extent they feel prepared to teach English, with a particular focus on writing. I also wanted to elicit information about knowledge of English obtained under other circumstances than their English teacher education. Also of interest was information about the respondents' educational backgrounds and other relevant background information, such as educational stays in an English-speaking country. By interviewing experienced English teachers who had participated in a writing project, I wanted to examine the same as with the novice teachers, as well as their thoughts on the writing project.

### 4.1.2 Procedure

I decided to collect the data through semi-structured interviews with nine English teachers (seven novice teachers and two experienced teachers). A semi-structured interview is useful for when "the area of interest is chosen and questions are formulated but the interviewer may modify the format or questions during the interview process" (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p. 438). At the same time, a semi-structured interview would be structured enough to allow me to gather data on certain topics from all the respondents, while also allowing me to follow up on what the individual respondents express. This because I would not have to slavishly

follow the order of the questions as set up in the interview guide, but rather follow the respondents' order in the way the various topics occurred for them. Ary et al. (2010) further states that semi-structured interviews usually consist of open-ended questions: "the questions are typically open-ended (cannot be answered with a yes or no or simple response) and the questions are designed to reveal what is important to understand about the phenomenon under study" (p. 438). Open-ended questions would be advantageous for this study because it would thus give the respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their answers and talk more freely. This would hopefully result in more and richer data.

### **4.1.3 The interview guide**

The interview guide was developed by the research group for the research project "Språklærerutdanningene i Lektorprogrammet – fagutdanningene i norsk, engelsk og fremmedspråk og nyutdannede læreres utfordringer" [Language teacher education in the five-year teacher education programme – Norwegian, English and foreign languages programmes and challenges for novice teachers]. In 2013 I piloted the interview guide when writing an examination paper for a master's course. The interview guide will be further commented on in 4.2.1, and is included as Appendix 1. As for the interviews with the two experienced teachers, the same interview guide was used, in addition to some supplementary questions. These questions are included as Appendix 2.

### **4.1.4 Sampling**

I decided to interview novice teachers teaching Vg1 English on the 'Education Programme for Specialization in General Studies'. I also included one teacher who teaches English at both Vg1 and Vg2 levels on a vocational education programme, this because the same subject curriculum applies for both Vg1 programmes for general studies and Vg2 vocational education programmes (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). To limit the study I decided to interview novice teachers with from half a year to four years of English teaching experience. This because I was interested in their teacher education, and since their reflections from their student days could be expected to be more fresh in memory than with more experienced teachers. I was, of course, also interested in their teaching experiences as novice teachers.

My supervisor provided me with six names and their e-mail addresses, of which five eventually participated in the study. One of the other researchers on the research project

contacted another teacher, who we interviewed together.<sup>1</sup> Finally, I also acquired another respondent via a friend.

When contacting the novice teachers, I included an information letter from my supervisor. The letter included information about the research project “Språklærer-utdanningene i Lektorprogrammet – fagutdanningene i norsk, engelsk og fremmedspråk og nyutdannede læreres utfordringer” [Language teacher education in the five-year teacher education programme – Norwegian, English and foreign languages programmes and challenges for novice teachers] and what the focus of the interviews would be. The letter also informed the respondents that they would be assured anonymity and that the interviews would be audio recorded.

Four of the novice teachers work at upper secondary schools in Akershus county, and the other three work at upper secondary schools in Oslo. Two of the novice teachers who work in Oslo work at the same school.

With regard to the two experienced English teachers, my supervisor told me about the writing project they had participated in. I read about the project and decided to contact two of the teachers who had participated. The two experienced teachers have both worked at the same upper secondary school in Akershus county.

To sum up, the sample is therefore a mix of a purposive sample and a convenience sample (Cohen, Manion, Morrison & Bell, 2011).

## **4.2 Gathering the data**

### **4.2.1 The interview sessions and the interview guide**

In the e-mail I sent to the novice teachers, I suggested that I could come to their school to have the interview there, but I added that it was also possible for them to come to the University of Oslo and have the interview there – if that by any chance was easier for them. One of the respondents preferred to have the interview at the University of Oslo and one respondent invited me to his home, close to the university. The five other interviews were held at the respondents’ workplaces. The interviews were conducted in a quiet room without any disturbances. One respondent, who is from the USA and has English as his mother tongue, wished to have the interview in English, as he did not feel confident enough with his

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<sup>1</sup> This particular respondent is also a Spanish teacher and was also interviewed about her education and teaching in Spanish by the other researcher. Also another respondent (one of the six I contacted first), who teaches Norwegian in addition to English, was asked questions about her Norwegian education and teaching by yet another researcher.

Norwegian. The other interviews were held in Norwegian. Before starting the interview I outlined the background for the study and how the interview would be structured, in addition to assuring them their anonymity. I brought with me a consent form for the sound recording, which the respondents signed. I also asked them if they had any questions before we started the interview. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted for approximately 35 to 50 minutes.

The interviews were based on the interview guide, but the order in which the questions were covered varied, depending on what the respondents talked about. The opening question was the same in each interview and was rather wide. Since it was a semi-structured interview, I could follow the direction of the respondent, and therefore the actual structure of each interview differed somewhat. At the same time I made sure I went through all the questions and that we covered all the topics. I also included some follow-up questions, of which some about writing, as this is the main focus of this study.

I started the interview by telling the respondents that I was interested in their subject knowledge, what kind of subject knowledge they regard important and what they possibly would prefer to have more knowledge of (see interview guide in Appendix 1). I then asked them the opening question: “What is the English subject to you?” (“Hva er engelskfaget for deg?”) The interview further covered the following topics: the respondents’ English subject education, the English school subject and the Didactics of English course. The respondents were then asked what they consider to be the central constituent of the English school subject and what they found central in their English subject education. Next they were asked about how they evaluate their subject knowledge of the part of the subject they find most central, and how they acquired that knowledge. The respondents were then asked questions about the different parts of the English school subject: oral communication, written communication, literature, culture and history, and English as a global language. They were asked how they considered the importance of each of these parts in their teaching, how they judge their subject knowledge of these different parts of the subject and how confident they feel, and how they have acquired their subject knowledge. They were also asked if they had taught at vocational study programmes. Furthermore, they were asked what they consider to be most challenging with the English subject. Another topic was didactics of English, and what kind of position the respondents assign to the didactics course, in relation to the English school subject and the English university courses.

I also asked the respondents about their educational background, including their particular degree, what other subjects they have studied in addition to English, how many

credits they have in English and if they had any special language background, such as educational stays in English-speaking countries. At the end of the interview I asked the respondents if they wanted to add something or if they felt that something had not been communicated clear enough.

As mentioned in 4.1.4, two of the interviews were conducted together with two other researchers, of which one from foreign language didactics, and one from Norwegian didactics, from the research project “Språklærerutdanningene i Lektorprogrammet – fagutdanningene i norsk, engelsk og fremmedspråk og nyutdannede læreres utfordringer” [Language teacher education in the five-year teacher education programme – Norwegian, English and foreign languages programmes and challenges for novice teachers]. The interview guide was mutual for these subjects (see Appendix 1). During the interview we took turns asking questions. We agreed prior to the interviews on how to proceed, and the respondents had accepted two interviewers.

With regard to the two interviews with the two experienced teachers I used the same procedure as described above. The interview with the retired English teacher took place in her home and the interview with the other experienced teacher was conducted at her workplace. Both interviews were conducted in Norwegian. I used the same interview guide as with the other respondents, in addition to some supplementary questions about the writing project (see Appendix 2).

#### **4.2.2 The respondents**

As previously stated, I interviewed seven novice teachers: four female and three male. I have given the respondents pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity: Anne, Kristine, Thomas, Jane, Pete, Martin and Sara. Thomas, Jane and Sara work at upper secondary schools in Oslo, while Anne, Kristine, Pete and Martin work at upper secondary schools in Akershus county. I also interviewed two experienced female teachers (of which one is retired), which I have given the pseudonyms: Elisabeth and Karen. They have both worked at the same upper secondary school in Akershus county. More information on the novice teachers is provided in subsection 5.1, and on the experienced teachers in subsection 5.7.



### 4.3 Analysing the data

Ary et al. (2010) describe the analysis of qualitative data in three stages: familiarizing and organizing; coding and reducing; and interpreting and representing. The first stage, familiarizing and organizing, involves gaining an overview and immersing oneself in the data. Ary et al. (2010) recommend transcribing all the data and reading through it several times while taking notes of key ideas. Therefore, immediately after the interviews I took some quick notes of my main impressions. The audio-recordings were then transcribed. Five of the nine interviews were transcribed by a research assistant employed by the research project, and four were transcribed by myself. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) claim “If there are several transcribers for the interviews of a single study, care should be taken that they use the same procedures for typing” (p. 180). To ensure this I met with the research assistant and discussed the transcribing to ensure that the same procedure was used. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) claim there is no one singular correct way to transcribe and state that “it depend[s] on the intended use of the transcript” (p. 181). The focus of these interviews was on the meaning. I wanted the transcriptions to be as true to the recordings as possible, but I also wanted them to be readable, because it was the meaning of the utterances that were important.

After I accessed the interviews transcribed by the research assistant and had transcribed the two remaining interviews with the novice teachers, I started the analysis. I read through the transcriptions several times and took notes, and also listened to some of the interviews “for a sense of the whole” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 429). The same procedure was followed with the interviews with the two experienced teachers.

The next stage, coding and reducing, “is the core of qualitative analysis and includes the identification of categories and themes” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 483). After reading through the transcriptions several times and taking notes, as well as making summaries of each interview, I coded the data and developed categories based on the categories in the interview guide. I also created some new categories after reading through the transcripts. These additional categories are: “adapting to the students’ individual level of learning”, “main focus on the UK and the USA in the teachers’ English subject education”, “is 60 ECTS-credits in English too little?”, “relevant knowledge from other subjects for teaching English: Norwegian and social sciences”, “benefits from studying abroad” and “competence on writing from abroad”. I developed the following additional categories from the interviews with the experienced teachers: “The need for a writing project”, “A challenge to teach

writing” and “How has the project helped?” First, I took notes and coded the interviews one interview at a time. With regard to the new categories I created, I counted the topics that reoccurred in the various interviews. Next, I organized my data thematically. This involved looking for relationships and connections between the categories.

The last stage, interpreting and representing, involves “bringing out the meaning” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 490). To interpret the data I looked at the connections between the categories and between the respondents. With regard to representing the data, I made a table with an overview of the novice teachers and their backgrounds. I made a separate overview of the experienced teachers and their backgrounds. The rest of the data was then presented thematically.

## **4.4 Reliability**

Cohen et al. (2011) claim that reliability is “a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents” (p. 199). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) are in agreement with this. They state that the reliability concerns “the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings; it is often treated in relation to the issue of whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers”, or in other words: whether a respondent would change his or her answers during an interview, or would give a different answer to another interviewer (p. 245). Regarding reliability of interviews, Kvale and Brinkman (2009) argue that it is related to the interview, the transcription and the analysis. I will therefore comment on the reliability with regard to these three processes.

One common threat to the reliability of interviews is, according to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), leading questions. Leading questions may influence the answers of the respondents. On the other hand, deliberately leading questions may improve reliability when used to confirm the interviewer’s interpretation or to “repeatedly check the reliability of the interviewees’ answers” (p. 172). In addition to questions from the interview guide, as well as follow-up questions, I also included interpreting (or leading) questions in order to check that I had understood the respondents correctly. Such interpreting questions may strengthen the reliability of the interviews.

I used the same interview guide for all the interviews. The respondents were given the same information at the beginning of the interview, as well as receiving the same information letter prior to the interviews. In the interviews with the two experienced teachers I also included questions about the writing project. These two teachers did not receive the

information letter, as this letter was intended for novice teachers. They did, however, receive similar information when I contacted them. I started all the interviews with the same opening question, and the questions from the interview guide were to a large extent worded similarly. However, as mentioned in 4.1.2, the order of the questions varied, following the respondents' order of what they talked about, instead of following the interview guide slavishly. During the interviews I also included follow-up questions, which also could vary from interview to interview – sometimes in wording and sometimes the whole questions, depending on what the respondent talked about. Hopefully this gave the respondents a chance to give more honest answers. The semi-structured interview with open-ended questions allowed me to conduct the interviews in this manner. Kinsey (1948, as cited in Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) claim that open questions result in the fullest answers and that “Standardized questions do not bring standardized answers, for the same question means different things to different people” (p. 134). Having open-ended questions and following the order of the respondent may therefore have enhanced the reliability. As mentioned in 4.1.3, I piloted the interview guide in 2013, and that may also have contributed to the reliability of this study. Silverman (1993; as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) suggests that, among other things, piloting can enhance the reliability of the interview.

One weakness with the data collection might be that I did not read through the transcriptions done by the research assistant before after I had conducted all the interviews with the novice teachers. This was because of technical difficulties and problems with accessing the virtual private network where the transcriptions were placed. I did, however, consult my notes taken immediately after the interviews, but reading through the whole transcript could have prepared me better for the upcoming interviews. With hindsight I see that better preparation would have lead me to my asking additional questions for clarification and to add further detail. The two interviews with the experienced teachers were, however, done later in the process and benefitted from my having worked with my findings from the seven first interviews.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) point out that one way of checking for transcription reliability is having two people independently transcribe the same part of a recorded interview and see how the two transcriptions differ. Because of time limits and limited resources of this study, it was not possible to go through with this. However, as previously mentioned, five of the nine interviews were transcribed by a research assistant. Therefore, in addition to reading through the transcriptions several times, I also read through some of them while simultaneously listening to the audio-recording. I could then ascertain that the

transcriptions were reasonably reliable. Regarding the interviews I transcribed, I listened to the audio-recordings several times over in order to avoid mishearing or misinterpretation and to be able to transcribe as accurately as possible. Eight of the nine interviews were conducted in Norwegian and the quotes in the result chapter from these interviews have been translated to English. The translation from one language to another may have affected the reliability of the transcriptions to a slight degree.

The reliability of the analysis may have been affected since the analysis was carried out by one person only. To compensate, all the interviews were analysed by using the same approach. The interview guide with its thematic structure facilitated the categorization of the data, which may have enhanced the reliability.

## **4.5 Validity**

The validity of research concerns “whether a method investigates what it purports to investigate” (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, p. 327). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) emphasise that validation does not only have to do with the findings, but belongs to the whole research process. The authors also state that “Validity is ascertained by examining the sources of invalidity” (p. 249). Bias is one cause of invalidity, and Cohen et al. (2011) argue that the most efficient way of gaining a higher level of validity might be “to minimize the amount of bias as much as possible” (p. 204). Lansing et al. (1961; as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) define bias as “a systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction, that is, to overstate or understate the ‘true value’ of an attribute” (p. 204). The sources of bias can be misinterpretations of what the interviewer asks or of what the respondent says, attitudes or expectations of the interviewer, and seeking answers the interviewer wants to hear. These sources of bias may have potentially affected the validity of the interviews. The respondents may also have given answers they believe I wanted to hear (Ary et al., 2010). Researcher bias can, however, be controlled by reflexivity, which is the use of self-reflection (Ary et al., 2010). To attempt to reduce researcher bias through reflexivity, I tried to be aware of my personal opinions so they would not affect the data.

The sample of novice teachers is reasonably representative of the group they come from, novice university educated English teachers. They comprise of both genders and they all fit the criteria set for this study: they are novice English teachers at upper secondary level, they have from half a year to four years of teaching experience, and they teach at Vg1 general studies or at Vg1 and Vg2 vocational study programmes. The teachers also have different

backgrounds and varying experiences with English. However, they are all well educated; they all have master's degrees, and they all have at least 60 ECTS-credits in English from a Norwegian university, as well as the Didactics of English course. The respondents volunteered to participate in this study. The fact that they are well educated with master's degrees might make them feel more confident in such a setting, talking about their education and challenges with teaching English, and this could be a reason for why they volunteered. This might influence the validity to the extent that these could perhaps be better qualified and confident than many of their peers. The respondents might also have personal reasons for participating in the study and this could potentially have influenced their responses.

## **4.6 Transferability**

Transferability concerns “the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or other groups” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 501). However, in qualitative research the aim is often not to generalize, but to give extensive descriptions of the context of the study in order to give the reader the opportunity to judge the transferability. It is argued that qualitative findings can be applied to other contexts or groups to the extent that they resemble the contexts and groups in the study. The degree of transferability depends on the similarity, which is decided by the reader, i.e. the potential user of the findings (Ary et al., 2010).

There are several threats to the transferability of this study. First, the findings are based on data from a small sample with only seven novice teachers from six different schools and two experienced teachers from the same school. Also, the setting and researcher bias may have affected the results. I have, however, attempted to provide detailed information about the context of the study, as well as attempted to minimize researcher bias through self-reflection. Even so, one cannot generalize my findings globally. The study's transferability is limited to these particular respondents. Additional interviews or a larger survey would be useful for investigating whether the trend they show can be found in the reference population: novice, university educated English teachers.

## **4.7 Chapter summary**

The present study is based on data from semi-structured interviews with nine English teachers. Seven of the respondents are novice teachers who work at upper secondary schools in Oslo and in Akershus county, and have from half-a-year to three years of teaching

experience. Two of the respondents are experienced English teachers have worked at an upper secondary school in Akershus county. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide. A research assistant then transcribed five of the interviews, and four were transcribed by myself. Next, the data was analysed and the findings were presented thematically. In the end of this chapter I have commented on the reliability and validity of this study, in addition to the transferability of the findings.

## 5 Results

In this chapter I will present the findings from the interviews with seven novice English teachers. I should mention that although my main focus is on writing, I will also present information on other aspects of English and English teaching that came up. I will start by presenting the respondents and their educational backgrounds. Next, I will present the respondents' views on the different parts of English subject they teach at upper secondary level, followed by their views on their English subject education. This will be followed by what the respondents say they possess of relevant knowledge from other subjects for teaching English, and their views on the one-year Teacher Education Programme (PPU) and the course "Didactics of English". I will then present respondents' views on studying abroad and how it is beneficial for their teaching. Finally, I will present the findings from the interviews with two experienced teachers who have participated in a writing project. The two experienced teachers were included to examine experiences with the writing project, as well as to examine to what extent their experience with teaching writing stood in contrast to the seven novices, or whether they experienced the same problems. I have translated all the quotes in this chapter from Norwegian to English, except for the quotes from Pete, as the interview with him was in English.

### 5.1 The respondents

In the following table I provide an overview of the respondents' (the novice teachers) educational backgrounds, their teaching experience and educational stays in English-speaking countries.

**Table 2** *Overview of the respondents: the novice teachers*

Respondents	Studies in English	Other subjects	Teaching experience	Stays in English-speaking countries
Anne	Master's degree	80 ECTS-credits in Spanish	2–3 years	2 years in the UK (one year with bachelor studies and one year with master studies)
Kristine	Master's degree	60 ECTS-credits in social sciences	First year of teaching	1 year in the USA during upper secondary  3 months in the USA (teacher training practice period)
Thomas	Bachelor's degree	80 ECTS-credits in Norwegian  Master's degree in literary theory	First year of teaching	1 year of studies in the USA
Jane	60 ECTS-credits	Master's degree in Norwegian didactics  60 ECTS-credits in social sciences	First year of teaching	None
Pete	60 ECTS-credits	Master's degree in religion  Undergraduate degree in psychology	First year of teaching	Born and raised in the USA  Undergraduate degree from the USA  Master's degree from the UK
Martin	60 ECTS-credits	Master's degree in history	First year of teaching	4 months exchange in the UK during his studies
Sara	Master's degree	80 ECTS-credits in the history of religion  60 ECTS-credits in social sciences	2.5 years	3-week summer school in the UK during her studies

The seven teachers who participated in this study all teach at the upper secondary level. They are newly qualified teachers in their first year of teaching, except for Anne who has between two and three years of experience, and Sara who has two and a half years of experience. Anne, Kristine and Sara have master's degrees in English, while Thomas, Jane, Pete and Martin have master's degrees in respectively Literary Theory, Norwegian didactics, Religion, and History. While some of the respondents have taken parts of their English studies in English-speaking countries, all of them have some parts of their English studies from a



Norwegian university. Anne, Jane, Martin and Sara have studied English and taken the PPU at the University of Oslo. Kristine and Thomas have studied English and the PPU at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Pete has studied English both at NTNU and at the University of Tromsø.

As mentioned, Anne, Kristine, Thomas, Pete and Martin all studied for a period of time in an English-speaking country as part of their education. During a two-year stay in the UK, Anne completed her bachelor's degree in English and wrote her master's thesis. Kristine had a three-month stay in the USA during her studies, where she carried through the obligatory practice period in the PPU (in addition to an exchange year in the USA during upper secondary). Thomas did one year of his English studies in the USA. Pete is American and has an undergraduate degree in psychology from the USA and a master's degree in religion from a British university. Martin had one exchange semester in the UK during his studies. Jane has her whole degree from a Norwegian university and has not had any educational stay abroad. Nor does Sara have any experience living in an English-speaking country, except for a three-week study trip to a university in the UK.

All the respondents have studied at least one other subject at university. Anne has 80 ECTS-credits in Spanish, including an exchange year at a Spanish university. Kristine, Jane and Sara have 60 ECTS-credits in social studies. Thomas and Jane have both read Norwegian at university. Thomas has 80 ECTS-credits in Norwegian and Jane has a master's degree in Norwegian didactics. Sara has also 80 ECTS-credits in the history of religion. Martin has a master's degree in history and Pete has an undergraduate degree in psychology and a master's degree in religion.

All the respondents, except for Martin, teach at the Education Programme for Specialization in General Studies. Six of them teach at the Vg1 level, and Anne, Kristine, Thomas, Jane and Sara also teach the Vg2 programme subject "International English". Both Kristine and Martin teach English at Vg1 and Vg2 at vocational education programmes.

## **5.2 Teaching the English school subject**

In this section I will start with the respondents' experiences with teaching the different parts of the English subject. First I will present what the respondents regard as the central constituent of the English subject. Afterwards I will present how they experience teaching the various areas of the subject: writing, oral communication, literature, culture and history, and

global English, and what the respondents experienced as challenges with adapting their teaching to the students' individual levels of learning.

### **5.2.1 The central constituent of the subject**

The opening question of the interview was “what is English as a subject to you”, followed up by asking the respondents what they consider to be the central constituent of the subject. The predominant answer to this question was communication. Kristine says “I think it is really important that you learn English and know English, so you can communicate with others”. Sara says that the students have “to be able to communicate a clear message, both orally and written”. Martin says that the central part of the subject is being able to communicate well and to be understood. He says it is important to be able to communicate what you think and to gain a certain degree of proficiency so communication is not limited. Anne sees communicative competence as the most central part of the subject and adds that “I see that as the central part, but to be able to do so properly you also need grammar, you need cultural knowledge and others things as well”.

There is a general focus among the respondents on the importance of formal English and writing academic texts. Many of the teachers mention that their students are good at expressing themselves in English using informal language, but the challenge is to teach them how to express themselves in a more formal manner. Kristine explains that her students' proficiency level is quite high and they do not need grammar instruction, so she focuses on the difference between formal and informal English and on teaching them to write texts in various formal genres, such as essays, reports and articles. Thomas sees adapting written and oral communication to different situations as the central constituent of the English subject. In his opinion his students have a quite advanced English language proficiency, but still lack the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to adjust their English language to the communication situation. Thomas therefore sees teaching the students how to adjust their written and oral communication as maybe the most essential and most important task in school, this because of the wide variety of real world written and oral communication situations they might face later on in life. He also points out that the students are exposed to English primarily through TV and relatively informal texts, and that they rarely spend time reading non-fictional prose and academic texts. The problem is that it is formal language genres they will have to master in a future job or during higher education, and it therefore seems important to guide them in that direction. He says that:

They have a lot of language without having formalised knowledge, and to be able to teach them to adapt for different situations, written and oral communication situations that they will encounter in the future, is, in my opinion, maybe the most essential and the most important task in school.

Jane also puts emphasis on being able to express oneself by using a more formal and academic language.

Several of the teachers mention a good grasp of grammar as an important part of effective communication. As mentioned above, Anne says that to be able to communicate properly you need to know the grammar. Pete considers grammar as the central part of the subject. He wants his students to learn grammar through realistic examples, even though he also says that he should not be teaching grammar on this level. However, he puts importance on the linguistic part of the subject. Jane also mentions grammar when talking about what she calls the ‘language part’ of the subject. She sees English as a subject comprising of various linguistic and social topics. She considers the linguistic part of the subject as the most central, and emphasises that by the language (i.e. linguistic) part, she not only refers to grammar, but also orthography, idiomatic language, the ability to make oneself clear and express oneself precisely and to express oneself in academic language.

### **5.2.2 Teaching writing**

As mentioned previously, the teachers consider writing a very important part of the English subject. Several of them express that it can be challenging to guide students with their writing and make them improve their writing skills. The majority of the teachers mention the importance of teaching the students to adapt their texts to the writing situation. They consider situational awareness and the ability to write in an academic manner as extremely important. Most of the teachers say that their students know a lot of English, but struggle when it comes to expressing themselves in a formal context.

Six of the seven teachers mention that their students have a high level of proficiency in English. When Anne started teaching she thought her students’ level of proficiency was so high that she did not feel comfortable with only having 60 ECTS-credits in English, thinking it was not sufficient for teaching at upper secondary level. She therefore decided to move to the UK in order to study more English (I elaborate on this in subsection 5.3.4). She felt she needed more English-studies to be able to pull the students further up from the already high

level they were on, especially when it came to their writing. Anne says that (also after her two years in the UK) the most challenging with the students' high level of proficiency is to know how to help them to reach an even higher level of proficiency, and that it is especially challenging to guide students with their writing. She says that the students write quite good texts with hardly any grammatical mistakes, but that it is challenging to pinpoint improvements. Kristine, Thomas, Jane and Martin also express that their students' relative high level of proficiency can be challenging when it comes to teaching writing. Jane and Martin say that their students are especially good at oral communication, and Thomas emphasises that his students are particularly good with informal English. However, they say that their students struggle when they have to structure what they want to communicate in formal and academic texts. Instead of focusing too much on grammar, because of the students' relative high level of proficiency and thus there is little need to do so, the teaching of writing is therefore turned from grammar instruction to focusing on structure and coherence, and on writing formal and academic texts. Anne and Kristine, in particular, think that because of their students' level of proficiency it is challenging to guide them to write even better texts, and using a more advanced and appropriate English.

Kristine also considers it very important for her students to learn to express themselves using formal English, especially for going to university, where many courses or the subject matter literature is in English, and she adds that a sound knowledge of English also is important for a wide variety of jobs. She holds that the students have a good knowledge of English already, but they have to learn about the differences between formal and informal English, and learn to master different genres. Jane shares this view and points out that while her students are good at communicating orally, they fall short when they have to structure the information as an academic text. Kristine says that the students get a lot of English input daily, but they still have to learn formal aspects of the English language in order to be better prepared for university studies and demands at the modern workplace – where they to some degree will be required to master it. She says that the students often use informal words in their written assignments and tests, and thinks that they might be influenced by the way people write in social media. Thomas also thinks it is very important to teach his students how to write academic texts because such know-how might be required from them in the future. Both Thomas and Pete consider it is especially important that their students learn how to write academically since they are in the Education Programme for Specialization in General Studies. Thomas says that

They are exposed to English primarily through TV series, as well a host of different informal texts. They do not sit at home and read factual prose and academic texts, even if this is what they might have to master in a future job or during higher education in maybe three years time. So it seems most relevant to guide them in that direction.

Kristine observes that using formal English is a challenge for her students, so therefore she starts focusing on it as early as possible. Kristine experienced herself as a student that her oral English (and informal English) was very good, especially after her exchange year in the USA during upper secondary, but found formal English difficult, especially when entering university. She claims that her own teachers at upper secondary level did not focus enough on writing formal English. Therefore she struggled with it at university and she does not want her students to have the same experience.

According to Kristine, the massive exposure to informal English in today's youth culture creates difficulties when it comes to teaching formal English:

Just to get them to be aware of it and distinguish between the situations where you are formal and where you can use slang. We have just had a unit about it, about the media, about how you write on the internet, how you use English there compared to how you use it at school. What is interesting is that they are aware of it, but then they have some words in their papers, which you can see are kind of sloppy. They are probably aware of it, but maybe they are just used to writing in that way on the internet, like a kind of "online language".

For Anne, the most challenging part of teaching English is how to guide her students to write appropriate and readable texts. She also says that her students are already on a high level, but the challenge is to know how to get them to write even better. Many of her students write with hardly any grammatical mistakes at all, so it is hard for her to point out anything in particular that the students can improve on. However, Kristine also mentions that the students' texts and sentences are not always cohesive and coherent. It is challenging to get them to write cohesive and coherent texts, and especially challenging when the students in one class are on different levels of language proficiency. Martin says that he focuses on genre and improving the students' language and on guiding them to write coherent texts. He says that he was surprised that many of his weaker students were able to write texts with relatively few grammatical mistakes, but their writing was limited by a poor vocabulary. Due to a limited vocabulary, what they are trying to communicate is often imprecise.

### 5.2.3 Teaching oral communication

The teachers I have interviewed consider oral communication an important part of the subject, and oral language skills an important part of communicative competence. Indeed, Jane considers oral communication a very important part of the Vg1 English subject. She explains her focus on oral communication in the Vg1 English subject by wanting to prepare her students for English in Vg2 (for those who choose the programme subject International English) where they get a separate mark for oral communication. She explains that as much as half of the Vg1 marks she gives are therefore based on the students' oral communication proficiency. Sara also considers oral communication to be a very important part of the subject, and says: "It is about half of it, isn't it?" Like Jane, she also mentions that you also get a separate mark for oral communication in the programme subject International English. She brings up that many of her students feel greater mastery of oral communication than written communication and therefore, she says, it is also a fun part of the subject to work with. However, she emphasises that oral communication is a part of the subject that is important to focus on in order to counter inaccurate formulations and switching to Norwegian.

The teachers do not necessarily find it challenging to teach oral communication. Many of the teachers feel they have the knowledge they need to teach it. Anne and Martin mention that their stay abroad as students in the UK makes them feel confident with teaching this part of the subject. They say they gained a lot of knowledge during their time abroad, and Martin adds that it certainly would have been advantageous to stay for an even longer period of time in an English-speaking country. Anne says that during her English courses at university in Norway the students hardly had to speak a word in English, and strongly feels that her stay in an English-speaking country was important for being prepared to teach English. Pete feels very confident in teaching oral communication because English is his mother tongue, and does not see it as a challenging part of his teaching.

However, Kristine and Sara find it challenging to get all of their students to speak English and participate in oral communication exercises. They say it is challenging to get students who do not want to talk out loud in front of the others to participate in plenary discussions. Both say they try hard to make their students feel comfortable with speaking English in class. Sara says she tries to make these students trust her and make them open themselves up for her – and create for them an opportunity to communicate orally without

being in front of the whole class. She says that in some classes the dynamic between the students makes it hard for them to trust each other and wanting to participate orally. In these cases she either organises smaller groups where the students practice oral communication or she allows them to practice it with her one by one.

Even though the respondents in general do not think teaching oral communication is particularly challenging, several of them find it challenging to *assess* oral communication. Thomas thinks devising appropriate assessment tasks for oral communication and for practicing oral communication is difficult, and points out that it was hardly focused on during his university education. Jane finds it challenging to assess oral communication due to a lack of guidance material and common criteria. Besides that, she also finds assessing oral communication quite difficult because of her limited experience as a teacher, and adds that many of the more experienced colleagues seem to cope just fine with it. She is uncertain of what the assessment criteria for oral communication really are, or could possibly be. At her school another teacher has made a set of assessment criteria for oral communication, which she employs. She adds that she really does not know what she would do without these. However, she is still uncertain about these criteria because they are devised by one person only, and she fears that, with the possibility of her students having an oral exam, their external examiner might have another idea of what oral competence is. Jane says she in particular struggles with justifying and explaining her assessments: “I can sit here and say that probably deserves the mark 4, but then the next problem is how to explain to the student when he asks what made it a 4”. She says it is a shame that the criteria are not more specific. She also adds that one should be able to agree on what is quality in oral competence when it constitutes a substantial part of the subject and the students may have to have an oral exam. Jane says “I really miss some help, in order to confidently know that my assessments are not only based on my very own beliefs.”

Sara says that she does not feel fully confident that she has the professional knowledge required to teach oral communication effectively. However, she says that she tries out different methods, and sometimes something seems to work in one class and not in another class. She thinks that it is hard to believe that as a teacher one can be truly confident that something will work and that the students will learn from it, because in her experience, one thing that works in one class may not work in a different class. Sara says that her way of working with oral communication is that they have to do a lot of it, so they can get as much practice as possible. She also focuses on working with vocabulary and trying to get the students who do not want to speak out loud in class to do so. Sara explains that one method

she uses is to pretend not to understand when a student speaks in Norwegian instead of English, when she knows that they are able to express themselves in English. She says that she tries to lure them to just get going with talking, but that sometimes she has to do this individually with the student and not in the classroom.

Several of the teachers express that they enjoy teaching oral communication because it allows many students to excel. Both Jane and Sara explain that oral communication is generally the students' strength in the English subject, as opposed to written communication, and especially writing formal texts. Jane is glad that they can feel that they really master a part of the English subject, and it seems like they practiced oral communication a lot during lower secondary level. Martin also experiences that that even the students who struggle the most with English are in fact quite good at speaking English, but that they nevertheless have a limited vocabulary. For some of his weakest classes he has to repeat quite a lot in Norwegian for his students to understand.

Even though the teachers say that their students often show strength in oral communication, it is, however, mainly by using informal English. The teachers seem to face some of the same challenges with both written and oral communication. As described in the previous section (5.2.2), the teachers say that their students have a high level of proficiency in English, but struggle with writing formal and academic texts. The teachers find it challenging to guide their students who already know a lot of English, to reach an even higher level of proficiency, especially when it comes to situational awareness and using formal English. The teachers express that they also have this challenge with oral communication. Kristine says that she pays particular attention to formal English during her students' oral presentations, and that she works on expanding her students' vocabulary, and tries to get them to use more precise expressions than informal expressions such as "stuff" and "things". She says it is not hard to understand what the students want to communicate, but mention that they need to be challenged in terms of style and learn how to be more precise and formal. It is important for them to learn this because many of them will go on to university where a higher level of formality and precision is required. Thomas thinks that learning to adjust ones oral utterances according to the situation is one of the most important parts of the English subject. He says that his students are quite good at speaking English, but they have to be taught how to adjust their spoken language according to the situation, and especially for more formal situations.



### 5.2.4 Teaching literature

Teaching literature is not perceived as a challenging part of the English subject by any of the teachers I interviewed, even though some of the teachers say they often have to read up on literature that they are not familiar with. Thomas and Jane explain that they use other kinds of texts in their teaching than the texts they read during their literature courses at university. Jane says that at university they read British and American literature only, and she has not been able to use this competence in her teaching. She says that she relies on contemporary literature and other kinds of texts instead because she prefers to think that these texts are more useful for her students. She has to acquaint herself with, and read up on newer literature, which that was not a part of the literature courses she took at university, but she does not consider this as problematic, and she thinks it is exciting to discover new literature together with her students. Thomas says it can be challenging not to use too advanced and demanding texts, because these are the kinds of texts he is familiar with from his education. He says he has to hold back on using these kinds of texts and that he should rather read up on young adult literature and newer literature, which can be challenging because that is outside of his literary field of interest.

Kristine, Martin and Sara say that working with literature is also very helpful for learning other parts of the English subject. They say it is easy to link literature to other topics. Kristine enjoys working with literature because she thinks that the students can learn a lot from it. She says they read books, and afterwards they have presentations or write book reports. She says “I think that with literature, the things you can use, you can do anything, it covers so much. So I really like using it in my lessons and will try to do so even more”. She also says it is easy to capture the students’ interest when working with literature and it is easy to make different kinds of tasks for the students to work with when reading literature, so that the students can get tasks adapted to their own level of learning, even if the texts are a bit too difficult for some of the students. Martin says he tries to link the short stories with culture and history and make a package out of it while situating the literature in a wider context. He says the textbook his classes use has good texts that fit well with his teaching. Sara says that literature is not something they work with frequently, but rather in certain periods. They read texts from time to time, but not in an in-depth way, but for learning about various topics. When they do work specifically with literature she focuses on making her students realise that literature is not that difficult. She tells her students that if you want to claim something it

is probably right as long as you can support your points of view by referring to the text in question.

### **5.2.5 Teaching culture and history**

The respondents generally do not consider teaching culture and history as challenging. They feel quite confident of their knowledge and feel prepared to teach it. However, some of the respondents say that have to read up on various topics, but they do not consider having to do so problematic. Anne says that she tries to include culture “here and there” in her teaching, and finds her stay abroad as a student in the UK as helpful for teaching culture. She says that she does not only focus on what the textbook says, but also shares her own cultural experiences from living abroad. Jane finds her year studying social studies as relevant for teaching this part of the subject. Martin feels very well prepared to teach history because of his background with history as his other subject. However, he says that his challenge, on the other hand, is to not focus too much on culture and history.

Sara claims the in-depth knowledge she gained from her university studies is not really necessary, and therefore tries to simplify her knowledge when teaching. She also says that if there is something relevant she does not know about, it is not a problem to read up on it, and be able to teach it in the classroom with self-confidence and being able to answer the students’ questions. However, in contrast from the others, Pete finds teaching history challenging. He says that because he has no background in history from his university education, and he has to do a lot of extra reading and preparation to be able to teach this aspect of the subject. He says it is fun, but challenging.

### **5.2.6 Teaching global English**

Anne and Kristine find it a bit challenging to teach the topic global English because their students often think of English as a language that only belongs to the UK and the USA. They say that their students are used to thinking of English as being about the UK and the USA, and that they have to aim for a British or American accent. Anne says

Here in Norway it is like either the UK or the USA, and the students think they have to learn one of them. And it is very hard to make them think that English, well they regard English as a global language, but as a global language where you have to speak either British or American, that is the ideal.

Kristine says “I do not think they understand how big it really is when you think of how many people in the world that speak it and how important it is to learn it”. In fact, Pete and Martin find teaching global English a challenge. They both feel that they should be more prepared to teach this part of the subject and that they have to use a lot of time to read up on the topic and use time to prepare themselves to teach it.

Thomas, Jane and Sara feel they have the competence to teach global English. Sara says that she thinks global English is one of the most enjoyable things to teach in the English subject. She says it is one of her personal interests and feels prepared to teach it:

It is one of my personal interests, so I consider myself to know enough about it to teach it at upper secondary level. I think it is one of the most fun parts. To work with accents and intonation, reading texts about it, for example about slang and languages mixed together. That is really enjoyable. Also, with regard to communication: How do you communicate with people who have a totally different idea of the world than we have, for example.

### **5.2.7 Adapting to the students’ individual levels of learning**

Several of the teachers find adjusting teaching to meet the students’ individual needs a challenging part of their teaching. Anne, Kristine, Jane and Martin say that adapting to the individual levels of learning of each student is quite a challenge. Anne thinks it is difficult when some students are quite advanced and some far behind. Kristine and Sara say what is most challenging is to adjust for the weaker student, while Kristine says it is especially challenging to teach writing to the weaker student. She says that it is not good enough just to write a couple of sentences, because the demands are higher on the “Education programme for specialization in general studies”.

### **5.2.8 Summary**

To sum up, the respondents look upon communicative competence as the central constituent of the English subject. They consider being able to adapt written and oral communication to the situation (situational awareness) as an important part of communicative competence. They consider their students’ level of proficiency in English to be high, but express that the students often struggle with adapting their English to the situation, and especially struggle with formal English, both in oral and written communication, and writing academic texts. They say it is challenging to guide their students to improve their writing skills, indeed, it seems this is the part of the English subject that is the most challenging for the respondents.

They do not consider other areas of the subject, such as literature, culture and history and global English, quite as challenging. Furthermore, the teachers express that adapting the teaching to the students' individual levels of learning is a challenge.

## **5.3 The teachers' English subject education**

In this section I will give an account of the respondents' views of their English subject education. I will start by presenting what the respondents regard as the main focus of their English subject education. Next, I will present how writing and oral communication has been a part of their English subject education. Furthermore, I will present the respondents' views on the minimum amount of ECTS-credits needed to teach English at upper secondary level. Lastly, I will give an overview of the respondents who have a master's degree in English.

### **5.3.1 The English subject education – about the UK and the USA only?**

Four of the seven teachers I interviewed say that the main focus of their English subject education was on the UK and the USA. Jane claims that she has a good overview of British and American literature because that was the focus of the literature courses she took at university. She struggles a bit when it comes to literature from other countries. She says “the texts in the literature courses were maybe a bit too limited” and that “it was very western-oriented”. Martin says that the literature courses and the culture and history courses were divided into British and American. Sara says that British and American culture was most central in the English university courses, which she says is important and is something they work with in the English subject, but that they also cover other English-speaking countries. Jane says that it was not enough with the 60 ECTS-credits she took in English because it did not prepare her to teach all the parts of the subject. She says that global English was not a part of the 60 ECTS-credits in English that she took, and that the focus was on the UK and the USA, which she refers to as old-fashioned. She maintains that there should be more focus on global topics and literature outside of the western canon. She says that

There was a course called “Global English”, or something like that, it was not a part of, well you could choose it if you took 80 ECTS-credits in English, but I have 60 ECTS-credits in English and then you had the topics that were set up, but there was nothing about it there.

Similarly, Martin says that global English was not a part of the English courses he had, and that he had to spend a lot of time reading up on the topic. Pete thinks that global English should be a larger part of the English courses, and he says that this is the part of the English subject where he feels the least prepared.

Anne, Kristine, Thomas and Sara had a course that dealt with English as a global language. Thomas says that the course he took was very relevant for what he teaches, and especially for the Vg2 subject “International English”. Kristine says she had a course on global English that she was very fond of:

That was really what made me excited about English. I had a course at university called Global English and the professor who had the course was really good, and it was just an amazing course. So after that, that was when I decided to go to India and study there, and then I decided that I wanted to continue. This was something I wanted to teach others because I think it is so important that people know about it.

Both Anne and Sara had a course on the topic of global English on master’s level. Sara says that this topic should have been integral to the teaching of English at bachelor level, so that all future English teachers would have had the topic global English as a part of their English studies. Anne says that she took such a course while studying for her master’s degree in the UK, and that the English university courses she took in Norway only focus on the UK and the USA.

### **5.3.2 Learning how to teach writing**

The respondents say that they face some challenges to do with teaching writing, but at the same time they say they have the necessary competence to teach it. Many of the respondents say they feel prepared to teach writing because they have written a lot themselves during their education. Kristine says that her competence in writing comes mainly from writing her master’s thesis. Thomas says that because of his solid competence in writing, teaching and assessing writing is not a challenge for him. Pete feels he has the knowledge to teach writing because of his own experience of writing a lot of English, but he adds that by trial and error he tries to find out how the students learn best. Martin also says he has learnt a lot about writing by writing himself during his university studies. Through the English and History courses at university he has written many academic texts and has become quite confident with handling formal genres. By attending literature courses at university he says he has also learnt about other relevant genres for his teaching, such as short stories. Because of this background he feels confident with teaching writing. Nor does Sara think that teaching writing is challenging, and says it is one of the things in her teaching that she is most comfortable with because of all the texts she has written herself during her own education.

She says that she developed her own tactic and that she can transfer her own experiences and knowledge to her teaching:

When it comes to written communication I feel that we had a lot of practice from all the written assignments, and that was really good for me because I developed my own tactic, my own way of approaching a text, which is the approach I try to teach my students.

Kristine says she has gained the knowledge on how to teach writing from her university studies. She says that writing was not her strongest point, but when she looks back she sees that she has learnt more than she thought she did, and especially through writing her master's thesis, she became a much more accomplished writer. She often looks back at her old notes about writing from the English courses at university. She says that they have just worked with five-paragraph essays and how to build up paragraphs, and it was helpful for her to look at her old notes. Kristine also mentions a linguistics course she took (the respondent could not remember which), which dealt with sentence structure and how to achieve cohesiveness and coherence, which is quite helpful for her now when she teaches writing. In addition to this course, she has the impression that she gained a lot of competence from writing a lot herself in the various English courses she took: "I guess it was during the English courses I attended, I adapted the writing style I still have, and also teach my students." She thinks, however, that the linguistic course, which she says is helpful for her now when she teaches writing, was maybe offered a little too early in her education, because she says it is easy to forget what she learnt at the beginning of her studies. She thinks it would be advantageous if it was brought up again during the PPU.

Many of the teachers I interviewed express that they are competent in writing because they have written a lot themselves during their university education. However, they still regret that their English subject education did not focus much on writing as a skill or on how to teach writing. As previously mentioned, the teachers find teaching writing challenging. Indeed, Anne, Jane, Martin and Sara say that there was hardly any focus on writing as a skill or how to teach writing. Anne says

I think we should have had more of it, and what I know about it is from courses I have been to after I started to work as a teacher, or as a result of teamwork amongst teachers.

Jane says

In the seminar groups the writing instruction was very poor. We hardly had any. We wrote texts and they were corrected a little bit and then we were done. I did, however, learn something. I learnt about the content and things like that.

Both Martin and Sara say they have learnt about genre in the English university courses, but not anything specific on writing. Sara says that she cannot remember learning anything about written communication. She says that she has not read about it, nor had any lectures about it. Like several of the teachers I interviewed they feel that they learnt a lot by writing themselves. Martin says “we have written a lot of texts, so academic texts is something that you get very comfortable with, as a result of our educational background”. Sara adds that she would not mind if there was more emphasis on how to teach writing:

When it comes to writing, I practised that a lot through writing a number of papers. That was great for me because that was where I developed my tactic, the way I like to work with a text, and that is the approach I try to pass on to my students. It is not like I necessarily needed more conversation, teaching and guidance on writing. But at the same time, why not? Gladly. It is something we often work with, so it might be an area one could have focused more on, as any other thing. I would not mind.

There is a clear tension between what the respondents say about their competence in writing, what they say about teaching writing, and what they say about the focus on how to teach writing during their teacher education. The respondents express that they have gained competence in writing because they have written a lot themselves during their studies. However, at the same time they regret that there was not more focus on writing as a skill and on how to teach writing during their education. They also say that written communication can be challenging to teach. When talking about writing, they say they have competence in and feel prepared to teach writing because they have written a lot themselves. But when I ask more direct questions about teaching writing, they say that it is a challenging part of teaching the English subject. As mentioned in subsection 5.2.2, the teachers find it challenging to guide their students with writing and helping them to achieve a higher level of proficiency. They find it challenging to guide their students to write even better texts and to adapt their language to the communication situation, especially using formal English and writing academic texts. The respondents express that there was too little focus on writing during their



English subject education. And even though they did write a lot of texts themselves, and, for example, learnt about genre through literature courses, they were hardly taught how to teach writing.

The respondents also mention that a lot of their competence on teaching writing comes from other sources than their English subject education. Martin says his knowledge of genre is from when he was a student himself at upper secondary level, and had teachers who focused a lot on genre, how to stick to one genre and how to adjust ones language according to genre. Jane stands out from the others (who say they feel confident in teaching writing because they have written a lot themselves). She says that her master's thesis in Norwegian didactics, which is about teaching writing, gives her invaluable knowledge and tools that she can use in her teaching. She says that if she had not written her thesis on this particular subject she would struggle a lot more with teaching writing, and would not at all feel prepared to teach it:

Had I not chosen to write my master's thesis about the teaching of writing, I would have had a poor foundation. But then I think about all the others. I work many hours a day even though I have this background, and I see that I save a lot of time and effort just by having these things in order and not having to find out how to do things or find out what something is. That really makes me appreciate my thorough grounding in written communication.

Many of the teachers say that they collaborate with other teachers at their school on how to teach and assess writing. Anne says that she and her colleagues have attended courses to learn more about it. Kristine explains that at her school they run a writing project where the aim is to get the students to become better writers. They have meetings where they focus on different things, such as sentence structure or paragraph structure, which she says refreshes her memory and is very helpful for her teaching. Thomas, who also read Norwegian at university, says that a lot that has to do with writing is transferable between the English and Norwegian subjects. At his school they work in parallel with writing in both of these two subjects. For example, in both subjects they have worked with academic texts, such as a discursive essay, and how to use sources and references. He says that he also works together with other teachers with assessing written assignments. Martin adds that he gets help from his colleagues who give him tips on how to do things, and that his school has models for teaching writing, in order to have a consistent approach. Sara explains that at her school the teachers work together with how to teach writing, and their common method for teaching

writing serves as a good point of departure for their own teaching. She says that there of course are some differences in the way each and one of them teach writing, but they aim at consistency while collaborating.

Thomas regrets that there was no focus on how to adapt communication to different situations during his English university courses. He says, however, with some degree of uncertainty, that during the first year of his English studies there might have been given lessons on how to write an academic text. He says “so maybe I have been through it there, indirectly.” Both Thomas and Pete say they have had courses in the USA that have been useful for teaching writing. Thomas had a master course called “Advanced Grammar”, which was rather practical and focused on “correct” use of language. Pete says that during his freshman English courses in the USA he learnt a lot about how to write and how to make papers. I elaborate on this in subsection 5.6.1.

### **5.3.3 Learning how to teach oral communication**

The respondents express that their competence in oral communication mainly comes from other places than their English subject education. Thomas says that his competence in oral communication is from speaking English a lot and teaching it, and not from his English subject education. He says, however, that he had one course about how to express oneself in different communication situations, that was somewhat relevant, but not to a large extent. Sara says her competence in oral communication is from “learning by doing”. She adds that she has read a little about it during courses on master’s level, which was somewhat useful. She also says that she has learnt a lot about how to work with oral communication by talking to her colleagues and getting tips from them. Anne, Kristine and Martin say they gained a lot of their competence in oral communication from their stays in English-speaking countries. Anne says that during her English subject education there were large groups and more lectures than there was discussion in smaller groups: “I felt like I could go through a whole degree at the University of Oslo with hardly talking any English myself.” She compares it with her Spanish courses where there were smaller groups and more discussion, which was useful for developing her oral skills in Spanish. She says that there was no focus on developing oral skills in the English courses: “English seemed more theoretical, you just came and took your exams and that was it. At least for my part, that is what I felt the focus was on”.

### 5.3.4 60 ECTS-credits – is it too little?

Three of the teachers I interviewed say that they feel that 60 ECTS-credits in English is not sufficient in order to be adequately prepared to teach English at upper secondary level. As previously mentioned, Anne started to teach English at upper secondary when she had the required 60 ECTS-credits in English. However, when she started working she felt that she needed more knowledge to teach at that level because of the students' high level of proficiency:

I found out that I did not have enough background in English to teach it at upper secondary level. I did at least not feel comfortable teaching English even though I had earned enough ECTS-credits. Therefore I spent two years in England as a student of English.

Thomas also shares this view:

I decided to end my five-year teacher education because I thought I would not get enough specialization after these three years, then a year with the PPU and the teaching practice period, and then a year with working on your master's thesis, to then start working at a school, I felt everything would be too superficial and I would not have any real specialization in anything. [...] I wanted to have more specialization in English. [...] The fact that you write a 30-ECTS-credit master's thesis and that you have different small courses, each on 7,5 ECTS-credits, for example, all those things makes the specialization quite limited.

Jane has 60 ECTS-credits in English from the five-year teacher education programme and says that she did not have the same in-depth knowledge as she had with her Norwegian subject (where she has 80 ECTS-credits and a master's degree): "What I did after I finished my master's thesis was to add a year with social sciences because I thought the 60 ECTS-credits I had in English in the five-year programme was not enough". She says that if she had not taken that extra year, she would not feel that she had had enough knowledge to teach English. Even though the social sciences courses were not in English, they were nevertheless relevant for many areas of the English subject, and especially for International English: "I do not think I had the knowledge I needed after I was done with the 60 ECTS-credits in the five-year teacher education programme, but the extra year gave me a better foundation for teaching English."

### **5.3.5 Master's degree in English**

Only three of the seven teachers I interviewed have a master's degree in English. They are Anne, Sara and Kristine. Anne has a master's degree in English from the UK, which is about text quality. Sara has a master's degree in Didactics of English. She wrote about motivation theory and students' motivation for choosing English programme subjects for Vg2 and Vg3. Kristine wrote her master's thesis at NTNU about right-wing extremism in the UK. She says

It was very interesting and it was a whole master's thesis in English, so it was a lot of writing and I felt it went very well. It was challenging at times to be academic, to keep it formal and not repetitive, but nevertheless, I think I learnt a lot and I bring with me that knowledge into the classroom.

### **5.3.6 Summary**

The respondents say that their literature, culture and history courses mainly focused on the UK and the USA, and not other English speaking countries. Some of the respondents have, however, had courses that have dealt with the topic global English. The respondents who have not been able to take such a course regret that it was not an option for them because it would be relevant for their teaching. The respondents' competence on how to teach writing and oral communication comes to a great extent from other places than their English subject education. Several of the respondents express that 60 ECTS-credits in English is too little to teach at upper secondary level, and because of this, they have added on to their education.

## **5.4 Relevant knowledge from other subjects for teaching English**

Some of the respondents express that they have gained relevant knowledge from other university subjects, such as Norwegian and social science, for teaching English.

### **5.4.1 Norwegian**

The two respondents who have read Norwegian at university (Jane and Thomas) say that a lot of their knowledge from the Norwegian university courses is also relevant for teaching English. Thomas says that a lot is transferable between the English and the Norwegian subject. He says that teaching writing in the two subjects is quite similar, and that as a teacher you need the same competence for teaching writing in both two subjects. Jane says

Through the Norwegian and the English subject I have had double up on the language part, and that has been really useful. I have been able to repeat a lot of the same things, sentence analysis, linguistics, literary analysis and a lot of these kinds of basic terms that I have had twice. While those who have, for example, English and social sciences, get double up on the social sciences part. But I have spoken with many of them and they say that they lack some things on the language part.

Jane says she can use a lot of what she has learnt about writing from the Norwegian subject university courses in the English subject:

Yes, absolutely, because with Norwegian I have had courses that have been more communicatively oriented, a bit more extensive than just grammar. I have had courses that have dealt with topics such as rhetoric, text structure, as well as more practical topics on writing. So I have learnt quite a lot there, but it has not been about how to teach writing, it was more about how to write well, but now I have to work with how to explain to the students how they can write well.

She says she learnt a lot about genre through the Norwegian courses. She had courses on master level about how to write different texts, which were very school-oriented and very useful.

Jane wrote her master's thesis in Norwegian didactics about the teaching of writing. She says she would have struggled a lot more with teaching writing if she had not written about this topic:

It was during the writing, when I had to immerse myself into the theory and literature before I started to collect my data, that was when I really gained an overview over the field of writing didactics. Then I wrote a thesis based on what kind of method of teaching writing three teachers in a school in Norway used, because they were doing a writing project over several years. I wanted to take a closer look at what they did and how they thought it worked out, and how the students thought it worked out. And through writing that master's thesis I felt that I got a lot of good tips on what I can do myself and what might not be such a good idea. I do not think I would be better at teaching writing with only the writing theory, but having the combination of the theory and collecting the data and seeing how it could work in practice, observing many lessons, that was very informative. So it makes it much easier for me to teach writing for my students than it would be without that master's thesis. So my answer would definitely be that I would not feel prepared for it had I not angled my thesis this way.

#### **5.4.2 Social science**

As previously mentioned, Jane studied social studies for a year after finishing her master's thesis. She did not think the 60 ECTS-credits she had in English was sufficient for teaching English. She says "I lacked on the social science part and wanted to add on that by immersing myself in social sciences the next year". Jane says:

Through that year I got more political science and sociology, not in English, but it was very relevant, it comes in handy especially in my Vg2 class International English. Global challenges, cooperation across countries – I got loads of that part in the social sciences courses and I am really happy about that because it gives me yet another capacity to rely on.

She says that because of her year with social science subjects she has the competence to teach the parts of the English subject that has to do with English being a global language, and that it is especially useful for teaching the Vg2 programme subject International English.

## **5.5 The Teacher Education Programme (PPU)**

In this section, I will present the respondents' views on the PPU, and how they felt it was connected with the English university courses. I will then present the respondents' views on the Didactics of English course, which is a part of the PPU, and finally on how writing was a part of the course.

### **5.5.1 Connection with the English university courses**

The teachers did not really see a connection between the English university courses they already had taken and the Didactics of English course. Jane says "It was completely separate and it did not seem like our didactics teacher knew which courses we previously had taken." Anne says that she did not see the connection between the didactics course and the English subject, but when she looks back now it appears to be much clearer.

### **5.5.2 The Didactics of English course**

Anne, Jane and Sara claim that the Didactics of English course was too vague and not specific enough. They say that at the time it was difficult to understand what was relevant, and that the theory part was just too vague and abstract. Jane says it as follows: "Didactics of English was very vague. We talked about how to present different topics for the students, but in a very general way". Sara claims that she did not understand what most of the things they worked with had to do with her future job as a teacher. It was just not clear for her at the time. The things she remembers were the few practical things that had to do with teaching. She says that they worked with teaching plans, teaching methods or assessment, but what was not practical is all forgotten.

I think it was hard to see what the Didactics of English was meant to be when I was there. I do not think it was communicated well enough to us students what we were supposed to do with the information we were given and why we got that exact information or texts or tasks.

Anne says that she did not really understand at the time how she could use this knowledge or in what way it was relevant for future teaching. She says that everything was a little fluid. However, in retrospect, when she looks at her notes from the course she sees that the topics they had been through were very relevant for teaching, but she did not see that at the time.

She says that maybe the course should have been more connected with the teaching practice period.

Sara thinks there should have been more focus on giving feedback. She says that they had some theory about it, the difference between formative assessment and summative assessment, but it was too abstract. She says that the only practical thing they did was to mark some exam papers, but the focus was only on which mark you had given. She says there should have been more focus on formative assessment, and how to make it useful for the student. Anne also says that they marked exam papers, but that the course was mostly theoretical. She says that they should have had more specific and practical tasks to work with. She says that there was a lot of focus on adapted education, and it was repeated again and again, but it was more a discussion about it than learning how to actually adapt the teaching in the classroom.

Thomas, Pete and Martin say that they thought that the Didactics of English course was better suited for future teachers who would teach at a lower level than upper secondary. Indeed, Thomas says he thought the course was aimed at the lower secondary level. He says there was a focus on how to get the students to participate, but that is not necessary at the school he works at. Pete says

I feel didactics prepared me for a lower level of achievement than what I met here. [...]

Maybe Didactics of English should be broken up into people who are directing themselves into lower secondary and those who are directing themselves to upper secondary, but then it would be limiting for people who have to choose to teach before they actually go.

Martin says that they worked with teaching plans, but he did not think they were that relevant because in his opinion they were aimed for a different target group than the students he would end up working with:

There was a lot of focus on teaching plans, which I thought was very good, but the problem was that these plans were often for a lower level of education. They were maybe aimed for lower secondary level or adult education for people who have come to the country with very little previous knowledge of English.

Like Anne, Jane and Sara, Martin thinks that the Didactics of English as a foreign language course should have been more practical and more linked to practice. He says they “could



have had more courses, like how to teach writing, how to teach grammar, how to use smartboard and so on". He adds that it would be interesting to have secondary school teachers who could come and have lectures on a topic that they are excited about.

### **5.5.3 Focus on writing in the Didactics of English course**

Anne, Jane and Sara express that there was not a lot of focus on teaching writing in the didactics of English course, or at all in the PPU. Martin shares this view, but he says he learnt a lot about how to teach writing during the teacher practice period. Sara says that there was some focus on how to use written tasks to learn factual knowledge, but she cannot remember anything specific on how to teach writing. Jane says that they only had one 45-minute lecture on teaching writing, which she says was too little, and they assessed exam papers one time. She says they marked the exams and then they got to know what mark the external examiner had given. She says that they should have done that more often and that there should be more focus on assessment. Kristine also says that there should have been more focus on assessment. She says they talked about it, but did not learn any specific methods. Jane wonders:

What are the different marks? What is a three and what is a four? [...] It was great that we did it once. There were lots of different opinions in the group, which led to considerable discussion, and it became very clear that we all thought differently of what the quality of a written text is. That was interesting, but we did too little of that.

Thomas and Pete say that there was some focus on teaching writing in the Didactics of English course, but there was not any focus on teaching how to write formally and produce academic texts. Thomas says

In the Didactics of English course getting students to discuss in their texts or getting them to write formally, and discuss objectively, was never mentioned. What I experienced when I took Didactics of English was that it was more aimed at the lower secondary level when it came to methods and texts.

He says there was little focus on genre and writing strategies. He says they worked with

Creative writing tasks and tasks to get the students to write, more than how to write in a given context, which is something we have worked a lot with here. That surprised me a bit. It might have to do with the choice of school. When I did my teaching practice I had many upper secondary groups, both the first year and the second year, and they had the need for practice in expressing themselves in English, with the English language, regardless of context and purpose, but here the purpose is to get them to write more academically and express themselves more precisely.

Pete also says that there was no focus on academic writing, but on expressive writing: “there was a lot of focus on how to teach creative writing, like a lot of free write activities and such, which is fine. It may be better if I was teaching middle school because the focus now is research”. He says, however, that during the PPU he learnt how to give feedback on written assignments, and how to motivate by giving proper feedback: “I learnt a lot during the PPU, which that actually helped me solidify my style of feedback”.

Kristine says that there was focus on writing in the Didactics of English course she took:

Our teacher in English was very good, our subject didactics teacher, she taught us, had very specific methods and ways for how to learn. She said always include writing in every lesson and I still do that because it is important to practice it. And I feel that we went thoroughly through a lot of topics like that, I got a lot of tips and a lot of knowledge of ways to do things and I think it was very helpful and it still is today, so I think it really helped.

Kristine does, however, say that they were not taught specifically how to teach writing and she says that what they learnt about writing in the English courses should have been repeated in the Didactics of English course. One reason was because it came so early in the course of study, which made it easy to forget. She says that there should have been more about sentence structure and composition of text, and how to teach it.

It was not like specific how to teach it, and how to put together a paragraph or sentences or text. It was more like you need an introduction, main body and conclusion, but that is not enough, it also has to make sense. So I missed that. We did not really go into sentence structure, it was more about the composition of a text. We did not really focus on grammar either, only a little bit about how to teach grammar, but I think it is more important how to

teach vocabulary, because of you do not have a vocabulary then you will not be able to write a coherent text, I think, so I try to focus on that.

She also says that there should have been focus on how to adjust to the individual's level when it comes to teaching writing:

Maybe especially when it comes to writing because many struggle a lot with writing, and that is something that could have been focused on at the PPU, and perhaps had some lessons about how to deal with students with writing difficulties who cannot write a single word and how to deal with that. Because there is a lot of talk about adapted education and those kinds of things, but when you do not get input on how to do it...

#### **5.5.4 Summary**

To sum up, the respondents do not really see a connection between the English university courses and the PPU and the Didactics of English course. The respondents express that the Didactics of English course was too vague, and that it was hard for them at the time to understand how it was relevant for their future teaching, and how they could connect the theory to practice. Some of the respondents claim that the course was aimed at a lower level of teaching than upper secondary and that it therefore was not so relevant for them and their teaching. The respondents express that there was little focus on writing during the course. Several of the respondents especially express the lack of focus on academic writing and how to teach writing at upper secondary.

## 5.6 Benefits from studying abroad

As I have mentioned in passing earlier, Anne, Kristine, Martin and Thomas have all studied in an English-speaking country during their education. They all value this experience and say they have gained knowledge and become more confident with their English skills because of their stay in English-speaking countries.

Anne studied in the UK for 2 years. She had one year with English courses at the bachelor level and she took a one-year master's degree. She also took a year of her Spanish studies in Spain. She asserts that her experiences from Spain helped to make her teaching in Spanish more interesting. She continues:

And that is what I felt I lacked in English, and that is why I wanted to go abroad, to live there. Of course it is just England, and there are many places where they speak English, but then I have at least experienced the culture and I feel that I have more to bring back to the classroom.

She says that she feels very confident of her own skills in English because of her stay in the UK. She says that the university courses in Norway gave her a good foundation of knowledge, but “it is the thing about living in the culture and to be confident in using the language oneself and those kinds of things that I think are very important”. Anne explains that her stay abroad is very helpful for teaching culture because she can tell about her own experiences living in a target language country, and the students can learn about these countries in a different way than only reading about them in their textbooks. She believes that there is a lot about culture that you can read up on, “but then there are certain parts of culture that I think you cannot read up on, you must have experienced things”. She says because she teaches Spanish on a much lower level than English, she would probably feel prepared to teach Spanish after the university courses in Norway and without the stay abroad, but “with English I felt that because of the level being quite a bit higher I had to go abroad and live in that culture”. As mentioned in 5.2.2 and 5.3.4, Anne felt the need to go abroad and study more English because she experienced her students' level of proficiency being very high, and found it especially challenging to guide her students with their writing and help them to achieve an even higher level of proficiency.

Both Kristine and Martin express that they in particular gained a lot of oral competence during their stays. Kristine says that her stay in the USA and all her travelling

has made her feel very confident with her oral competence in English. Martin also feels more confident with his oral competence because of his exchange semester in the UK. He says it helped a lot, and that he gained a lot of knowledge during his stay, and he with advantage could have stayed even longer in an English-speaking country. He also recommends everyone who studies English to live in an English-speaking country, and preferably longer than his 4-month stay. Anne says that because of all the advantages you get, exchange should be obligatory when studying a language, and that it should last for at least a year: “You get so much more out of studying in the target language country.”

### **5.6.1 Competence on writing from studying abroad**

Thomas took a year of his studies in the USA, where he studied linguistics and history. Pete has also studied in his native-country, the USA. They both say that much of their competence in writing and teaching writing is from their studies in the country. Pete explains where his competence in writing comes from: “that is from the USA where English is a part of any course we take. Genre and text building, that sort of stuff, I think it is from there”. Thomas took a course called “Advanced Grammar” in the USA, which focused on usage, and was more practically oriented than what he had experienced other linguistic courses in Norway to be. He says it was very useful. His experience is that there is a larger focus on developing basic skills at universities in the USA than in Norway, and especially when it comes to expressing oneself in writing. He says he had essay-practice in the USA, and learnt for example about the 5-paragraph essay, which he has used later in his teaching. He says that the way they teach writing in the USA is more formal and structured, and that there are more detailed requirements. There was no focus on expressive writing, as apposed to the Didactics of English course. He says that at his university in the USA:

They are not afraid to let you know when something does not correspond to the genre expectations, and therefore you learn these kinds of instrumental frames for how an assignment should look like a lot quicker than you do in Norway. And there is more personal contact between professor and student there than in Norway.

Pete also says that there was a focus on writing academically. He says the freshman English course he took “taught us a lot about how to write and how to make papers, which is something we are supposed to be doing here, because I teach university preparatory. I teach them to write academically, so those courses were really invaluable”.

## **5.7 Interviews with two experienced English teachers**

I interviewed two experienced English teachers who have participated in a writing project for upper secondary teachers. One of the teachers, Elisabeth, who is now retired, was one of the initiators of the project and also managed it. She has a master's degree in English and has also studied Norwegian (about 90 ECTS-credits) and pedagogy (60 ECTS-credits). Before she started with her English-studies in Norway she lived in England for three years, both working and studying drawing and painting, as well as some English language courses. She explains that after these three years she had a solid knowledge of English. She has taught English on all levels at upper secondary. In addition to teaching she has also worked as part of the school management team.

Karen teaches English and Norwegian at an upper secondary school. She has a master's degree in English, 90 ECTC-credits in Norwegian as well as 60 ECTS-credits in literary theory. After she finished upper secondary school she spent half a year in England in order to study for an English proficiency test. Like Elisabeth, she has also taught English on all three levels at upper secondary.

I will now present my findings from these two interviews. My findings from the interview with Elisabeth are presented in case A, and my findings from the interview with Karen are presented in case B.

### **5.7.1 Case A – Elisabeth**

#### **The central constituent of the subject**

Elisabeth mentions being able to express oneself as the central constituent of the English school subject. She says that the social studies part, the literary part and the linguistic part of the subject are all equally important, but to be able to show one's knowledge in these areas one needs to be able to express oneself well enough. She emphasises the need to practice a lot to be able to express oneself, and that the learning process should be built up systematically.

#### **The need for a writing project**

Elisabeth explains that the new curriculum in 2006, with its emphasis on the basic skills, was the background for the writing project she took part in. She explains that some of the teachers from her school were at a university course for teachers about writing. She says that she talked to a professor at the course with long experience of research on writing, and they decided to set up a writing project together. She underlines that the writing project was a

result of an initiative from below: from the teachers. She says that they were several enthusiastic teachers from her school who wanted to participate in such a project.

Elisabeth explains that before they got started with the project, they were not as aware of what the students needed to be able to become good writers:

We let them write, yes, and we gave them feedback as well as we could, but it was not really done systematically. At my school we [the teachers] collaborated very closely, that was one of the things that I thought made it so fun working at exactly that school. But a systematic structure of the writing instruction – we did not have that. That does not mean that everything we did was not any good, not at all, but I think that maybe more students would have had advantage of a more systematic teaching and practice, not least.

She says that teaching writing before they started the project could be challenging:

It was one of the reasons for thinking that it would be relevant with such a project. This is something we need. And that is why I think it is a shame that teacher education programmes do not really address it seriously, so that teachers can become more systematically aware.

Elisabeth explains that she did not learn anything about how to write well during her education. She says that it was a shame because it took her many years before she felt she was able to write well. She asks: “How was I supposed to be able to show my competence when I was not able to write properly? I did not have the natural talent for writing. But with some training you can get a lot better at it.” She explains that both herself and other teachers at her school felt they lacked competence in writing. She says teachers need to be aware of what to look for in a text: “In what way is this text good and what can be improved? What advice would you give?” She adds that the students also have to be able to do this.

### **How has the writing project helped?**

Elisabeth explains that while the project was running they had meetings every second week where they discussed texts from different subjects written by their students. They discussed what was good about the texts, what was lacking and what feedback to provide. During the project the teachers also attended writing courses in collaboration with a university where they had to write texts themselves. The teachers tried out the methods before they carried them out in their own classrooms.

Elisabeth says that before the project started they were not really aware of what the students needed to become better writers, and that the writing project was really helpful in raising awareness of what was needed. Because of the project she has become a better writer and thinks that she has contributed to allow her students to become better writers. She says that it is not easy to measure how much the writing project has helped, but she mentions that former students who have started at university level have given feedback to their old teachers and said that the work with the project has been a great help for their writing at university. Elisabeth also mentions that her students now found it easier to get started writing when they had writing assignments in class: “We saw that it got easier for them to get started, and they no longer got a mental block when they were supposed to write, whether it was in Norwegian or History, or whatever subject. Maybe because they had the skeleton to start out with.”

Elisabeth says that they already before the project had good students, but during the project they saw their progress, especially in writing argumentative texts, which was the kind of text the students struggled the most with before the project. They became better at writing academic texts and not only simple narratives.

Even though Elisabeth thinks that the project was a success, she says it is a shame that it depends on whether or not there are enthusiasts at schools who want to get started with such a project: “That is a real shame. It should be an obvious matter and it should actually come from the authorities. There should be a template for teachers and it should come during the teacher education.” She explains that she after a while she got tired of leading the project and the meetings, and she says that is not how it should be. There should be someone who could take over her position, and the school management should take an active part. But if the school management does not have any pressure from above, a project like this will fade out. She also thinks that there should be set aside some of the teachers’ time for leading such a project and that it also should be paid.

### **5.7.2 Case B – Karen**

#### **The central constituent of the subject**

Karen regards communication as the central constituent of the English school subject. She mentions reading, writing, speaking and listening, and explains that she tries to include all these four activities in all her lessons. She says that although it is not always possible, her goal is that all her students should read, write, speak and listen, at least a little, in all her lessons.



### **A challenge to teach writing**

In addition, Karen thinks that writing is the most challenging part of the English subject. She says it can be challenging to explain to her students what a good text should include and says she would like more use of model texts in order to demonstrate to her students, for example, what a good introduction should include. She claims that her students are quite good at understanding and speaking English because they have travelled a lot and become familiarized with using the language, but struggle when it comes to both reading and writing more academic texts.

Another challenge with teaching English for Karen is to fully understand the assessment criteria and to make them understandable for her students. She says it is difficult for her students to understand the subject curriculum, and also for the teachers to really understand what the competence aims really mean. She says the competence aims are too vague and that the competence aims for writing for the three years of upper secondary level are too similar. She says: “You do not see any development in the subject curriculum from Vg1, Vg2 and to Vg3. The students do not always understand what the aims mean. They understand that it gets harder and harder to write, more demanding, but not in what way. It is a shame that they cannot become more clarified”. Karen adds that she thinks there is a lack of focus on grammar in the subject curricula and this also a disadvantage for the students in order to become better writers.

Karen also mentions that she finds it challenging to work with feedback, because it is so time-consuming. She says that “Ideally, when my students get feedback [on their texts] they should go back to their text and continue working with it”. But because of everything the English subject consists of, she claims there is not enough time to do this.

### **The need for a writing project**

Karen says that she joined the writing project because she felt the need to work with writing more systematically. She explains that before the project they did not work systematically with teaching their students how to write. She says that when her students had writing assignments, either at home or at school, they had to figure out how to write it themselves, then the teacher marked the text, and that was it. She doubts that her students learnt much from that. She says she was frustrated with how they worked with writing and felt like writing was not sufficiently focused on. She explains that she and the other teachers joined the project because they felt that they could and should be able to do better. Karen tells that

prior to the writing project she had tried out process-orientated writing, which she believes students can learn a lot from, but she explains that it was far too time-consuming and exhausting for her to continue with.

Karen says that she did not acquire the knowledge needed to teach writing from her university studies. She says that they wrote a few assignments but they hardly got any feedback and they never had any writing instruction. She explains that her knowledge about how to teach writing is from collaboration with her colleagues during her years as a teacher: “We have helped each other out a lot, both with making assignments and planning lessons together and by marking texts together. That has been a tremendous support. So I think we worked it out together.” She thinks there should be more systematic writing instruction during the university education:

If you already during your studies have a systematic writing instruction and also as a student write texts and get feedback and discuss the texts... Because when you start working, the learning curve will be steep and you will get thrown into it. So how do I do this – you have to find out by trial and error.

She says that at her schools the students are on a high level already, but that it is challenging to help them to become even better writers:

How to get your students to get better, expand their vocabulary, work with their mistakes, read, use the language and learn idiomatic expressions, to evolve – it is challenging. I do not have the solution on how to do it. I just try out different things, and then some things work.

### **How has the writing project helped?**

Karen says she is uncertain whether the writing project actually helped them reach their goal – to have more structure in their writing instruction. She questions whether she gained more competence in writing from the project:

I do not think it has changed my writing [instruction] that much. After a while I got quite frustrated and wanted out of the project. I felt that I gained quite little from it. I felt there was too much fumbling so it did not really help me.

She thinks the teachers from subjects that traditionally have not written much, such as social sciences, gained more from the project than she, as an English teacher, did. She says that because the project included teachers from many different subjects the project pulled in all directions, and the teachers from the different subjects had different needs. She found it quite frustrating and felt that there was minimal benefit. She says she would prefer there to be someone who works with this at a university who could contribute in leading such a project for English, even though she agrees with the idea that the wish to go on with such a project should come from the teachers. Karen says that after some time, she chose to leave the project. She explains: “I felt that I did not learn much from it, and I thought I cannot use my time on this. I cannot bear it.”

Karen finds it hard to distinguish where the changes in her writing instruction come from: whether it is because of the writing project or whether the cause is the changes that came with the reform of 2006. She adds that the more use of computers has also changed how they work with writing. She explains that after the reform:

I started with process-oriented writing and smaller writing assignments with feedback. But also, together with this you now have the computer. They did not have that before. So it is difficult to distinguish what is a result of the writing project and what is a result of the greater use of computers. With computers students can write together, they can write alone, it is easy to use their texts as model texts, or improve their texts. So I do not really know what is a result from the writing project – it is hotchpotch of all the things we do differently now. And pressure writing, subtasks, introduction, paragraphs, we have worked more with all these things. But I do not think it is because of the writing project. I think it is just as much other things. And the textbooks have these kinds of tasks, and as I said, computers and the possibilities a projector gives you. It makes things different.

In other words, Karen finds it hard to see what caused the changes in their writing instruction because it all happened at the same time. She explains that the reform, with its competence aims and assessment criteria changed the way they as teachers worked. She says it has helped her to teach writing, although she still finds it quite challenging and the competence aims somewhat vague.

In the next chapter, the *Discussion*, I summarize my findings, before I discuss the findings in light of relevant theory and relevant studies.

## **6 Discussion**

In this chapter I will start with summarizing the findings of the study. Next, the results will be discussed in light of relevant theory about SLTE, and in light of studies that look at writing in SLTE in Norway. Finally, I will provide some comments on the study's transferability.

### **6.1 What did I find?**

The aim of my study has been to investigate to what extent novice English teachers at upper secondary school level feel prepared to teach writing. I have examined how novice teachers regard their professional subject knowledge and what challenges they face in their teaching. For a broader input, I also included interviews with two experienced teachers who have participated in a writing project for upper secondary teachers. These two interviews were carried out in order to examine their experiences with the writing project, as well as to examine how they consider their subject knowledge in English regarding writing. Another point of interest was to what extent they experienced the same or similar challenges as the novice teachers. In the following two sections I will summarize the results.

#### **6.1.1 Novice teachers' feeling of preparedness**

I interviewed seven novice teachers who teach English at upper secondary level, all with master's degrees and at least 60 ECTS-credits in English. Five of the seven respondents have also studied in an English-speaking country.

All of the respondents regard communication as the central constituent of the English subject. The ability to adapt one's oral and written language to the situation is considered an important part of communicative competence. Furthermore, all of the teachers consider writing a very important part of the English subject.

The respondents express that teaching writing is the most challenging part of teaching English. They claim their students tend to have a high level of language proficiency and that they are good at communicating orally, but that how they master their language is mostly informal, and that they struggle when they have to express themselves in a formal manner. The respondents claim that it is challenging to guide their students with their writing and help them improve their writing skills, especially when the students have to use formal English and write more formal, or academic texts. Because of their students' high level of language proficiency, the teachers find it difficult to help them improve their writing. They also find it

hard to explain to their students what they can do to improve their writing. Because of their students' high level of language proficiency, several of the teachers say that there is little need to focus on grammar, but rather on structure, coherence and on writing formal and academic texts. Overall, this seems to be what the teachers think is the most challenging part of teaching the English subject. The respondents do not consider other areas of the subject, such as literature, culture and history, and global English, quite as challenging.

The respondents regret that their SLTE – including both their English subject education and the PPU with the Didactics of English course – did not focus more on writing. They have written a lot during their English subject education, but claim to have received little writing instruction, as well as little feedback on their writing, and hardly any specific instruction on how to teach writing. Several of the respondents say that although some attention was paid on how to teach writing at the Didactics of English course, it was often aimed for a lower level of learning. The respondents especially express the lack of focus on academic writing and how to teach writing at the upper secondary school level.

Furthermore, several of the respondents express that 60 ECTS-credits in English is not sufficient for teaching at upper secondary level, and for this reason, they have on their own initiative added further studies to their education. They have either changed their course of study or taken extra credits in order to feel better prepared to teach English. One of the teachers thought her students' level of proficiency was so high when she started teaching that she decided to move to the UK in order to study more English. She did not feel comfortable with only 60 ECTS-credits in English and definitely did not find it sufficient for teaching at upper secondary level.

According to the respondents, their competence on how to teach writing to a large extent originates from other sources than their teacher education, such as in-service courses for teachers and collaboration with colleagues. Some of the respondents also express that they have gained relevant knowledge on how to teach writing from the university subject Norwegian and from studies abroad.

### **6.1.2 Two experienced teachers' perceptions of a writing project**

In order to contrast to the interviews with the novice teachers, I also interviewed two experienced teachers who have participated in a long-running large-scale writing project. The two experienced teachers were included to see to what extent their experience stood in contrast to the seven novices, or whether they experienced the same problems.

Like the novice teachers, the two experienced teachers also consider communication the central constituent of the English subject. It also turned out that both teachers felt the need to participate in the writing project because they, like the novices, found teaching writing challenging, and they, despite their long experience, did not know how to teach writing effectively either. They also mention the introduction of the basic skills with the Knowledge Promotion Reform in 2006 and its increased focus on writing as an impetus for wanting to participate in this type of writing project. The two experienced teachers would both like their writing instruction to be more systematic. Like many of the novice teachers, Karen, one of the experienced teachers, also claims that her students are good at oral communication, but struggle with writing academic texts. Her students have a high level of language proficiency, but she finds it difficult to guide them to write even better and explain to them what a good text should include.

However, the two experienced teachers have different opinions about how the writing project was of help. While Elisabeth found the project very helpful for her teaching and says that it was an awakening for her of what was needed in her writing instruction, and also claims that her students benefited from it, Karen, however, is unsure if the writing project actually was useful for her teaching. In fact, she thinks the project was of little use for her writing instruction, and thinks the project pulled in too many directions caused by number of different school subjects included. She felt quite frustrated and decided to leave the project because she felt it took up too much of her time, and because she felt she hardly gained any relevant knowledge useful for her writing instruction. She does however say that her writing instruction has changed somewhat during the last years, but that it is difficult to say what exactly has caused the changes. She points out that several changes have occurred at the same time, and therefore, it is difficult to be certain of where changes in her writing instruction come from. She explains that the Knowledge Promotion Reform with its focus on the basic skills and the associated new textbooks with tasks that matched the new competence aims, have changed her writing instruction. She also mentions the use of computers, which have made work with writing and giving feedback easier.

Although Elisabeth thinks the writing project was a success, she still thinks it is a shame that such a project depends on the enthusiasts at schools who are willing to start up and manage this type of project. She thinks there should be set aside time to lead the project, which should also be paid, and that the project should not depend only on teachers and their voluntariness, because when she became tired of leading the project there was no one to take over her position, and the project then faded out. Both Elisabeth and Karen strongly believe

that a focus on learning how to teach writing should be included in the teacher education, rather than being offered only as an in-service writing project.

## **6.2 Discussion of the findings**

In the following subsections I will discuss the results of the study in light of relevant theory about SLTE. Furthermore, I will discuss the results in light of studies that look at writing in SLTE in Norway.

### **6.2.1 The importance of teachers' language skills**

As mentioned in chapter 5 and in section 6.1, both the novice and the experienced teachers mention their students' high level of language proficiency in English. Rindal (2013) states that young Norwegians are exposed to a lot of English outside of school, and according to Hellekjær (2012), many students therefore develop quite advanced language skills. However, the respondents also mention that their students' language skills are predominantly informal oral skills. As previously mentioned, Anne experienced her students' language proficiency level to be surprisingly high when she started teaching. Of that reason, she decided to move to the UK in order to study more English, because she felt that the 60 ECTS-credits she already had in English was insufficient for teaching confidently at upper secondary level.

The findings, however, also show that the novice teachers in general feel quite confident of their own language skills. They nevertheless say that their oral competence to a large extent comes from other sources than their English subject education. Several of the novice teachers say that they developed their oral competence during their stays in English-speaking countries. Anne thinks that her stay in the UK was decisive for her own language skills to be sufficient for teaching at upper secondary level. In addition, she claims that there was no requirement to speak any English during her English subject courses, and she asserts that she did, therefore, not develop her oral English language skills. This was one of the reasons for wanting to study more English in the UK.

The increasing use of English worldwide makes it more important to master English on a more advanced level (Hellekjær, 2012). A consequence of this is an increasing demand for competent English teachers (Burns & Richards, 2009) who have a high level of language proficiency (Hellekjær, 2001). According to Andrews (2007), language teachers' level of proficiency is closely linked to their effectiveness in facilitating effective communication in the classroom and also to function as language models for their students. The students' rather

advanced language skills also affect what to expect from language teachers; that English teachers have to master English at a more advanced level, in order to be able to teach advanced oral and written English (Hellekjær, 2001). Darling-Hammond (1998) claims that teachers' expertise is one of the most important factors for their students' learning. Orafi and Borg's (2009) findings clearly show that teachers' language skills can be detrimental to English teaching, in particular for the teaching of real world communication skills.

English teachers' language skills are therefore extremely important for their teaching. However the novice teachers claim that their language skills to a great extent are developed due to stays in English-speaking countries, and not as a result of their English subject education in Norway. In his study, Drew (1997) found that during the English subject education, which includes topics such as grammar, literature and communication, student teachers still showed marginal linguistic development. Hellekjær (2001) is rather critical to whether student teachers in Norway acquire sufficient language skills during their English teacher education. He claims that the lack of emphasis on student teachers' oral and written proficiency is problematic. More recently, Lund (2014) found in her study that there still is little emphasis on development of student teachers' language skills during their SLTE.

The findings indicate that the SLTE the novice teachers have received is quite theoretical, and there has been hardly any focus on developing their practical language skills. It has quite a different focus than the English school subject, where communication is central, and the present study indicates that this gap is problematic.

### **6.2.2 Are the novice teachers adequately qualified after their obligatory education?**

Several of the respondents in the study express that they did not feel prepared to teach English at upper secondary level with only having the 60 ECTS-credits in English, obligatory for teaching at this level. They express that 60 ECTS-credits is not sufficient. The lack of development of their own language skills (both oral and written), lack of several topics that they now are obliged to teach, and too little specialization in English, were mentioned by the respondents as reasons for why they thought 60 ECTS-credits was insufficient. Several of the respondents had therefore, on their own initiative, decided to add on to their education. This is explained by the respondents' feeling that there was little focus on developing their language skills during their education. Indeed, the respondents claim that their current oral competence is not owing to English subject education. They also mention that they have



written a lot during their education, but that there was little focus on writing as a skill. Several of the respondents also mention that their education did not cover important topics that they now have to teach. They also say the attention of their English subject education, about culture, history and politics, was centred on the UK and the USA, and express that the topic “global English” should have been an obligatory part of their education. Thomas, as the others, thought he would have too little specialization with only having taken the obligatory number of credits in English, and decided therefore to change the course of his study in order to immerse himself in the English language.

Damsgaard and Heggen (2010) found that the novice teachers who participated in their study, did not see themselves as fully qualified after graduating. In fact, they regarded their education to be of little relevance for their competence needs as teachers. They claimed their education had an emphasis on theoretical knowledge, and considered the teaching practice, or the part of their studies where they “learnt to be teachers”, as most important. Other studies have also shown that novice teachers regard the practical part of their education as most useful and where they learnt the most (Damsgaard & Heggen, 2010; Faez & Valeo, 2012). As previously mentioned, the respondents express that the Didactics of English course, which is included in the PPU, should have been more practical and more linked to practice. They also claim that the Didactics of English course lacked connection with the English subject courses. Several of the respondents claim that they learnt most from the practical parts of the Didactics of English course and claim that the teaching practice was most relevant. This is in accordance with a sociocultural view, that learning to teach takes place in a social context, i.e. in the social practices in classrooms, meaning that learning is situated (Johnson, 2009; Burns & Richards, 2009).

### **6.2.3 Are the novice teachers prepared to teach writing?**

My data shows that the respondents find teaching writing the most challenging part of teaching the English school subject. The respondents say it is challenging to help their students improve their writing skills. Their students often struggle with adapting their English to the situation and especially struggle with expressing themselves in a more formal manner. The respondents consider it very important to teach their students how to adapt their language, and especially how to use formal English and write academic texts. They also find it challenging to guide their students, who already have a high level of (informal) proficiency, to write even better texts. The findings indicate that because of the students’ high level of

proficiency, the teaching of writing has turned from grammar instruction to focusing on structure, cohesion and coherence, and on learning how to use a formal language and write academic texts.

The novice teachers say that they have written a lot during their education, but that they have received little writing instruction and little focus on writing as a skill. Also, there was hardly any focus on learning how to teach writing. These findings are supported by Drew's (1997) and Lund's (2014) studies, in which they find that writing instruction in SLTE has great shortcomings.

Lund (2014) found that writing is a large part of the SLTE courses, in the sense that obligatory written assignments are common and that the final mark for a course is often based on written work. However, she found that there is little emphasis on learning *how* to write and on learning how to *teach* writing. She also found that the syllabuses for the English subject courses provide little information about the criteria for writing. She claims that the main purpose of the written assignments seems to be for the institutions' need for a tool for assessment, and not for the students' need for learning.

Like Lund (2014) found in her study, the novice teachers also express that they have written many texts during their SLTE. Many of them claim that they have gained competence in writing because they have written a lot themselves during their studies. However, they express that there was little focus on learning how to write, as well as on learning how to teach writing, and now as novice teachers, they find teaching writing to be the most challenging part of their teaching. The findings indicate that even though teacher students have written a lot themselves, it does not necessarily mean that they therefore develop their language and writing skills accordingly, and neither that they automatically learn how to teach writing. Although the students write a lot, they do not necessarily become better if they lack criteria for writing (Lund, 2014), or if they do not receive substantial formative feedback on written work.

The two experienced teachers also found teaching writing challenging – despite their experience – and therefore decided to take part in a writing project. These findings support the findings from the interviews with the novice teachers, and strengthen the argument that an extended take on writing should be made obligatory in SLTE. The findings also indicate that a type of writing project in which the two experienced teachers participated, does not necessarily compensate for shortcomings in SLTE. The findings show that one of the experienced teachers still struggles with the teaching of writing even after participating in the project. This makes it even more urgent to change SLTE in order to rectify its current

shortcomings. The two experienced teachers' experience also makes clear the need for specially designed in-service courses for current English teachers.

To sum up so far, the present study, as did Drew (1997) and Lund (2014), found that there was insufficient focus on learning how to teach writing in SLTE courses. The findings also show that writing instruction is what the teachers find to be the most challenging part of teaching the English school subject. Given the importance of writing and its increased emphasis in the English subject curriculum and as a basic skill, this reflects quite negatively on the content and quality of current SLTE programmes. This stands in stark contrast to the current English subject curriculum, which is quite ambitious when it comes to writing. It can therefore hardly come as a surprise that novice as well as experienced teachers all-to-often feel that they are not adequately prepared to teach writing at the upper secondary school level.

#### **6.2.4 From where do the teachers have their knowledge on how to teach writing?**

That the current SLTE courses fall short with regard to preparing teachers to teach writing is also supported by the novice teachers who assert that their knowledge of how to do so mainly comes from other sources than their SLTE in Norway – for example from collaboration with colleagues, from courses they have attended as teachers, from the university subject Norwegian, or from English studies in English-speaking countries.

Some of the respondents say that they do not expect their SLTE to teach them everything they need to know as teacher, and expect that there are some things they will have to read up on. They also express that collaborating with their colleagues is helpful. However, the interviews with the two experienced teachers indicate that one cannot assume that teachers will gain sufficient knowledge on how to teach writing just from experience. Indeed, Damsgaard and Heggen's (2010) study shows that little is done to further develop novice teachers' competence, which could compensate for what the teachers felt was lacking in their teacher education. Furthermore, Farrell (2013) asserts that the amount of teaching experience alone does not necessarily translate into teaching expertise. This is exemplified by the two experienced teachers interviewed, who even after many years of teaching English and also after much collaboration with their colleagues during the years, still felt that teaching writing was a quite a challenging part of their English teaching. In fact, this motivated them to take part in a writing project.

However, it turned out that even a large-scale writing project that lasted for several years and that also involved collaboration with university writing researchers, may not necessarily fully compensate for the shortcomings in writing instruction in SLTE. My findings show that one of the teachers, Elisabeth, found the writing project very helpful for her teaching, and she also thinks that her students benefitted from it. Karen, on the other hand, did not think the writing project helped her much with teaching writing, and still thinks that teaching writing is challenging. Elisabeth also expresses – even though she thinks the project was helpful – that after a while it also became quite demanding to use her extra time on leading the project, and that it was a shame that there was no one to take over her leadership role when she did not want to lead the project any more. Instead, both Karen and Elisabeth think that a strong focus on writing instruction should be an obligatory part of SLTE.

Indeed, one may question whether such a writing project should at all be necessary for teachers in order to be prepared for teaching writing. Furthermore, it is highly reprehensible that such an important part of the English school subject has so little emphasis in SLTE. Given that the novice teachers find writing, which is such an important part of the English subject, very challenging to teach, there should be little doubt that they would have benefitted from learning more about how to teach writing in their English subject courses as well as in the Didactics of English course.

### **6.3 Transferability**

As mentioned in subsection 4.6, transferability has to do with the degree to which the findings can be generalized to other groups or contexts. However, in qualitative research, the aim is often not to generalize, but to give extensive descriptions of the context of the study, in order to give the reader the opportunity to judge the similarity and whether the findings can be applied to other groups or contexts (Ary, et al., 2010).

This study has used a qualitative approach, where the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. I interviewed seven novice teachers and two experienced teachers.

There are several limitations to my study. Most important, it comprises only nine respondents, of which seven are novice teachers. This makes it too limited to make any claims about transferability. Additional interviews or a larger survey would be useful to examine whether the findings can be found in the reference population: novice, university

educated English teachers. However, since both the novice and the experienced teachers experience the same problems, there might be reason to believe that other teachers also experience the teaching of writing in the same way.

## 7 Conclusion

In the final chapter I will present some of the implications of the study's findings, some suggestions for further research, and finally, a few concluding remarks.

### 7.1 Implications of the findings

The present study reveals that the teaching of writing is the most challenging part of teaching the English subject. The novice teachers I interviewed find it especially difficult to help their students, who already have a rather high level of language proficiency, to further develop their language skills and be able to use formal language and write academic texts. Their experiences make the novice teachers regret that their SLTE did not have more focus on writing as a skill and on how to teach writing. They also claim that developing their practical language skills had little emphasis during their SLTE. My findings also reveal that 60 ECTS-credits, the obligatory number of credits in English for teaching at upper secondary school level, is considered insufficient for being able to teach confidently. The findings also show that English teachers with many years of experience still find teaching writing challenging, and that participating in a long-running writing project does not necessarily compensate for shortcomings in writing instruction in SLTE.

The findings also indicate that there is need for changes in SLTE to ensure more focus on student teachers' language development, their writing skills, and on learning how to teach writing. According to my respondents, current Norwegian SLTE do not adequately prepare student teachers for teaching writing at the upper secondary school level. Indeed, it should be quite clear that SLTE programmes in their English subject courses need to put far more focus on the knowledge student teachers need to teach text production, and on how to teach writing in their didactics courses.

Furthermore, the interviews with the experienced teachers also show that there is need for in-service courses as well. The findings indicate that even with many years of teaching experience, the two experienced teachers still struggled with the same problems as the novice teachers. Also, that participating in a writing project for upper secondary school teachers, does not necessarily compensate for shortcomings in SLTE, strengthens the argument that there is need for in-service courses for English teachers on how to teach writing as well.

## **7.2 Suggestions for further research**

As previously mentioned, the transferability of the study is limited because of its small sample. This qualitative study only consists of nine interviews – seven interviews with novice teachers and two interviews with experienced teachers. To examine whether the findings from this study are representative for novice teachers, it would therefore be interesting to conduct a quantitative study with a larger sample. A survey with a larger and more representative sample with novice teachers with teacher education from several universities and university colleges, as well as including experienced teachers, would provide more valid results. Including experienced teachers would be useful for investigating whether or not they experience the same challenges as the novice teachers. In addition, a systematic study of current SLTE courses would be interesting in order to examine to what extent they prioritise writing or not.

## **7.3 Concluding remarks**

In my thesis I have investigated to what extent novice university educated English teachers feel prepared to teach writing at upper secondary level matching current requirements. I have, based on my findings, suggested that the main implication of the study is that there is a need for changes in SLTE to ensure more focus on the knowledge student teachers need about writing, and about how to teach writing. I also suggest that there is need for in-service courses for even experienced English teachers. These measures are necessary in order to fulfil the ambitious demands of the current revised subject curriculum – a curriculum which reflects changes in thinking about what language competencies really are about – and which also adapts to a situation where English is increasingly used as a lingua franca all over the world. The importance of being able to write English appropriately for the purpose and situation, and with high levels of accuracy, is only increasing.

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# Appendix 1: The interview guide

## Intervjuguide for KiS-prosjektet 2013 – “Språklærerutdanningene i Lektorprogrammet – fagutdanningene i norsk, engelsk og fremmedspråk og nyutdannede læreres utfordringer”

Informasjon som vi åpner med i intervjuet med lærerne:

- Vi er interessert i norsk/engelsk/fransklæreres fagkunnskap, og hva slags fagkunnskap du synes er viktig og hva du muligens har savnet.

1. Oppstartsspørsmål: Hva er norsk/engelsk/franskfaget for deg?
2. Hva synes du er det mest sentrale med norsk/engelsk/franskfaget som du studerte som en del av lærerutdanningen din – altså vitenskapsfaget?
3. Hva synes du er det mest sentrale - eller utfordrende - med norsk/engelsk/franskfaget som du underviser i skolen – altså skolefaget?
4. Du har nevnt XX som sentrale i undervisningsfaget. Kan du si noe om hvordan du vurderer fagkunnskapen din på dette området, og hvor du har tilegnet deg denne kunnskapen?
5. Hvis vi ser nærmere på undervisningsfaget, er det jo flere områder som er (sentrale) i læreplanen. Kan du si litt om hvor viktig du mener disse områdene er i din undervisning, hvor faglig trygg du er på disse områdene, og hvordan du har tilegnet deg de faglige kunnskapene innenfor områdene.

Områder som bør dekkes:

Engelsk	Fremmedspråk	Norsk
Språkferdigheter:  Muntlig språk/kommunikasjon Skriftlig språk/kommunikasjon  -tekstkompetanse -Litteratur -Kultur/historie -Yrkesfagengelsk -Engelsk som verdensspråk/ internasjonalt kommunikasjonsspråk	Språkferdigheter Forberedt muntlig språk Interaksjon/dialog (uforberedt muntlig) Skrivning Språkkunnskap Grammatikk Uttaleregler Tekstlingvistisk kompetanse Kultur & samfunn	Språkkunnskap Argumentasjonslære Grammatikk Sidemål Tekstlingvistikk Talemålsvariasjoner Språkhistorie Nabospråk/nordiske språk  Litteraturkunnskap Litteraturhistorie/ Kulturhistorie Litteraturanalyse/ litteraturanalytiske begreper Internasjonal litteratur (herunder nordisk) Sakprosa og skjønnlitteratur Sjangerkunnskap  Muntlig kommunikasjon Kunnskap muntlig komm. og om å veilede elever i muntlig komm.  Skriftlig kommunikasjon Kunnskap muntlig komm. og om å veilede elever i skriftlig komm.

6. Hva ser du på som det mest utfordrende emnet å undervise i? Hvorfor? (*Bør dette komme som eget spørsmål – etter å ha snakket om de ulike delene av faget – kan ta det her hvis informantene ikke selv bringer det på bane når de snakker om de ulike delene av faget?*)
7. Hva slags rolle eller posisjon opplever du at fagdidaktikken har i forhold til skolefaget og vitenskapsfaget?
8. Faglig bakgrunn
  - a) Hvilken grad og fag har du?
  - b) Hvor mange studiepoeng har du i norsk/engelsk/fremmedspråkfaget?
  - c) Hvilke kurs tok du i norsk/engelsk/fremmedspråkfaget?
  - d) Hvis du har en master – hva handlet den om?
  - e) Har du noen spesiell språkbakgrunn i nynorsk/engelsk/fremmedspråkfaget? – flerspråklighet i hjemmet, utenlandsopphold, e.l.?
  - f) Kan du andre fremmedspråk? (evt. fransk/tysk/spansk)

## **Appendix 2: Supplementary questions – for the experienced teachers**

Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan prosessen med skriveprosjektet var?

Hva var bakgrunnen for at du valgte å bli med på skriveprosjekt?

Følte du behov for å styrke egen kompetanse?

Følte du deg forberedt til å undervise i skriving før prosjektet?

Hvordan jobbet du med skriveundervisning før prosjektet?

Var skriveundervisning en utfordrende del av undervisningen før prosjektet?

Har prosjektet hjulpet deg med din skriveundervisning? På hvilken måte?

Hva satt du igjen med av utvidet kunnskap etter prosjektet?