# Extended Writing Opportunities in English

*A study of opportunities, discourses and scaffolding of writing in English in lower secondary classrooms*

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Mastergradsavhandling ved Institutt for Lærerutdanning og Skoleforskning

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# Abstract

Being able to express oneself through writing is a necessity in the modern world, both in one's personal life and for the participation in society. This master thesis investigates what characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing when their students were provided opportunities for extended writing, in lower secondary classrooms in Norway. I wanted to investigate what characterized the opportunities given, including the framing of the writing event and what type of writing tasks the students engaged in, what aspects of writing the teachers focused on in their writing instruction, and how the students were scaffolded during the writing process.

I used video observation to examine this matter, analyzing data material collected by the Linking Instruction and Student Experiences (LISE) project at the University of Oslo, led by Professor Kirsti Klette and coordinated by Associated professor Lisbeth M. Brevik. Of the seven English classrooms recorded, I identified four classrooms in which opportunities for extended writing were given, one in 9th grade and three in 10th grade. There were eight lessons across the four classrooms in which extended writing occurred, and these lessons were further analyzed.

My findings show that although there were few opportunities for extended writing given in the seven English classrooms recorded by the LISE research team, in those that did occur, multiple practices identified as effective writing instruction were present. Across the four classrooms, all the students had engaged in various prewriting activities that assisted them in collecting and reflecting upon potential writing content. The opportunities were genre-focused, purpose-driven, and process-oriented, and different aspects of writing were emphasized in the same writing event, for example grammar and genre features. My findings also show that the four teachers provided their students various scaffolds during the writing process that contributed to assist the students in composing and structuring their texts, including model texts, writing frames, writing strategies, and feedback. The extent to which the teachers highlighted specific features of these scaffolds and modeled the writing skills being targeted in the task, varied across the four classrooms. Hence, this MA study contributes to research on how writing is framed and taught in classroom settings in English lessons in lower secondary schools in Norway.

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# Sammendrag

Å kunne uttrykke seg gjennom skrift er helt nødvendig i det moderne samfunnet, både i ens eget personlige liv og for å kunne delta i samfunnet. Denne masteravhandlingen belyser hva som karakteriserte fire engelsklærere i ungdomsskolen sin tilnærming til å undervise i skriving når elevene fikk muligheten til å skrive over tid. Jeg ønsket å undersøke hvordan disse skrivesituasjonene var rammet inn og hvilke oppgaver elevene ble bedt om å skrive, hvilke aspekter ved skriving lærerne fokuserte på i undervisningen sin, og hvordan de støttet elevene sine i skriveprosessen.

For å undersøke dette analyserte jeg videomateriale samlet inn gjennom Linking Instruction and Student Experiences-prosjektet (LISE) ved Universitetet i Oslo, ledet av professor Kirsti Klette og koordinert av førsteamanuensis Lisbeth M. Brevik. Av de syv klasserommene som ble filmet, identifiserte jeg fire klasserom hvor muligheter for å skrive over tid ble gitt, hvorav ett var på 9. trinn og tre på 10. trinn. På tvers av de fire klasserommene identifiserte jeg åtte undervisningstimer hvor elevene fikk skrive over tid, og disse ble videre analysert.

Funnene mine viser at selv om få muligheter til å skrive over tid ble gitt i de syv engelskklasserommene filmet gjennom LISE-prosjektet, forekom det flere undervisningspraksiser som kjennetegner skriveundervisning av høy kvalitet i de klasserommene der slike skrivemuligheter faktisk ble gitt. I alle fire klasserommene deltok elevene i ulike førskrivingsaktiviteter som bidro til å gi dem ideer til hva å skrive om. Skriveoppgavene var sjangerorienterte og formålsdrevet, og elevenes skrivearbeid ble gjennomført i prosess. Ulike aspekter ved skriving ble vektlagt i én og samme skriveaktivitet, for eksempel grammatikk og sjangertrekk. Til slutt viser funnene mine at lærerne på tvers av de fire klasserommene ga elevene sine ulike støttestrukturer i skrivearbeidet som bidro til å hjelpe elevene med å skrive og strukturere tekstene sine. Jeg observerte modelltekster, skriverammer, skrivestrategier og tilbakemelding. Hvorvidt lærerne pekte på spesifikke trekk ved disse støttestrukturene og modellerte ulike aspekter ved skrivingen, varierte i de fire klasserommene. Denne masteroppgaven er altså et bidrag til forskningen på hvordan engelsklærere i norske ungdomsskoler legger til rette for skriving og hva som karakteriserer skriveundervisningen deres.

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Last, but certainly not least, I want to express my gratitude to my family. Mom, thank you for always supporting me and reminding me that you believe in me! Most importantly, thank you for teaching me and reminding me that my worth does not come from what I do and what I achieve. Sindre and Eyvind, thank you for giving me words of advice during my whole education, from start to finish. I have always learned and continue to learn so much from you!

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# Table of Content

# 1   Introduction

It is a paradox that the medium students use to show knowledge and competence in school, writing, is often taken for granted. When we think we are measuring the students' knowledge, we are in reality measuring their ability to express this knowledge through writing (Kringstad & Kvithyld, 2013, p. 71; my translation).

I still remember reading this quote in one of the articles on the syllabus and realizing that students in fact need to be *taught* how to express their knowledge. It sparked an interest in me to further examine how to conduct writing instruction of quality that equips my students for the various writing tasks that await them both within and outside the classroom. Within the last two years of being enrolled in the teacher program at the University of Oslo, I have grown to realize that writing, being one of the five basic skills, is a comprehensive skill that needs to be taught. Writing is arguably the most difficult language skill to master and one of the most complicated human activities (Drew, 2019). Writing does not only entail that of producing text. Similarly, engaging one's students in writing does not equal teaching them *how* to write.

Being able to express oneself through writing is a necessity in the modern world, both for the participation in society and in one's own personal life, Drew (2019, p. 1) arguing the inability to so a "severe handicap". What is more, mastering the written word is power in our modern society as writing is critical to communication, and as textually mediated communication dominates in our society (Santangelo, Harris & Graham, 2016). Hence, a critical responsibility that teachers hold is to make their students competent writers who can participate in society (Blikstad-Balas, 2018).

## 1.1  Mastering the written mode in English

Considering the global status of English, being able to write in English is of increasing importance, and a crucial premise for this study. Norwegian adolescents are expected to use English in a variety of contexts outside the classroom. They are required to read and write in English in many subjects in higher education. Also, the printed word in English is prevalent in the world, and considering Norway's increasing political and commercial links to the rest of the world, being able to write in English is a necessity in the modern day and age (Bazerman,

2016; Drew, 2019). Therefore, mastering English represents an opportunity regarding education, international travel and employment (Linn, 2016).

Students use written English for a variety of purposes in their lives outside the classroom, including maintaining personal relationships online, gaming, social media, and surfing on the internet (Brevik, 2019a; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Although these arenas provide adolescents with various opportunities for practicing the English language, their communication is not characterized by the formality that is required in other communicative events that the students will participate in, both in higher education and in their future work life (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016).

In research, writing, with its many subskills, is repeatedly identified as an aspect of education that many students struggle to master (Blikstad-Balas, Klette & Roe., 2018; Santangelo et.al., 2016). Researchers argue that is reasonable to infer that students have spent more time working with grammar and writing on sentence level than with writing extended texts (Matsuda et al., 2009). Research in Norway has shown that students score lower on written production than on reading and oral comprehension, with texts including an overuse of informal language, a lack of coherence, and a lack of an appropriate and helpful structure (Horverak, 2015).

## 1.2  Writing in the English subject curriculum

The Knowledge Promotion (2006, 2013), being the current national curriculum, places great emphasis on the five basic skills that students are to acquire in school, writing being one of them. As a basic skill, writing is considered fundamental to learning in all subjects as well as a prerequisite for the students to demonstrate their competence (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012). Writing holds a central role in the English subject curriculum, highlighting the ability to express ideas and opinions in an understandable and purposeful manner, to write different kinds of texts, and to adapt language to the purpose and audience, as three central components of writing competency. Furthermore, in the English subject, students are expected to use and understand an extensive vocabulary, and use patterns for orthography and word inflection (UDIR, 2013).

There are high expectations on English teachers to systematically teach their students how to write in English in different contexts (Kwok et.al., 2016). Indeed, there is a need to focus

more on writing competence and writing instruction in English lessons in Norway (Horverak, 2015). Students need intentional and extensive teaching and scaffolding from their teachers in order to succeed in that of producing complex texts in English. Writing should not simply be assigned and tested, but also explicitly taught, followed by guided practice (Kwok et.al., 2016).

## 1.3  Writing instruction in English in a Norwegian context

Researchers have emphasized that there is limited knowledge concerning the opportunities students are given to engage in extended writing in the classroom in Norwegian lessons in lower secondary schools, including the nature and framing of such opportunities (Blikstad-Balas et.al., 2018).

Although there has been an increased focus on writing in Norwegian schools after the establishment of the National Writing Centre, the focus on writing in the English subject is still limited (Horverak, 2015). What we do know is mostly based on interviews with teachers (Burner, 2016; Lund, 2014), analyses of students' texts (Austad, 2009; Kjempenes, 2018; Larsen, 2009; Wold, 2017), analyses of written material (Skulstad, 1999; Sparboe, 2008; Ørevik, 2019) and of teachers' feedback during the writing process (Burner, 2016; Horverak; 2016). Hence, there is limited research on the approaches English teachers in Norway apply when teaching writing.

Rindal and Brevik's (2019) review of doctoral work in English didactics in Norway written within the last 30 years, shows that of a total of 19 doctoral theses, only six have examined topics related to writing and writing instruction in English, and only two of these have examined English writing *in* the classroom (Burner, 2016; Horverak, 2016). Rindal and Brevik (2019) call for further investigation of writing instruction in English classrooms in Norway, including the processes students go through when producing text, how texts are produced, what type of texts students write, what characterizes teachers' feedback during the writing process, and the access students have to models and other scaffolds prior to and during the writing process.

Conversely, in the context of Norwegian lessons, several studies on writing and writing instruction have been conducted, reporting positive effects of teachers providing various

scaffolds during the writing process, including model texts, writing frames, and writing strategies (Elvebakk & Jøsok, 2017; Håland, 2018; Larsen et.al., 2018; Øgreid, 2016). Blikstad-Balas et.al. (2018) conducted a thorough investigation of the writing opportunities given students in 46 classrooms in lower secondary schools, using video observation, and in a follow-up study, Blikstad-Balas (2018) carried out a systematic investigation of which of Roz Ivanič's (2004) six writing discourses were represented in the writing tasks given in 33 lessons. Hence, several studies have been conducted examining various aspects of the approaches applied to teaching writing in Norwegian lessons, whereas there is a lack of similar studies of English lessons in Norwegian classrooms. My study contributes new insight into such practices.

## 1.4  The LISE project

Due to the existing knowledge gaps concerning the approaches applied when teaching writing in English lessons in Norway, I decided to join the Linking Instruction and Student Experiences (LISE) project at the University of Oslo; started in 2015, led by Professor Kirsti Klette and coordinated by Associate Professor Lisbeth M. Brevik. The paramount goal of LISE is to examine the quality of instruction in lower secondary school in the school subjects English, Norwegian, mathematics, French, science, and social studies. In total, the LISE-project has recorded 290 lessons across seven classrooms from seven different schools in 9th and 10th grade (2015-16 and 2016-17), filming four to six consecutive lessons in each classroom. Of these, a total of 60 English lessons were filmed, which are relevant for my MA study. Hence, this project provided me a considerable amount of data that I could use to observe what characterized the teaching approaches applied when teaching writing in lower secondary English lessons. Further details about the LISE project will be presented in the methodology chapter.

## 1.5  Research questions

Based on the research gaps mentioned above concerning how writing is taught in English lessons in Norway, my overarching research question is: *What characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing when the students were given opportunities for extended writing?*

In order to examine this question, I have developed the following sub-questions:

Q1: *To what extent were opportunities for extended writing given in English lessons in 9th and 10th grade, and what characterized those opportunities?*

Q2: *Which writing discourse(s) were manifested in the lessons containing extended writing, including the writing tasks and the teachers' instruction in general?*

Q3: *To what extent and how were the students scaffolded during the writing process?*

To clarify, 'extended writing' implies writing for more than seven minutes (Grossman, 2015). 'Writing discourses' refers to different views on the nature of writing and how it is to be learned, taught, and assessed (Ivanič, 2004). 'Writing tasks' refers to the type of writing the students are asked to produce. Last, 'scaffolding' refers to the strategies the teachers employ to support their students in the writing task at hand, the aim being to enable them to perform it independently in the current as well as in similar writing events in the future (Brevik, 2015). These concepts will be elaborated on in Chapter 2 (Theory and Prior Research) and Chapter 3 (Methodology).

## 1.6 Outline of the thesis

In addition to this introductory chapter, this MA thesis comprises Chapters 2–6. In Chapter 2, I present theory and prior research concerning writing theory, including prior doctoral theses, master theses, and other studies of relevance. In Chapter 3, I give an account of the methods I have used to answer my research question, including procedures for data selection and analysis, research credibility, and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I present my findings, and those are further discussed in light of relevant theory and prior research in Chapter 5. Here I will also present implications of my MA study. Finally, in Chapter 6, contributions of my thesis and suggestions for further research will be presented, before presenting concluding remarks.

# 2  Theory and Prior Research

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framing of my MA study, explaining the perspectives I link to the concepts of discourses of writing and scaffolding. A key theoretical standpoint in my study is that writing and writing instruction in Norwegian lower secondary schools take place within the *sociocultural* environment of the classroom, and I therefore find Vygotsky's sociocultural theory on learning to be an appropriate theoretical framing for my study (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). First, Vygotsky's theory will be presented (2.1). Second, an account of Roz Ivanič's (2004) theoretical framework on the six discourses of writing will be given (2.1.2), followed by an elaboration on the concept of scaffolding and how it relates to the teaching of writing (2.1.3). Finally, I present prior research of relevance to this MA study with regard to the topics of writing opportunities and teachers' writing instruction.

## 2.1  A sociocultural theory on learning

According to Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory on learning (e.g. 1978, 1986), the learner's learning happens when he or she participates in a social and a cultural experience, in which the learning is supported by others in the learning environment (Vygotsky, 1986). Learning is thereby not an individual activity, but it happens through social interaction in the dialectic relations between the personal and the cultural. It first takes place on a social (intermental level) before it takes place on an individual (intramental) level, being shaped by the practices the learners inhabit, but also shaping them themselves. The connection between these two is made through mediating tools such as language (Vygotsky, 1986). Within Vygotsky's view on learning, the learner is actively involved in the task at hand and relates that which occurs in the social interaction to his own individual consciousness (Brevik, 2015). Hence, the learner's learning does not happen by receiving information from the teacher or more competent peers. Instead, the learner actively engages in a process of internalizing this information, and then externalizing and *using* it to move forward in his own learning and development (Brevik, 2015).

In order to understand this dialectic process, it is critical to take into account Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This is a key construct within his theory, and it targets the learner's development process in a social situation (Chaiklin, 2003). The ZPD is defined as follows:

The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Hence, even though the learner is active in the learning process, there is a limit to how much he or she can develop without assistance (Dysthe, 1999). There is a gap (illustrated in Figure 1) between a learner's actual level of development (current understanding) and his or her potential development (can understand with help). The ZPD is illustrated as the middle circle, in terms of what a learner can understand with the help from teachers and peers.
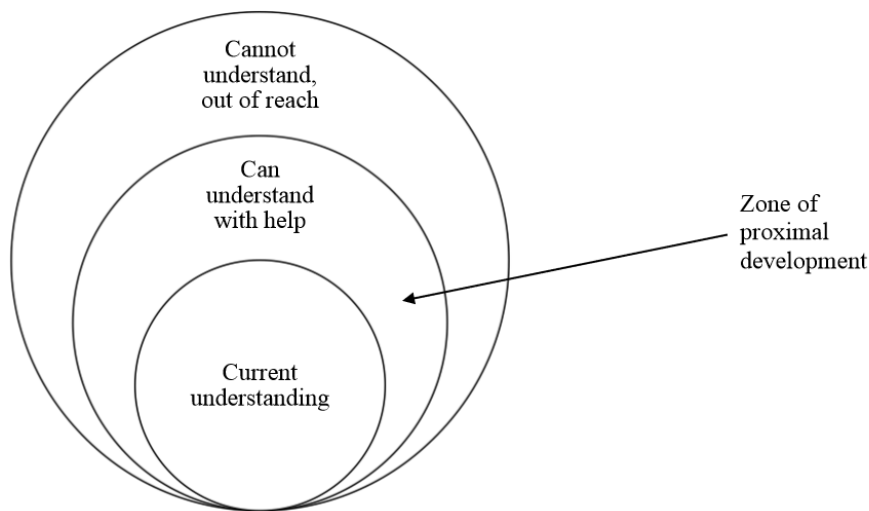


**Figure 1** Model based on Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)

Receiving guidance from others, in social interaction, the learner's ZPD expands, and he or she can proceed to the next stages of development (Dysthe, 1999). In this zone of social interaction, knowledge and understanding are developed, and the learner is better equipped to solve the problem at hand. This sociocultural perspective on learning and development is relevant for my MA study since I investigate the classroom setting, a social and material environment where students and teachers engage in social interaction (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015).

## 2.1.1 Discourses of writing

The writing discourses developed by Roz Ivanič (2004) represent a sociocultural view on learning in the sense that writing is shaped by the social, sociocultural and political context in which it occurs.

The way in which teachers teach writing arguably reveal their belief about the learning, teaching and assessment of writing. In order to investigate English teachers' approaches to teaching writing, I decided to use Ivanič's (2004) theoretical framework in which she describes six writing discourses, each representing different views on the nature of writing. She defines 'discourses of writing' as "constellations of beliefs about writing, beliefs about learning to write, ways of talking about writing, and the sorts of approaches to teaching and assessment which are likely to be associated with these beliefs" (p. 224). She presents six writing discourses, which are connected to (1) skills, (2) creativity, (3) process, (4) genre, (5) social practices, and (6) sociopolitical practices.

Ivanič's (2004) framework is grounded in a comprehensive and social view of language, more specifically a *multi-layered* view of language (see Figure 2). At the center is the text, consisting only of the linguistic substance of language. This text is shaped by and inseparable from cognitive processes in the writer's mind. Furthermore, the writer is situated in a social context that also influences the production of the text. This context is referred to as the 'event', which refers to the purpose for language use, the social interaction, and the time and place of the writing. Lastly, the sociocultural and political context of the specific writing event also has an impact on the production of the text – different discourses, genres and multimodal practices are assigned different value and meaning in different cultures. The different layers involved in the production of text are illustrated in Figure 2.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ 4: Sociocultural and political context          │
│   ┌───────────────────────────────────────────┐ │
│   │ 3: Event                                  │ │
│   │   ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐ │ │
│   │   │ 2: Cognitive processes              │ │ │
│   │   │     ┌─────────────────────┐         │ │ │
│   │   │     │ 1: Text             │         │ │ │
│   │   │     └─────────────────────┘         │ │ │
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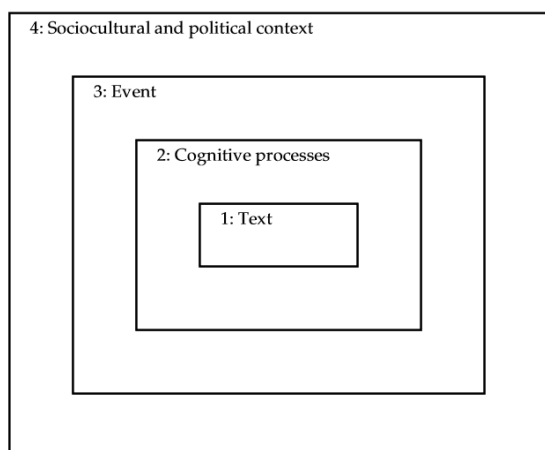
**Figure 2** A multi-layered view of language (Ivanič, 2004)

In each of the six writing discourses, varying emphasis is put on the significance that each of the layers hold in the production of text. Notably, although representing different views on writing, the discourses do not exclude one another; two or more discourses might, and often do co-occur. Still, the way in which certain practices are enacted at the expense of others, makes it possible to identify how a specific discourse dominate in a specific writing event (Ivanič, 2004). Although there are clear contradictions between some of the discourses in terms of the view on writing, one should not be regarded as more "correct" than another. Instead, all of them should be understood as representing critical aspects of writing. In the following I elaborate on each of them, including the view of the nature of writing, and the learning, teaching, and assessment of writing inherent in each discourse, based on Ivanič's (2004) framing.

## Discourse 1: A skills discourse of writing

Within the skills discourse, writing consists of applying linguistic knowledge to produce text, thereby focusing on the written text's linguistic form. Here, learning to write involves "learning the sound–symbol relationships which generate well-formed words, syntactic patterns which generate well-formed sentences, and looser patternings of cohesion within and between paragraphs which are characteristic of well-formed texts" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 227). It is the correctness of the letter, word, sentence, and form that determines to what extent the text represents good writing. At one extreme, writing is considered to be independent of context, and the same rules and patterns apply to all writing, regardless of text type.

The teaching of writing within the skills discourse includes the explicit teaching of grammar, spelling, punctuation and syntax. Ivanič (2004) argues that since it is generally recognized that texts differ, and that the language utilized is adjusted accordingly, the belief about writing within the skills discourse is often found in conjunction with the belief within the genre discourse – that writing is a set of text-types shaped by the social event in which it occurs (Ivanič, 2004, p. 225). In general, the skills discourse is often integrated with other approaches to the teaching of writing. Even though mastering spelling, punctuation and well-formed sentences are central aspects of learning to write, Ivanič (2004) emphasizes that it is problematic to consider this discourse of writing as more important than other discourses of writing. She also challenges the common view that that knowledge of linguistic patterns can solely be developed through explicit teaching.

## Discourse 2: A creativity discourse of writing

Within the creativity discourse, writing is considered the product of the writer's mental processes and creativity (Ivanič, 2004). It is the text's content and style that is in focus, rather than its form and linguistic features. The writer is seen as an author whose primary goal is to engage a reader. Within this discourse, learning to write is a result of writing on topics which is of one's interest, and in order to develop as a writer, one frequently needs to engage in such creative writing (Ivanič, 2004). The teaching of writing within this discourse typically includes engaging students in writing fiction and narratives in which they use personal experiences as inspiration. Also, the teaching of creative writing is often combined with the teaching of reading. The students learn to write by reading various authors' written work, and the teacher highlights different features of the specific text that the students are encouraged to apply in their own texts, for example specific aspects of vocabulary and composition. Students are encouraged to express their personal voice; "creative self-expression" is important within this discourse of writing (Ivanic, 2004, p 229).

## Discourse 3: A process discourse of writing

In the process discourse, writing consists of "composing processes in the writer's mind, and their practical realization", and learning to write includes learning both the mental[1] and the

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[1] Ivanič (2004) uses "cognitive" in the multi-layered view on language figure (Figure 2), but "mental" when she describes the process discourse of writing. In the same way, I use "cognitive" when referring to the model, and "mental" when referring to this specific discourse of writing.

practical processes involved in producing text (Ivanič, 2004, p. 225). Central elements of these mental processes include planning, translating and reviewing text. The mental processes layer in the comprehensive view of language model is considered to have the strongest influence on the production of text within this particular discourse. The teaching of writing will most likely include a practical sequence of stages, including generating ideas, planning, drafting, providing and receiving the teacher's and peers' responses on drafts, in addition to revising and editing text. The mental processes might be learned implicitly, whereas the practical ones are more flexible and might be taught explicitly. The focus on learning and improving the processes involved in writing has the primary function of improving the final text. This approach to the teaching of writing does not necessarily consider the differences in text-type, context and purpose – the same practical processes are often applied. Ivanič (2004) argues that a consequence of embracing this approach is that there is an extensive focus on the *practical* processes involved in writing, even though the intention might also be to develop the students' mental processes regarding the production of text. This discourse is also often found in combination with other discourses.

## Discourse 4: A genre discourse of writing

Within the genre discourse, writing is considered "a set of text-types shaped by social context", and the form of the text depends on its purpose (Ivanič, 2004, p. 225). The focus is on writing as a product, but also how social factors in the writing event, shapes it. Here, learning to write entails learning the features of "different types of texts which serve specific purposes in specific contexts" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 225). Linguistic features are especially highlighted within this discourse; the students are to learn how to write texts that are linguistically appropriate to the purpose they are serving, be it describing, informing, or instructing. Even though the genre discourse share features with the skills discourse regarding the focus on language, the former emphasizes the primacy of linguistic *appropriacy,* whereas the latter correctness. The most important criterion within the genre discourse is the text's *appropriacy*; that the text fulfills its intended purpose, and that it fulfills the text norms that are expected by the specific genre. Ivanič (2004) posits that the teaching of writing within the genre discourse will most likely include the explicit teaching of different genres, including purpose, linguistic vocabulary, and form and/or structure. The target text is often modelled, and the students are encouraged to use the information they have been given to construct similar texts.

**Discourse 5: A social practices discourse of writing**

In this discourse, writing is considered to be "purpose-driven communication in a social context" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 234). In a social practices discourse, the text itself and the processes of composing it are inseparable from the social interaction comprising the communicative event in which they are set. Within this discourse, students "learn by doing" – learning takes place implicitly as one participates in socially situated literacy events, fulfilling social or functional goals. This discourse places emphasis on the writing in real-life contexts, with real purposes for writing. Learning to write does not simply include the construction of written text, but also "by whom, how, when, at what speed, where, in what conditions, with what media and for what purposes texts are 'written'" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 235). The social practices associated with the context in which the writing occurs is of great importance, particularly as the *purpose* of the writing is decisive. Within this discourse, writing is understood as the ability to adapt to the purpose and the social frames of the specific context.

Ivanič (2004) states that the pedagogic implications of this particular discourse might not be as direct as in the other discourses presented above, given the gap between educational and real-life settings. Ivanič (2004) proposes three approaches to the teaching of writing that reflect the view of writing represented in this discourse, although these arguably represent a limited view on writing. First, a functional approach to the teaching of writing includes engaging students in writing tasks where the goal is to fulfill a specified social goal, for instance set by an employer. This is especially relevant in vocational studies; preparing students for writing requirements of a particular job. Second, she proposes a communicative approach, engaging students in situated activities holding a clear purpose where students engage in real-life writing. Authentic communication is a key requirement here, and the students need to adjust their writing in accordance with these circumstances. Teachers can engage their students in communicative activities that resemble real-life contexts and purposes for communication, such as writing under time-constraints or writing a letter to a company (Ivanič, 2004, p. 236). Third, Ivanič (2004) suggests assigning students the role of an ethnographer, examining the writing practices of a particular workplace or organization they would like to be a part of in situ, including observing and documenting the practices and the texts that are produced there, reflecting upon the reasons for these choices in light of the specific work place or organizational context.

Hence, this discourse of writing is complex and can be manifested in various ways. Its functional view on writing can be found in the English subject curriculum, as the students are expected to write various texts suited to purpose, audience, and the situation in general (UDIR, 2013).

**Discourse 6: A sociopolitical discourse of writing**

This final discourse of writing resembles the former one in the sense that it focuses on the context in which the writing occurs. However, the *political* aspects of the context are in focus within this particular discourse. Writing is regarded both as a practice *shaped* by social forces and political relations, and the writing is in turn considered to *shapes* these relations. Learning to write within the sociopolitical discourse of writing entails becoming aware of how choosing one type of writing, including genre and discourse, over another has consequences for how the student represents the world and how the student writer positions him- or herself in relation to the reader. The decisions the student makes when he or she writes is determined by the sociopolitical context in which the writing occurs.

The student writer can be seen as a social agent that can use writing to contribute to social change, challenging existing norms through the writing. Politics, relations of power, ideology, identity and social change can be addressed, and the writer can thus be regarded as holding and practicing a social responsibility. Furthermore, Ivanič (2004) argues that holding the role as a social agent also entails that of meeting texts with a critical attitude and asking questions regarding the established truths that are mediated through text, and possibly also using writing to reflect upon this matter. The teaching of writing might include tasks where the goal is to address and discuss the power relations established in texts and the implications of such power relations. Students might also be asked to produce texts which challenge and subvert norms and conventions.

## 2.1.2 Scaffolding

Regardless of which aspect of writing teachers choose to focus on in their teaching of writing and what characterizes the writing events in which they engage their students, students are in need of their teacher's scaffolding in order to acquire and master the skill of writing. The concept of scaffolding is concerned with the strategies the teacher employs to expand the students' current level of understanding and performance with the aim of helping them to

gradually obtain control of the activity at hand (Brevik, 2015; 2019b). Without such scaffolding, the task would be outside the student's capacity. Thus, scaffolding also takes place in a sociocultural framing, in line with a Vygotskian view on learning.

The metaphor of scaffolding is retrieved from the construction field, a scaffold being a *temporary* structure set up to help the building or adjustment of another structure (van de Pol, 2010; Wood, Bruner, & Ross., 1976). In the domain of learning, the metaphor of scaffolding refers to the temporary support with which teachers provide their students to enable them to perform and complete a task that they might not be able to complete without such support (Tabak & Kyza, 2018). Hence, through scaffolding, the teacher targets the student's ZPD, and helps the student reach a higher level of understanding (see Figure 1). In order to facilitate this process, teachers need to adapt their teaching to the needs of their students (Tabak & Kyza, 2018).

The intention of scaffolding is not only to help students complete the task at hand, but also to ensure that the student can perform similar tasks independently in the future (Belland, 2017; Brevik, 2019b). In their scaffolding, teachers make their thinking visible in order to support and shape learning, and in the process, the students internalize and appropriates that which has been scaffolded (van de Pol, 2010). In the end, indicated by the teacher's dynamic assessment of the student's understanding and performance, the scaffolding can gradually be removed as the student takes an on more responsibility for performance of the task at hand (Brevik, 2019b; Tabak & Kyza, 2018). Thus, the *fading* of the support structure is a central feature of scaffolding, ultimately resulting in a transfer of responsibility for the performance of the target skill from the teacher to the student (Belland, 2017).

Furthermore, Belland (2017) emphasizes the crucial aspect of *intersubjectivity* in scaffolding – that there is a shared understanding between the teacher and the student of what successful performance of the target task looks like. Clearly, students cannot acquire the skill and perform the task at hand independently in the future if they do not know how to recognize a successful performance of the respective skill (Brevik, 2019b). Intersubjectivity is thereby a crucial aspect of the transfer of responsibility; without it, students might not be able to engage in independent performance of the target skill (Belland, 2017).

A central feature of scaffolding is joint activity and participation, which mirrors Vygotsky's (1986) words that "what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do

independently tomorrow" (p. 211). Hence, the student is to be an active participant in the process, and the end goal of scaffolding is to make the learner become self-regulated and competent enough to and be able to solve the problems independently (Belland, 2017). The student's responsibility of the task increases as the teacher's scaffolding fades (Brevik, 2019b).

## Operationalization of scaffolding

For the purpose of this MA thesis, I find it appropriate to clarify how I will operationalize the concept of scaffolding. First, in line with Belland (2017), I consider instructional support provided prior to students' independent problem solving to not equal scaffolding; instead, the support needs to be provided *as* the students engage with the task. Second, in line with Puntambekar & Hübscher (2005), I argue that all support provided by the teacher during the problem solving cannot be characterized as scaffolding. For it to be so, I argue in line with Brevik (2019b) that the support provided not only should help the student in performing the task at hand, but also enable the student to complete the task independently in the future. For example, telling a student that he needs to add a paragraph to his text is not scaffolding, even though the teacher's feedback ideally is an essential means of scaffolding. Features of the skill being targeted in the task must in some way be highlighted to the student. Only then can the teacher's support gradually be faded, and the student can assume independent responsibility for the activity. In that way, the student's ZPD is well targeted (van de Pol et.al., 2010).

Third, although the most ideal form of scaffolding is that which is provided one-to-one between the teacher and the student, this being the core of the original definition (Wood et.al., 1976), I argue, in line with Puntambekar & Hübscher (2005), that a teacher can also employ a variety of strategies to support the class *as a whole* in completing the task at hand. The classroom is a complex learning environment, and it is impossible for the teacher to provide and adjust his or her scaffolding to all students at the same time (Tabak & Kyzo, 2018). Last, scaffolding is not restricted to interactions between individuals; it can also be embedded in various artifacts and resources (Puntambekar & Hübscher, 2005). Therefore, it is crucial that the teacher recognizes that such resources alone fail to target each student's ZPD, and that he or she needs to guide the students in their use of those materials, adjusting the scaffolding to the needs of individual students.

Having emphasized that writing is a complex skill consisting of multiple subskills, the argument follows that for students to develop as writers, they need scaffolding *during the writing process.* Often, students master various subskills of writing, but struggle to integrate those into a full writing performance (Tebak & Cyza, 2018). In the context of writing, when students are asked to write longer texts, or to write for a longer period of time, they depend on their teachers' scaffolding to assist them in transferring their knowledge of specific subskills to a full writing performance that requires these subskills to be integrated and coordinated (Tabak & Cyza, 2018, p. 192). Only then will there be a potential for them to achieve a satisfactory result of the writing task at hand and to use this knowledge in similar writing tasks in the future. This perspective is key to my MA thesis.

The literature presented above is critical in order to investigate writing in the L2 classroom, more specifically what writing entails, and how teachers can teach their students the skill of writing, and support them in the process of developing as writers.

## 2.2  Review of prior research

In the following, I present prior research that is of relevance to my MA study. First, I address key practices identified in research as characterizing quality writing instruction, and research on Norwegian students' writing competence in general. Second, I present studies in the field of education in Norway that with their various findings – and subsequent research gaps – have inspired me to conduct further research on teachers' approaches to teaching writing in English lessons in lower secondary classrooms in Norway.

Graham et.al. (2016) have conducted a metareview of extensive research on the characteristics of effective teachers' practices and writing instruction. Four of these characteristics will be presented here. First, dedicating time in the classroom for various forms of writing *over time* along with *writing instruction* is listed as the most critical characteristic to ensure the development of students' writing competency, much due to the complexity of writing. Second, the existence of a *supportive writing environment* in the classroom proves highly effective. This practice includes providing writing tasks with clear and specific goals, allowing students to cooperate in the writing process, engaging students in various prewriting activities that assist them in collecting, organizing, and reflecting upon

potential content, and providing support that enable them to make progress and accomplish the writing tasks at hand (Graham et.al., 2016).

Third, *teaching writing strategies and skills* is proved to be effective. Such strategies are used for planning, drafting, revising and editing text, and Graham et.al. (2016) emphasize that students benefit from being taught these strategies through the teacher's explanation, modelling, and provision of opportunities for guided practice. Also, students benefit from their teachers' instruction on basic writing skills, also being explained, modelled and practiced in whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction. Fourth, research widely supports the notion that students' writing is improved when they receive feedback on their writing or learning progress. Being taught to assess their own writing along with giving and receiving feedback from peers generally prove to enhance students' writing. This requires critical reading, and students might potentially employ the same assessment process in their own texts (Graham et.al., 2016; MacArthur, 2016).

Several studies on second language writing of English worldwide show that organizing material and employing a formal language are aspects of writing that students struggle with (Hyland, 2009; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Silva, 1993). These challenges are evident in research examining students' writing in Norwegian as well, especially when writing persuasive essays (Berge & Hertzberg, 2005; Hundahl, 2010). Hence, the argument follows that English teachers need to give extensive attention to that of structuring, creating coherence and adjusting one's language to the situation. The students need extensive support in the process when producing complex texts in English. Furthermore, the results of an extensive assessment project conducted in lower secondary schools in eight European countries in 2002, indicated that Norwegian students score lower on their written production than on their reading and oral comprehension (Bonnet, 2004).

In the following, I present prior studies in the field of language education in Norway that are of relevance to my study with regard to writing instruction both in Norwegian and in English lessons. In general, there is limited research on this topic. In English, I have identified seven doctoral theses and five master theses of relevance, written during the last 30 years.

Regarding school level, three studies on writing and writing instruction have been conducted in primary school (Drew, 1997; Larsen, 2009; Skulstad, 1999), four in lower secondary school (Austad, 2009; Burner, 2016; Drew; 1993; Ivancevic, 2018), three in upper secondary

school (Horverak, 2016; Lund, 2014; Sparboe, 2008), and one in higher education (Lehmann, 1999).

A number of studies within the field of English didactics (both MA and PhD theses) have examined topics related to writing instruction through teacher interviews, analysis of teachers' texts, and analyses of written learning material (Austad, 2009; Drew, 1997; Larsen, 2009; Skulstad, 1999; Sparboe, 2008; Ørevik, 2019). Based on interviews, teachers explain that they find it challenging to teach writing, especially helping students to develop their ability to use formal language and write academic texts (Lund, 2014). Lund's (2014) findings indicate that writing instruction might be the most challenging part of teaching English. As regard research on Norwegian learners of English' texts, Lehmann's (1999) study suggested that they do not necessarily have the writing competence expected in higher education.

Others have examined learning material related to writing instruction (Skulstad, 1997; Sparboe, 2008; Ørevik, 2019). Skulstad (1997) conducted genre analyses of authentic genres from the business field. Her main argument is that acquiring genre awareness and understanding how the communicative purpose of a text affects the use of language, are two valuable skills that students of English need to develop, and she calls for further research looking into if and how L2 teaching aims to develop learners' genre awareness (Skulstad, 2019). Further, Sparboe (2008) analyzed two previous English curriculum, textbooks and exams given to students specializing in English in upper secondary schools, and found that there is a lack of focus on how to teach and write academic texts. He found that there are improvements in the current curriculum, there being clearer criteria for how to teach academic writing. Ørevik (2019) also investigated the patterns of genres and text types represented in textbooks, on educational websites and in national exams, and found little evidence of model texts given to the students as scaffolding prior to or during the writing process, especially when being asked to write persuasive essays.

In her doctoral thesis, Ørevik (2019) created an empirically based typology of genre categories, and I have used her descriptions to categorize the genres present in the four classrooms I have analyzed. Of the six main genres (argumentative, descriptive, dialogic, reflective, expository, and narrative/poetic), I have identified the argumentative, reflective, and dialogic genres, more specifically the subgenres persuasive essay, formal letter, personal letter, and personal text.

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First, writing a persuasive essay involves building an argument by stating a claim and obtaining support, and the communicative goal is to convince. The rhetorical organization includes a claim, followed by supporting arguments. Second, writing a formal letter typically involves communicating on a formal a level, and the communicative goal involves placing a request, complaint or application. The rhetorical organization includes place, time, formal greeting, topic, message, preclosing, formal greeting (Ørevik, 2019, p. 108). Third, writing a personal letter involves spontaneous language production, the communicative goal typically being to maintain personal relationship. The rhetorical organization includes an informal greeting, message, closing, and informal greeting. Fourth, writing a personal text typically involves sharing personal thoughts or experiences, the goal being to convey such to an audience. The rhetorical organization is characterized by a narrative or referential style, using first person point of view.

Furthermore, Ion Drew (1997) investigated novice teachers' competence and preparedness to teach English through interviews and a corpus analysis of their written texts, and his findings implicate the importance of providing students with strategies to improve writing performance, and the provision of opportunities to write different text types on which they receive feedback during the writing process. He calls for more qualitative studies on writing, taking into consideration what the students are asked to write, how their text is to be organized, and the processes the students engage in when producing text, including the provision of feedback (Drew, 2019).

In contrast, only one master theses (Ivancevic, 2018) and two doctoral theses (Burner, 2016; Horverak, 2016) have conducted research on writing *within* the English classroom setting. Ivancevic's (2018) study was also part of the LISE project. In their studies, Horverak (2016), Burner (2016), and Ivancevic (2018) all examined the teacher's assessment practices during the writing process. Burner (2016) investigated student and teacher perceptions on assessment practices (in writing lessons specifically), and found that students to large extent appreciated being involved in assessment practices, and appreciated text revision, but that there often was a lack of opportunities to follow up written feedback in the classroom. He asks for research that investigates the elements that constitute student involvement in assessment practices in English classrooms (Burner, 2019), which is one of the objectives in my study. Findings from Larsen's (2009) study also emphasized that students need to be trained in giving and acting upon feedback on their written work, both in terms of language and content.

Findings from Horverak's (2016) study indicated that feedback on written texts was not fully utilized and taken advantage of by the English teachers in her study. Nevertheless, employing an approach of letting the students engage in text revision based on their teacher's feedback, resulted in the students working well with revising their own texts. Furthermore, Horverak (2016) examined teachers' explicit writing instruction in addition to their feedback practices, and found that teachers used model texts and writing frames when teaching writing. The results of her intervention of a genre-pedagogical approach to the teaching of writing suggest that this approach seemed to improve the students' argumentative writing skills.

This review of prior research reveals that there have been a few studies within the field of English didactics that examine various aspects of writing instruction in Norway. What we do know, is to a large extent based on interviews with teachers and analyses of written material. Consequently, there is a need for further research on how writing instruction is actually carried out in English lessons, examining a wider range of practices in addition to feedback on written texts during the writing process.

To complement the research in English, I have identified some relevant studies on writing in the context of *Norwegian* lessons. Blikstad-Balas et.al. (2018) conducted a study where they examined what characterized writing opportunities provided in 46 classrooms, based on video observation. Although few examples were identified, they found that when sustained writing opportunities were given, they were clearly framed within a genre, with the teachers highlighting how to write in specific genres. They found that the teachers provided different means of scaffolding during the writing process, with provision of feedback being particularly salient. They call for further investigation of the amount of time dedicated to writing *in class* and what kind of writing the students engage in.

Furthermore, Blikstad-Balas (2018) investigated which of Roz Ivanič's (2004) writing discourses were manifested in writing orders given by teachers in Norwegian lessons. Her sample included 33 classrooms. She found that the genre and process discourses dominated, and that although they generally co-occurred, the genre discourse was particularly dominant. She also found evidence of teachers providing feedback on the students' written work *during* the writing process, and the provision of various means of scaffolding during the writing process. There was limited evidence of the social practices and sociopolitical discourses of writing in her material.

Since research emphasizes that students need scaffolding when structuring the content of their written texts, a number of Norwegian researchers have conducted studies on different means of scaffolding provided students in the writing process, including writing frames, model texts, and writing strategies (Elvebakk & Jøsok, 2017; Håland, 2018; Larsen et.al., 2018; Øgreid, 2016). They all found that these were beneficial for the students' writing as they highlighted specific aspects of the writing skill at the core of the task at hand, and the use of those scaffolds potentially enables the students to apply these particular features in their own texts, *combined with the teacher's additional instruction and support*.

## The relevance for my MA study

Based on the literature and the empirical studies presented above, it seems that students depend on multiple factors to develop as writers. Among them are opportunities to write over time, and the teacher's explicit instruction and scaffolding during the writing process. Several aspects of writing need to be taught, and teachers can employ a variety of strategies to teach those.

In this MA study, as I seek to examine what characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing, I will build on these studies by examining what characterizes the opportunities students are given to write for an extended amount of time, including the time dedicated to writing and what type of writing the students engage in. Second, I will examine the teachers' explicit writing instruction, including the methods they employ to teach various subskills of writing and the various genres presented by Ørevik (2019), and if and how they teach genre awareness. Third, I will examine how the teachers scaffold their students in the writing process, given the complex nature of writing in general and in one's L2 specifically, including the provision of writing strategies, models, and feedback. Since my study is conducted in the classroom, in lower secondary schools specifically, my study will contribute to fill some of the knowledge gaps presented above.

# 3   Methodology

In this chapter, I present the methods I have used to examine my overall research question: *What characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing when the students were given opportunities for extended writing?* This is a qualitative study, using video material from English lessons in Norwegian classrooms in 9th and 10th grade. I will begin by describing the research design of this MA study (3.1). Next, I will give an account of the data material (3.2), followed by a description of the sample (3.3) and the data analysis procedure (3.4). Finally, I discuss the credibility and ethical aspects of this MA study (3.5).

## 3.1   Research design

Since the purpose of my study was to investigate what characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing in English lessons in lower secondary schools, I assessed a qualitative approach to investigate the matter to be the most suitable. This approach is most suitable when one's interest is to ask "what" and "how", rather than "how many" (Buston, Parry-Jones, Livingston, Bogan & Wood, 1998, p. 187).

Since a limited number of studies examining topics related to writing instruction have been conducted *in the classroom,* I decided on a design based on observation of video recordings. Qualitative analysis of video observation material thereby served as the foundation of my MA study, such recordings providing me with insight into *how* writing instruction is carried out in naturally occurring contexts in English lessons in Norwegian classrooms. My aim was to analyze particular phenomena (writing discourses and scaffolding) and study a group of individuals (teachers) without the intention of generalizing to a larger population (Creswell, 2014). Hence, my study is best described as qualitative.

Table 1 shows an overview of the research design in its entirety, including the method, the research question, the data material, the data analysis, and the analytical concepts used in this MA study.

**Table 1** An overview of my research design and data material

| Design & method | Research question | Data material | Data analysis | Analytical concepts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Qualitative video observation | What characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing when students are given opportunities for extended writing? | Video recordings from the LISE study; English lessons in lower secondary schools containing opportunities for extended writing | Directed content analysis of video recordings | Extended writing<br><br>Writing discourses<br><br>Scaffolding |

## 3.2  Data material

In this section, I will introduce the data material, including additional information about the LISE project, the advantages of using of video recordings, and the advantages and the disadvantages connected to that of using secondary data collected by others.

### 3.2.1 LISE

My data material is collected by the LISE research team. There being a recognized need for educational research conducted *in* the classroom, and the LISE project holding a large quantity of such data material, choosing to join the LISE project and using their video recordings as the material for my study proved to be advantageous. The seven schools in the project were sampled based on variation in levels of student achievement (based on gains from national reading tests), as well as demographic and geographic variation across three school districts (urban, suburban and rural) (Brevik, 2019b).

Given the nature of my research question, I chose to limit the data to the video recordings, thereby excluding the collected questionnaires. There was a standard procedure as to how the videos linked to the LISE-project were recorded. In each classroom, there were two cameras, one in the front of the classroom filming the students, and one in the back of the classroom filming the teacher. Each teacher had a microphone attached to him/her, in addition to there being a microphone placed in the middle of the classroom capturing the students' utterances. This design provided reasonably good video and audio recording of interaction in plenary, between the students, and between the teacher and individual students (Brevik, 2019b).

### 3.2.2 Video recordings

Since my interest was to examine *what* characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing, I argue that using video observation of authentic classrooms enabled me to conduct a reliable study that would enable me to answer my research question. Scholars agree that video analysis has several advantages regarding the investigation of teaching and learning, as "it enables more precise, complete, and subtle analyses of teaching/learning processes" (Klette, 2016, s. 1). Features of quality teaching can be deconstructed and studied in detail (Brevik, 2019b).

Since I used video recordings as the source of my data, I had the opportunity to look for and identify patterns that might be difficult to observe in situ (Blikstad-Balas, 2017). I was able to rewind and watch specific segments repeatedly and make a detailed descriptive transcription on which I could build my analysis, such transcriptions often being perceived as more precise than field notes (Blikstad-Balas, 2017). The data are not based upon what the observers identify while in the classroom, or what they remember from the instruction. What is more, since there were two microphones in the classroom, one placed on the teacher and the other one in the middle of the room capturing the class, I could analyze the content of both the discussions in plenary *and* the teacher's interaction with individual students (Brevik, 2019b). Last, using video observation enabled me to observe what the teachers actually *do,* rather than what they *say* they do. Hence, video observation is an advantageous method for gathering data that enable me to answer my research question.

### 3.2.3 Use of secondary data

Since I was a part of the LISE project and thereby used their collected material, my data material is secondary data. I was provided rich and comprehensive data that I could use to examine and answer my research question. Being able to use this data proved very timesaving for me since I did not need to go through the groundwork of finding and contacting participants, and I did not need to conduct the filming myself. I also had the opportunity to contact researchers associated with the LISE project who could assess and discuss my analysis with me.

However, using secondary data entails the possibility of receiving data without sufficient information (Dalland, 2011). Since I was not present in situ in the lessons being filmed, I do

not have a first-hand experience with the context from which the data is collected (Andersson-Bakken, 2013). The cameras do not capture everything. Furthermore, as my study completely relies on data already collected by others, I did not have the opportunity to influence the organization of the data collection process and the focus points of the study (Dalland, 2011). I would, for example, have benefitted from having access to more classrooms where opportunities for extended writing were given. Nevertheless, the data material collected was sufficient for me to study the approaches applied when teaching writing in lessons were opportunities for extended writing were given.

Lastly, when re-using data collected by others, there are a number of ethical guidelines that need to be followed, and I will address these in further detail in chapter 3.5.

## 3.3  Sample

I chose purposive sampling for my MA study, this principle being basic in qualitative research for selecting cases and individuals to study (Bryman, 2016). More specifically, I used criterion sampling, sampling all cases that met the criterion of extended writing. Since my overall research question concerns this specific phenomenon, the criterion for my selection was that opportunities for extended writing were given in the lessons I was to analyze. Employing this sampling strategy proved beneficial as it enabled me to study the same phenomenon and compare the occurrence of it across different classrooms. The LISE project holds a considerable amount of data from English classrooms in Norway, 60 lessons in total. An overview of the coding of the lessons, done by researchers in the LISE research team, showed that there were occurrences of lessons in the existing data material that consisted of such opportunities. I used this overview to identify my sample.

This coding had been completed using the Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation (PLATO), a system of codes used when observing English Language Arts instruction (ELA). This instrument is based on existing literature on effective instruction in secondary English Language Arts and in adolescent literacy more generally (Grossman, 2015). The framework is built around four primary underlying constructs that are assumed to be critical for middle and secondary school instruction, including Instructional Scaffolding, Cognitive Demand of Classroom Talk and Activity, Contextualizing and Representing Content, and Classroom Environment (Grossman, 2015). These are further divided into three or four sub-elements,

giving a total of thirteen core elements of teaching practice in ELA (English and Language Arts), each being scored separately. What characterizes each of the elements is described in detail, and potential ambiguities are clarified. When analyzed, the lesson is divided into segments of 15 minutes, and each of the segments is scored on a 1-4 scale depending on the occurrence and quality of specific features of the specific category (Klette et.al., 2017).

## 3.3.1 Sampling procedure

My sampling procedure included identifying the lessons in which extended writing occurred. Extended writing is a term operationalized in the PLATO manual, and it accounts for seven minutes of consecutive writing. In order to examine the opportunities for extended writing given to students in the seven recorded schools, I watched the lessons containing segments which had been received score 3 or 4 based on the PLATO manual for Text-based Instruction (see Table 2). This specific manual consists of two parts, namely the reading and production of authentic texts. My sample was limited to the lessons whose code 3 or 4 was related to the *production* of text. Sustained opportunities for students to write extended and authentic texts within a particular genre or structure are given, and the teacher "explicitly focuses the students' attention to issues of writing, style or genre in their writing" (Grossman, 2015).

**Table 2** The Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations (PLATO 5.0): Text-Based Instruction (writing)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TBI** | No opportunities for students to engage in a writing process | Brief pieces of connected text (at least 3 minutes) | Sustained opportunities within a particular genre or structure | Sustained opportunities with attention to issues of writing craft, style or genre |

*Note.* TBI = Text-Based Instruction. This is a simplified version.

Looking through this overview, I found that there were eight lessons in which opportunities for extended writing were given. These were distributed across four of the seven classrooms; one in 9th grade (S02) and three in 10th grade (S07, S17, S50). These eight lessons amounted to my final sample. See Table 3.

In order to get a fuller understanding of the context in which the extended writing occurred, I watched all the lessons filmed consecutively in each of the four classrooms ($N = 19$). My aim was to identify whether lessons before or after the extended writing lessons were related to

the writing task. I identified that four additional lessons indeed concerned the extended writing task (in S07 and S17), even though these lessons did not contain any extended writing opportunity. Of note, I did not analyze these lessons.

**Table 3** The sample for this MA study

| School | Grade | Filmed lessons | Lessons with ext. writing (lesson #) | Task | Sample |
|--------|-------|----------------|--------------------------------------|------|--------|
| S02 | 9th | 6 | **1** (#1) | Writing a formal letter to the local government | 1 |
| S07 | 10th | 4 | **3** (# 2, 3, 4) | Writing a persuasive essay about the US election | 3 |
| S17 | 10th | 5 | **2** (#3, 5) | Writing a letter to a friend | 2 |
| S50 | 10th | 4 | **2** (#2a, 2b) | Writing a text about what next year will be like | 2 |
| **Total** | | **19** | **8** | | **8** |

## 3.3.2 Teachers

The English teachers in these four classrooms are also part of my sample. Table 4 provides background information about the four teachers, representing two males and two females, across two age groups, and with different educational background and teaching experience. This information is collected from the LISE study, logged by the teachers themselves, in connection with the video recordings.

**Table 4** Background information of the English teachers at the sampled schools.

| School | Teacher | Pseudonym | Age | Education in English | Teaching experience |
|--------|---------|-----------|-----|----------------------|---------------------|
| S02 | Female | Anette | 40-49 years | 300 ECT (Master's degree) | 14 years |
| S07 | Male | Michael | 20-29 years | 61-90 ECTS | 6 years |
| S17 | Female | Thea | 40-49 years | 61-90 ECTS | 20 years |
| S50 | Male | Ragnar | 40-49 years | 31-60 ECTS | 18 years |

## 3.4  Data analysis

In this section, I present the procedures I used to analyze the eight lessons comprising my sample. I analyzed them qualitatively, using structured observation as the main analytical approach. More specifically, I employed a deductive approach in line with a directed content analysis (Fauskanger & Mosvold, 2014; Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005). This involved letting theoretical and analytical categories determine what components in the eight lessons that were relevant to analyze in order to answer my research question, thereby focusing my analysis (Kleven, 2014).

As presented in the theory chapter, Roz Ivanič (2004) has developed a comprehensive theoretical framework of six discourses of writing (i.e. skills, creativity, process, genre, social practices, sociopolitical), and I found it advantageous to use these six discourses as categories when characterizing the teachers' approaches to teaching writing. Furthermore, in order to investigate the teachers' scaffolding practices, I used three of PLATO's categories on instructional scaffolding. This means that I used two thematic categories: (1) Ivanič's (2004) writing discourses and (2) PLATO's instructional scaffolding categories.

In the following, I present the four steps I employed in the process of analyzing the data material, including a description of the theoretical and analytical categories I used.

### 3.4.1 Step 1 – Getting an overview of the writing event as a whole

The first step of the analysis was to watch through all the lessons relating to the extended writing opportunity to identify what characterized the writing event, including the topic, the task, and the amount of time dedicated to writing. I made detailed field notes as I watched these lessons, already having studied Ivanič's (2004) six discourses of writing and PLATO's scaffolding categories in detail. I watched the video recordings in the Teaching Learning Video Lab at the University of Oslo.

### 3.4.2 Step 2 – Analyzing the discourses of writing

After having obtained an overview of these lessons, I read through the field notes to identify and assess which of Ivanič's (2004) six writing discourses were manifested in the lessons in which the extended writing occurred, including the writing task and the teachers' instruction

in general. In the following, I will address what I have included in each of the categories, based on the descriptions given in Ivanič's (2004) framework.

### Discourse 1: A skills discourse of writing

To examine the occurrence of this discourse of writing, I looked for the teacher's instruction in grammar and syntactic patterns, and other general features of formal language. I also looked for the teaching of general features of structure, both on a local (paragraph) and global (text as a whole) level. If the preferred structure was connected to a specific genre, I did not identify it as an occurrence of the skills, but of the genre discourse of writing.

### Discourse 2: A creativity discourse of writing

To examine to what extent the teacher engaged the students in creative writing, I looked for opportunities for the students to write on topics of interest, including personal narratives and descriptions of places or events within their own experience. I also looked for occurrences of the teachers exposing the students to examples of good writing (e.g. Ivanič, 2004) with the intention of having the students acquire different aspects of the text, for example specific aspects of vocabulary and composition.

### Discourse 3: A process discourse of writing

To assess the occurrence of this discourse, I examined to what extent the teachers focused their students' attention to and/or engaged their students in different processes involved in producing text, including generating ideas, planning, drafting, revising based on feedback, and editing. I also searched for means of support (such as model texts) provided prior to the writing event to help the students compose and structure their texts.

### Discourse 4: A genre discourse of writing

To identify this discourse of writing, I looked for the teachers' explicit instruction on different genres, including purpose, linguistic features, and other features associated with the specific genre. I also looked for the provision and modeling of the target text as Ivanič (2004) describes this as a typical approach to teaching writing within this discourse of writing.

### Discourse 5: A social practice discourse of writing

This is a complex discourse of writing, and it can be realized in multiple ways. When analyzing the eight lessons in which extended writing occurred, I searched for students' opportunities to write for real purposes, in real-life contexts, using authentic communication.

Since I investigate the classroom setting, I also looked for *simulated* activities, such as practicing that of fulfilling a specific functional goal set by a fictive employer. Tasks containing a clear purpose and being set in a particular social context, were included in this discourse of writing. What is more, I examined to what extent the teachers bring their students' attention to how social factors of the context in which the students write, might or should affect their writing.

**Discourse 6: A sociopolitical discourse of writing**

This discourse is also complex and might be realized in multiple ways. To identify this particular discourse, I examined if students were asked to think critically when studying and writing texts, reflecting upon the power that specific genres or discourses hold, and the consequences of choosing one over the other. This also includes questioning established truths being mediated through writing. Hence, this is relevant both when students are to analyze others' texts *and* when they are to write their own texts. The latter concerns both that of using writing to address issues of power, and how they as writers position themselves in relation to the reader and the world. Last, I looked for tasks where the students are challenged to produce nonconformist texts which challenge and subvert norms and conventions.

## 3.4.3 Step 3 – Analyzing scaffolding practices

After having identified which of Ivanič's (2004) discourses of writing were observable in the eight lessons where extended writing occurred, my focus shifted to the teachers' scaffolding practices during the students' writing process. The data material had already been coded by the LISE research team using PLATO's analytical frameworks concerning instructional scaffolding, and I decided to use these frameworks. This domain is developed in accordance with existing theory on scaffolding and consists of the elements of Modeling and Use of Models, Feedback, and Strategy Use and Instruction. I focused on each of the frameworks separately and registered what score each of the segments (15 minutes) in each lesson had been given. I only focused on the lessons containing segments receiving score 2 or higher. Even though I knew what score each segment had been given, I had to identify what characterized the teacher's practice. I thereby watched through those lessons again, and using the framework for the specific element, I analyzed what characterized the specific practice, be it the teacher's modeling or use of models, provision of writing strategies, or feedback. These PLATO elements will be presented in the following (see Table 5).

**Table 5** PLATO (5.0): Elements used in my study to characterize teachers' scaffolding practices

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MOD** | No visible enacting of strategies or skills.<br><br>If present, model is not explained. | Strategies or skills partially demonstrated, but modeling incomplete.<br><br>Explicit reference to model, but model incomplete | Strategies or skills clearly and completely enacted, modeling complete.<br><br>A complete model is used. | Strategies or skills clearly and completely enacted, specific features *decomposed*.<br><br>Specific features of the model *decomposed.* |
| **SUI** | No reference to or provision of instruction about strategies. | Reference to at least one strategy, but no explicit instruction on how to use it. | Explicit, yet limited, instruction about a strategy, including how to use it. | Explicit and detailed instruction about one or more strategies. |
| **FDB** | No feedback | Vague feedback; procedural suggestions | Generally specific feedback; substantive/procedural suggestions | Specific feedback; substantive suggestions |

*Note.* MOD = Models and Use of Models. SUI = Strategy Use and Instruction. FDB = Feedback. This is a simplified version.

## Modeling and the Use of Models

The element of Models and the Teacher's Modeling captures the extent to which a teacher *shows* his students *how* to complete the task at hand by visibly enacting the skill, strategy, or thought process targeted in the lesson. It also captures the teacher's provision and use of a model, an exemplar of the task at hand, to enable the students to complete the task. With regard to the skill of writing, I used this element to analyze how the teachers model the particular writing skills being targeted in the task, and how they use the model(s) provided in their instruction. Two central features of this element include the number of students for whom the modeling is available, and that the modeling and/or model is *decomposed* for the students, for example which components of a paragraph that makes it one of high quality.

## Strategy Use and Instruction

Strategy Use and Instruction, when teaching writing specifically, focuses on the teacher's ability to teach strategies and skills that support students in the writing process. A strategy is defined as a flexible method or way to do something that can be applied in multiple contexts, and in the current writing process specifically. This element captures both the teacher's strategy *instruction*, explaining how and why to apply the specific strategy or method, and strategy *prompting,* telling the students to apply a strategy they are familiar with. This

element shares features of the Modeling and Use of Models rubric. Yet, I find it purposeful to use this rubric specifically for strategies that regard *writing.* Moreover, strategy instruction might not include the *modeling* of the strategy.

**Feedback**

The element of Feedback concerns the quality of the teacher's feedback provided in response to students' performance of ELA skills and their ideas. In the case of this MA study, this includes the quality of their writing and their ideas connected to the content of the writing task at hand. The teacher's feedback (ideally) includes two elements, namely comments on the quality or nature of student work *and* suggestions for how students can improve the quality of their work. The rubric distinguishes between vague and specific feedback, the difference being to what extent the teacher identifies *what* the students have done poorly and/or well. The teacher's suggestions for improvement should preferably be concerned with the skill targeted in the task at hand (substantial) rather than simply what steps to take next (procedural).

## 3.4.4 Step 4 – Organizing and reviewing

The last step was to organize the material to get an overview of each classroom, including the nature and framing of the writing opportunity, the writing discourses present, and the teachers' scaffolding practices during the writing process. Then I compared the four classrooms to examine how they were similar and how they differed in terms of these categories. During the process, I returned to the video lab several times to watch a selection of segments over again to verify my analyses.

# 3.5 Research credibility

In this section, I discuss the reliability and validity of my MA study, along with ethical considerations. According to Brevik (2015, p. 46), the difference between these two can be described as "the accuracy and transparency needed to enable replication of the research (reliability)" and "the trustworthiness of the inferences drawn from the data (validity)".

### 3.5.1 Reliability (or "repeatability")

According to Johnson & Christensen (2013), a study's reliability is concerned with whether the results obtained are repeatable. A central aspect of a study's reliability is the *process* through which the study was conducted, more specifically the consistency and stability of it (Johnson & Christensen, 2013).

Reliability can be divided into inter reliability and intra reliability. Inter reliability measures the agreement among numerous researchers' results (Hallgren, 2012). As already addressed, I used the PLATO manual as an analytical tool in my MA study, a thoroughly validated analytical instrument. The already coded data have been coded by certified raters who have completed a PLATO-training program, which strengthens the reliability of their assessment. They have watched and analyzed the lessons, and agreed upon the quality of the specific lesson, with respect to the element of teaching they are analyzing. Inter reliability also entails that using the same analytical framework, different researchers should be able to arrive at the same results (Bryman, 2016). I have provided detailed descriptions of the analytical tools to ensure that they can be applied by other researchers, and that their findings align with mine, yet bearing in mind the subjective nature of interpretation (Blikstad-Balas, 2017).

Intra reliability measures to what degree there is an agreement among multiple repetitions of one test (Bryman, 2016). As previously mentioned, using video recordings as data enabled me to watch desired segments several times, zooming in at specific incident of relevance and interest. I was thus able to watch specific utterances several times and assess them in light of the specific element I used as an analytical lens. Furthermore, since I am connected to the LISE project, I have been able to discuss my interpretation with my supervisor and other peers also being linked to this project. Hence, the use of video observation and the PLATO-manuals strengthens the reliability of my study, as following the same process potentially will lead to similar results.

### 3.5.2 Validity (or "trustworthiness")

In the following, I will give an account of the strategies I have employed to maximize the validity, or trustworthiness, of this study. The validity of a qualitative study is concerned with whether the research is "plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible" (Johnson,

2011, p. 299). A study's validity primarily depends on the researcher's judgments, and whether the inferences drawn from the data are trustworthy and defensible (Brevik, 2015).

To strengthen the descriptive validity of my research, I have provided transcriptions of fragments of the data to support my inferences. The audience can then consider whether the findings I present and the inferences I make seem plausible (Blikstad-Balas, 2017). On that note, I have also used audit trail to ensure that the observations and inferences I have made are defensible, and that I have presented these observations in a transparent way (Johnson & Christensen, 2013).

Furthermore, to strengthen the external, or generalizing, validity of my study, I have observed English teachers of different genders, age, and teaching experience. Although my study is based on a small amount of collected data, this also being sampled purposefully and thus not eligible for generalization, generalizations *can* be made as long as the people and settings I want to generalize to are similar to those in the original study (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). It is thus reasonable to infer that the findings presented in my study reflect the practices that can be found in many other English lessons in Norwegian lower secondary schools. Although my analyses concern a limited sample, they represent a systematic analysis of all extended writing opportunities that occurred in seven English classrooms across two school years, based on a total of 60 video-recorded English lessons.

Although reactivity, the potential influence that the researcher (in my case, the camera) has on the participants' behavior (Maxwell, 2013), is a threat with regard to the trustworthiness of the data, the effect is arguably overrated, as the participants seem to forget that they are recorded (Blikstad-Balas, 2017). Furthermore, I have primarily studied the *teacher,* so it is not of crucial importance how the students behave. I also argue that I will be able to make valid conclusions about the teachers' approaches to teaching writing regardless of him/her behaving differently than (s)he would without the presence of a camera.

Furthermore, to prevent the loss of important contextual framing, I watched all the lessons preceding the lesson where the opportunity of extended writing was given (Blikstad-Balas, 2017). This provided me with important information that helped me understand the context in which the specific lessons I analyzed were a part of. I have provided descriptions of the specific context to ensure this aspect of my study's validity. In addition, in order to limit the magnification of specific incidents (Blikstad-Balas, 2017), I watched all the lessons in full,

even though the extended writing only occurred in one or two segments. I could thereby assess whether my findings from the specific segments were representative for the rest of the lesson.

### 3.5.3 Ethical considerations

As a researcher, I have several ethical guidelines I am obliged to follow. My research project is a pedagogical study, and thereby falls under the guidelines of the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee's department for Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology (NESH) (Kleven, 2014). Bryman (2016) addresses four chief ethical principles in research, namely that it shall not harm the participants, there shall be no invasion of privacy, the participants shall receive and sign an informed consent form, and the researcher shall present the data as they are.

The students and teachers included in the LISE project have already given their consent to the use of the data for purposes related to research, and their informed consent is thus already ensured. Furthermore, the data material collected are saved in a legal and proper manner and can only be found on selected computers (Dalland, 2011). As part of the LISE project, I have also signed a statement promising to not abuse the data nor leak personal information. Consequently, the anonymity of all the participants will be ensured.

Although my role has been restricted to that of being an independent observer, not having been in contact with the respective participants, there are a number of ethical issues that I've had to consider. The first issue concerns the handling of the data and how I have presented and addressed the teachers and their practice, regardless of my assessment of their practices. This is a matter of respecting them and protecting their integrity (Befring, 2016). The teachers' participation is voluntary, and their participation provides my research with authentic and interesting data.

Secondly, I have had to be aware of my bias as a researcher; existing assumptions and attitudes can potentially result in me obtaining results consistent with what I want and/or expect to find (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). I have analyzed only a limited number of the four teachers' lessons and can only make inferences about the teachers' instruction based on what I have observed in these lessons specifically.

# 4 Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings of this study. I have identified three main patterns in the data material. First, I found that in the seven recorded classrooms, there were very few lessons in which opportunities for extended writing were given. In the classrooms that *did* contain such opportunities, the students engaged in a prewriting phase preparing them for the extended writing task, they wrote within a particular genre or structure, and the teachers focused the students' attention to issues of style and genre (4.1). Second, I found that several discourses of writing co-occurred in each of the classrooms that offered opportunities for extended writing. Still, the genre and process discourses dominated (4.2). Third, I found that the students in these classrooms were provided various scaffolds during the writing process, including models, writing strategies, and feedback (4.3).

## 4.1 Opportunities for extended writing

In this section, I address my first sub-question: *To what extent were opportunities for extended writing given in classrooms in 9th and 10th grade, and what characterized those opportunities?*

A main finding is that opportunities for extended writing in the seven recorded English classrooms were rarely given. Out of 60 filmed lessons, only eight (13%) contained such. These eight lessons were distributed across four of the seven recorded classrooms, which signifies that although few in number, extended writing opportunities nevertheless was a part of English instruction in these classrooms. Table 4A shows how these extended writing opportunities were distributed across the four classrooms, one in 9th grade (S02) and three in 10th grade (S07, S17, S50). The class in S50 was divided into two groups, both groups engaging in the same writing activity.

**Table 4A.** Lessons with extended writing opportunities

| School | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 | Lesson 4 | Lesson 5 | Lesson 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S02 (9th grade) | Formal letter (group 1) | | | | | |
| S07 (10th grade) | | Persuasive essay | Persuasive essay (cont.) | Persuasive essay (cont.) | | |
| S17 (10th grade | | | Personal letter | | Personal letter (cont.) | |
| S50 (10th grade) | | Personal text (group 1) | Personal text (group 2) | | | |

*Note*. Number of recorded lessons vary between classrooms, from six (S02) to five (S17, S50) and four (S07). Orange background indicates extended writing opportunities. Cont. = continued.

In the four classrooms, I identified four subgenres[2], namely the persuasive essay, the formal letter, the personal letter, and the personal text (see Figure 4A). In the following, I present what characterized the writing opportunities in each of the four classrooms.

## 4.1.1 Writing a persuasive essay

The persuasive essay[3] is a genre that requires a claim followed by supporting arguments. In S07, Michael's class, the students had been working on the USA's political system and the election specifically. The students had been given the task of writing a persuasive essay in which they argued for which of the two presidential candidates (Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton) they would vote. No intended audience or purpose other than to argue for their choice was given. The writing task was thereby based on what they had been working on in the preceding lessons. The students were expected to use the knowledge they had attained to write a formal text about their choice. The students were expected to write within this specific genre, and the teacher focused the students' attention to issues of argumentative writing (high end of the PLATO rubric on Text-Based Instruction). The students had been provided a booklet (both online and printed) containing information about the political system and the presidential election in the USA, and other supportive material such as maps, statistics, quotes made by the two presidential candidates, and a glossary with content-specific terminology

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[2] These four subgenres belong to the argumentative, dialogic and reflective genres (e.g. Ørevik, 2019). In the following, however, I choose to refer to the four subgenres as genres.

[3] Michael calls the text "an argumentative text", but I use Ørevik's (2019) description "persuasive essay". What characterizes the argumentative text as expressed by Michael, resembles Ørevik's (2019) description of the persuasive essay.

that they were expected to apply in their own texts. Michael actively participated and provided guidance during the extended writing opportunity.

The writing occurred in three of the recorded lessons, and Michael stated that the students would continue the writing in the following week. In the three lessons, lasting about 70 minutes each, a total of 85 minutes (15+35+35 minutes) were dedicated to extended writing. Hence, the lessons were not exclusively dedicated to the writing of the persuasive text; plenary discussions concerning the election occurred in between the writing sessions.

## 4.1.2 Writing a letter

In two of the four classrooms, the students were asked to compose a letter based upon a literary text. In S02 it was a formal letter, a genre that requires communication on a formal letter, and the purpose is typically to place a request, complaint or application. In S17, on the other hand, it was a personal letter, typically characterized by spontaneous and personal language, and the purpose is to exchange information about everyday topics and maintain personal relationship.

In S02, Anette's class, the students had been reading and working with questions related to the short story "First day of spring" by Howell Hurst, and they had been given the task of composing a formal letter to the local government in which they complained about how a relative, the main character in the short story, had been taken care of by the local community and the welfare system. In their letters, the students were expected to use the short story as inspiration along with specific genre features appropriate for the formal letter genre. Hence, as in S07, the students were expected to write within a specific genre, and Anette focused the students' attention to issues of that specific genre. They were given a model letter that they were encouraged to use as inspiration, and this, along with the specific genre features and other elements to include, were provided along with the task. Of note, the writing activity was a differentiated task given to the students who had finished a former task, and it was thereby only a few students who engaged in this extended writing activity. Anette walked around as the students wrote; she helped the students answer the short questions, and she introduced the extended writing task of the formal letter to the students who had finished the previous tasks. The writing occurred in one lesson, lasting for 35 out of the 60 minutes. In the following lesson, they started reading a new short story, and there was no opportunity to continue writing the formal letter during the remaining video-filmed lessons.

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In S17, Thea's class, the students had been working with the topic of teenage pregnancy, and in the recorded lessons, they read and worked with "Dear Nobody" – a play by Berlie Doherty dealing with the issue of teenage pregnancy and abortion. Thea engaged the students in a variety of activities related to the short story both prior to and in between the writing sessions, including a literary circle, a role play, and a short writing activity. The task involved taking the role as a friend of either Helen or Chris, the young couple expecting a child, and write a personal letter[4] giving one of them support and personal advice concerning whether they should take an abortion or not. The students were expected to use the play as inspiration along with specific genre features appropriate for the personal letter genre. Hence, as in the two other classrooms (S02 and S07), there was an expectation to write within a specific genre, and Thea also focused the students' attention to issues of the specific genre (high end of the PLATO rubric on Text-Based Instruction). The students were given two model letters to use as inspiration, along with a glossary of content-specific terminology that they could apply in their own texts. Thea provided guidance during the writing process.

In this classroom, the extended writing opportunity occurred in two of the five recorded lessons, and 40 minutes (15+25 minutes) of the total 105 (50+55) minutes were dedicated to the writing specifically. Importantly, similar to S07 but in contrast to S02, all the students engaged in the same writing activity.

### 4.1.3 Writing a personal text

Another genre that occurred in one lesson only, was the personal text. This genre typically includes sharing and conveying personal thoughts to an audience, using first person point of view.

In S50, Ragnar's class, the students had been working on how to express oneself using the future tense in English. They were given the task of writing a text about what they thought next year would be like, as they would be graduating from lower secondary school and starting upper secondary school the following school year. The genre for this extended writing opportunity was not made explicit, but the students were expected to write within a specific structure, and they were instructed to write about their personal expectations. Ragnar focused

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[4] Thea calls the text "an informal letter", but I use Ørevik's (2019) description "personal letter". What characterizes the informal letter resembles the description of the personal letter.

their attention to issues of writing, such as dividing the text into paragraphs and varying one's language. The text did not have an intended audience, but Ragnar told some of the students that a native English person should be able to understand the essence of the educational program they presented in their text. The students were provided a glossary of content-specific terminology that they were expected to apply in their texts. Ragnar walked around and guided the students in the process of writing.

Although the writing only occurred in one lesson for each student group, 40 minutes of the total 45 minutes were dedicated to writing. The class was split into two groups, and the same extended writing opportunity was offered in both groups. Hence, these two lessons amount to two of the five recorded lessons from that classroom (see table 4A).

### 4.1.4 Summary

To sum up, the video material reveals that when opportunities for extended writing were given in four of the seven recorded classrooms, the task held a clear purpose and there were clear expectations concerning genre or structure. The teachers extensively prepared their students for the extended writing task to come by engaging the students with relevant information for the writing task at hand. The amount of time dedicated to the prewriting phase and to the writing activity itself varied in the four classrooms.

## 4.2  Discourses of writing

In this section I address my second sub-question: *Which writing discourse(s) were manifested in the lessons containing extended writing, including the writing tasks and the teachers' teaching approaches?* In the four classrooms, I identified four of the six writing discourses developed by Ivanič (2004). These are the skills, the process, the genre, and the social practices discourses. I did not find any evidence of either the creativity or the sociopolitical discourses of writing in the four classrooms that engaged in extended writing opportunities. Hence, the students were neither asked to engage in creative writing in which they wrote on topics of interest, nor writing in which they examined and discussed various issues of power relations.

As mentioned, the process and genre discourses dominated in the four classrooms since central features of these were given particular attention. All the students had engaged in a prewriting phase of generating ideas for their writing, and in three of the four classrooms, the

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students were provided feedback during the writing process and revised their texts accordingly. It was, however, the practical aspects of the writing process that were in focus, with limited emphasis on the mental processes involved in producing text, although the mental processes are key to learning to write within the process discourse. Further, since the students in three of the four classrooms (S02, S07, S17) were expected to express themselves within a specific genre, and the teachers to a large extent drew their students' attention to specific features, this particular discourse was also dominant.

Interestingly, the writing discourses co-occurred. As table 4B shows, at least two of the discourses were combined in all the four classrooms. These will be described in further detail below.

**Table 4B.** The writing discourses present in the lessons containing extended writing.

| School | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 | Lesson 4 | Lesson 5 | Lesson 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S02 (9th grade) **Anette** | Process Genre Social practices | | | | | |
| S07 (10th grade) **Michael** | | Skills Process Genre | Skills Process Genre | Skills Process Genre | | |
| S17 (10th grade) **Thea** | | | Skills Process Genre Social practices | | Skills Process Genre Social practices | |
| S50 (10th grade) **Ragnar** | | Skills Process | Skills Process | | | |

*Note.* Orange background indicates extended writing opportunity.

In the theory chapter, these six discourses of writing were presented in the order of which layer in the multi-layered view of language figure being in focus within the respective discourse (Figure 2). In the following, however, the order in which the discourses are presented mirrors the extent the discourses were evident across the four classrooms.


## 4.2.1 A process discourse of writing

As shown in Table 4B, the process discourse was observed in all the four classrooms, though to varying extent. The students were given a model, be it a writing frame or model text, that assisted the students in the process of composing and structuring their own text. In S07 and S17, the writing process was divided into separate stages, distributed across multiple lessons.

In these two classrooms as well as in S50, the students received feedback on their texts, and they were to revise their texts accordingly. A deliberate planning phase only occurred in S07.

**Different stages in the writing process**

First, in all of the four classrooms, the students engaged in a *prewriting* phase, and this potentially served to help the students generate ideas before writing. This phase included activities and materials such as literary texts, discussions, and role plays. The length and complexity of this phase varied considerably in the four classrooms. In S50, in the lesson preceding the extended writing lesson, they had discussed what their future would look like. In S07, in addition to having worked extensively with the topic in advance, the prewriting phase also involved producing the outline for the persuasive essay.

> **Ragnar:** Last week talked about future/your future/your very near future, what you're planning on doing when it comes to school. The writing task is based upon what we talked about last week.

> **Michael:** Some of you have already made a plan. And then we will make this plan perfect today.

It was, however, only in S07 that the students engaged in a *deliberate* planning phase, the students intentionally engaging in a process of planning the content and structure of their own text. They were provided an outline they could use to plan their texts, this being available in the booklet and on the white board.

Second, in all the four classrooms, the students had time in class to write the *first draft*, and the teachers guided them in the writing process. The students were provided various models (i.e. writing frames and model texts) in the process to help them compose and structure their text. The time dedicated to writing differed in the four classrooms, 35 out of a total of 60 minutes in S02, 85 out of a total of 210 minutes in S07, 40 out of a total of 105 minutes in S17, and 40 out of a total of 45 in S50.

Third, in three of the four classrooms (S07, S17, S50), the provision of *feedback* from both the teacher and peers was a stage planned for in the writing process. The students were given specific criteria to evaluate in their peers' texts. Ragnar And Michael stood out in this regard as they walked around and actively participated in the process, offering feedback along with the peers.

> **Ragnar**: So what did he comment on in your text? (…) Yes, you should have capital letters, of course, when you start sentences. (…) So he commented on your grammar and your choice of words. (…) *Hvordan kunne du ha skrevet dette annerledes*? (…) Universities, *skulle det ha vært. Sånn ved første*

*blikk, det er det samme som [student's name] kommenterte. Liten bokstav i begynnelsen av setninger, det er… Men den kommuniserer, så du får fram tanker om framtiden.*

As the example illustrates, the students were provided feedback from their peers, and the teacher both affirmed and provided further feedback on their texts.

Last, in two of these three classrooms (S07, S17), the students engaged in the process of *revision* based on the feedback they received. In these two classrooms, the students continued writing in future lessons and used the feedback they received to write a second draft that was to be submitted. In S50, however, the students were told to use the feedback in future writing events.

S07 stood out concerning the writing process, which clearly included a sequence of steps, and these steps was distributed across multiple lessons. The students had worked extensively with the topic prior to the writing, they created an outline as a way to plan the content and structure of the text, they had extensive time to write in class with access to the teacher's guidance (15+35+35 minutes across the three lessons in which the extended writing occurred). In addition, they gave and received feedback at *two* stages during the process, and revised their text accordingly.

**The mental processes involved in writing**

Even though the students engaged in the *practical* stages involved in producing texts, including generating ideas for writing, planning, drafting and revising, there was limited evidence of the teachers emphasizing the *mental processes* involved in writing. Within the process discourse of writing, learning to write also includes learning the essence of these.

## 4.2.2 A genre discourse of writing

In three of the four classrooms (S02, S07, S17), the students were expected to express themselves within a particular genre, and they were expected to apply specific genre features in their own texts. To do so and thereby master the appropriacy of the specific genre, the teachers highlighted features typical of the specific genre and provided a model text that the students could use as inspiration when they wrote. According to Ivanič (2004), within the genre discourse of writing, the linguistic features being most appropriate to use are emphasized, for instance specific formulas.

Since Ragnar did not give any attention to the *genre* the students were writing within, for example what characterizes a personal text, his lessons are not included in this discourse.

## Highlighting central genre features

A central characteristic of the teaching of writing within this discourse is teaching specific features associated with the specific genre. This occurred in all the three classrooms. Michael brought all his students' attention to an essential feature of writing a persuasive essay, namely practicing the establishing and articulating of arguments on a general basis, and that these should be based on facts, even though they do not reflect the writers's own opinion. A number of students expressed their frustration about the task because they did not want to vote for any of the candidates. This feature is addressed in the following example during the extended writing of the persuasive essay:

> **Michael**: If I understand the situation correctly, the worst part for you, the hardest challenge, the biggest danger, is becoming too emotional. Because we really don't want any of them [Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton], do we? But sometimes in life we need to make a stand. (...) And as I told [student's name], if I put a gun to his head, and forced him to choose between Jonas Gahr Støre and Erna Solberg, all he wanted to do, he would like to vote for Knut Arild Hareide. That's what he wanted, but he had to make a choice, because for some reason Knut Arild Hareide was no longer a candidate. (...) It's not always easy, because you have your emotions. You have your brain, you're smart people. But try to put your emotions aside. If it's difficult getting along, include some quotes. I mean, look at this one: "One of the key problems today is that politics is a disgrace. Good people don't go into government". I mean, come on, you can discuss that quote for ages.

In addition, another way in which Michael highlighted features of argumentative writing was by asking follow-up questions to individual students to make them elaborate on their statements and provide support for their claims, as in the following example.

> **Michael:** Okay, give me a negative side. Let's take a look at all the negative sides with both candidates
> **Student:** he lies
> **Teacher:** He's lying. About what?
> **Student:** About a lot of things
> **Teacher**: Such as?

Similarly, Thea and Anette focused their students' attention to formulas appropriate in the letter genre. Thea provided instruction on those prior to the writing task, to the whole class, whereas Anette brought attention to them as she introduced the writing task to individual students.

> **Thea**: *Hva er det som kjennetegner et brev?*[5] *Hva er det som gjør at vi kjenner igjen at dette er et brev?*
> *Snakk med naboen. Finn tre ting.* (…) Yes, to and from. *Altså, man skriver hvem som skriver til og hvem*
> *det er fra. Og det kan jo være forskjellige måter å si det på. Hvis det er et uformelt brev kan det være* «To
> my dearest friend», (…) *ikke sant, det er forskjellige måter, men nå er det uformelt brev*. To and from.
> *Andre ting som er kjennetrekk for brev*? (…) Yes, a date. That is very common in a letter. And in this
> letter maybe some personal language, personal language, personal feelings.

Anette focused her students' attention to specific formulas such as "Dear Sir/Madam" and "Yours sincerely" when she introduced the writing task. These were also addressed specifically in the task. She did not emphasize *why* the use of these formulas was appropriate.

Furthermore, Thea highlighted the appropriate language to use in the letter, relating to *style*. Since the letter the students were to write was personal, Thea emphasized that the language in their letter should be personal as well, as shown here:

> **Thea**: In English it is very important to know the difference between written formal language and
> informal language because in some genres, *teksttyper*, if you use like eh unformal language in a letter to
> your boss, that wouldn't be very proper. So (…) in what genres would you use formal language?
> **[Students discuss]**
> **Thea**: *faktatekst, fagtekst, en søknad, og formelt brev, en klage for eksempel, jeg vil klage på bota jeg*
> *fikk.* (…) *Tips til uformelle sjangere, med uformelt språk? Hvilke tekster?*
> **[Students discuss]**
> **Thea**: yes, diary, a letter to a friend, a story, a short story, yeah. (…) In formal language, no
> abbreviations"
> (…)
> **Thea**: So you can see that this is a letter to a friend. There are personal language, not so much slang
> really, but there are abbreviations, as you can see, and you understand that these people are quite close

As the example illustrates, Thea brought attention to specific features of the model text that gave it the appropriate style, namely the use of personal language and abbreviations. Of the four teachers in my study, Thea was the only one who explicitly focused her students' attention to that of adjusting their language to the purpose and audience, this being critical within the genre discourse of writing (Ivanič, 2004).

A text's appropriacy is also concerned with its form and/or structure (Ivanič, 2004), and Michael highlighted how ensuring an appropriate structure in one's persuasive essay is essential in order to strengthen the argumentation, as here:

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[5] Utterances in Norwegian are italicized.

**Michael**: And for me as a reader I think here 'okay good start, I look forward to reading this. But oh, you're moving this direction, interesting. And then suddenly you're over here, and I am confused. (…) If you continue going back and forth, I have no idea, 'what is he or she trying to say? What is your point? Try to stick to the red line here (…). Make sure your introduction and conclusion talk together (…).

In S02, a partial suggestion for an appropriate structure for the letter was provided along with the task. The task read "Include a polite introduction, who you are, your relation to Martha, Martha's situation, and so on".

**Model of the target text**

In three of the four classrooms (S02, S07, S17), the teachers provided their students with a model that resembled the text they were to write. Ivanič (2004) emphasis that this practice is typical within a genre-oriented approach to the teaching of writing. In S02 and S17, this text was a complete letter. In S07, however, the students were provided an *outline* for a persuasive essay, comprising the different parts that were to be included in the students' own texts. Anette and Thea drew their students' attention to specific features of the letters, and prompted them to apply those in their own letters. Hence, in various ways, the teachers prepared their students to write texts that amounted to appropriate examples of the genre they were expected to write within.

## 4.2.3 A skills discourse of writing

I observed the skills discourse in three of the four classrooms (S07, S17, S50). It was most dominant in S50, as the purpose of the writing task was for the students to practice expressing themselves using the future tense in English. According to Ivanič (2004), correctness is a core characteristic of the skills discourse, as illustrated here:

**Ragnar:** Remember what we've learned about the future. There is a reference to a page if you don't remember, but you do remember "going to" and "will": "I will probably get to know a lot of new people", for example.

The students were also asked to comment upon grammar in general in their students' texts. Further, he challenged his students to ensure a clear structure by dividing the text into paragraphs, this being a *technical* skill and a feature of structure that is not dependent on the specific genre. Hence, in this lesson, it was the text's *linguistic* form that was in focus, and it

was the correctness of the words, sentences and text formation that determined the quality of their writing (Ivanič, 2004).

Similarly, elements of the skills discourse were also found in S07 and S17, since both Michael and Thea drew their students' attention to an aspect of structure that was not directly determined by the specific genre. Yet, due to the purpose of the tasks and what the teachers focused on in their instruction, the skills discourse was secondary to the genre and process discourses in these two classrooms. For example, when Michael introduced the peer feedback activity, he pointed to a list of suggestions for what to give feedback on:

> **Michael:** What is good here? How can the paragraphs be improved? (…) You can say, 'You use sentence connectors really well. This makes your text more structured'.

In this example, the focus was not on how the structure was appropriate for the persuasive essay specifically, but he seemed to target the general skill of ensuring a helpful structure in one's text. Also, in addition to practicing using sentence connectors, the students in S17 were asked to provide feedback on verbs specifically. Still, practicing verb features in English was not the purpose of the task at hand.

Hence, in the three classrooms (S07, S17, S50), the skills discourse appeared with varying emphasis, and it occurred in combination with other discourses of writing (i.e. process, genre, social practices).

## 4.2.4 A social practices discourse of writing

As previously emphasized, Ivanič's (2004) social practice discourse is complex, and there are different approaches to the teaching of writing associated with it. I observed this discourse in two of the four classrooms (S02 and S17). The two writing tasks were set within a specific context, simulating one being set in real-life. Further, the students were given a specific role and were writing to an actual recipient, and they were to fulfill a social or functional goal; namely to make a complaint to the local government (S02) and to give personal advice to a friend (S17). The communication involved in the writing was thereby purpose-driven and the students needed to consider contextual factors of the event in which the writing occurred, such as who would be reading text, the situation they were in, and what position they had. However, the writing tasks were still set within the school context, and they (along with their purpose) were thereby not situated in a real-life context. What is more, the students did not

engage in authentic communication, and the tasks did not reflect the writing practices of a particular context. These are crucial aspects of learning to write within this social practice discourse of writing (Ivanič, 2004).

Concerning the teachers' *explicit instruction*, Anette and Thea differed in terms of to what extent they explicitly focused their students' attention to the social context in which they wrote, and how they needed to consider aspects of this context as they wrote. Anette did not bring attention to such contextual aspects, whereas Thea in various ways brought her students' attention to aspects of the challenging situation that Helen and Chris were in. For example, she emphasized that they were teenagers, and that Helen's mother was in favor of them having an abortion, cautioning Chris about seeing Helen unless he would marry her, as illustrated here:

> **Thea:** They [Helen and Chris] are in trouble and need some help. Who can they ask for help? And who are we to… Who can they ask for help? Who should they go to?

This example, along with many similar situations in S17, made it reasonable to infer that the students considered the challenges of Helen and Chris' situation when they wrote their personal letters. She did not explicitly say that they should *consider* these challenging aspects and let them affect their writing, though except in the following example (to an individual student):

> **Student**: *Må jeg skrive formelt eller ikke formelt*?
> **Thea**: *Ikke formelt, fordi du er en venn*

## 4.2.5 The sociopolitical and creativity discourses of writing

In the recorded material, I did not find any evidence of either the sociopolitical or the creativity discourses of writing.

## 4.2.6 Summary

To sum up, the process and genre discourses of writing dominated across the four classrooms. Three of the four teachers had divided the writing process into multiple stages, and all provided a support structure to help the students compose and structure their texts. In three of the four classrooms, the students were expected to write within a specific genre, and the

teachers focused their students' attention to specific genre features. Elements of the skills and social practices discourses were also observable.

# 4.3  The teacher's scaffolding practices

In this section, I address my third sub-question: *To what extent and how were the students scaffolded during the writing process?*

Somewhat surprisingly, in all the four classrooms, there was strong evidence of the teachers providing their students with different scaffolds during the writing events. The students thereby had access to different means of scaffolding that potentially assisted them in fulfilling the task at hand. As mentioned, these scaffolds included model texts, writing frames, writing strategies, and feedback.

I will in the following elaborate on each of the scaffolding practices I observed in each of the four classrooms. Using the PLATO rubrics as analytical lenses, I examined what characterizes the teachers' modeling and use of models, provision of and instruction in writing strategies, and provision of feedback.

## 4.3.1 Modeling and Use of Models

The provision of models and the teachers' modeling of skills, strategies, or processes being targeted in the extended writing opportunities, is the first element of instructional scaffolding (PLATO). In all the four classrooms, the students were offered models intended to be used in the writing process, a model being an exemplar of the text the students were asked to produce. Table 4C shows the two types of models and the teachers' modeling practices I observed in the four classrooms. These are explained in further depth below.

**Table 4C** Lessons with models and modeling of skills targeted in the writing task.

| School | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 | Lesson 4 | Lesson 5 | Lesson 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S02 (9th grade) | Model: letter | | | | | |
| S07 (10th grade) | | Model: writing frame | Model: writing frame<br><br>Modeling: common thread, sentence | Model: writing frame | | |
| S17 (10th grade | | | Model: letter<br><br>Modeling: sentence | | Model: letter | |
| S50 (10th grade) | | Model: writing frame<br><br>Modeling: future tense, sentence | Model: writing frame<br><br>Modeling: future tense, sentence | | | |

*Note*. Yellow background indicates extended writing opportunity**.**

## Writing frame

First, in S07, all the students were provided a model in the form of a writing frame, more specifically an outline for the persuasive essay they were to write. It was included in the booklet that the students had received, and it was also visible on the white board during the whole writing process. Headlines showing the placing of the introduction, paragraphs one to three, and the conclusion were provided, and there were key words for each of the headlines. Michael did not comment upon it during the extended writing opportunity, and he did not highlight central features of it. He might have done so in the lesson preceding the first recorded lesson.

Similarly, the students in S50 were provided a writing frame in the form of a suggestion for an appropriate structure for their personal text, including which upper secondary school they wanted to go to, their expectations, and what they thought would be different from lower secondary school. The personal text as a genre does not require a rigid structure as with the persuasive essay in S07. These guidelines were presented on the white board, along with the task, and were thereby accessible to the students throughout the whole writing process. This model, however, was incomplete (score 2).

## Model text

The second model the students were provided was a model text, more specifically a model

letter resembling the letter they were to write (S02 and S17). In both classrooms, it was a complete model, encompassing all the features of the target text. The students were given access to the letters during the entire writing process (both on the learning platform and as a physical copy). Thea and Anette both referred to the letters during the English instruction, highlighting a few specific features, and prompted their students to use these features in their own texts. The features were on a surface level, including the date, the appropriate greeting, and the style of language. In addition, the teachers made explicit reference to the letters as they guided their students in the extended writing process. In S02, the formulations "use the sample letter" were articulated in the task, and Anette pointed to specific places in the model letter when she introduced the task to the students.

Conversely, in S17, the students were given *two* letters, each representing opposing views on the matter they were to discuss in their own letter; one argued in favor of and the other against Helen and Chris having an abortion. Thea read both letters out loud before the students started composing their own letters, while only commenting on the first one. I observed that at least one of the letters was quite long, consisting of five paragraphs.

## The teachers' modeling and use of the models

Even though the students were provided various models, there was limited evidence of the teacher decomposing features of them and modeling the skill being targeted in the extended writing opportunity, be it how to write formally, how to use sentence connectors, how to build paragraphs, or how to vary one's language. What is more, the modeling observed was largely restricted to individual students. However, in each of the four classrooms, I identified examples of the teachers' use of the models and modeling of the skills being targeted in the task.

In S07, Michael modeled a central skill and process targeted in the lesson, more specifically how to ensure an appropriate structure in one's persuasive essay. He started by drawing an illustration of the text on the white board and wrote the headlines for each of the parts. Although the model he drew resembled the outline the students had been given, he did not make this connection explicit. Here is the modeling sequence in its entirety:

> **Michael**: Your key task in the introduction is to answer the title. If the title is 'Who I would vote for in the election', the first paragraph needs to be about who you would vote for. What about the final paragraph, [student's name]? What would you focus on here? In the conclusion..
> **Student:** It's an answer to the introduction. [Michael draws an arrow from the conclusion to the

introduction].

**Michael**: Absolutely, you make sure you come back to your introduction. Now, what is the danger here in the main part? [He draws a large cross in the middle of the picture resembling the text, using a black marker]. (…) *Hva er den største faren som kan skje i en skriftlig tekst? Hva er det verste du kan finne på?*

**Student**: Talking against yourself

**Michael**: Right, you could do that, you could talk against yourself. Big danger. (…) So try to avoid doing this, talk again yourself. If you say in the first and the fifth paragraph that you would vote for Hillary Clinton, but then the main part is all about why Donald Trump should win, then you're talking against yourself. We don't like that. (…) You need to make sure the introduction and the conclusion say the same things as in the main part. Another risk is getting off track. (…) *Dere ønsker en rød tråd*. [Michael draws a line through the model text he has drawn on the board, using a red marker this time]. *Den begynner her oppe, og så går den ganske rett ned gjennom teksten, en klar sammenheng*. (…) A text looking like this [Michael draws a zigzag line through the text] this looks more like alpine skiing (…). You may still reach your target, but you made all these turns. And for me as a reader I think here 'okay good start, I look forward to reading this. But oh, you're moving this direction, interesting. And then suddenly you're over here, and I am confused. (…) If you continue going back and forth, I have no idea, 'what is he or she trying to say? What is your point? Try to stick to the red line here (…). Make sure your introduction and conclusion talk together (…). Make sure that you return to your conclusion, no I mean to your question here [points to the introduction]. Introduction and conclusion need to communicate, like a happy couple.

As the example illustrates, Michael made his thinking visible and explained why staying on track and thereby ensuring a common thread in one's text is so important, including *how to do so*. His modeling was available to the whole class. These aspects characterize the high end (scrore 3-4) in the PLATO rubric.

Further, Anette and Thea to a large extent used the model letters to provide instruction when they introduced the writing task to their students. They brought their students' attention to a few specific features of the model letters, as the following examples illustrate:

**Anette:** Use the sample letter. [She turns the page]. You can see here how you .. This I think this is your own address, this is to the local government, the date, and you use Dear/Sir Madam, and in the end Yours faithfully"

**Thea**: So you can see that this is a letter to a friend. There are personal language, not so much slang really, but there are abbreviations, as you can see, and you understand that these people are quite close

Finally, Michael, Thea, and Ragnar were modeling to the students how they could start some of the key sentences in their texts, as in the following example:

> **Thea:** After looking into these alternatives that they have: "Dear Helen" or "Dear Chris", "I think you should … keep the baby, give it up for adoption, have an abortion, because …". And give your reason. (…) An advice can also be "It's your choice, I can't give you an advice"

Ragnar was also several times modeling the skills being targeted in the lesson, including how to use the future tense, how to translate specific words into English, and how to vary one's language. The modeling in the first of the two following examples was provided to the whole class, while the second one was offered to an individual student:

> **Ragnar**: Remember what we've learned about the future. (…) You do remember "going to" and "will". "I will probably get to know a lot of people" (my italics)

> **Ragnar:** I hope to be admitted to… (…) *Kanskje du kan skrive noe sånn "If my dreams come true», sånn at du varierer litt*

Hence, all the students across the four classrooms were provided models that they could use in the writing process.

## 4.3.2 Strategy Use and Instruction

The provision of and instruction about writing strategies is the second element of instructional scaffolding (PLATO). All the four teachers provided their students writing strategies, and those included spontaneous writing to get into the zone of writing, generate ideas for writing, and terminology (see Table 4D).

An important finding is that none of the four teachers provided explicit instruction in *how* and *when* to use the strategies they provided, but simply either referred to a strategy or prompted the students to use it (low end of PLATO rubric on Strategy use and Instruction). The writing strategies were mostly part of the teacher's guidance of individual students.

**Table 4D.** Lessons with writing strategies

| School | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 | Lesson 4 | Lesson 5 | Lesson 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S02 (9th grade) | Terminology | | | | | |
| S07 (10th grade) | | Spontaneous writing | Spontaneous writing<br><br>Generate ideas for writing | Spontaneous writing<br><br>Generate ideas for writing | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **S17 (10th grade)** | | | Terminology | | Generate ideas for writing | |
| **S50 (10th grade)** | | Terminology | Terminology | | | |

*Note*. Yellow background indicates extended writing opportunities.

First, terminology occurred as a writing strategy across three of the four classrooms, including the use of a dictionary to look up difficult words and find new words to use in their text (S02, S17, S50), and using other words to explain a term or concept that could not be directly translated into English (S50). These are both flexible strategies that the students could use in the current as well as in future writing events. The latter is illustrated in the following example:

> **Ragnar**: When you write...there will probably be some words that are difficult to translate into English. For example: studiespesialisering, I don't know if there is a word for that in English, because the the school systems are different. So you'll have to try explain....instead of writing ehhhm studiespesialisering, then you will have to describe that you need to go there in order to study later at University level or college. So, maybe some of the words will be difficult to translate, so try to avoid using Norwegian words

Second, Michael and Thea prompted their students to use the material provided in the English lesson to generate ideas for writing. As addressed above, the students in S07 had been given a booklet with extensive information about the political system in the USA, and Michael repeatedly, both in plenary and to individual students, prompted the students to use this booklet as inspiration when writing:

> **Michael**: If you find it difficult to get started or move on, include some quotes: "I support Hillary Clinton because of her views on guns. According to blahblahblah, she has said that she will shut down the NRA, because of this and this.." (…) So you can use quotes if that helps you get into the zone.

In this example, Michael emphasized why the students should use this writing strategy, and how they could use it in their writing. The way he explained that they could include quotes if they found it difficult to write, demonstrates that this is a strategy that the students can employ in future writing tasks when they find it difficult to get started on the respective writing task.

Third, spontaneous writing occurred as a dominant writing strategy in S07. This amounts to a writing strategy because it functions as a way for the students to get into the writing process, allowing them to write down their immediate thoughts without worrying about the structure

or construction of well-formulated sentences. Many of the students expressed that they struggled to move forward in their writing, not knowing who to vote for in the US election, how to articulate their arguments, and how to structure their text. Similar examples as the following one occurred throughout the recorded lessons in which the extended writing occurred:

> **Michael:** Okay, so even though this is suggested to be written here, start with that up here, and then you can change the order later if you want to. Start with what comes to your mind.

## 4.3.3 Feedback

Feedback is the third element of instructional scaffolding. Feedback on the students' work related to the extended writing task was provided in three of the four classrooms, both given by peers and by the teachers. In addition, the teachers provided their students a list of criteria to assess and comment upon in their peers' texts. As the writing skill at the heart of the tasks differed in the different writing tasks, the focus of the feedback differed accordingly. Skills being targeted in the four classrooms included correct use of verbs, specific vocabulary, genre features, structure, and argumentation.

Table 4E shows the patterns of scaffolding practices that I observed in the four classrooms, and these will be presented and further elaborated upon below.

**Table 4E.** Lessons with feedback on the texts during extended writing

| School | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 | Lesson 4 | Lesson 5 | Lesson 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S02 (9th grade) | | | | | | |
| S07 (10th grade) | | Teacher's and peers' feedback | Teacher's feedback | Teacher's feedback | | |
| S17 (10th grade | | | Teacher's feedback. | | Teacher's and peers' feedback | |
| S50 (10th grade) | | Teacher's and peers' feedback | Teacher's and peers' feedback | | | |

*Note*. Yellow background indicates extended writing opportunities.

**The teacher's feedback**

All the four teachers guided their students in the writing process, but Anette's guidance was mostly dedicated to introducing the extended writing task and helping the other students answer the short questions, and is thus not considered a feedback practice. Michael's, Thea's,

and Ragnar's feedback, on the other hand, targeted the students' ideas and written work, although the extent to which their feedback was specific and suggestions for improvement targeted the skill at the core of the task, varied considerably.

Michael to a large extent provided feedback on the students' *ideas and thinking*, as realized in their argumentation, rather than on their written text. His feedback was largely concerned with the students' ideas concerning whom to vote for and how they articulated their reasons behind their opinion, this being one of the underlying skills at the heart of the task at hand. However, his feedback was generally considered vague, the reason being that the suggestions he provided generally were procedural, for example to find more information about the candidates in the booklet. There were, however, evidence of his feedback on the students' understanding and performance being more specific and suggestions more substantive, as in the following example:

> **Student**: *Kunne man skrevet sånn, den man IKKE ville stemt på for eksempel?*
> **Michael**: Well, that could be some of your arguments, yes. Showing why the other candidate isn't suitable, but I mean, the key point is to write who you would vote for

As the example illustrates, Michael confirmed the student's idea about how to argue, and provided a suggestion that targeted the underlying skill in the task, namely to present arguments for why one *would* vote for either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton.

Conversely, Ragnar, provided feedback on specific features of the students' *written texts*, including the language, structure, and content. His feedback was to a large extent based upon the feedback that the students had already provided on each other's texts. Hence, his feedback functioned as both an affirmation of *and* an elaboration on the students' feedback on their peers' performance, as in this example:

> **Ragnar:** A bit short, yes. So maybe give a few more examples? This is a bit like a list; you're listing up things. (…) *Kanskje bruke litt mer tid på hver enkelt, og gi litt flere eksempler, for eksempel? For eksempel hvorfor blir det mindre fritid?*

In this incident, Ragnar provided feedback on specific features of the students' work, in addition to a suggestion for how to improve the text.

Whereas there was evidence of Michael and Ragnar providing specific feedback and substantive suggestions for how the students could improve their writing, Thea's feedback was largely vague and the suggestions (when provided) were mostly procedural, proposing

how the students could move forward in the writing. As she guided her students, her feedback mostly concerned whether the students had remembered to include the date and to use the model letters in their own texts.

**Peer feedback**

In the same three classrooms (S07, S17, S50), the students were asked to provide feedback on each other's texts. To do so, the students were provided a list of criteria to assess in their peers' texts, those targeting the skill at the heart of the writing task. Hence, the students were asked to provide *specific* feedback, this being a central feature of quality feedback according to the PLATO rubric. The criteria were written on the white board in all three classrooms, and introduced as follows:

> **Ragnar**: *Innhold – er teksten i tråd med oppgaven? Formidler den? Språket – altså grammatikk, rettskriving, også det om du er flink til å variere språket. Struktur – hvordan teksten er bygget opp. Har den innledning, hoveddel og avslutning? Og avsnitt. Så hvis teksten er en sammenhengende smørje med tekst, så er det nok lurt å dele den opp i avsnitt, ja. Her er noen knagger å henge tilbakemeldingene på*

Having been given these criteria to assess, the following example illustrates how the students provided feedback on these in their peers' texts, and how a student explained to the teacher the feedback he had received from a peer.

> **Student:** He said that I struggle with my i-s, small i-s instead of capital. And the text was probably, it was not so good structure
> **Ragnar:** Okay, so maybe you should add some paragraphs? What about the content? Maybe it could be a bit longer?

Regarding peer feedback, the PLATO rubric emphasizes that one should not assume that students receive feedback from their peers even though they are instructed to do so. Ragnar stood out in this regard as he walked around and asked the students about the feedback they received from their peers and he used that as the basis for his own feedback, as is shown in the example above. Michael and Thea, however, did not ask about the content of the feedback given from peers.

## 4.3.4 Summary

Across the four classrooms, there was evidence of the teachers providing their students with different scaffolds during the extended writing opportunity that potentially helped the students in completing the writing task at hand. These scaffolds included models and modeling,

writing strategies, and feedback. Nevertheless, there was limited evidence of the four teachers decomposing features of these scaffolds beyond the surface level, and they only infrequently modeled and provided instruction in the skills and strategies being targeted in the writing task. The extent to which the feedback provided targeted the students' writing varied across the three classrooms in which feedback was given.

# 5   Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss my findings in view of theory and prior research. First,
I discuss the seemingly uncontested notion that extended writing opportunities are critical for
students' development as writers (5.1). Second, I discuss the finding that multiple discourses
of writing co-occurred in the same writing event, complementing each other, but that central
aspects of them were given limited attention (5.2). Third, I discuss the importance of
scaffolding students' writing, based on the finding that although the students were
provided multiple scaffolds during the writing process, the teachers seldom decomposed
specific features of the scaffolds available and seldom modeled the skills,
strategies or processes being targeted in the writing task (5.3). I end the chapter by addressing
three didactical implications of my MA study (5.4).

## 5.1   Does the opportunity for extended writing matter?

Although there was limited evidence of extended writing opportunities in the recorded video
material, my MA study shows that when the students *were* provided sustained opportunities to
write authentic texts for an extended amount of time (i.e. seven minutes or more), these
opportunities were of high quality. There were indeed powerful examples of multiple
practices identified as effective writing instruction. Across the four classrooms, the teachers
engaged their students in a purposeful writing task that was clearly framed within a particular
genre or structure, and the four teachers explicitly focused their students' attention to
particular issues of writing (Graham et.al., 2016). In addition, the students had access to the
teacher during the whole writing process, they cooperated and discussed their writing with
their peers, and they were given various means of support at different stages in the writing
process, including a booklet and a literary text they could use as inspiration, a glossary of
content-specific terminology, model texts, writing frames, and feedback. Hence, the students
in the four classrooms wrote within a supportive environment, this being a critical factor for
students to develop as writers (Graham et.al., 2016).

It is tempting to question why there were not more extended writing opportunities present in
the recorded video material since it only requires seven minutes or more of consecutive
writing to be characterized as extended writing. It should be possible to prioritize this amount

of time for students to engage in purposeful writing in class, especially considering the fact that this is crucial for the development of students' writing competence (Cumming, 2016; Graham et.al., 2016). In the national subject curriculum in Norway, "planning, formulating and working with texts" is articulated as stages the students are to engage in in order to develop their writing competence, and this implies that students need to be engaged in writing over time (UDIR, 2013).

Undoubtedly, it is not simply a matter of increasing the *time* dedicating to writing; the *quality* of the writing task and the opportunity as a whole is of considerable importane. Writing researchers (Cumming, 2016; Graham et.al., 2016) emphasize the importance of engaging students in writing events with a clear purpose and within a particular genre or structure, and that the purposes for which the students write vary. First then the can the writing activity serve the function of helping the students improve as writers rather than simply learning content, although the latter is also a function that writing holds (Kringstad & Kvithyld, 2013). In addition, a characteristic of writing events of high quality is that students are engaged in various prewriting activities that help them collect, organize, and reflect upon content to include in their texts (Graham et.al., 2016). Such activities occurred in all the four vide-recorded classrooms in my study.

Is it, then, extended opportunities alone that should be prioritized in the classroom? Certainly not. Shorter writing activities indeed have an educational value. First, such activities can be used to practice particular subskills, such as sentence combination and the passive voice. Indeed, writing is a complex skill consisting of multiple subskills, and for students to master such subskills, they might benefit from practicing those separately before they are to be integrated and coordinated in a more complex text (Tabak & Kyza, 2018). Second, shorter writing activities can be, and often are, used as a starting point for more extended writing tasks (Blikstad-Balas et.al., 2018). As the students in Thea's and Anette's classrooms had already engaged in short writing activities prior to the extended writing task, I argue that they were well prepared to write the extended text since they had already used writing as a tool to reflect upon the given topic, be it through answering questions to the short story (S02) or writing down the perspectives of four characters in the play (S17).

However, it is not sufficient to engage students in multiple short events and then expect them to master the increasingly complex texts they are expected to write both in and outside of school. Students indeed need to be trained to *integrate* the various subskills of writing, into a

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full writing performance (Tebak & Cyza, 2018). Even though the students master specific subskills, such as orthography or giving reasons for their statements, they do not necessarily have the competence to transfer this knowledge and integrate those subskills when performing an extended writing task. As research shows, even though students in Norway generally have high proficiency in English and might write short texts of with satisfactory result, they do not necessarily master that of writing complex texts with formal language and a clear and appropriate structure (Bonnet, 2004; Horverak, 2015; Lehmann, 1999).

Interestingly, in the two classrooms where the writing process was distributed across multiple lessons (S07 and S17), only a limited time of the total time dedicated to the specific topic was dedicated to writing. The remaining time was allocated to other activities related to the given topic. In contrast, in the two classrooms where the writing only occurred in one lesson (S02 and S50), most of the lesson was dedicated to writing. Hence, even though the process in which those students wrote was not as extended as in the former two classrooms, the quality was arguably not less. Even though it can be beneficial for students to be engaged in a variety of task-related activities *in between* writing sessions, since those can contribute to stimulate the students' thinking and generate further ideas for their writing, it might be just as beneficial for them, if not more, to be given extended time to write in *one sitting* – that the sections consisting of seven minutes or more occur *consecutively.* Then the students will have more time to engage with the task in depth, drawing upon the ideas generated during the activities they engaged in *prior* to the writing.

Hence, although shorter writing activities are valuable in the classroom, students do need to be provided opportunities for extended writing in order to develop as writers. Regardless of the exact time dedicated to extended writing and how this time is distributed across lessons, the content of the writing activity is also of great importance – e.g. what the students write and what aspects of writing they are taught in the process.

## 5.2 Discourses of writing – *which, what,* and *how many*?

In the following, I discuss the occurrence of specific discourses of writing and the absence of others. I discuss which elements of the particular discourse that were prioritized, and the

possible consequence of that, along with to what extent one should combine multiple discourses of writing within the same writing event.

## 5.2.1 Which discourses, and what elements, were prioritized?

A main finding is that across the four classrooms, four of Ivanič's (2004) six discourses of writing were present, either in the writing task or in the teacher's instruction in general. Across the four classrooms, although to varying extent, the teachers brought their students' attention to genre, grammar, and the social context in which the writing occurred, and the students' writing was divided into multiple stages. It is indeed a promising finding that various approaches to the teaching of writing occurred in these classrooms; this arguably signaled that these teachers held a multifaceted view on the nature of writing and what learning to write entails.

My study provides insight into how the four teachers focused on the whole writing process, dividing the writing process into multiple phases and providing their students with scaffolds during the writing process that helped them compose and structure their own texts. This finding aligned with what researchers have found in their studies on writing in Norwegian lessons (Blikstad-Balas, 2018; Hertzberg & Dysthe, 2012). It was promising to see how well the students in the four classrooms were prepared for the writing task to come, and how the students in two of the four classrooms engaged in a revision phase (S07 and S17). The students in Burner's study (2016) reported that they were seldom offered the opportunity to act upon the feedback given. Still, in the recorded material, there was limited emphasis on what each of these writing phases entail and how engaging in each of them contribute to improve the quality of the final text (Ivanič, 2004). Within the process discourse of writing, learning these mental processes involved is also part of learning to write.

Regarding the planning phase, students will not only benefit from engaging in activities generating ideas for writing, but also activities in which they intentionally need to *reflect* upon the content and structure of their text. Michael's students engaged in this phase by making an outline for their text. Although this is an important stage in the writing process, focusing too much on a deliberate planning phase can also hinder creativity and fluency, and teachers need to recognize how students' ideas develop even during the writing process (Torrance, 2016). Still, the ability to write complex texts is required both in and outside the classroom, and the students therefore depend upon their teachers to teach them *why* and *how*

to plan their writing (Bazerman, 2016). To consider the intended purpose and audience, and other contextual factors, is critical in this writing phase. Similarly, for the revision phase to be effective, the students need to learn to consider the intended purpose and audience of their text, and let those factors affect how they revise their texts (MacArthur, 2016; Santangelo et.al., 2016; UDIR, 2013). These are critical skills that proficient writers master (Bazerman, 2016).

The genre discourse of writing also dominated across the four classrooms, and this finding aligned with what Blikstad-Balas (2018) found in Norwegian lessons. Emphasizing particular genres and their features in one's teaching is indeed valuable, as mastering the expectations of particular genres is an essential part of being a skillful writer (Bazerman, 2016; Skulstad, 1999). What is more, in the context of supporting students' L2 writing development, Cumming (2016) suggests that teaching genres is a beneficial approach, as these provide clear frames to write within. Still, more than simply focusing on which linguistic features are associated with different genres, I argue that students will benefit from learning about *how* using these features ensures appropriacy and therefore contributes to achieve the intended purpose. Understanding how the purpose for one's writing affects the language, structure, and content of texts is critical for the students to become independent and skillful writers (Skulstad, 1999). In this study, Anette and Thea both focused on specific linguistic features appropriate for the formal and personal letter genres respectively, although they to a limited extent focused their students' attention to the purpose and effect of using the linguistic features.

Furthermore, elements of the skills discourse occurred in three of the four classrooms (S07, S17, S50), including structure and grammar. Within the renewed core curriculum in Norway, a greater emphasis is put on English as a *language subject*. The goal is that students are to understand and *be understood* (UDIR, 2019). Consequently, embracing this particular discourse in one's teaching of writing is critical in order to help students reach the goal, specifically to master features of written language, including grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This is especially important considering the results of multiple studies showing how Norwegian students' writing competency is not as well developed as their oral competency. What is more, since students, both in and outside school, are expected to master and employ formal language in writing, they might benefit from being taught various aspects of formal language that are largely independent of the genre within which the students write.

Furthermore, in line with findings from Blikstad-Balas' (2018) study on the occurrences of the six discourses of writing developed by Ivanič (2004) in Norwegian lessons, I could not find any evidence of the sociopolitical discourse of writing, and central elements of the social practices discourse were not observable. I argue that both of these discourses of writing represent aspects of writing that students will benefit from exposure to. First, as regard the former, one of the three cross-curricular topics within the renewed core curriculum is democracy and citizenship (UDIR, 2018). An essential element within this particular topic includes teaching students about the link between their individual rights and duties; students are to learn to use their rights to participate in the political sphere of society. What is more, students' ability to *think critically* is to be nurtured (UDIR, 2018). Hence, English teachers can develop these skills in their students in various ways, for example by having them write texts in which they challenge politicians' use of rhetoric as a tool of power, along with the consequences of this.

Regarding the social practices discourse of writing, this involves engaging students in writing activities resembling writing practices of various contexts outside the classroom and requiring students' use of authentic communication to fulfill social or functional goals (Ivanič, 2004). By participating in those activities, the students are better prepared for the various writing practices that await them outside the classroom; being prepared to consider and adjust their writing to the social context in which they write. As emphasized in the description of the English subject in the renewed core curriculum, an aim is to prepare students for education and working life that demand competence in the English language (UDIR, 2019).

However, these two discourses of writing represent a challenging and demanding view on writing and learning to write, and perhaps it is better to postpone those to an upper secondary school level, and thereby focus on more fundamental aspects of writing in lower secondary school levels. A possible explanation for the lack of evidence of these two discourses in the secondary classrooms I have observed, is the nature of the school context. The social context in which the students and teacher participate is the same: the teacher is the audience and the actual purpose of the writing will ultimately be the teacher's assessment (Blikstad-Balas, 2018). Still, through the examples of Anette and Thea – engaging their students in purposeful writing directed to an actual audience, my study illustrates how aspect of the social practices discourse can be integrated into one's teaching on a level that is within the students' capacity.

## 5.2.2 How many discourses should be combined in the same writing event?

Another interesting finding of this study is that two or more of Ivanič's (2004) discourses of writing co-occurred within the same writing event. This finding is in line with what Blikstad-Balas (2018) found in Norwegian lessons. Importantly, although these discourses represent different views on writing, the discourses do not exclude one another (Ivanič, 2004).

Indeed, it can be beneficial to apply an approach to the teaching of writing within the same writing event in which one makes use of central elements of various discourses of writing. In other words, the different discourses can complement each other, potentially ensuring a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of what learning to write entails (Ivanič, 2004). As mastering orthography and spelling in English are two central aspects of writing competency in English (UDIR, 2013), and mastering different genres is important in order to be able to participate in a text-oriented society (Skulstad, 1999), these can be combined. What is more, dividing the writing process into multiple phases, letting the students both plan and discuss the writing as it occurs, can be beneficial for the students' learning and improve the quality of the final product (Graham et.al., 2016; Ivanič, 2004). I argue, in line with Ivanič (2004), that embracing a view of writing that holds that the text, the cognitive processes, the writing event, and the sociocultural and/or sociopolitical context are interrelated, and that learning to write involves all four layers, is indeed valuable.

Nevertheless, the question is whether one should combine multiple discourses in the same writing event, and if so, how many? Combining too many of the discourses can result in the neglect of critical aspects of the specific discourses, as discussed above. I argue that there is not necessarily a contradiction between holding this multifaceted view on the nature of writing and still choosing to focus on specific aspects of writing in a specific task, be it particular grammatical constructions or how to adjust one's writing to the social context in which the writing occurs. In fact, perhaps it is better to focus extensively on specific discourses of writing, drawing the students' attention to significant features of each of them individually, than combining multiple in the same writing event. Keeping the renewed core curriculum in mind (UDIR, 2018), a main value is to facilitate for students' in depth learning, the intention being that students will develop an understanding of central elements within a particular subject, and learn to use professional knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar settings (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). Hence, the argument follows

that students might benefit from studying particular discourses in depth, one by one, so that they can master the essential elements of each of them, and then combine these in future writing events. For example, in my data material, I argue that the students in Michael's class could have benefitted from practicing that of employing formal language in their formal texts.

The premise is that the different discourses are portrayed as representing various aspects of writing that are all important (Ivanič, 2004). Clearly, portraying writing simply as a matter of mastering grammar and structure is too narrow, and fails to portray writing as a multifaceted activity. Similarly, restricting learning to write to that of mastering linguistic features of specific genres is also too narrow. Indeed, disregarding any of the discourses results in a weakened view on writing.

Hence, writing is a multifaceted activity consisting of multiple subskills, and there are a number of possible approaches to the teaching of writing. Regardless of the approach applied, writing is a challenging and demanding skill to learn and master, and for students to develop as writers, they need to be scaffolded in the process.

## 5.3  Does the provision of scaffolds equal scaffolding?

I was positively surprised to see the extent to which the four teachers in my material had designed an environment that facilitated learning, as they all in various ways scaffolded their students both prior to and during the writing process. Adapting one's teaching to meet the needs of individual students is a key characteristic of effective teachers, and all available research emphasizes the significance of scaffolding in the different phases of the writing process (Graham et.al., 2016; Hertzberg & Dysthe, 2012). Teachers can employ a variety of strategies to target their students' ZPD, and in that way help the student to fulfill the task in a more satisfactory way than he or she could unaided (Brevik, 2019b; Tabak & Kyza, 2018). Hence, there was evidence of four teachers providing various scaffolds in the classroom when the students engaged in extended writing.

A repeated aspect of scaffolding that I identified in these classrooms was the model text and the writing frame. I previously addressed this particular scaffold when I presented the genre discourse of writing as developed by Ivanič (2004), but in the following I focus on the scaffolding aspect of it rather than on the features being typical of a specific genre. The

provision of model texts is a common practice in Norwegian classrooms in general (Horverak, 2016; Håland, 2018; Larsen et.al., 2018). These model text amounts to a tangible outcome, and it contributes to ensure a shared understanding between the teacher and the student of what a successful performance of the target task might look like (Belland, 2017; Cumming, 2016). This is a critical principle of scaffolding of writing.

Nevertheless, there is a potential pitfall by providing this particular type of scaffold, especially in the form of a model encompassing *all* the features of the target text, as in Thea's and Anette's classroom. It is important to be aware that students might easily regard the model text as the correct solution to the task at hand and use it uncritically when writing their own texts (Paltridge, 2012). This is relevant for my material since Thea did not decompose features of the model letter apart from the use of abbreviations and personal language, which might result in the students not knowing how they should use the model text as a resource rather than as a solution. This is especially relevant in her classroom since the two model letters represented different perspectives on whether Chris and Helen should keep the baby or not, a choice that the students were asked to make. Nonetheless, she did emphasize that the students were to use the letter as an *inspiration*, and not to copy the content of it.

Certainly, model texts do not provide sufficient support alone. Håland (2018) and Øgreid (2016) emphasize the importance of engaging students in a dialogue in which the model text is decomposed, and specific features are highlighted, both on a global and local text level. This way, the students are guided into an understanding and potentially attain greater competence of what characterizes a satisfactory result of the writing task at hand (Tabak & Kyza, 2018). The student can then critically use the model text as a resource, and potentially perform the writing task, and similar task in the future, independently. The teacher's support can then be faded (Belland, 2017).

Furthermore, regarding the provision of writing strategies, I only identified a few across the four classrooms. The provision of this particular scaffold is identified as one of the main practices of effective writing instruction, proven to have a considerable effect on students' writing and their development as writers (Drew, 2019; Graham et.al., 2016; MacArthur, 2016). Importantly, in order for strategies to have an effect on students' writing and development as writers, students depend on their teachers explaining and modeling the writing strategies, along with providing guided practice (Graham et.al., 2016). Only then can the student internalize the essence of the strategy and use it independently in both in the

current and in future writing events. Hence, the *provision* of writing strategies is not sufficient in order to enable the student to make use of strategies. The students need to be guided into an understanding of how and when to use them. For example, given the complex nature of the persuasive essay, I argue that the students in Michael's class would have benefitted from being provided and receiving instruction on writing strategies that could help them structure their texts both on a global and a local text level.

My MA study also provides valuable insight into how feedback was a common practice employed by three of the four teachers in order to scaffold their students in the writing process, there being strong evidence of this scaffolding practice in Norwegian lessons as well (Blikstad-Balas et.al., 2018). It is indeed promising to see how the teachers across the four classrooms prioritized to walk around and made their guidance accessible to their students. Feedback is a highly effective way in which teachers can target their students' ZPD and thereby facilitate for their students' development as writers (Burner, 2016; Graham et.al., 2016, Horverak, 2019; Igland, 2009). The students can receive guidance on difficult parts of the task as they occur and make changes *as* the text is being produced, and the suggestions for improvement are based on the student's current understanding and performance of the writing task.

Still, the quality of the feedback is of crucial importance regarding how it contributes to improve the students' writing. Although there was evidence of Michael, Thea and Ragnar providing feedback on their students' written work and ideas in the observed English lessons, there was generally limited evidence of specific feedback targeting the students' mastery of the writing skill being targeted in the task. Ragnar was an exception here as his feedback to a large extent was specific and his suggestions for improvement concerned what the students needed to do differently in order to produce English texts of higher quality. Hence, in order to improve as writers, students depend upon *specific* feedback and *substantial* suggestions for improvement. That the potential of the feedback was not fully utilized by the lower secondary English teachers in this study, is in line with what Horverak (2019) found in her own study on teachers' assessment practices in the English upper secondary classroom.

Still, a promising finding in my study is that three of the four teachers engaged their students in peer feedback, and that they provided specific criteria that the students were to assess in each other's texts. Peer feedback is an advantageous practice whose positive effects on students' writing generally have been reported in research (Graham et.al., 2016), and Burner

(2019) emphasizes that students should be involved in various assessment practices. Nevertheless, students depend on being trained in that of giving feedback on peers' texts based on evaluation criteria in order for it to have a good effect on their written product (Graham et.al., 2016; MacArthur, 2016). If not, students might not know how to help each other, or at worst, they provide incorrect suggestions for improvement (MacArthur, 2016). I commend Michael and Ragnar for how they modeled ways in which the students could provide feedback on each other's texts.

Based on findings of this study, I find it purposeful to address and further discuss the lack of the teachers' explicit instruction in and modeling of central features of the writing skill being targeted in the writing task, be it how to structure a paragraph, how to use connectives in a correct and helpful way, or how to write formally. Although direct instruction does not equal scaffolding, I argue that it is critical in order to ensure that students acquire the specific skill. Qualitative studies on writing instruction report that explicit instruction in basic writing skills combined with the teacher's modeling and guided practice generally improve the quality of students' writing (Graham et.al., 2016). In light of scaffolding, the latter two are crucial.

Given that research shows that students in Norwegian schools struggle to master formal aspects of writing, such as formal language, creating a helpful structure, and ensuring coherence in general, and in English specifically, I argue that those should be explicitly taught and modeled (Horverak, 2015; Håland, 2018; Lund, 2014). Horverak (2015) report that explicit, rather than implicit, grammar instruction generally appears to be more efficient for developing students' writing skills, particularly in contexts where English is the L2.

## 5.4 Didactical implications

Based on what I have discussed above, there are three didactical implications that I find purposeful to address.

First, engaging in extended opportunities of writing prove to be critical for students to develop as writers, and a main implication of this study is therefore that students should be given frequent sustained opportunities to write in class. Importantly, it is not simply a matter of increasing the time of the writing. The task should hold a clear purpose and there should be clear expectations for the writing. To ensure the quality of the writing opportunity, teachers can engage their students in a variety of activities prior to the writing event, divide the writing

process into multiple stages and focus on how working intentionally with each of the stages improves the quality of the final text, and intentionally plan for the provision of feedback on their students' texts. These factors contribute to ensure a supportive environment, which is critical for students to develop as writers.

Second, I hold that teachers should indeed hold a multifaceted view on what writing and learning to write entail, and teach their students the various aspects of writing, including grammar, genres, processes involved in writing, and how the social and sociopolitical context might shape their writing. Engaging in creative writing is also valuable. Nevertheless, I argue that in order to ensure students' in-depth learning, this being a major area of focus in the renewed core curriculum, students might benefit from engaging with a limited amount of discourses within the same writing event. Then they can learn the essence of each discourse, and eventually learn to combine them in more complex writing tasks.

Third, I emphasize the value of providing students with various scaffolds at different stages in the writing process, as those potentially contribute to assist the students in completing the writing task in a satisfactory way. Nonetheless, I uphold that for students to internalize the essence of these scaffolds and complete similar tasks independently in the future, they depend on their teacher's additional support in the form of modeling of the writing skills targeted in the task, and provision of opportunities for guided practice. Only then the students' potential for learning and developing as writers of English can be maximized.

# 6   Conclusion

In this final chapter, I summarize the main findings of my study along with their contributions (6.1). In addition, I give suggestions for further research (6.2), before some concluding remarks (6.3).

This MA thesis is based on a video study of extended writing opportunities in English lessons in lower secondary schools in Norway. Using secondary data collected by the LISE project team and analyzing those using a directed content analysis, I examined what characterized extended writing opportunities given in English lessons in four lower secondary classrooms. The overarching research question was: *What characterized four English teachers' approaches to teaching writing when the students were given opportunities for extended writing?* In order to examine and answer this question, I used the following three sub-questions:

> Q1: *To what extent were opportunities for extended writing given in English lessons in 9th and 10th grade, and what characterized those opportunities?*
>
> Q2: *Which writing discourse(s) were manifested in the lessons containing extended writing, including the writing tasks and the teachers' instruction in general?*
>
> Q3: *To what extent and how were the students scaffolded during the writing process?*

## 6.1   The main findings and their contributions

In answering my first sub-question, I have demonstrated to what extent the students in the recorded material were given opportunities for extended writing, and what characterized those opportunities. A number of Norwegian researchers (Blikstad-Balas et.al., 2018; Rindal & Brevik, 2019) have called for a further investigation of various aspects of this matter, including the time spent on writing, what tasks the students write, and how the teachers scaffold their students in the process. My findings show that when the students were given sustained opportunities to write, these opportunities were purpose-driven, genre-focused, and process-oriented. What is more, the teachers drew their students' attention to various issues of writing. I also found that across the four classrooms, the students had worked with the given topic prior to the writing activity, and they had in various ways been prepared for the writing task to come, through plenary discussions and role plays to name a few pre-writing activities.

The time dedicated to writing varied within the four classrooms. An interesting finding is that in the classrooms where the writing was distributed across multiple lessons, only a limited time of each lesson was allocated to writing, whereas in the classrooms where the writing only occurred in one lesson, the majority of the lesson was dedicated to writing. Hence, this MA study contributes with insight into what characterized extended writing opportunities in four classrooms, including how the students were prepared for the extended writing, what type of writing they engaged in, and how the time was spent.

In answering my second sub-question, I identified which of Roz Ivanič's (2004) discourses of writing that were present in the teacher's approach to teaching writing. These discourses all represent different views on the nature of writing, and how it is to be learned, taught, and assessed. In my findings, multiple writing discourses co-occurred in the same writing event, the genre and process discourses being dominant. The teachers also focused on grammar and structure (the skills discourse), and two of the teachers engaged their students in writing tasks that were situated in a simulated real-life context (the social practices discourse). I consider it a promising finding that various approaches to the teaching of writing were applied, thereby challenging the notion that learning to write is primarily a matter of learning and mastering grammar, for example. Nevertheless, focusing on too many aspects of writing within the same writing event might prevent students' in-depth learning. Hence, this MA study contributes to supporting prior research on Norwegian lessons that teachers to a large extent focus their students' attention to genre and let their students work in process, while there is limited evidence of the teachers engaging their students in writing tasks where they need to consider the broader social, sociocultural and/or political context in order to achieve their intended purpose (e.g. Blikstad-Balas, 2018).

Finally, in answering my third sub-question, I identified how the four teachers scaffolded their students in the writing process given that students to a certain extent are dependent upon their teachers in order to develop as writers. I identified a number of scaffolds across the four classrooms, including model texts, writing frames, writing strategies, and feedback. However, the models provided were rarely decomposed to the students and the teachers seldom modeled the skills and strategies being targeted in the writing task. Regarding the feedback given in the writing process, this MA study contributes with insight in a number of ways, as has been requested by multiple researchers (e.g. Burner, 2019; Drew, 2019; Larsen, 2019; Horverak, 2019). First, I found that all the four teachers walked around in the classroom and made their

guidance accessible to their students, although the extent to which they provided feedback on their students' ideas and written work varied considerably. There was only one teacher that provided specific feedback on the students' *written* work, whereas the other teachers mainly offered vague and procedural feedback. Second, three of the four teachers facilitated for peer feedback, and the students were all given a list of criteria to assess in their peers' texts. Hence, it is promising to see that the teachers actively (despite the vagueness) participated in their students' writing processes and facilitated for the students to participate in each other's writing process, yet students will arguably benefit from their teachers being more intentional about providing specific feedback on their written texts.

Through these empirical findings, my MA study contributes to research on how writing is framed and taught in classroom settings in English lessons in lower secondary schools in Norway. As mentioned, although my analyses concern a limited sample, they represent a systematic analysis of all extended writing opportunities that occurred in seven English classrooms across two school years, based on a total of 60 video-recorded English lessons. In this respect, my MA study contributes to what Horverak (2019) addressed as a need for research on writing instruction in lower secondary schools specifically, and I am happy to offer a certain contribution. To the best of my knowledge, in a Norwegian context, nobody has used video observation to examine various features of the writing opportunities given in English lessons in lower secondary schools, making this MA study an empirical contribution in this field. Also, through this MA study, I have made further contributions to the work that has already been done by other researchers in the LISE research team.

## 6.2  Suggestions for further research

As there is generally limited research on what characterizes teachers' approaches to teaching writing in English lessons in Norwegian classrooms, further research in this field is needed, preferably examining a larger sample of extended writing lessons than that of this MA study. Here, I present a couple of specific suggestions.

First, since the provision of writing strategies, combined with the teacher's explanation, modeling, and provision of opportunities for guided practice, is identified as one of the main instructional practices that contributes to develop students' writing competence, and I suggest a further examination of *which* writing strategies English teachers provide their students, *how*

teachers teach these, and how students use them. Second, since students are expected to use writing for multiple purposes outside the classroom, and since the school holds a crucial responsibility in that of equipping their students to fulfill the various expectations present in the text-oriented society in which they will participate in the future, I suggest further research on how English teachers prepare their students for the writing tasks that await them outside the classroom. Both writing tasks and the teacher's explicit instruction can be examined, and the use of video observation is a purposeful method to investigate these matters, possibly also in combination with student and teacher perspectives.

## 6.3  Concluding remarks

Through this MA study, my understanding of what it means to teach my students how to write has deepened considerably. I have come to understand that in addition to giving my students opportunities to write extended texts, the *quality* of the opportunity is of uttermost importance. As a teacher, I play a crucial role in that of facilitating for my students to develop to become skillful writers of English.

I have indeed been encouraged to see how Anette, Michael, Thea and Ragnar created a supportive environment in their classroom in which their students could write. They all, in various ways, prepared their students extensively for the writing task to come, be it through discussions, role plays, or reading and working with a literary text. What is more, the students were not on their own in the writing process but were given the opportunity to co-operate with their peers, and they had access to their teacher's individual guidance during the writing process.

Throughout the process of this MA study, I have grown to understand that there are indeed high expectations on me as an English teacher to teach my students how to write in a variety of situations, for a variety of purposes. Still, I have been very encouraged as I have realized that I as a teacher have a significant role to play regarding how to equip my students to acquire the skill of writing, a skill that is of great value outside school as well as in the classroom. That is a great privilege.

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