

Writer/reader visibility in young learner writing: A study of the TRAWL corpus of lower secondary school texts

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Abstract: A pervasive finding in learner corpus research is that advanced EFL learners tend to overuse interactional features of writer/reader visibility (WRV) in their written academic texts, including first- and second-person pronouns, *I think*, modal adverbs, modal auxiliaries, and questions. Very little research has been done on younger learners, however. The present study is a mixed-methods investigation of WRV features in argumentative and expository genres in the TRAWL longitudinal corpus of learner texts from Norwegian lower secondary school. Comparisons are made with more advanced levels (undergraduate university students) using the Norwegian component of ICLE, ICLE-NO.

The results show that the TRAWL pupils use many WRV features in their writing, first-person reference being especially frequent (with *I* dominating). Compared to the advanced learners in ICLE-NO, the TRAWL learners overuse some, but not all, features. One explanation for the high frequency of WRV features in TRAWL is that the prompts – both argumentative and expository – often request a personal style. Some expository prompts and texts are more impersonal, but overall there is little distinction between the genres. The pedagogical implications are that instructors need to be more specific about genre requirements, and create more obligatory prompts that do not request a personal style.

Keywords: genre, writer/reader visibility, learner corpora, young learner writing, EFL writing



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1. Introduction

A pervasive finding in learner corpus research is that advanced EFL learners tend to overuse interactional features of writer/reader visibility (henceforth WRV) in their academic written texts, including first- and second-person pronouns, private verbs, expressions of modality, evaluation and subjective stance, imperatives and direct questions (Ådel, 2008; Aijmer, 2002; Gilquin & Paquot, 2008; Granger & Rayson, 1998; Hasselgård, 2009; Paquot et al., 2013; Petch-Tyson, 1998; Ringbom, 1998; Virtanen, 1998). Very little research has been done on younger learners, however (but see Hong & Cao 2014; Thomson, 2018). The present study is a mixed-methods investigation of WRV features in argumentative and expository genres in a longitudinal corpus of EFL texts written by lower secondary school pupils in Norway (age 13-16). At this stage, pupils move from writing predominantly personal/narrative texts to more academic texts, hence this level can give interesting insights into writing development.

We have formulated four research questions concerning the nature, frequency and distribution of WRV features across genres and school year:

1. What WRV features do the TRAWL pupils use, and how frequently?
2. Does the use of WRV features change over time (from year 8 to year 10)?
3. Can the use of WRV features be related to genre and task type/writing prompt?
4. How do the young writers compare with more advanced learners?

The primary data come from the TRAWL (Tracking Written Learner Language) corpus, which has been under compilation in Norway since 2016. TRAWL is a longitudinal corpus of authentic school texts written by L1 Norwegian pupils (age 10-19) in English, French, German, Spanish, plus some Norwegian texts for comparison.¹ Our study uses a subset of TRAWL texts written by one EFL class from Year 8 to 10 (lower secondary school, age 13-16). The texts have been classified according to genre based on a framework developed by Ørevik (2019) and adapted to lower secondary level by Hasund (forthcoming). Our emphasis will be on the *high-complexity genres* (argumentative and expository), as this is where the term WRV is most relevant, rather than on low-complexity genres (narrative, reflective and dialogic). To answer research question 4, we use the Norwegian component of the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE-NO), which represents a later stage of language learning (undergraduate university students), albeit a different writer group. We do not use any L1 reference corpus, but comparisons are made with the findings of Paquot et al. (2013), who studied WRV features in argumentative and disciplinary L1 and L2 writing (see below). We apply a mixed-methods approach, combining a quantitative study of WRV features across genres and a qualitative, close reading of argumentative and expository texts.

2. Previous research

In a study entitled 'Writer-reader visibility in EFL written discourse', Petch-Tyson (1998) investigates a number of WRV features, namely first- and second-person pronouns, 'fuzziness

words' (e.g. *kind/sort of, and so on*), emphatic particles (*just, really*) and deictic references to the situation (*here, now, in this essay*). Two major insights were gained from this investigation: advanced EFL learners in general produced more of these features than their native peers, and the extent of overuse varied across different L1 groups (Petch-Tyson, 1998, p. 112).² For our purposes, it is interesting that the highest amount of interactive features was found among Swedish learners, who are assumed to be linguistically and culturally similar to Norwegians (not included in the study). Ringbom (1998) finds that Swedish and Finnish advanced learners use the phrase *I think* more frequently than other learner groups as well as native speakers (p. 44). Swedish and Finnish learners are furthermore reported to use almost three times as many direct questions in their argumentative essays as native speakers (Virtanen, 1998, p. 100). This is interpreted partly as a deviation from the expected formal style of academic writing and partly as a sign of cultural differences in rhetoric (Virtanen, 1998, p. 105). Investigating modal expressions (auxiliaries, adverbials, and *I think*), Aijmer (2002) identifies general overuse in the argumentative writing of Swedish learners, which she ascribes partly to transfer from Swedish, and partly to the "learners adopting a more speech-like style in their writing than the native writers represented in in the LOCNESS corpus" (p. 72). Hasselgård (2009) observes, based on a subset of ICLE-NO, that Norwegian advanced learners of English are more likely than native speakers to open their sentences with an expression of subjective stance, such as *I think, I believe, I would say* (p. 133). They also overuse adverbials of stance and modality in a similar way as Swedish learners (p. 135). The study concludes that the Norwegian learners "exhibit an interactive writing style with a high degree of writer and reader visibility" (p. 137).

The above-mentioned studies of WRV concern argumentative writing, a register in which "personal references and subjective attitudes are certainly hard to avoid" (Recski, 2004, p. 3). Several studies suggest that the learners of English are influenced by colloquial speech and lack register-awareness (e.g. Aijmer 2002, Gilquin & Paquot 2008). Ädel (2008, p. 47) argues that external factors such as task-setting, intertextuality and timing also influence the use of WRV features. A register comparison was undertaken by Paquot et al. (2013), who discussed WRV features in argumentative and discipline-specific academic writing across three writer groups: advanced French learners, advanced Norwegian learners, and novice English L1 writers. The learner data came from ICLE and VESPA while the L1 reference corpora were LOCNESS and BAWE (Paquot et al. 2013, p. 378 f).³ The WRV features examined were largely the same as in Petch-Tyson (1998) and in the present study. Register was found to be important for all three writer groups, with more WRV features in the argumentative than in the discipline-specific register. However, in both registers, the learners significantly overused WRV features compared to native speakers and the Norwegian learners to a greater extent than the French (Paquot et al. 2013, pp. 384-385). While the above-mentioned studies all use data from university-level learners, Hong and Cao (2014) investigate how young (pre-university) EFL learners use interactional metadiscourse, a concept which includes expressions of modality and writer/reader reference (p. 207). The learners' L1s are Chinese, Polish and Spanish, and interestingly, from the perspective of the current study, the data represent two registers: argumentative and descriptive. The argumentative texts are found to contain more interactional

metadiscourse than the descriptive ones (p. 218). While finding this result surprising due to an expectation of more academic detachment in the academic register, the authors concede that “the given prompts/topics may also influence young EFL learners’ use of interactional metadiscursive features” (p. 219).

In a Norwegian school context, Høegh-Omdal (2018) found that argumentative EFL essays written by Year 10 pupils were characterised by “informal, expressive and oral language” (2018, p. 52).⁴ Based on data from the TRAWL corpus and interviews with teachers, Høegh-Omdal suggests the interactional style is teaching-induced rather than developmental: the teachers reported a stronger focus on text structure than formality level (p. 52). Furthermore, the L1 Norwegian essay tradition allows for a more personal, informal and expressive style (p. 54; see also Øgreid & Hertzberg, 2009). Other studies confirm the impression that overuse of WRV features seems to be widespread in Norwegian secondary school, at both lower and upper level (Hasund, 2019; Horverak, 2015; Thomson, 2018).

3. Data and methodology

3.1 Corpus material

A subset of the TRAWL corpus makes up our primary data.⁵ This corpus is still being compiled and consists of texts written by pupils in Norwegian schools in L2 English and L3 German, French and Spanish, plus some L1 Norwegian texts for comparison. All texts are authentic and written as part of the ordinary school work (homework, school tests, mock exams etc.). The corpus also includes tasks/writing prompts, and some texts for reception accompanying the prompts. The English material spans years 5 to 13 in the school system (ages 10 to 19); see footnote 1 and Dirdal (2021). The original TRAWL texts are not sorted by genre, and one text, e.g. a mock exam, may contain answers in more than one genre. The material used for the present study, however, was sorted according to genre based on Ørevik’s (2019) typology with six main genre categories: Argumentative, Descriptive, Dialogic, Expository, Narrative and Reflective. Ørevik’s typology was developed for upper secondary school and adapted to lower secondary level by Hasund (forthcoming). The genre categories are inferred from the prompt, e.g. an answer to the prompt “write a fantasy story” is classified as Narrative. An additional category labelled Open was created for prompts that invite different genres (as in “write a fictional or factual text”). Classifying learner texts according to genre involves many challenges which will not be dealt with here due to scope limitations; for a detailed discussion, see Hasund (forthcoming) and Ørevik (2019). Although the present study uses the texts from the argumentative and expository genres only, we first present an overview of all the texts to track the distribution of the six main genres across school years. From 2015 to 2018, a total of 17 pupils contributed 311 texts (114,168 words), of which 174 are argumentative and expository (55,908 words). Table 1 shows the number of words (tokens) and texts in the subcorpora:

Table 1. The TRAWL subcorpora: Words and texts per school year and genre

Genre		Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
Argumentative	words	1,230	6,349	22,466	30,045
	texts	11	20	58	89
Expository	words	2,766	4,597	18,500	25,863
	texts	22	11	52	85
Descriptive	words	1,168	3,461	1,695	6,324
	texts	3	27	4	34
Dialogic	words	3,625	1,888	0	5,513
	texts	9	3	0	12
Reflective	words	0	2,144	2,581	4,725
	texts	0	13	5	18
Narrative	words	6,339	16,713	465	23,517
	texts	12	26	1	39
Open	words	10,225	6,927	1,029	18,181
	texts	23	9	2	34
Total	words	25,353	42,079	46,736	114,168
	texts	80	109	122	311

Table 1 shows that, at the end of lower secondary school, pupils write both more and longer high-complexity texts and correspondingly fewer low-complexity texts overall.

The Norwegian part of the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE-NO) is used as a reference corpus. ICLE-NO contains mostly argumentative texts and is therefore most suitable for comparison with the argumentative genre in TRAWL. It comprises roughly 210,000 words in 316 texts. The writers in ICLE-NO are undergraduate university students whose L1 is Norwegian, most of them in their first year (Granger et al. 2009). All corpus texts were included (unlike Paquot et al 2013, which will account for differences in numbers between that study and the current one). Note that ICLE-NO is used merely to compare TRAWL writers to learners at a (presumed) more advanced stage of proficiency. It does not represent a learning target; indeed, Paquot et al. (2013) show that WRV features are overrepresented in ICLE-NO compared to the L1 writers in the LOCNESS corpus.

3.2 Methodology

We use a mixed-methods approach by which a quantitative corpus analysis is supplemented by a qualitative, close reading. As Durrant et al. (2020, p. 421) argue, consistent development patterns can be identified through quantitative corpus analysis, but the description will be

enriched by “qualitative investigation of the meanings which underlie quantitative patterns.” For the corpus analysis, we uploaded the subcorpora based on school year and genre in the Lancaster University corpus toolbox, #LancsBox (Brezina et al. 2020), which automatically provides the data with lemmatization and part-of-speech annotation. Results are presented in raw and normalized frequencies and text distribution. We use only descriptive measures due to some limitations of our primary data that make them unsuitable for reliable inferential statistics: the overall size of the material is small, and the subcorpora based on year and genre are sometimes tiny. Furthermore, the texts may contain quotes from secondary sources as well as spelling errors, and several variables are not controlled for (e.g. timing and access to reference tools). Another limitation of the quantitative analysis is that it only takes into account the two factors year and genre, without looking at the specific form of the writing prompt. Therefore, to complement the quantitative findings, we present a qualitative analysis of some high-complexity texts in relation to not only year and genre, but also the specific form of the writing prompts.

Inspired by previous studies, the following WRV features were investigated: first- and second-person pronouns, *I think*, modal adverbs, modal auxiliaries, and questions (identified by question marks). These features are associated with interactivity and personal stance (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 68). For further specification of the lexical items searched for, see Section 4. Pronouns and the verb *think* were identified using #LancsBox’s Words function (lemma, *_pron; lemma, *_v). Question marks, modal auxiliaries and modal adverbs were retrieved via the Whelk tool in #LancsBox, which displays the distribution of the search hits across corpus files. The KWIC tool was used to identify and study individual hits in context, including *I think*, and the Text tool was used for the manual reading of whole texts (for further explanation of #LancsBox functions, see Brezina et al., 2020). Prompts and (when available) texts for reception were not uploaded in #LancsBox but were read manually. Appendix A lists all the writing prompts in the high-complexity genres and shows how many pupils have answered each prompt.

4. Findings

This section presents our findings regarding the linguistic features listed in 3.2, showing their frequencies in the argumentative and expository genres and the range of texts in which they occur.

4.1 First- and second-person pronouns

Following Paquot et al., (2013, p. 380), we searched for the following first- and second-person singular and plural pronouns and determiners: *I, me, myself, my, we, us, ourselves, our, you, yourself, yourselves, your*. Tables 2 and 3 present the frequencies per 1,000 words and text dispersion across the two genres in TRAWL, and, in the argumentative genre (Table 2), in ICLE-NO too.

Table 2. First- and second-person pronouns in TRAWL argumentative texts and ICLE-NO

Variable		Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		ICLE	
		11 texts 1,230 words		20 texts 6,349 words		58 texts 22,466 words		316 texts 210,156 words	
		/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts
1st person	I	30.1	10	26.0	18	22.8	57	8.7	258
	me	2.4	3	1.4	6	3.0	33	0.7	87
	myself	0.0	0	0.3	1.0	0.2	4	0.2	27
	my	7.3	9	8.4	17	5.6	37	2.3	163
	we	12.2	5	1.0	3	10.4	39	9.0	247
	us	0.8	1	0	0	2.1	25	2.0	171
	ourselves	0.0	0	0.2	1	0.1	2	0.3	43
	our	0.0	0	0.2	1	2.6	22	4.3	198
Total		52.8		37.5		46.8		27.5	
2nd person	you	14.6	10	33.7	19	13.8	44	6.2	217
	yourself	0.0	0	0.6	3	0.2	3	0.2	29
	yourselves	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.01	3
	your	2.4	2	5.0	13	2.5	20	1.7	128
	Total		17.1		39.3		16.5		8.1

Tables 2 and 3 show that first- and second-person pronouns are found in all subcorpora. In the argumentative genre, the young TRAWL learners use first- and second-person pronouns more often than the older learners in ICLE-NO.

Of the individual pronouns, *I* is the most frequent first-person pronoun by far, and *you* is the most frequent second-person pronoun. The total frequencies of first-person pronouns are much higher than those of second-person pronouns, except in Year 9 Argumentative (henceforth, Y9 Argu).⁶ This, however, is largely due to a few pupils in Y9 Argu who have very high frequencies of *you*. Table 3 also shows that Y10 Expo is markedly low on both first- and second-person pronouns compared to Y8 and Y9 Expo, as well as all the argumentative subcorpora. In the argumentative genre (Table 2), on the other hand, the differences between Years 8, 9 and 10 are not very large (except second-person pronouns in Y9 Argu). This seems to indicate that Year 10 is where the pupils begin to master the difference between argumentative and expository writing (but see Section 5.1 on the fuzzy borders between these genres).

Table 3. First- and second-person pronouns in TRAWL expository texts

Variable	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		
	22 texts		11 texts		52 texts		
	2,766 words		4,597 words		18,500 words		
	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	
1st person	I	31.1	15	15.0	10	13.4	49
	me	2.9	1	1.5	4	1.1	11
	myself	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.2	3
	my	3.6	3	9.4	8	1.3	13
	we	18.1	12	31.1	11	5.2	36
	us	2.5	5	1.5	2	1.0	11
	ourselves	0.0	0	0.2	1	0.1	2
	our	1.8	4	7.0	9	1.2	11
Total	60.0		65.7		23.5		
2nd person	you	9.4	10	15.0	9	4.9	32
	yourself	0.7	1	0.2	1	0.3	4
	yourselves	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
	your	2.2	6	4.1	4	0.7	9
	Total	12.3		19.3		5.9	

A final observation from Tables 2 and 3 is that there is more variation in first- and second-person pronoun use in Years 9 and 10 than in Year 8. In Y8 Argu, only seven out of 12 forms are used; in Y8 Expo, nine forms are used, and first-person *I* is clearly the most frequent. In Years 9 and 10, in contrast, eleven out of 12 forms are used in both genres, and they are more spread out. This is probably because there are more and longer texts in Years 9 and 10, but could also indicate that the pupils are developing a more varied lexical repertoire from Year 9.

4.2 The collocation *I think*

The collocation *I think* (cf. Paquot et al., 2013, p. 380; Ringbom, 1998, p. 44) was found to be frequent and widespread across the TRAWL subcorpora and in ICLE-NO. The frequencies and text dispersion are shown in the first row of Table 4. In the argumentative genre, the young TRAWL learners use *I think* more overall than the older learners in ICLE-NO. Year 8 stands out with the highest frequencies of *I think* in both genres; then there is a marked drop to Year 9. In the argumentative genre, the frequencies drop further in Year 10, while they remain the same in Year 10 as in Year 9 in the expository genre. Overall, the use of *I think* is widely dispersed; even in the small Y8 Argu corpus, *I think* occurs in eight out of eleven texts.

A search for the most frequent verbs (lemmas) in the high-complexity genres in TRAWL shows that *think* is among the top six in all subcorpora. A comparison of the frequencies for the verb *think* and the collocation *I think* shows that *I think* accounts for the majority of uses of the verb (cf. Ringbom, 1998), especially in Years 8 and 9, less so in 10, where there is more variation.

4.3 Modal adverbs

The following fifteen lexical items were selected on the basis of lists in Petch-Tyson (1998), Ädel (2008) and Paquot et al. (2013): *actually, certainly, completely, definitely, frankly, maybe, naturally, obviously, of course, perhaps, possibly, probably, really, totally, unfortunately*. The adverbs express different types of stance, notably attitude in addition to certainty (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 81). Some of the items, e.g. *really*, can function as intensifiers as well as adverbials, or as circumstantial instead of stance adverbials (e.g. *naturally*). However, we have not distinguished between these functions in the quantitative analysis.

Table 4. Modal adverbs and the collocation *I think* in TRAWL and ICLE-NO

	Argumentative								Expository					
	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		ICLE-NO		Year 8		Year 9		Year 10	
	11 texts 1,230 words	20 texts 6,349 words	58 texts 22,466 words	316 texts 210,156 words	22 texts 2,766 words	11 texts 4,597 words	52 texts 18,500 words	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k
<i>I think</i>	8.9	8	5.0	7	3	32	1.2	130	8.3	15	3.7	8	3.7	31
<i>actually</i>	4.1	3	0.3	2	0.6	11	0.6	87					0.1	2
<i>certainly</i>							0.2	39					0.1	1
<i>completely</i>					0.2	4	0.1	25			0.2	1	0.3	5
<i>definitely</i>			0.5	3	0.05	1	0.1	13						
<i>frankly</i>					0.05	1	0.01	3						
<i>maybe</i>	4.1	4	1.1	2	0.7	10	0.9	98	0.7	2	1.5	4	1.3	13
<i>naturally</i>					0.2	3	0.04	8						
<i>obviously</i>					0.05	1	0.1	22						
<i>of course</i>					0.7	12	0.7	104			0.2	1	0.4	7
<i>perhaps</i>							0.4	55			0.2	1		
<i>possibly</i>					0.1	2	0.1	19					0.2	3
<i>probably</i>					0.4	6	0.8	113			1.3	2	0.3	5
<i>really</i>	2.4	3	0.8	4	1.1	17	0.9	117	0.4	1	0.9	3	0.4	4
<i>totally</i>					0.05	1	0.1	23						
<i>unfortunately</i>					0.2	4	0.1	20			0.2	1	0.4	5
Total adverbs	10.6		2.7		4.1		5.2		1.1		6.6		3.4	

Table 4 shows the distribution across lexical items and corpus texts. As can be seen from the 'Total' row, the TRAWL texts have a markedly higher frequency of modal adverbs in argumentative than in expository texts except in Year 10. The use of modal adverbs in argumentative texts increases steadily from year 9 through to ICLE. The peak in Y8 Argu can probably be explained by the small size of this subcorpus and some individuals being relatively prolific adverb users. In Y8 and Y9 Expo, the frequency of modal adverbs is moderate, while in Y10 Expo it rises slightly above the level of Y10 Argu.

To some extent the rise in frequency is accompanied by a widening of the lexical repertoire. As shown in Table 4, the young learners gradually make use of more adverb types. Year 8 pupils use only three lexemes, *actually* (only in Argu), *maybe* and *really*. These stay with them throughout the three years although *actually* remains infrequent. In Year 9 the learners begin to express stance in a more nuanced manner through modal adverbs, with 10 different items being used between the genres. The diversification continues in year 10 where 14 items are attested, and the rise of *of course* is notable. In fact, from Year 9 on, the young learners make similar selections of modal adverbs to the advanced learners in ICLE-NO although the dispersion of items outside the favourites *maybe* and *really* is generally not very wide.

4.4 Modal auxiliaries

The frequency distribution of the core modal auxiliaries in the subcorpora is shown in Table 5 (*can, could, may, might, must, ought, shall, should, will, would*). The total frequencies of modal auxiliaries indicate some degree of genre sensitivity, although the patterns are not easily interpretable. In the argumentative genre, the frequencies are remarkably similar across the subcorpora. In the expository genre, by contrast, the frequencies drop steadily from Year 8 to Year 10.

It is instructive to study the lexical distribution of the auxiliaries. The token frequencies are stable in the argumentative genre and decreasing in the expository genre, but as Table 5 shows, the number of types increases in both. Year 8 learners mainly stick to *can/could, will/would* and *should*, all of which have Norwegian cognates (*kan/kunne, vil/ville* and *skulle*). *May* and *might* have no direct counterparts in Norwegian but appear in the texts of pupils in Years 9 and 10. *May* remains rare in both argumentative and expository texts, while *might* is more frequent and more widely dispersed than *may* in Year 10, especially in expository texts. The pupils do not use *ought* at all, and it is rare in ICLE-NO. *Shall* occurs sparingly in Years 9 and 10 and in ICLE-NO. *Shall* and *ought* are also the least frequent ones in L1 English (Biber et al., 1999, p. 489). We have not classified each instance of modals according to meaning, but a close reading of the texts suggests that the modals found in Year 8 texts predominantly express deontic meanings, especially ability, willingness and future reference, whereas the modals in Years 9 and 10 express both deontic and epistemic meanings (see Section 5.1). The decrease of *can* in Year 10 may be evidence of this, as this modal is not typically used with epistemic meaning (Aijmer 2002, p.66). Thus, it seems likely that the increased lexical repertoire entails an increased use of epistemic modality.

Table 5. Modal auxiliaries and question marks in TRAWL and ICLE-NO

	Argumentative								Expository					
	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		ICLE-NO		Year 8		Year 9		Year 10	
	11 texts	1,230 words	20 texts	6,349 words	58 texts	22,466 words	316 texts	210,156 words	22 texts	2,766 words	11 texts	4,597 words	52 texts	18,500 words
	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts	/1k	texts
can	6.5	3	9.0	15	8.7	43	4.3	270	11.2	11	4.8	10	2.5	26
can't, cannot			1.6	7	1.1	16	0.6	81	2.2	6	0.2	1	0.8	11
could	3.3	2	1.0	4	1.7	20	1.4	160	1.5	1	1.5	3	2.4	22
may			0.3	2	0.3	4	1.3	137			0.4	2	0.2	3
might			0.5	2	0.5	6	1.3	130			1.7	3	1.0	11
must			0.2	1	0.1	3	0.7	88	0.4	1	0.9	1	0.4	5
ought							0.1	11						
shall					0.1	1	0.1	13					0.4	3
should	4.1	1	0.6	4	1.6	15	2.4	182	3.3	5	2.1	4	1.4	15
will	5.7	2	3.9	9	3.4	29	4	244	1.8	2	2.8	3	3.7	24
won't					0.2	4	0.1	21					0.2	4
would	3.3	4	2.1	7	2.5	23	3.8	224	1.8	5	2.8	3	1.7	15
Total modals	22.8		19.1		20.1		19.7		22.1		17.4		14.7	
Question marks	0.8	1	0.5	1	1.5	17	3.7	220	1.1	1	0.2	1	1.7	12

4.5 Questions

Questions were identified by searching for question marks (cf. Paquot et al., 2013, p. 384). The last row of Table 5 shows the frequencies per 1k and text dispersion of question marks in TRAWL and ICLE-NO. In TRAWL, Years 8 and 9 have lower frequencies of question marks than Year 10 in both the argumentative and expository genres. Furthermore, the numbers are well dispersed across the Year 10 texts, indicating that the use of question marks in high-complexity texts is more common among older writers. In the argumentative genre, we also note that question marks are more frequent in ICLE-NO than in TRAWL. However, although the dispersion of question marks in ICLE-NO is wide, the number is boosted by some texts where they are extremely frequent (25 texts have above 10 questions per 1,000 words).

5. A closer look at some prompts and pupil texts

This section presents a qualitative, close reading of some of the TRAWL prompts and pupil texts in the high-complexity genres. As described in Section 3.2, the quantitative analysis of WRV

features in relation to school year and genre has some limitations. One is that the data material is small, so the numbers must be interpreted with caution. Another is that year and genre do not explain everything, and that closer examination of the specific form of the writing prompts is necessary to explain why the pupils answer the way they do (cf. Crossley 2020, p. 432). Therefore, the present section supplements the quantitative analysis focusing on year (8-10) and genre (argumentative and expository) with a qualitative analysis focusing on the specific form of the prompt. This analysis includes seeing the pupil answers in relation to the wording of the prompts, whether the prompts request long or short answers, and whether they are optional or obligatory. Where relevant, texts for reception accompanying the prompts are also taken into account.

5.1 Year 8

5.1.1 Argumentative texts

Y8 Argu has eleven answers to two prompts, of which one is obligatory with ten answers, and one is optional with only one answer. This indicates both that the Year 8 pupils are given few argumentative prompts and that they largely avoid the genre when they can choose (nearly all pupils have chosen to write stories).

The high frequencies of first-person pronouns and *I think* in this subcorpus are largely linked to the obligatory prompt. It is a short answer prompt which reads: “In the booklet you have read many quotes about “What is history?” Which is your favourite quote? Explain why” (Y8_Argu_STEP_1).⁷ Example [1] shows one answer, rendered in full:⁸

[1] Y8_Argu_P60110⁹_STEP_1: My favorite quote is made by John W. Gardner. “history never looks like history when you are living through it” he had write something that **I think** is true and interesting. The quote **can** inspire **me** to **really** think, **maybe** its true that **we** never **can** see the history when **we** are living. Every day is history, and every day is special. Every day **can** not always be so interesting for **me**, but for other people **can** just one day be the best day of their life.

In just 89 words, the pupil uses several WRV features to express and justify his/her opinion: first-person pronouns and *I think*, the modal auxiliary *can* and the modal adverbs *really* and *maybe*. The other nine responses to the same prompt are very similar; some also include second-person pronouns to engage the reader.

5.1.2 Expository texts

Y8 Expo comprises 22 answers to four prompts, of which two are obligatory with ten answers each, while two are optional with just one answer each. Again this shows that, when the pupils are allowed to choose, nearly all avoid (and thus get little practice) writing high-complexity texts in Year 8 (cf. Table 1 on the distribution of the six main genres).

The two obligatory prompts are short answer questions that request literary analyses. One, about a folktale, asks the pupils to “write a short text about what you think is the moral of the folktale” (Y8_Expo_BECD_1). In the classification of this prompt (see Hasund, forthcoming), the wording *what you think is the moral* was interpreted as primarily requesting interpretations

(expository) more than personal opinion (argumentative), but the prompt shows how the borders between the argumentative and expository genres can be fuzzy. Example [2], rendered in full, illustrates how most pupils have responded to the prompt:

[2] Y8_Expo_P60104_BEER_1: The moral of the text is that a blind person **can** be cleverer than a person who **can** see. A blind person **can't** see with his eyes, but **I think** they're see more than **us**. because they don't see how the person look, but how they are. A girl who don't look so good, **can** be the nicest person in the world, and that girl everyone like, **can** be that girl who **maybe** not have the biggest heart... That's why **I think** the blind **can** see more than **us**, because they see with the heart, and not with the eyes.

The answer does provide an interpretation of the folk tale, but the style resembles the argumentative text in [1] above in the use of first-person pronouns and *I think*. The writer is also visible through the use of the epistemic modal *can* (in *can be*) and the modal adverb *maybe*, in both cases assessing a degree of probability. The deontic *can see*, on the other hand, does not reflect writer visibility.

5.2 Year 9

5.2.1 Argumentative texts

In Year 9, the pupils write more and longer argumentative texts than in Year 8. The Y9 Argu subcorpus has 20 answers to three different prompts which all request the pupils' opinion on various matters. 14 of the texts respond to an obligatory short answer question which asks the pupils to "describe a hobby you have or would like to have" and give reasons for their choice (Y9_Argu_HOBB_1), so the frequent use of first-person pronouns and *I think* is expected. The very high frequency of second-person *you* in Y9 Argu can also be related to the prompts: Six texts answer two optional long answer questions which ask the pupils to recommend their own top choices for young people regarding hobbies or travel destinations. Both prompts are accompanied by texts for reception written in an interactional, persuasive style, and example [3] illustrates how some pupils adopt this style in their answers:

[3] Y9_Argu_P60109_HOBB_3A: There a lot of different hobbies in the world, some needs physicality and speed, while other hobbies require thinking and communicating. Some hobbies fit better for young people then old people and also the other way around too. **I am** going to write down which three hobbies **I think** is best and most fun for teens.

(...)

I would really recommend playing some kind of instrument as a hobby. Many people think that it is too late for them to start practicing an instrument when **you** are a teen, but **I** disagree. For those who want to start playing an instrument, **I** would recommend getting a teacher that **can** teach **you** how to play the instrument **you** want to learn. **You** don't have to get a teacher but **I think** it helps **you** get motivated and **you** get feedback from the teacher. **You could** also watch video tutorials online on webpages like YouTube and Vimeo. There are a lot of great tutorials there, but **I** would still go for a teacher for

the reasons **I** listed earlier. **I would** recommend playing a song **you** like and have heard before because it gives **you** more motivation to learn it and master it. Practicing an instrument is a great way to spend **your** free time instead of sitting home and doing nothing. Like many other things **you** got to practice a lot, the more **you** practice the easier it gets to play the song and the instrument. **You can** also play in a band with **your** friends, and perform in front of an audience. The beginning **might** seem hard, but it gets easier.

The excerpt renders the first and last of four paragraphs in a 692 word long text. Interestingly, in the first paragraph, the pupil opens in the third person with a presentation of the topic (hobbies) before switching to a first-person style explaining his/her choice of hobbies (with *I* and *I think*) and outlining the structure of the text (*I am going to...*). The fourth paragraph, in contrast, is written in a persuasive style, combining a second-person perspective (with many instances of *you*) and a first-person perspective (with *I* and *I think*). The paragraph also includes the modal auxiliaries *can*, *could*, *might*, *should*, *would*, and the modal adverb *really*, illustrating the increased variation in Year 9 pupils' lexical repertoire for expressing modal meaning and an increased mastery of the argumentative genre.

5.2.2 Expository texts

In the Y9 Expo subcorpus, all the 11 texts are responses to long answer questions, so the mean text length is higher than in the other subcorpora, which all have a mix of long and short answer texts. Interestingly, while all the argumentative prompts in Year 9 explicitly request the pupils' opinion, none of the four expository prompts do. Admittedly, two of them invite a personal style, e.g. "Write a text and talk about table manners in your family and your culture" (Y9_Expo_EEFO_2), and in the seven answers to these prompts, there are many first-person pronouns, but fewer cases of *I think* than in the argumentative genre. The other two expository prompts open up for more impersonal writing by asking the pupils to *discuss* matters more generally, e.g.: "People around the world are starving. In the US, one in six people struggles with hunger. How can future foods solve this problem? Discuss (...)" (Y9_Expo_EEFO_3). Only four of the 11 texts answer these prompts, and the pupils only partly pick up on the opportunity to write more impersonal texts, as illustrated in example [4]:

[4] Y09_Expo_P60101_EEFO_3: The weird menu

Many people around the world are starving. In the united states as much as one of six people don't have enough food. **Why is that so?** Now I'm going to discuss and share **my** thoughts around it.

I think if **we** started to eat more vegetables, **we could** avoid the big numbers of people starving around the world. **I** have read a lot of articles about how meat is produced. It takes insanely many kilogram of seeds to feed a cow to the size it has to be before its slaughtered and carried to supermarkets and restaurants around the country. (...)

Someone **would** be displeased if the production of meat went down. Some of the butchers **might** not be able to make enough money trough their business. And people who work at restaurants **might** not be able to make that much money on the expensive

steaks and hamburgers. But **I would** say **perhaps** the people it **would** effect the most is the good old American's who eats nothing but big pieces of meat twenty four seven. (...)

In the classification of the prompt (Hasund, forthcoming), the word *discuss* was interpreted as a request to explore future foods (expository) rather than to argue a case and take a stand (argumentative). The answer, however, resembles the argumentative answer in [3] above in that various WRV features are used strategically in different parts of the text to argue a case. After paraphrasing the prompt in the first sentence, the pupil asks a rhetorical question (*Why is that so?*) and answers in the first person, outlining the structure of the text (*Now I'm going to*) and presenting his/her thoughts (*share my thoughts; I think*). In the following paragraphs, the pupil argues against meat production using a combination of a first-person and third-person style, several modal auxiliaries (*can, could, will, would, might*) and the modal adverbs *maybe* and *perhaps*. This pupil uses modal auxiliaries with epistemic meaning, in contrast to the Year 8 examples in [1] and [2], where the modal auxiliaries are primarily deontic, and epistemic modality is expressed with adverbs and *I think*. In sum, although there are traces of more impersonal and expository writing, the interactional and argumentative elements dominate.

5.3 Year 10

5.3.1 Argumentative texts

Y10 Argu is the largest of the TRAWL subcorpora. The 58 texts respond to six prompts, of which three explicitly ask for the pupils' opinion or invite a personal style. Two of these three prompts are obligatory, which explains why as many as 32 of 58 texts answer them and also why there is a high frequency of first-person pronouns. Example [5] is an excerpt from one of 14 answers to the following prompt: "In the preparation material you have seen examples of how people connect online and offline. Use two examples from the preparation material and explain how they are relevant to the way **you** connect and socialise in **your** daily life" (Y10_Argu_ONOF_1A, bold in original).

[5] Y10_Argu_P60115_ ONOF_1A: In this task **I will** use two examples from the preparation material and explain how they are relevant to the way **I** connect and socialise in **my** daily life. (...) **Me** and **my** friends are often using social media to planning overnight trips to **my** cabin and day trips to Denmark. In addition, most birthday invitations are sent via Facebook. Who wants to miss a trip to Denmark or a birthday? Not **me** anyway! It is quite natural that **I** feel **I** have to be online all the time.

The excerpt is from a text which has a clearly visible author as shown in the use of first-person pronouns, *I will* to outline the structure of the text and *I feel* to express stance. All the answers to this prompt present a first-person perspective, but many switch between the first and second person, similarly to example [3]. Example [5] also has a rhetorical question, a feature used by many Year 10 pupils to involve the reader.

Whereas all argumentative prompts in Years 8 and 9 request – and get – the pupils' personal opinion, three of the Y10 Argu prompts (of which one is obligatory) give the pupils an opportunity to argue at a more general level. One prompt asks them to choose one of six

controversial statements and “discuss arguments for and against” (Y10_Argu_ARES_2). However, a manual reading of the answers shows that personal opinion dominates even in these texts, although there may be passages written in the third person. An example to illustrate is [6] below. It shows the first, second and last paragraph in a five-paragraph essay about the statement “Lower secondary school should be a grade-free zone”:

[6] Y10_Argu_P60106_ARES_2C: In this essay **I** am going to discuss and talk about for and against that lower secondary school should be a grade-free zone. There are many arguments about this subject and **I** am going to explain **my** view about this matter. First **I** am going to write about why **I** am against, and then why **I** am for. In the end **I** am going to give **my** reason in this matter.

The lower secondary schools **should** not have a grade-free zone, because the grades **can** prepare the pupils on the high schools and universities. It **will** be easier for the pupils to change schools if they know how the system works. After a few years the pupils **will** know the system so well that they **can** improve how they work and how they do on tests. It **can** be hard to get a good grade, but if the pupil got a bad grade they **can** improve on another test. The teachers **can** be a bit less harsh on the grades, they **can** adapt to the different classes, and students.

(...)

As a conclusion **I** just want to say that **I** have tried to show **my** opinions on this matter in the best way, and that **I** hope **you can** understand the way **I** see.

The pupil clearly states in the introduction that the arguments for and against grades are both his/her own, using *I/my* in metadiscursive expressions (Ädel 2006, Hong & Cao 2014), and the first-person voice dominates in the first and last paragraphs. In the second paragraph, however, the third person dominates together with deontic modal auxiliaries. This does not mean the second paragraph is impersonal, but it shows that the pupil is able to present writer stance by other means than first-person pronouns and *I think*. In the text as a whole, writer stance is also expressed with the modal auxiliaries *can*, *should*, *will*, *would*, and the modal adverbs *maybe*, *of course*, and *actually*, thereby illustrating the increased variation found in the lexical repertoire of Year 10 pupils.

5.3.2 Expository texts

Y10 Expo contains 52 texts distributed over seven prompts, of which four invite a personal style (as in the argumentative genre); again, some are very similar to the argumentative prompts and yield similar answers. For instance, one prompt asks the pupils to write a text about a cartoon “explaining what you feel the writer thinks” (Y10_Expo_ATWE_1B), and many of the 16 answers to this obligatory prompt are dense with WRV features, e.g. “**I think** he created this cartoon to show **us** how **you might** think or how others think” (Y10_Expo P60106_ATWE_1B). Considering that 41 of the 52 texts in Y10 Expo answer these personal prompts, it might seem surprising that the subcorpus is so low on first- and second-person pronouns compared to the other high-complexity subcorpora, and also that it is rather low on modal auxiliaries. There are, however,

at least three explanations for the low frequencies. One is that the 41 texts answering the personal prompts include 30 short answers, while the 11 texts that respond to the more impersonal prompts are all long answers. Another explanation is that some of the personal prompts consist of two separate parts, one asking the pupils to describe or narrate and one asking for their opinion, like the following: "Read appendix 1 "Epiphany" on page 7 and describe what happens in the text. Then explain what **you** think the change in the relationship between the girls says about the relationship between blacks and whites in the USA today" (Y10_Expo_ONOF_1B, bold in original). Example [7] is an excerpt from one of the 14 answers to this obligatory prompt:

[7] Y10_Expo_P60105_ONOF_1B: In this short answer task **I will** describe what happens in the text "Epiphany", then **I will** explain what **I think** the change in the relationship between the girls says about the relationships between black and whites in the USA today.

The text "Epiphany" is about DeMaris and Epiphany, who has been best friends since the first day of first grade. After the summer vacation, they were going to start at junior high school. DeMaris noticed quickly that thing between her and Epiphany were not the same as before. Later on DeMaris sat down on the same table as Epiphany in lunchtime. DeMaris feel so judge when she walked in the lunch. (...)

I think the relationship between these two girls in the text, has an absolute connection with the relationship between black and white humans in the USA today. However humans in USA been judge because of the skin color. **I think** the text tries to convey that the skin color has less importance when **you** are a child and greater importance when **you** grow older. (...)

In [7], the pupil uses WRV features in the first paragraph to outline the structure of the essay and in the third paragraph to express opinion. The second paragraph, which answers the descriptive part and contains a summary of a story, has none of the search forms at all.

The third explanation for the low frequencies of first-/second-person pronouns and modal auxiliaries is that three of the prompts do not explicitly request a personal style, and, as mentioned, although there are only 11 answers to these prompts, they are all long answers. Example [8] is one of eight texts about "a person who has been important for American history" (Y10_Expo_CIRI_C). Except one *we* and two *you*, this 469 word long text about Rosa Parks is written entirely in the third person. The excerpt shows the second and third of five paragraphs:

[8] Y10_Expo_P60108_CIRI_C: If **we** took a look back in long time, in Rosa's time, it was not the same rights as now for many humans. The black people did not get treated in the same way as the whites. The black people were almost not worth something. The way they get treated was unfair. The black people **could** not get at the same schools as whites, they **could** not sit together on the bus with whites and they **could** not get to the same hospital as whites. Now when **you** hear this **you maybe** thinks that cannot be true, but it is. Rosa Parks **would** do something to this unfair treating, and she did.

It all started the 1st of December 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa Parks was on her way at the bus. The bus was full and it was no one free seats. As the laws was, the black people sat back in the bus and the whites in front of them. Suddenly the bus stopped and all the black people knew that if it was a white who wants to sit, they needed to get their seat to her or him. The bus driver opened the door and it was a white man who needed a seat. The white part of the bus was full, so he needed to get a seat on the black part. He gets to Rosa's seat and said that she needed to move. Rosa **would** not move at all she was decided to sit down. (...)

As was the case for the argumentative texts (cf. example [6] above), example [8] illustrates how several pupils present themselves as visible authors in the first part of expository texts also. The rest of the text is narrative and descriptive, where the few search forms found are largely used for other purposes than expressing WRV, such as *could/would* in the excerpt above, or appear in quotes (e.g. / in "I have a dream"). Another interesting answer to the same prompt is about Martin Luther King Jr. Each paragraph in the main body starts with a question (e.g. *What is the story behind him?*, *Why was he killed?*) which is then answered (Y10_Expo_P60106_CIRI_C). The answer otherwise resembles example [7] – and many other Y10 Expo answers – in that the introduction has an interactional style, while the main body is more impersonal with few of the search forms. In sum, although there are fuzzy borders between argumentative and expository writing, at least some texts in Year 10 indicate an awareness of the difference between the two genres.

6. Discussion

This section discusses our main findings in light of our research questions as well as previous research. Our first research question was "What WRV features do the TRAWL pupils use, and how frequently?" Figure 1 shows all interactional features combined in the argumentative and expository genres (for ease of reference, the ICLE-NO frequencies are included).

Figure 1 gives a visual representation of what our analysis has shown: all the well-known WRV features are used in TRAWL, first-person reference being especially frequent (with *I* dominating). Second-person pronouns and modal auxiliaries are also quite frequent, followed by *I think* and modal adverbs. Question marks are used to a limited extent. The juxtaposition of TRAWL and ICLE-NO frequencies shows that the tendency to be visible writers starts early and that the young TRAWL writers are even more interactive in their high-complexity EFL texts than the advanced learners, who were found to overuse WRV features compared to both French learners and native speakers (Paquot et al. 2013, p. 384).

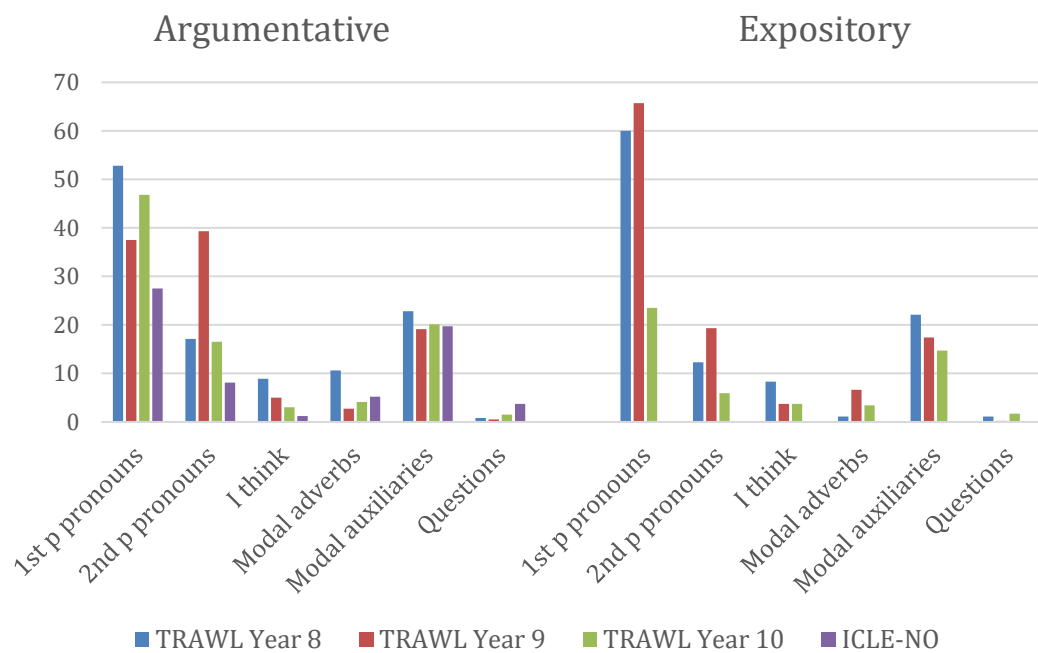


Figure 1. WRV features per 1k words across the corpora

The second research question asked if the use of WRV features changes over time. The clearest change is an expansion of the lexical repertoire from Year 8 to Year 10, primarily in the use of modal auxiliaries and adverbs. The main reason for this change is that the pupils write both more and longer high-complexity texts towards the end of lower secondary school. In Year 8, they are given few obligatory high-complexity prompts, and nearly all pupils choose low-complexity genres for the optional prompts, which are often long answers. In Years 9 and 10, they get more obligatory high-complexity prompts and to some extent choose these genres more for the optional, long-answer prompts also. As a result, WRV features are used with increasing variation on the text level as well, from short, first-person texts to longer texts where different features are used strategically in different paragraphs. Regarding frequency, there is no similarly clear change in the overall frequencies of WRV features as the pupils grow older, at

least not in the argumentative genre. In the expository genre, however, there is a marked reduction in the use of first- and second-person pronouns in Year 10 compared to Years 8 and 9 and to the argumentative genre. Possible explanations for this can be found in the answer to Research question 3.

Research question 3 asked whether the use of WRV features can be related to genre and task type/writing prompt. There is much overlap between the argumentative and expository prompts in that they both tend to request a personal style, so the teachers do not seem to make a clear distinction between the two genres; notably, the words *argumentative* and *expository* are never used in the prompts. In the few cases where the prompts *do* invite an impersonal style, the answers tend to include interactional elements regardless, suggesting that the pupils do not make a clear genre distinction either. One possible explanation for this could be the influence from the Norwegian essay tradition (Øgreid & Hertzberg, 2009), which seems to transfer into both argumentative and expository texts. This being said, the markedly low frequencies of first- and second-person pronouns in Y10 Expo indicate that there could be *some* awareness of an argumentative/expository distinction on the part of both teachers and pupils. Some of the expository prompts invite a more academic, impersonal style, and some of the pupils' answers include longer narrative/descriptive elements with few of the search forms. Overall, however, pupils use many WRV features in their high-complexity texts, a number of which are directly linked to the prompts; some also reflect the texts for reception which pupils use as models for their own writing.

The last research question asked how the young writers compare with more advanced learners with the same L1 background. For this question we only have comparable data from the argumentative genre. The analysis shows that the young TRAWL learners use first- and second-person pronouns and *I think* more often than the older learners in ICLE-NO, who in turn use them more often than the L1 writers in LOCNESS, according to Paquot et al. (2013, p. 381). For the other features, our findings are less clear-cut. Question marks is the only WRV feature where the Year 10 pupils have the highest frequencies in TRAWL, while ICLE-NO has even higher figures, thus suggesting that this feature is more common among older writers (but see the reservation as to ICLE-NO in Section 4.5). As regards modal adverbs, there was a steady rise from Year 9 to university level, while the frequency in Year 8 was the highest in the whole dataset. The frequencies of modal auxiliaries in ICLE-NO and TRAWL do not differ much. However, it was found that the pupils gradually increase their repertoire of modals, with epistemic modality being used more by the older pupils. Paquot et al. (2013) did not investigate modal auxiliaries, but Aijmer (2002, p. 61) found significant overuse of modals in the Swedish component of ICLE compared to native writing. The frequency of modals in Aijmer's material was similar to that in ICLE-NO at about 20 per 1,000 words (see section 4.4), thus indicating overuse in ICLE-NO too. Similarly, Paquot et al. found that modal adverbs are overused by Norwegian learners compared to both French learners and native speakers (2013, pp. 383-384). The investigation of TRAWL indicates that the Norwegian learners' predilection for modal expressions is present from an early stage of learning. In sum, our results corroborate Paquot et al.'s finding that Norwegian learners are frequent users of many WRV features.

7. Concluding remarks

The present study breaks new ground by tracking the use of WRV features in a longitudinal, genre-based corpus of young learner writing, in contrast to most other studies which are based on cross-sectional corpora of advanced learner texts. However, our corpus is small and represents few writers. This places obvious limitations on the generalizability of the findings, although it is reassuring that they are consistent with those of Paquot et al. (2013) for more advanced learners. It would therefore be useful to expand the material in a future study, which might also facilitate more sophisticated quantitative explorations that might gauge the impact of e.g. individual variation as well as school year and various task variables. In its present form, the TRAWL material includes quotes from secondary sources and spelling errors, limitations which should be taken more systematically into account in future studies. Furthermore, a future study should include a relevant English L1 reference corpus. In the present study, we opted against using LOCNESS for reasons of comparability. However, the Growth-in-Grammar corpus (Durrant & Brenchley 2019; Durrant et al. 2020), comprising texts by British schoolchildren aged 8-16, may provide a good basis for comparison in future explorations. A reference corpus of comparable Norwegian L1 texts would offer an interesting opportunity to investigate cross-linguistic influence. It is for example likely, since the high frequency remains stable across stages of proficiency, that modal expressions are more frequent in Norwegian than in (L1) English. Finally, as Hong & Cao (2014) found differences in the use of interactional metadiscourse among different L1-groups, it would be interesting to investigate the extent to which the Norwegian learners in TRAWL use WRV features in a way that is culture-specific. Here the question of stylistic L1 transfer from the Norwegian essay could be further explored (cf. Høegh-Omdal, 2018; Øgreid and Hertzberg, 2009). To the extent that pupils' overuse of WVR features is a problem, the pedagogical implications of our study are clear: When teaching high-complexity writing, instructors need to be more specific about genre requirements, and create more obligatory prompts that do not request the pupils' personal opinion.

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Notes

1. <https://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/research/groups/rawl-tracking-written-learner-language/>
2. Similar findings are reported by Recski (2004).
3. The corpus acronyms stand for the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), the Varieties of English for Specific Purposes dAtabase (VESPA), the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS) and the British Academic Written English corpus (BAWE). See Paquot et al. (2013: 378 f) for further description.
4. Høegh-Omdal's study analyses 13 essays from TRAWL that are also part of the material for the present study.
5. The TRAWL project has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).
6. We abbreviate reference to all the TRAWL subcorpora in this way.

7. Argu: genre code. STEP_1: prompt code.
8. The examples are rendered verbatim, without error correction. WRV features have been highlighted in bold.
9. P60110: pupil code.

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Appendix A: Argumentative and expository prompts

Appendix A lists all the argumentative and expository prompts that have pupil answers in the TRAWL subcorpora used for the present study, i.e. excluding prompts that no pupils answered. The right-hand column shows the total number of texts, i.e. how many pupils have answered each prompt.

Argumentative prompts	Texts (n)
Y8 BECR 3C Long answer.* Inspiring interior. Imagine that you have been put in-charge of a group of students at your school who are focusing on improving your school building and/or your classroom so that it better inspires creativity. You have met a few times to talk about how you would like your school to look. Write a letter to your head of school asking him or her to consider 4 points your group thinks are important when rebuilding your school. Write at least 3 paragraphs. Write your letter in the 3 rd person point of view.	1
Y8 STEP 1 Short answer. In the booklet you have read many quotes about “What is history?” Which is your favourite quote? Explain why.	10
Y9 HERE 3A Long answer. In the booklet you read about Dublin’s top five for teens. Decide on a place of your choice and suggest your top five for teenagers. Give each of your paragraphs a suitable title.	1
Y9 HOBB 1 Short answer. You have just read about different hobbies. Describe a hobby you have or would like to have. Give two reasons for your choice.	14
Y9 HOBB 3A Long answer. In the booklet you read about several different hobbies. Explain what you think would be the top 3 hobbies for people of your age. Give at least 2 reasons why you think each hobby is in your top 3 list.	6
Y10 ARES 1 Long answer. You are going to explain/talk about the British colonization of the world to a friend of yours. Include two advantages and two disadvantages due to the British colonization. Remember title.	2
Y10 ARES 2 Long answer. Choose <u>one</u> of the tasks below and discuss arguments for and against. Remember title. (A It is wrong to kill animals for food; B It is ok to keep animals in zoos; C Lower secondary school should be a grade-free zone; D It is ok to put nine-year olds in prison if they break the law; E 16-year-olds should be allowed to drive cars; F Schools ought to buy a laptop for all students).	14
Y10 ATWE 1A short answer. Choose any English speaking country either from the preparation material or from materials you have used in your English class. Describe ONE tradition your country of choice celebrates AND explain why this particular tradition interests you.	16
Y10 ATWE 2D Long answer. Of the traditions and lifestyles described in the reference material or that you have studied in your English class, explain which country you would like to live in if you could choose. Give specific reasons as to what traditions in the country you would like to experience and why.	4

Y10 ONOF 1A Short answer. In the preparation material you have seen examples of how people connect online and offline. Use two examples from the preparation material and explain how they are relevant to the way you connect and socialise in your daily life.	14
Y10 ONOF 2D Long answer. Create a text in which you describe and reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of online and offline connections. Use one or more examples from the preparation material. Give your text a suitable title.	8
Expository prompts	Texts (n)
Y8 BECR Task 1 Short answer. In the booklet there are three folktales. Choose ONE of the folktales. Write a short text about what you think is the moral of the folktale you have chosen.	10
Y8 STEP Task 2 Short answer. In Appendix 1, you will find the words to the song “We are the world”. Read the words and answer the following: In your opinion what message is in the words of the song?	10
Y8 STEP Task 3D Long answer. The booklet highlights some animals that helped change history. Compare one of them with another animal that you may know about or have read about. Explain why you have chosen the two animals to compare. What are some differences and similarities between the two.	1
Y8 SKES Task 3 Long answer. What is a friend? When you were younger you made friends with other children you played with. Later in life friends become more important in other ways. What is a friend to you?	1
Y9 EEFO Task 2 Long answer. Write a text and talk about table manners in your family and your culture. Remember title.	6
Y9 EEFO Task 3 Long answer. People around the world are starving. In the US, one in six people struggles with hunger. How can future foods solve this problem? Discuss. Remember title.	2
Y9 HOBB Task 3D Long answer. Compare a hobby from the booklet with any other hobby you have read or heard about. Include in your comparison the differences and similarities between the two hobbies.	1
Y9 WRST Task 3 Long answer. Discuss the relationship between teenagers and parents today. Choose your own title.	2
Y10 ATWE Task 1B Short answer. Read appendix 1 on page 6 - 7 and write a short text explaining what you feel the writer thinks about helping others. Use specific words from the text to support your reasons.	16
Y10 ATWE Task 2A Long answer. In the preparation material in <i>A Fine Balance</i> you have read about Dina who lives with her brother Nusswan. Create a text in which you reflect on Dina's situation and her relationship with her brother Nusswan with regard to Dina getting married.	6
Y10 ATWE Task 2B Long answer. In your preparation material there is an article on Jamaican culture. Write about how the lifestyle of this country is similar and different	2

to another English speaking country either described in the preparation material or an English speaking country you have studied in your English class.	
Y10 ONOF Task 1B Short answer. Read appendix 1 "Epiphany" on page 7 and describe what happens in the text. Then explain what you think the change in the relationship between the girls says about the relationship between blacks and whites in the USA today.	14
Y10 CIRI Task A Long answer. Essay. Write a text about (...) the following: "What have you learned about the US from the texts in this chapter." Remember to give your text a suitable title.	5
Y10 CIRI Task B Long answer. Essay. Write a text about (...) the following: "How African Americans and Native Americans have been treated in the US." Remember to give your text a suitable title.	1
Y10 CIRI Task C Long answer. Essay. Write a text about (...) the following: "A person who has been important for American history." Remember to give your text a suitable title.	8

* Y8: school year. BECR 3C: prompt code. Long answer: required length (long or short)