



UNIVERSITETET I AGDER

## **English Academic Writing in the Norwegian Upper Secondary School**

How does upper secondary school ESL instruction help students develop academic writing skills?

IDUN MUNKEJORD

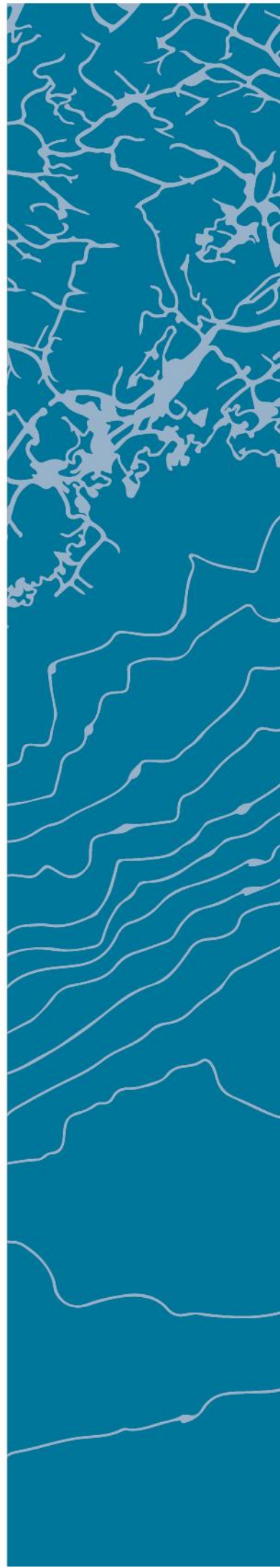
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## **Acknowledgments**

First of all, I would like to express my innermost gratitude to my supportive and patient husband and daughters who have believed in my abilities to complete this thesis. My sincerest thanks to my sister who have provided me with a beautiful office and great company during the creation of this thesis. You have all been priceless.

I also want to thank my supervisor, Sigrunn Askland, for her insight, guidance, useful and constructive comments which have helped shape this thesis to what it is today. Particularly her structural advice has been invaluable. I very much appreciate the time you invested in me amidst a busy schedule.

Third, I want to express gratitude to my employer for giving me the opportunity to study for a master while working as a teacher. And my sincerest gratitude to my wonderful colleagues whose positive attitude and encouragement gave me motivation to carry out this challenging study.

I also want to thank the students that voluntarily participated in my research project, and the teachers who made recruitment possible during the pandemic. Without your participation, there would be no thesis.

Finally, my sincerest thanks to my dad, and my mum in heaven. Thank you for always believing in me and supporting me. You made all the difference.

Kristiansand, 2021

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate how English academic writing instruction in Norway is perceived by upper secondary students, and how it is carried out from their point of view as a support to improve their academic writing skills. The following was the research question for my thesis: What do students in Norwegian upper secondary school know about writing academic English, and how do they practice writing English as a preparation for higher education? The question calls for a review of the current ESL instruction as well as a review of the English subject curriculum (LK20).

The corpus consisted of nine students of English, three females and six males, in their first year of upper secondary school. This thesis examined academic writing in three different schools and four different classes in upper secondary schools in the South of Norway. To fulfill the purpose of my thesis, I carried out a qualitative research project using semi-structured interviews. The participants were asked open-ended questions about what they know about academic writing, what type of instruction they receive in academic English, and how they work with academic English to prepare for higher education.

The results from the study show that it requires much practice, time, and effort to learn to master academic L2 writing as students must work out what ideas they want to express, create sentences with the intended meaning, adjust the language to appropriate levels of formality and modality. Additionally, they must use sources in an independent and correct manner and organize paragraphs into a structure that captures the argument as a whole. To aid students with such L2 academic writing, the five-paragraph essay proves to be the writing format most commonly used.

The findings of this study suggest that students' knowledge about academic writing varies widely. It shows that students perceive a lack of knowledge in formal and argumentative writing as a major obstacle when learning L2 academic writing. Argumentative writing appears to be a neglected genre, and students seem to work the most with articles, which does not demand the same level of reflection as argumentative writing.

The study displays that students enter both upper secondary school and higher education with limited experience in formal writing and limited experience in argumentative writing. Hence, the conclusion is that L2 instruction does not sufficiently prepare upper secondary students for L2 academic writing in higher education.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

According to different studies and my personal experience as a teacher in Norwegian upper secondary school, many students struggle with academic writing in ESL (English as a second language). Written English proficiency is important in Norway for many reasons. Norway is a small language community, and a good command of English is of vital importance in almost all domains. In Norway there is an increased use of English in higher education as well as a growing political and commercial link with the rest of the world (Hellekjær, 2005). As a result, students need to develop their English academic writing skills to master their university coursework in English. They also need a good knowledge of English to be able to do research and write scientific papers. The question is how the Norwegian school system prepares the students for such academic writing in English.

As an English teacher in upper secondary school, I have become aware of how challenging students find academic writing in English. Despite its importance, successful academic writing skills escape many students. Therefore, one important goal in upper secondary schools in Norway is to provide students with effective instruction that helps them meet expectations for good academic writing in English. Doing so requires developing an understanding of which aspects of writing are particularly key to English academic writing quality (Crossley & McNamara, 2016).

Sparboe (2008) investigated the current situation of academic writing in the Norwegian upper secondary school. His findings showed that there were serious issues with the way academic writing instruction was communicated in the English Syllabus (LK97) at the time. He concluded that academic writing was overlooked and under-communicated in the syllabus and in English textbooks, thus leaving most of the responsibility of clarifying academic writing in English to the English teachers. The conclusion of his thesis concurred with both Lehmann's and Hellekjær's works pointing out that the situation for reading and writing was unsatisfying in Norwegian upper secondary school and did not sufficiently prepare the pupils for higher education (Hellekjær, 2008; Lehmann, 1999). This is of course ironic since in the core of the curriculum it was stated that the overall aim of upper secondary education was to prepare the students for higher education. Henceforth, the LK06 was welcomed as a much-needed change, but when Sparboe's master paper was written in 2008, it was

too early to assess the results of the new curriculum LK06 as it was just recently introduced. Since then, teachers and students have been through two curriculums, and the question is if the situation of academic writing in English in the Norwegian upper secondary school has improved since then.

## 1.1 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

Young people today all over the world are extensively exposed to the English language through various types of media. We would therefore expect students to speak and understand English well. However, it does not mean that their writing skills are equally well developed. In the academic world students are faced with many different challenges when they write. A recent study investigating Norwegian teachers' perception of English writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary schools indicated that Norwegian students face challenges with organizing material and structuring texts when they write academic texts in English (Horverak, 2015; Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017). They find it challenging to write the introduction, the thesis statement, write about the appropriate topic in a formal language and conclude sentences of paragraphs in the body, and finally sum it all up in a conclusion i.e., the whole process of academic writing. The problem seems to be global for ESL learners as they struggle with academic writing when they enter university, indicating that they are not fully prepared for university when they leave upper secondary school (Hyland, 2019). An important competence aim for learning academic writing in ESL is to help students pass their academic courses successfully and manage future university studies (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). ESL should therefore teach students to think and reflect, organize ideas, and structure texts adequately when they write academic papers.

In this paper, I will study the current situation of ESL instruction in the Norwegian upper secondary school, but from the students' perspective. Therefore, in my *thesis I would like to investigate what students in Norwegian upper secondary school know about writing academic English, and how they practice writing English as a preparation for higher education.*

The research questions of this thesis are: ***What do students in Norwegian upper secondary school know about academic writing in English, and how do they practice writing academic English as a preparation for higher education?***



The purpose of the thesis is not to discover universal truths, but to investigate how English academic writing instruction in Norway is perceived by upper secondary students, and how it is carried out from their point of view as a support to improve their academic writing skills. The purpose of my project is to investigate if the current ESL instruction in upper secondary effectively helps the students develop academic writing skills. The question calls for a review of the current ESL instruction and a review of the English subject curriculum (LK20). When I started this project, the new curriculum LK20 had just been implemented for vg1 English<sup>1</sup>. The students had followed the curriculum for half a semester, which is a short time for assessing its full impact. Hence some of the review will be on the results of the LK06/13 curriculum (which students have followed for the past seven years). For my investigation, I will interview some students of vg1 English to hear their views and opinions on academic writing instruction. I will then analyze the different aspects of ESL academic writing instruction by looking at the LK13/LK20 vg1 English syllabus, which provides the foundation for the expected teaching practices in the subject (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a, 2020).

## **2 THEORY**

### **2.1 ENGLISH IN THE NORWEGIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Traditionally, English was regarded as a foreign language in Norway. Nevertheless, this situation has changed with the increased access to English through various international media sources (Rindal, 2013). The status has now changed from being a foreign to a second language (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). However, when compared to the definition of ESL (English as a second language) in other countries, where it has the status of an official language (Graddol, 2006), it is not really a second language either. Therefore it could be argued to have an in-between status; it is neither a foreign nor a second language (Graddol, 1998; Rindal, 2013). Since English or any other language is often understood as the second language acquired after the first language, English would be considered an ESL in a Norwegian context (Harmer, 2015, pp. 2-4). Hence the term ESL will be used to indicate that it is not the first language for students. In this paper I will refer to English as a second language by using the terms ESL or L2 interchangeably.

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<sup>1</sup> The first year of English in the general university and college admissions certification.

In the Norwegian educational system, all Norwegian children start school at the age of 6 and have a legal right to 13 years of free education. The school system is organized into primary school (years 1-7), lower secondary school (years 8-10), and upper secondary school (years 11-13). When they enter upper secondary school, they can choose between general studies<sup>2</sup> to prepare for higher education, or vocational studies to prepare for a specific job. English is obligatory every year through years 1-11 (primary, lower, and the first year of upper secondary school) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a).

In terms of grades, there are no grades in primary school. School exit exams are administered after years 10 and 13. The students may be elected to take a written or an oral exam after the final year of lower secondary school (year 10) and the final year of obligatory English in upper secondary (year 11). After year 11 students in general studies can choose to continue with English for one or two more years and specialize first in international English, then in either social science studies or literary studies in English. However, these so-called programme subjects in English (years 12, 13) are to be changed next year in the LK20. Nevertheless, my study will focus on first-year general studies in upper secondary school.

The Ministry of Education directs the documents that govern the school system, and national curriculum plans provide the framework for schools and teachers. Until recently, based on the LK06/13, the students in vocational studies and general studies had the same English subject curriculum and took the same English exam. According to LK20 they will now follow the same subject curriculum, but different competence aims, and they will be given different exams (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

### 2.1.1 THE HISTORY OF ESL INSTRUCTION IN NORWAY

All teaching is based on underlying theories, models, teachers' beliefs and practical experience. In this section, I will introduce some of the ideas that have influenced writing instruction in English in the past.

For several centuries and up until the 1960s, second language instruction was dominated by the *grammar-translation method*, where grammar instruction of written

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<sup>2</sup> The branch of upper secondary school that leads to general university and college admissions certification.

language was the central element in second language teaching (Drew & Sørheim, 2009, p. 23). In the 1960s and later, new methods emerged with the *audio-lingual method* focusing on listening and speaking, *the natural method* based on Krashen's ideas that language output will emerge after large amounts of comprehensible language input (Lightbown & Spada, 2013), and the *communicative method* focusing on communicative competence. These approaches all prioritized spoken language to production of texts. While the grammar-translation method neglected oral communication with a strong focus on grammar, it could be argued that the newer methods focused on oral communication skills and resulted in a neglect of grammatical knowledge needed to produce formal and well-written texts. Today the philosophy of many language teachers is that students will benefit from a balanced approach including all the methods mentioned above. With the introduction of the L97 curriculum, the primary aim was to develop both students' oral and written English (Drew & Sørheim, 2009, pp. 27, 30).

Due to the low PISA ranking in 2001, the Knowledge Promotion (LK06) was introduced. In LK06, writing as a basic skill received a central role in the curriculum as a step towards life-long learning (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b). Writing serves as a tool for learning in all subjects and as an instrument for the students to show their competence.

Sparboe's research (2008) on English academic writing in Norwegian upper secondary school, showed that the concept of academic writing was overlooked and under-communicated, a situation that made teachers' instruction a laborious job having to compensate for lack of writing methodology in the English curriculum (LK97). In his conclusion, he states that he looks forward to the results of the LK06 curriculum which he believed would improve the situation for the better on the topic of academic writing instruction. With a clearer syllabus and more solid criteria to what an academic text in upper secondary should contain, he hoped circumstances would improve in the future. Thirteen years later we are again at a crossroads switching from LK06/13 into yet a new reform LK20. In this thesis, I expect to find that academic writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school has improved since Sparboe conducted his research in 2008.

In the next chapter, I will set out to describe the aspects of writing that are particularly key to L2 academic writing quality. To be able to understand how to write academic texts in English, students need to understand what academic writing is. Academic writing needs a lot of study and practice to develop learners' academic writing skills. Therefore, it is important to study the features of academic writing to comprehend what is expected of the academic genre.

### 2.1.2 THE FEATURES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

In this paper, I have chosen to use the term “academic writing” when referring to what most upper secondary school teachers seem to call “formal writing”. Academic writing is the term applied in the new English subject curriculum (LK20): “*use academic language in working on (...) own written texts*” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). In my thesis, the term “academic writing” refers to “*writing which is clear and concise, focused, structured and supported by evidence with the purpose to aid the reader's understanding*” (Leeds, 2020).

Proficiency in academic writing is a crucial component in higher education, and students are expected to enter higher education having already acquired adequate academic writing skills (Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017). Mastering the features and criteria of academic writing is essential to produce texts in the academic genre. According to Hyland (2002), the general features of academic writing such as explicitness, objectivity, emotional neutrality, and appropriate genre requirements are inadequate among students. The focus of this chapter is therefore to enhance what features upper secondary students must master to succeed with academic writing in English at university level. Below I will therefore describe the most important features of academic writing since they will serve as a reference for the analysis of my findings.

Producing a piece of “good” academic writing involves several steps. Some of these are outlined below:

- Be factual, concise, and accurate (Bush, 2013)
- Be objective, formal and use concise language which refrains from personal pronouns, slang, contractions and generalized terms (Lee, Bychkovska, & Maxwell, 2019; Pritchard, 2013)
- Generate ideas, organize material, draft, review, and revise written work (Linnæus, 2021)

- Structure and create paragraphs and sentences and link them into cohesive and coherent texts using transition words (NTNU, 2020)
- Build an introduce-develop-conclude structure where the language is argumentative and reflective to demonstrate different sides of an issue (Dwankowski, 2018)
- Create a thesis statement in the introduction to give the text focus and direction (Bush, 2013)
- Read and look for relevant data and quote sources (Bush, 2013)
- Argue logically for opinions in an academic language by using theory and sources (NTNU, 2020)
- Paraphrase to avoid plagiarism without changing the meaning of the original text (Elizalde Esain, 2017)
- Address a specific audience and choose the appropriate style for writing in different contexts (Hyland, 2007)

It is important to remember that academic texts are written with an academic audience in mind, and the writing style needs to conform to the conventions of the field being studied (Linnæus, 2021). Typical models of academic writing could be essays, articles, and texts from the coursebooks. To be precise, an **article** is written to inform the readers about a topic and may investigate, describe or present information, facts or knowledge (Globalskolen, 2021). Furthermore, instead of expressing personal opinions and arguing, an article may refer to what other people have discovered about a topic. The purpose of **argumentative writing**, on the other hand, is to influence or convince a reader about a topic supporting arguments with solid evidence (Skrivesenteret, 2014). Essays are typical examples of argumentative writing as they analyze and criticize a topic (Andrews, 1995).

Furthermore, English learners come from different learning backgrounds and writing experiences, have different personalities, aptitudes, and levels of motivation. These are crucial factors that will influence how successful students become at academic writing (Hyland, 2014, p. 33).

When it comes to argumentative skills in academic writing, the ability to argue is a core attribute of all forms of advanced level of education (Andrews, 1997, pp. 259-269). However, argumentation can appear to be a vague concept that is difficult to

grasp, as it is much related to the learner's personal development and self-efficacy (Elander, Harrington, Norton, Robinson, & Reddy, 2006). Research shows that students who receive good grades on their essays, manage to efficiently integrate structures with content (Prosser & Webb, 1994, pp. 125-138) and build arguments rather than information (Elander et al., 2006). In lower levels the emphasis is more on the form (Peck & Coyle, 2005).

Another difficult concept to grasp is formality. The lack of a clear definition of formality and the focus on discrete features to avoid, can be limiting for both ESL students and teachers. Liardét et al. (2019) argue that the focus should rather be on what to include to achieve formal language. An accumulation of multiple errors across a single sentence for instance can reduce the perceived formality of the text, and lead to significant interruption and confusion for the reader (Faigley, Carey, & Munoz, 2017).

Furthermore, modern communication influences formality. There appears to be an increase in the use of different degrees of informality in the written mode (e.g., emails, text messages, etc.). This use of informal expressions may impact the quality of academic discourse (Liardét, Black, & Bardetta, 2019). Heylighen & Dewaele (1999), on the other hand, accentuate that formal written language tends to be less interactive, describing the context from a detached, impersonal, objective point of view.

In the next chapter, I will present what academic writing skills upper secondary students are expected to master.

### 2.1.3 WRITING SKILLS IN THE ENGLISH SUBJECT CURRICULUM (LK20)

All students' work on academic writing in English must be founded in and comply with the competence aims in the Norwegian curriculum. The new English subject curriculum (LK20) sets the following criteria for academic writing for upper secondary students. Only the competence aims that focus on writing will be quoted below.

Students are expected to be able to:

- *“use appropriate strategies for [...] text creation”*
- *“[...] use academic language in working on [...] own written texts”*
- *“express himself or herself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, receiver, and situation”*

- “use knowledge of grammar and text structure in working on own [...] written texts”
- “[...] critically assess the reliability of the sources” of different factual texts
- “use different sources in a critical, appropriate and verifiable manner”
- “write different types of formal texts [...], including multimedia texts with structure and coherence that describe, discuss, reason and reflect adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation”
- “assess and revise own texts based on criteria in the subject and knowledge of language”

Since the LK06/13 applied to the students of my study in their year 10, the term “academic” was not yet used in the competence aims. However, since the introduction of the LK20, “academic language” is a term used in the competence aims (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). The term “formal writing”, on the other hand, is a term stated in both the LK06/13 and LK20. In LK06/13, however, it is only presented in the general part as “distinguish between *formal* and *informal* written language”, but not in the competence aims. This can be confusing. Nonetheless, in the LK20 it is emphasized clearly in the competence aims as “write different *formal* texts [...] adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation”.

The English teacher has considerable influence on academic writing instruction; first and foremost because there are very few concrete instructions in the choice of writing methodology in the English subject curriculum. This applies to the previous LK06/13 as well as the new LK20 syllabus. Subsequently, it means that it is up to the teacher to decide how to conduct the teaching of writing English. The teacher’s decisions in the classroom will of course be informed by the teacher’s theories and beliefs about what writing is and how students learn to write. In other words, the instruction will be guided by both practical and theoretical knowledge (Hyland, 2014, p. 1)

The next chapter will look at research on academic writing challenges in L1 (first language) and L2, both in a Norwegian and in an international context. It will investigate what possible instruction approaches could help solve these challenges.

#### 2.1.4 THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY AS A MODEL TEXT IN ACADEMIC WRITING

To succeed with academic writing in English L2, it is important to include example texts or models as a part of the instruction. Recent studies conducted by Horverak (2015) and McIntosh (2017) found that the five-paragraph<sup>3</sup> essay was the most commonly used writing format in English L2 writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school. To get started with academic writing in upper secondary school, the five-paragraph essay format appears to be an effective building block for novice academic writers (Nunes, 2013, p. 296). It is helpful as a guide for their writing as it provides students with a clear structure of how to organize their texts, ideas, and thinking into an introduce-develop-conclude format (Weyers, 2014, pp. 39-42).

Some of the advantages of the five-paragraph essay are that it helps the students stay on topic and not digress, and it frees the students from worrying about structure and concentrate on content (Nunes, 2013). Nevertheless, some criticism of the five-paragraph essay is that in upper secondary school students are expected to write longer assignments in an academic language. The format could be too short for developing in-depth arguments, and thus students may end up developing ideas only on a surface level (Brannon et al., 2008). In higher education, students will have to write sophisticated and in-depth papers to meet university requirements. However, the benefit of the five-paragraph essay is that as students get used to academic writing and reach college, they will have developed the capacity to handle more workload and the ability to extend the five paragraphs into several paragraphs when more depth is required from academic writing in higher education (Smith, 2006)

Another criticism is that the five-paragraph essay is considered a rigid form that could restrict students from exploring their own thoughts, and that the writing format emphasizes structure over content (Campbell & Latimer, 2012). As ESL teachers are inclined to view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers, their focus tends to be directed to form rather than content (Sommers, 1982). If the form becomes the valued outcome instead of the content, teachers may risk grading the students' papers based on their ability to reproduce the form instead of communicating content (Labaree, 2020). Nevertheless, for students who find writing a good academic essay challenging, the five-paragraph essay format makes writing a

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1 for a detailed description of the five-paragraph essay provided by NDLA (Norwegian Digital Learning Arena).



more manageable task. Besides, for teachers the five-paragraph essay is a fairly easy way to teach writing, which students tend to find helpful.

#### 2.1.5 ACADEMIC WRITING AS A GENRE

ESL students are expected to write assignments that may range from one paragraph to several pages, to tests and exams with few sentences or complete essays (Zemach & Rumisek, 2016). Part of the learning process of academic writing entails trying and failing, and learning from experience during the process and from feedback (Grendstad, 1986). Still, academic writing is more than just putting together words to make sentences and communicate information. It constitutes a genre in itself (Hyland, 2008). Hence Hyland suggests that a genre approach can be a useful approach for students to get prepared for academic writing at university.

Hyland (2008) defines genre as “a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations”. Genre pedagogy is based on the principle that an awareness of texts facilitates writing development (Hyland, 2019). The teacher plays a key role in providing the students with examples of different genres. When students’ genre awareness increases, it has a positive impact on their writing ability. They learn to control language and writing purpose, content, and context. Each genre has its own conventions and provides students with an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured, and why they are written in a certain way (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014). This explicitness gives learners something to aim at, making writing clear rather than acquiring genre by relying on an exploratory hit-or-miss method. The conscious manipulation of language works to shape a clear meaning.

Genre is not a concept any longer in the Norwegian curriculum. After the revised version of LK06 was published in 2013, the English subject curriculum removed the mentions of genre (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017). The same goes for the new curriculum LK20. Like the previous curriculum, it instead focuses on the purpose of a text, and that it should be adjusted to its recipient and medium. However, the students must still learn which genre they should choose to fulfill the writing acts and purposes. The curriculum suggests that the students learn to write “different types of formal texts [...] with structure and coherence [...] adapted to the purpose and situation” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). This implies that

students should be given the opportunity to write a variety of texts in different contexts for different purposes, particularly because at university level greater demands will be made of their writing competence (Drew & Sørheim, 2009, p. 87). Since there is no reference to a specific genre or text types in the curriculum, the students' ability to choose a suitable text for the specific task, will be part of the assessment (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017).

Learning academic writing through the lens of genre can serve as a robust pedagogical approach as it helps students identify the kinds of texts they will have to write in different disciplines. However, genre use varies across cultures and languages. This is one of the reasons why writing in English can be difficult for second English language speakers. What is considered logical, relevant, or well-organized in writing can differ in different cultures, which can have implications for teachers and learners of academic writing (Hyland, 2008). Research suggests that texts in English, compared to texts in other languages, tend to be more explicit about structure and purpose, less tolerant of digressions, more cautious in making claims, and use more sentence connectors.

## 2.2 WRITING RESEARCH

Several studies on L1 compared to L2 writing suggest that L2 learners have problems with many aspects of the academic writing process. These include organizing material, planning, structuring texts and reviewing. In addition, students seem to struggle with adjusting the language to appropriate levels of formality along with constructing arguments, using and citing sources critically.

### 2.2.1 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON L2 WRITING COMPARED TO L1 WRITING

Studies show that L2 English writers have more difficulties organizing material than L1 writers. It seems that organizing ideas when structuring a text is a challenge for L2 English learners in general (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2010). Studies also show that L2 writers plan and organize less than L1 writers (Shaw & Weir, 2007, p. 38).

Translation of ideas from L1 is challenging as students may not possess the necessary language resources yet to write effectively in a range of genres and understanding the argument structure. This may affect how much attention students are able to devote to planning, monitoring, and reflection of what they have written (Hyland, 2015). Furthermore, L2 writing is more cognitively demanding for students

than L1 writing as it requires paying attention to several different levels (spelling, syntax, lexical retrieval) at the same time which in the L1 requires less mental capacity. Students may feel that their knowledge of lexis or grammar is not adequate to represent their ideas and therefore find it too laborious to plan. As a result of not planning, students may end up employing more general terms, paraphrasing, or employing simpler syntactic structures in their texts than if they planned the text carefully (Field, 2004, pp. 66-67).

The use of conjunctions to link words and phrases together is another challenging element reported in L2 English writing (Leki et al., 2010). Argumentative texts for instance exhibited less paragraphing and coherence, looser structure, less variety, and more errors in terms of transition words than L1 writers (Silva, 1993). Hyland (2015, 2019) explains that for L2 writers some of the main problems are related to language difficulties such as insufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar thus often resulting in struggles with conveying their ideas in appropriate English. Connor & Long (1996) claim that this could be due to linguistic and rhetorical conventions possibly not transferring well across languages and might interfere with the L2 writing.

Furthermore, different research reported in Silva (1993) confirmed that the composing process patterns (planning, writing, and revising) are similar in L1 and L2, but that the composing is more difficult and less effective in L2, leaving L2 texts simpler than L1 texts. Shaw and Weir (2007) found that L2 writers did less organizing and planning while Silva's (1993) studies additionally revealed that L2 writers did less reviewing, less rereading and reflection of their writing. As a result of this approach to L2 writing, the L2 writing process resulted more laborious and less productive than the L1 writing process, less fluent and accurate, and less varied and sophisticated.

Writing in a second language is a challenging process. Many students are not prepared for the required standards of academic writing when they enter higher education and will therefore face difficulties in a system where the key assessment tool is writing (Hyland, 2019). In higher education writing skills are highly valued and considered an important component of overall proficiency for ESL learners globally. The argumentative and persuasive modes are particularly regarded as crucial for success in these contexts (Coffin et al., 2005).

The above issues demonstrate that there is a growing need to support students with their academic writing in English in the upper secondary school to prepare students for higher education. Surveys of first-year university students revealed that essay writing was the most commonly requested topic for advice and guidance (Elander et al., 2006, pp. 36-37). Even professional academics often struggle to specify what constitutes a good essay. A lecturer quoted “I can recognize a good piece of student writing when I see it. I know when it is well structured and has a well-developed argument, but it is difficult to say exactly what I am looking for” (Creme & Lea, 2008). Nevertheless, there are a few core criteria professionals seem to agree to play a central role in academic writing in both L1 and L2; use of language, structuring, and argumentation (Elander et al., 2006).

### 2.2.2 RESEARCH ON L1 WRITING IN NORWAY

There is limited research in Norway on how students in upper secondary school are taught academic writing skills, and what skills they have acquired before they start higher education (Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017). Nevertheless, a study conducted by Jonsmoen & Greek (2012) revealed that students, when they leave upper secondary and enter higher education, have limited abilities in academic writing. They are simply not prepared for writing argumentative texts, using critical reflections, or citing sources. A similar study conducted in Sweden that may be relevant also in a Norwegian context, reported that students found the transition from upper secondary school to university very challenging and struggled to meet the requirements for written communication at a university level. The research revealed that upper secondary teachers were unsure of what academic writing comprises, and students had only to a limited degree been prepared for academic writing. They frequently copied texts, did not show critical reflections, and seemed unaware of the requirements for citation (Ask, 2005).

Writing research over the last 25 years shows that students in secondary school generally struggle with argumentative writing and that they do not often write argumentative texts (Berge, Evensen, Hertzberg, & Vagle, 2005). Part of the problem with argumentative writing is the limited time devoted to it in schools. Students lack experience with the reading and writing of argumentative texts (Andrews, Torgerson, Low, & McGuinn, 2009). In Norway, the writing and reading of argumentative texts have always been strongly advocated in subject Norwegian in upper secondary school, while narrative modes have dominated the teaching of writing at primary and lower

secondary levels. Although in recent decades there has been an increasing focus on acquiring writing skills in the curriculum, writing instruction has not necessarily followed the same course (Berge et al., 2005).

In the QAL project (Quality Assurance of learning outcome in written Norwegian) implemented from 1998 to 2001, a large-scale evaluation of students' writing skills on the final Norwegian examination in lower secondary school, revealed that argumentative writing is challenging for the students. It revealed that students generally have a preference for narrative text types when they graduate from lower secondary school, but have problems with argumentative writing (K. L. Berge & Hertzberg, 2005). The main challenges seem to be to create structure, argue, and use a formal language, and these appear to persist in upper secondary school.

Øgreid & Hertzberg (2009) reported in another study on argumentative writing in lower and upper secondary school that the prevailing features of the students' argumentative texts were oversimplified language, use of expressive style, and arguments that lacked elaboration and scientific terms. Øgreid & Hertzberg (2009) further explained that this could be the case since in the subject Norwegian using emotionally based arguments may be accepted if they are well formulated. Furthermore, L1 accepts humor, irony, and free association in argumentative texts which in other disciplines are considered inappropriate devices (Øgreid & Hertzberg, 2009, pp. 463-464). The researchers suggest that this is because of the long tradition of writing causeries and literary essays. And since text norms in the Norwegian subject often set the standard for writing, norms tend to be transferred to other disciplines as well and may influence subjects such as the L2. Studies show that L2 users' language background and experience, in our case L1 (Norwegian), influence L2 writing (Connor & Long, 1996). Cultural and linguistic differences between L1 and L2 may also cause challenges with writing academic texts in ESL.

### 2.2.3 RESEARCH ON L2 WRITING IN NORWAY

Studies conducted by Lehmann (1999) and Hellekjær (2005) found that the English writing and academic reading proficiency were unsatisfying in Norwegian upper secondary school and did not sufficiently prepare students for higher education. Later, Sparboe (2008) found that there were serious issues with the way academic writing instruction was communicated in the English Syllabus (LK97) in the

Norwegian upper secondary school. Another study which examined if LK06 competence aims prepared students for academic writing in theory, ended up inconclusive about whether this was the case in practical terms (Shirazi, 2010).

Other studies in Norwegian upper secondary school conducted by Horverak (2015, 2019) show that the main challenges with academic writing for Norwegian students in ESL seem to be how to structure texts and adjust the language to appropriate levels of formality, how to construct arguments, cite and use sources in an independent and correct manner (Horverak, 2015, 2019). Another disputed issue in the study was whether teachers should allow the use of using the first personal pronoun when students write essays. Horverak (2015) also revealed that teachers usually focus on using the five-paragraph essay approach when they teach students how to write argumentative texts in English. The five-paragraph essay is further described in 2.1.4.

While the teachers seem to agree about the importance of teaching how to write specific text types and adjust language to task and context, they have different opinions on how detailed the instruction should be (Horverak, 2015). Some teachers fear that if the instruction is too explicit, it may impede creativity. Other teachers focus on the need to learn how to structure a text and are open to creativity within certain writing frames. What material is used to teach writing varies from teacher to teacher. It is difficult to find academic example texts in English textbooks (Horverak, 2015, p. 13). Hence teachers must often develop their own samples, usually based on previous student essays. Therefore, newly educated teachers may find it challenging to teach English L2 writing as they lack material and enough instruction in L2 English writing in the teacher training. This is supported by a recent study which found that English-teacher education had not prepared them sufficiently for teaching written text production (Rødnes, Hellekjær, & Vold, 2014).

To conclude, L2 learners seem to struggle with various aspects of L2 academic writing such as structure, formality, coherence, and genre. They also find it difficult to argue, cite and provide evidence for sources.

### **3 METHOD AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 CHOICE OF METHOD**

This thesis examines academic writing in three different schools and four different classes in upper secondary schools in the South of Norway. The overall aim of my study was to investigate what students know about academic writing, and how they practice academic writing in vg1 English studies in upper secondary school in Norway as a preparation for higher education. To fulfill the purpose of my thesis, I carried out a qualitative research project using semi-structured interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Since qualitative research methods may be time-consuming to analyze, it is more common to operate with smaller sample sizes (Jacobsen, 2018). Hence my selection consisted of nine students and comprised three females and six males at the ages of 16-17 years in their first year of upper secondary school studying vg1 English. All the students were Norwegians with Norwegian as their L1. Since this type of research method operates with fewer participants, the aim is not to make generalized claims or conclusions, but rather to provide a rich understanding of important aspects related to academic writing in L2 English.

To secure the anonymity of the participants, their names were replaced with pseudonyms. Although I used a volunteer sampling strategy by contacting English teachers in my school network and asked for volunteers in their English classes, the selection of participants was strategic to a certain degree as I tried to get a varied sample in terms of gender and age (Cohen et al., 2018, pp. 129, 222). The criteria for the selection of individual respondents were being a student in vg1 English.

Due to the pandemic, recruiting students was somewhat challenging. Teachers were busy and perceived the job of recruiting students to my project as additional work in a hectic school day. Students were partly being homeschooled and were less available than under normal circumstances. Therefore, most teachers sent out a message on the student platform "Its learning" asking for volunteers. In some classes, students failed to respond and recruiting students was difficult. However, I finally managed to get in touch with two teachers that managed to recruit volunteers from their classes. The students received a detailed information letter in Norwegian about the master project before the study started (appendix 5). After being recruited for the project they

received an even more detailed information letter to know their rights as participants (appendix 6).

### 3.2 PARTICIPANTS

Preferably I wanted to recruit four females and four males from two schools, and a male and a female from each class. However, due to the difficulties of recruiting students, I ended up with two males and two females from one class at one school, four males from another school representing two classes, and one female participant from yet another school. The reason for this selection was that I had managed to recruit one male and one female participant from my own school network while waiting for a response from different schools. Hence, in total, the participants represented three schools and four classes (see table 1 below).

Table 1:  
Overview of participants

	Female	Male	Total students
School 1, class 1	2 (Nina, Anita)	2 (Olav, Kåre)	4
School 2, class 2		3 (Anders, Terje, Stig)	3
School 2, class 3		1 (Per)	1
School 3, class 4	1 (Mette)		1
Total	3	6	9

### 3.3 THE INTERVIEWS

I chose a semi-structured design for my interviews i.e. I followed a set of pre-prepared questions so I could modify the questions, wording, and explain along the way (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 511). The interview guide had nine questions and was designed with the research questions in mind (appendix 2 and 3). Since I was interested in the students' subjective view on the topic, the participants were asked open-ended questions about what they know about academic writing, what instruction they receive in academic English, and how they work with academic English to prepare for higher education. I focused on interrupting as little as possible to let the participants explore without restraints to uncover the real meaning. In the



interviews, I tried to capture the students' knowledge and perception of academic writing in vg1 English studies, as well as the students' confidence level regarding their academic writing competence. The interviews took between 40 minutes and an hour and were conducted in Norwegian to make the setting more comfortable and less stressful for the participants. The interview guide was therefore translated into Norwegian. After each interview, I wrote notes in order to help me remember details about each participant in case I needed more information (Jacobsen, 2018, pp. 200-201).

The interviews took place in January and February of 2021 after school hours. I met seven of the students at their corresponding schools to make them feel more comfortable, and two participants at an office I borrowed. The interviews were completed individually face to face allowing me to carefully sample the respondents' opinions and knowledge on the subject of academic writing. The semi-structured interview was based on a given topic with preformulated open-ended questions and keywords. This gave me several advantages such as allowing for a conversational style with the students, getting answers with richer details as I could be open to new data and explore it for new insight as it surfaced, ask for relevant information, and clarify misunderstandings as they emerged during the interviews (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 508). From time to time, I had to apply prompts if the students were hesitant or vague in their answers due to uncertainty about the meaning of academic writing. The doubts quickly disappeared when I pointed out criteria from my own list. As a result of this semi-structured method, I felt that the respondents became more involved and seemed motivated to reply.

I tried to follow the principle of saturation for the interviews although it was challenging to recruit participants. When I had completed eight interviews, I started to think that no new insights were produced with new data. Of course, I can never be certain that the data was completely saturated, but I decided I had enough data to support the emerging theory.

### 3.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The interviews were carefully transcribed before they were analyzed. I transcribed the part of the data which was relevant for my project. Small talk has been left out. In the beginning, I transcribed every word, also unnecessary expressions like "eh" and

my confirming “mm” which in hindsight only seemed disturbing, but after a couple of interviews, I realized that it was difficult to analyze the data from these interviews and started transcribing into a more formal and written style, making the data more to the point, even if it meant moving around the order of the words and sentences (Kvale, Brinkmann, Anderssen, & Rygge, 2015, pp. 208-210). I have translated into English the parts of the interviews that will be provided as examples in this paper.

The interviews were first transcribed in Word and then imported into Nvivo, a software for qualitative analysis. The transcriptions were read multiple times (in Nvivo) and the coding involved categorizing the different questions and answers before analyzing the data to discover overlapping thoughts or answers to the research questions (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 668). For the analysis of the interviews, I followed a *thematic analysis*, which consisted of collecting, preparing, reading, and coding the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose a thematic analysis because it is accessible to researchers such as myself with limited experience of qualitative research, an easy and quick method to learn, and because it is a well-proven and widely-used qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data which allows for an interpretation of various aspects of the research topic. I applied Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phase step by step model: (phase 1) familiarizing myself with the data, (phase 2) generating initial codes, (phase 3) searching for themes, (phase 4) reviewing themes, (phase 5) defining and naming themes, and finally (phase 6) producing the report. By sifting, sorting, reviewing, and reflecting on the data, the significant features of the data emerged, and I could use these for subsequent focusing when trying to interpret the data (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 648). The subthemes were developed partly as a result of predefined categories central for academic writing, and partly as a result of the process of analysis.

Finally, I should mention that the design has been approved by the Data Protection Official for Research in Norway (NSD), and all data collection has been conducted in line with their ethical guidelines concerning anonymity and providing the participants with information about the project before start-up (appendix 4).

## 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

I wanted to investigate what students in Norwegian upper secondary school know about writing academic English, and research how they practice writing English as a preparation for higher education. My aim was to find out how ESL instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school helps students develop academic writing skills. Not surprisingly the results showed more than one unique answer. The thematic analysis displayed that particularly two main themes were repeated throughout the participants' demonstration of what they know about academic writing, and how they practice academic writing as a preparation for higher education. The findings and analysis will be organized topic-wise, and only the most relevant results will be extracted from the findings. The two main themes and subthemes are indicated in table 2 below, and suggest focus on how students work with language, structure, and content.

Table 2: Thematic patterning in the analysis of L2 academic writing

Main themes	Sub-themes
The language formality in academic writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- students' perception of the concept of academic writing</li><li>- contractions and slang</li><li>- argumentative and reflective language</li><li>- objectivity</li><li>- coherence by using transition words</li><li>- sentence variation by using synonyms</li></ul>
The structure and content of academic writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- planning</li><li>- model texts and the five-paragraph essay</li><li>- thesis statement</li><li>- argument and evidence, sources and citation</li><li>- genre as a means to develop text awareness</li></ul>

### 4.1 HOW DO STUDENTS WORK WITH LANGUAGE FORMALITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING

This chapter will look at challenges around formality in academic writing, which is one of the two main themes that crystallized during my thematic analysis. Academic writing is expected to have a certain level of formality with which language must comply to be considered sufficiently academic. Participants emphasize that they struggle with formality in their texts. They use contractions, strive to be objective, and have difficulties arguing. They also struggle with creating coherence and varying sentences.

#### 4.1.1 STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE CONCEPT OF ACADEMIC WRITING

When I started the interviews, I realized that the students were not familiar with the term “academic writing”, although LK20 specifically states that the students must be able to “use academic language in working on [...] own written texts”. Even though the term “formal writing” and “academic language” are both applied in connection with writing texts, the participants are nonetheless more familiar with the term “formal writing” than the term “academic writing”: As one of the participants said: “We have used the term formal writing, not academic writing. Academic writing is a very formal word” (Anita).

The fact that academic writing is not defined in the curriculum, can be confusing. Instead, the teachers seem to apply the term “formal writing”. When I explain that generally speaking, academic writing is a type of formal writing, the participants immediately understand the meaning. The fact that the participants are more familiar with the term “formal writing” than the term “academic writing” is perhaps because it is the term teachers are most familiar with from both the LK06/13 and LK20 curriculum, or because teachers prefer using the term “formal writing” since they may associate “academic” with a more scholarly audience, viewing “formal” as a more accurate term for upper secondary. In that case, it corresponds with the students' perception of academic writing as advanced and complicated, and a term associated with writing at university level: “I imagine a university with a lot of people just writing” (Nina).

Based on my findings the students themselves particularly identified language formality as one of the main challenges with academic writing. All the students report that they struggle with writing formal texts in L2 English. Per and Nina explain that remembering to write texts in a formal language is the most challenging part of academic writing. Nina explains that “when I write, I usually write out my thoughts, but it does not work when I need to use formal language because my thoughts are usually not in a formal language”. Anita reports that when she finds herself in a good flow of the writing process, she easily forgets to apply formal language to her text, especially when she is short of time. Terje, on the other hand, worries that since academic writing is quite new to him, he finds it challenging to know if his writing is academically correct. These findings seem to agree with Horverak's (2015, 2019) research confirming that the biggest challenge for upper secondary students is formal writing.

In the next chapters, I will analyze the different informal writing styles that the participants reported caused them most difficulties. In the analysis, I will try to give possible reasons for the challenges students face.

#### 4.1.2 CONTRACTIONS AND SLANG

In my study, the participants report that they receive feedback describing their language as too informal and not appropriate for the purpose and situation. They apply informal language such as contractions, personal pronouns, and colloquial expressions in texts although all nine participants report that they have learnt that contractions and slang should not appear in formal language. Many students question why they have learnt contractions in school at all when these now prove unacceptable in a formal written text. The students report that it can be a struggle having to unlearn the use of contractions such as “can’t” and “isn’t” that they spent much time earlier school years learning. Suddenly in upper secondary these are not permitted in writing.

The fact that in lower levels L2 students study everyday topics where informal English makes up a major part of the language, could be a possible explanation for the overuse of informal language (Lee et al., 2019). In primary school, students often study dialogue or narrative voices in English where contractions are a great way to simplify language and make it more personal, friendly, and authentic (Hasund, 2019): “In primary it was a must to use contractions [...] Now, it is difficult to stop using it” (Nina). Nevertheless, contractions make formal writing seem unprofessional or non-academic as suggested by Anders: “Sentences must be to the point and each sentence have a meaning. Earlier I have just produced a lot of text, but now I must economize my words more”. Liardét et al. (2009) accentuate that academic language is grammatically accurate and economic. In higher education students are expected to use more academic language, and the students’ writing is expected to follow the same development. This is in accordance with the aim of the LK20 to prepare the students for higher education: “It shall prepare the pupils for an education [...] that requires English language competence in [...] writing” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

In terms of formal language teaching, several students report that in vg1 they quickly learnt that they were expected to start using formal language. It seems common practice among the teachers to introduce the students to formal language by looking at the difference between informal and formal language. One student Per says: “The

teacher tells us that it is important that we know the difference between when and how we should write formally and when and how informally". He explains that for a deeper comprehension of the concept, the class has written the same text in both formal and informal English and describes the informal version replete with slang and contractions, and improper words: "It looked more like commentaries on Facebook or Youtube". Another student, Mette, claims she did not receive instruction in the difference between formal and informal writing in lower secondary. She affirms that her lower secondary school did not prepare her well for academic writing in upper secondary and says that the transition came as a shock to her. In upper secondary she suddenly realized that her writing in English was much too informal and had to work hard to adjust her language: "Even contractions were permitted in lower secondary school [...] Our English teacher did not mind if we used words such as "don't", she explains.

It may seem as if some lower secondary teachers have not emphasized sufficiently in their L2 writing instruction the difference between *formal* and *informal writing* as required in the curriculum (LK06/13 10<sup>th</sup> grade). In the main subject areas, writing is presented as involving "distinguishing between formal and informal written language" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b). Perhaps the lack of a clear definition of formality in the curriculum is a reason why teachers interpret it as difficult, and in upper secondary some teachers focus on discrete features to avoid, which can be rather limiting for both L2 students and teachers (Liardét et al., 2019): "She gave us instruction about what words and expressions we should avoid, and which we should use in a formal language" (Nina). Instead of focusing on what not to include, it might be more beneficial to focus on what to include to achieve formal language. In upper secondary, it seems as teachers approach formality by particularly focusing on the difference between formal and informal writing (LK20), probably because they experience this as a much-needed area of improvement when students go from lower to upper secondary school.

The overuse of informal language could also be due to a lack of genre awareness in the students, which makes it difficult to control language and writing for a purpose (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014). Since genre is not a concept any longer in the Norwegian curriculum, genre has been replaced by the expression "write different types of formal

texts [...] adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation” (LK20). This will be discussed more in detail in chapter 4.2.5.

Yet another possible reason for the overuse of informal language could be that social media has influenced the way students express themselves in academic writing in English today (Liardét et al., 2019). From social media people have become used to expressing their thoughts and opinions in a limited number of characters, contracting and abbreviating words. This may have impacted how the participants express themselves when they write texts in general, also in the academic environment. The students have become used to an informal language habit which can be challenging to disrupt. The question is whether the students will change and adapt their writing to the academic frame, or if the academic language will gradually become more informal. There are indications that since informality has now invaded a large range of written and spoken domains of discourse, academic writing has also followed this trend (Liardét et al., 2019).

Furthermore, another reason for the overuse of informal language could be cultural and linguistic differences between L1 and L2 such as English being more explicit about the purpose and less tolerant of digressions than L1 Norwegian (Hinds, Connor, & Kaplan, 1987). The fact that L1 allows for more free associations in texts (Øgreid & Hertzberg, 2009), could add to the informal impression of students’ L2 academic texts as they use their language background and experience in L1 to write texts in L2 (Connor & Long, 1996).

#### 4.1.3 ARGUMENTATIVE AND REFLECTIVE LANGUAGE

My participants report that they struggle with argumentative writing and do not spend much time on this (Anita, Nina, Mette, Olav, Terje, Anders, Stig, Per) which corresponds with research results from the past 25 years (Berge et al., 2005). My participants expressed that they often became frustrated with not being able to convey their ideas in appropriate and correct English: “I struggle the most with writing fluent sentences” (Terje). Hyland (2019) argues that this can be due to insufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar for L2 writers, while Connor & Long (1996) argue that it could be caused by linguistic and rhetorical conventions not transferring well from L1 to L2 (from Norwegian to English). This is often the case in argumentative writing (Leki et al., 2010). Eight of the nine students confirm that they

have worked the least with argumentative writing and the most with the structure of factual texts such as articles (based on the five-paragraph approach): “We have not talked that much about how to argue, but we have talked about how we can get across our ideas in a formal way” (Anita). Overall, according to all the students, the assignments they have written so far this year seem to have consisted of a factual text like an article, a literary analysis of for instance a song, poem, a short story, or a novel, and for some participants a rhetorical analysis of for instance a speech. Just a few of my participants seem to have attempted to write an argumentative essay. One participant, Kåre, mentioned that their class did this on the social conditions in the US.

According to Jonsmoen & Greek (2017), when students leave upper secondary and enter higher education, they have limited abilities in academic writing and are simply not prepared for writing argumentative texts, using critical reflections or cite sources. This could indicate, as Berge (2005) claims, that students have challenges with argumentative writing due to a preference for narrative text types from lower secondary school, a tendency which appears to persist in upper secondary school. This could also explain why students feel unable to convey their ideas properly. If students do not work with a particular genre as for instance argumentative writing, students nor teachers can expect students to perform or express themselves well in this kind of text (Andrews et al., 2009). Besides, it takes time to change an old habit from lower secondary school and adopt a new text approach in upper secondary. Hence, academic writing must be practiced.

It is easy to understand that the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary school is perceived as difficult for participants. Anita claims that her lower school did not prepare her for academic writing in upper secondary and says that the transition came as a shock to her. Moving from narrative writing to writing texts where the language must be argumentative and reflective in upper secondary, is quite demanding. The LK20 expects students to “write different types of texts [...] that describe, discuss, reason and reflect”. Argumentative and persuasive modes are regarded as crucial for success in higher education (Coffin et al., 2005). Still, students practice argumentative writing the least and appear to work the most with the genre article which entails more explaining than arguing. This is also suggested by both Anders and Olav who are of the impression that they predominantly work



with factual texts and history. Anders believes this focus is a way to compensate for not studying social science this year.

The fact that students mostly work with writing articles and not argumentative writing, could be due to a lack of confidence with the genre for both students and teachers. With limited exposure to this type of writing, the participants have insufficient knowledge to produce good argumentative texts. They simply lack the imperative writing skills to produce such texts. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge and experience with teaching academic writing could be an underlying reason why teachers do not engage in teaching argumentative writing (Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017), particularly if they are newly educated teachers who feel they lack instruction in L2 English writing (Rødnes et al., 2014). It requires practice and time for both students and teachers to learn to write thorough argumentation and discussion adjusted to an audience and purpose, to use sources in an independent and correct manner, and to adjust the language to appropriate levels of formality and modality (Horverak, 2018).

Argumentation can appear to be a vague concept that is difficult to grasp as it is much related to the learner's personal development and self-efficacy (Elander et al., 2006). Not only that, as Hyland (2014) accentuates, learners' different learning backgrounds and writing experience, their different personalities, aptitudes, and levels of motivation, are all crucial factors that will influence how successful students become at academic writing (Hyland, 2014, p. 33). Voicing judgments, giving opinions and at the same time displaying knowledge can be a demanding task for young students. Besides, not all students have strong opinions about topics at this age and like even less to discuss or negotiate them. To think critically and look for underlying assumptions and ideas, is demanding at such a young age, and even more so when having to express these ideas in academic writing in English L2 (Hundarenko, 2019). Research confirms that students may find it more than difficult enough to express themselves academically in their L1. In addition, due to the possible pressure of performing, ambitious students may prefer other genres of academic writing in English which they know will reward them the desired grade or the teacher's approval.

#### 4.1.4 OBJECTIVITY

Another topic the students identify as challenging is writing in an objective tone. In lower secondary school the students explained that they were accustomed to expressing their opinions using personal pronouns. In upper secondary the academic language is expected to be objective. This means using impartial language void of personal pronouns and separating facts from feelings to make the texts more professional and credible (Bennett, 2009). Instead of expressing personal opinions, feelings, or biases about a topic using personal pronouns, students are expected to provide references and evidence for every opinion they have, consider both sides of an argument and avoid value judgments: “It is fun to argue but challenging when it is not my personal opinion I am supposed to present” (Kåre).

Many students find it hard to detach themselves from the texts to make the text more formal and write in an impersonal tone and from an objective point of view (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). The curriculum states that students must “express themselves in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence [...] adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation” (LK20). Participants seem to know that academic language should be impersonal and must not include personal pronouns such as “I, my, our, us” which can make the tone of writing too subjective. Anita explains: “We have been taught never to write about our personal opinions. We must stay objective and not write *I think* but frame it in a more impersonal way. This year I have learnt ways to replace the expression *I think* with for instance *in my opinion*.” Furthermore, Kåre explains that it is not easy to remember to stay formal and apply the correct language consistently in a written text. It is particularly difficult to avoid using personal pronouns like “I” and “you” and avoid providing your personal opinions. He says that he is aware of the fact that “the text must be a lot less personal now than in lower secondary school as you must prove your points with evidence through the use of sources”.

In academic writing, the focus is no longer on the student, but on the information and arguments they want to make to prove their points (Bush, 2013). Their thoughts and beliefs are now required to be based on lessons, reading, discussion in class, and research rather than what they believe or think. The fact that the students all report this topic of objectivity as a significant challenge, corresponds with Hyland’s (2002) research stating that elements such as objectivity and emotional neutrality were inadequate among students in upper secondary. Still, this seems to be the situation

also for the present study. It could be due to many reasons. First, it could imply that students have worked more on reflective writing where it is appropriate to use the first person and less on argumentative writing: “Not showing my opinions and being very objective, is difficult. When I have an opinion, it is difficult not to show it” (Nina). Secondly, it could again indicate that teachers in lower secondary have not made clear to the students the difference between formal and informal writing in relation to objectivity, or what academic writing implicates, leaving students unprepared for upper secondary school. As Liardét et al. (2019) confirm, the lack of a clear definition of formality can be limiting for both ESL students and teachers. The purpose of the text becomes unclear.

Another possible reason for objectivity being challenging, is the fact that the LK06/13 did not mention formal and informal language like the LK20 does, nor was the use of “academic language” specified. Instead, the competence aims said, “use general vocabulary [...] write different types of texts with structure and coherence”. Lack of specifications can cause confusion for both the students and teachers. When the aims are not explicit enough, the common understanding of “formal writing” may be different and will depend on each teacher’s interpretation of the aims. In the case of my students who followed the LK06/13 in year 10, it seems that in lower secondary, formal writing has focused more on writing correct grammar than on expressing themselves “in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence [...] adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation” (LK20) (Hyland, 2007; Knapp & Watkins, 1994). Fortunately, the LK20 seems to have much more specific competence aims in this regard, that leave less up to interpretation. The LK20 year 10 competence aims clearly state that students should “use academic language in working on own [...] written texts” and “write formal [...] texts [...] with structure and coherence [...] adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

#### 4.1.5 COHERENCE BY USING TRANSITION WORDS

The findings of this study indicate that all nine students seem to be familiar with tools such as connectors or transition words. Participants seem to know they must use these to create coherence between ideas in sentences and paragraphs. Still, one student explains that she had never heard about connectors before upper secondary school and had not given this much thought until this year. According to some participants, their teachers do not dedicate considerable time to teaching transition words but

expect participants to use them all the same: “We have not worked a great deal with connectors, but I apply them in my texts anyway since we have learnt them in the Norwegian subject. And the use is the same in English L2, I believe” (Kåre).

When students work with academic writing in English, they are expected to be able to express themselves with “coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Although teachers appear to encourage the students to use such transition words between sentences and paragraphs, based on students’ views, they do not seem to spend much time teaching the purpose and use of such transitions in detail. Transitions appear to be a device the students are expected to practice in their academic writing in upper secondary without considerable instruction or guidance. Perhaps teachers believe that since the students are accustomed to transitions in Norwegian L1 writing, they will easily transfer the knowledge from L1 to L2 as the L1 is likely to influence the L2 language (Øgreid & Hertzberg, 2009). Besides, in a busy school day, every topic cannot receive equal attention. Therefore, this approach could be a way for teachers to save time.

Nevertheless, when students receive lists of transition words or are referred to textbooks for more information, this could signal teachers primarily view transitions as verbal decorations that embellish the students’ papers to make them sound better, and that this is knowledge students can easily acquire on their own. As a result, students risk adopting the same view as their teachers and fail to understand the significance transitions play for creating coherence in written texts. Participants may not realize that the transitions help them piece together their ideas into a logical and coherent whole. When teachers choose this approach, students may be left with the impression that using transitions in the text is an end in itself rather than a tool to improve coherence in the students’ writing. Nevertheless, if students had a better understanding of how transitions work in order to piece together ideas of a written text into a logically coherent argument (NTNU, 2020), perhaps they would use transitions more consciously when they organize and structure the language of their texts.

Coherence seems to encompass a big challenge of L2 academic writing. Silva (1993) found that writers in L2 English struggled with paragraphing and coherence and exhibited more errors with transition words than L1 writers. Maybe this indicates that

the use of transition words is to some degree dissimilar in L2 compared to L1 and proves Silva's (1993) point that the L2 writing process is less productive than the L1 writing process. The difference in transition use could indicate a cultural and linguistic difference between L1 and L2 that may cause challenges with L2 academic writing (Connor & Long, 1996). English compared to other languages tend to use more sentence connectors and is less tolerant of digressions (Hinds et al., 1987). Participants perhaps need to learn the difference between the L1 and the L2 in this regard. As a result, careful instruction of transition and coherence is important since there is a difference in the application between L2 and L1, and this should not be left to the students to solve on their own.

#### 4.1.6 SENTENCE VARIATION BY USING SYNONYMS

Like transition words, most of the students know they must vary sentences by using synonyms. However, synonyms similarly to transitions appear to be a device the students are expected to practice in their academic writing in upper secondary without considerable instruction or guidance. Few teachers seem to go into details about synonyms in their instruction. Only one class sounds as if they have worked explicitly with synonyms. According to students, the teacher provided tasks to practice the use of synonyms and showed students how to use online synonym dictionaries. The rest of the participants give the impression that they know they should use synonyms to vary sentences, but individually they practice using synonyms differently. Most of the students explain that they apply whichever synonym that naturally pops up in their minds when they write. They explain that they do not actively search for synonyms during the writing process. Only two students mention that they use online dictionaries for synonyms. Nina explains that she only starts looking for synonyms in the text when she has finished writing: "When I am done, I realize I have applied the same word several times. Then I try to change it and look for a different word".

Synonyms can help vary the text but also convey the right level of formality. Students often have a tendency to use non-academic or informal words in their texts such as "good, bad, small or big" which make the text sound informal (Field, 2004) (see 4.2.5 for more details). The use of synonyms is a great tool to avoid repetitions and create variety in a text. It seems that the significance of learning to use synonyms in academic writing in English is underestimated by the teachers. Maybe they believe that students use synonyms in Norwegian (L1) writing all the time and assume that

the same knowledge can easily be transferred into L2 English. This could be true to some extent but does not justify that teachers leave the topic to the students to investigate on their own at such a young age. Self-study requires self-discipline, and the students are perhaps too young for this. It is thus the teacher's task to teach students synonyms explicitly and provide opportunities to practice these in different contexts. When students are not familiar with the academic language yet, it is rather challenging to distinguish between academic and non-academic words because they have not developed a sensation for academic language so far, particularly for first-year upper secondary students whose vocabulary is likely to be limited in terms of academic writing. They do not have a perception for which synonym would be contextually appropriate in a text as they have not developed a habit of using synonyms. If the students are left on their own to figure this out, it requires knowledge of how to use synonym dictionaries effectively as the accuracy of meaning is important. Although synonyms are useful, if they are not used correctly, they can create the opposite effect and distort the meaning or the tone of the writing. Hence it is paramount that the students learn to pick synonyms that are appropriate and accurate in the given context: "If I do not know what the synonym means, I do not dare to apply it in my text. I have heard stories about people who have made big mistakes with synonyms" (Nina).

## 4.2 HOW STUDENTS WORK WITH STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF ACADEMIC WRITING

This chapter will look at challenges with creating structure and content in academic writing, which constitutes the second main theme that crystallized during my thematic analysis. Studies show that students struggle with planning, structuring, and organizing their L2 academic texts. In addition, they find it difficult to use and cite sources. Nevertheless, the application of model texts and developing genre awareness seem to be effective steps towards improving academic writing skills.

### 4.2.1 PLANNING

Planning constitutes one of the important basic writing skills in the LK20 (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020): "Writing requires planning, formulating and processing texts that communicate". Even though the students know they should plan their texts, only five out of nine students appear to plan their writing carefully (Terje, Stig, Nina, Anita, and Kåre). The five students who plan their writing, on the

other hand, also report it is challenging to write academic texts. Anders, for example, finds it difficult to express his thoughts in proper words in English. Terje says that even though he plans his writing, it is difficult to get started, but his approach is to write the words “introduction, body, and conclusion” and then note down a keyword for each paragraph and start to fill in information into the different paragraphs.

The rest of the participants (Per, Mette, Olav, and Anders), jump directly into writing. Olav explains that he thinks it is difficult to plan and structure the text in advance. He says: “I think it is wise to read carefully through the task and reflect on some ideas, but not think too much about the task”. He explains that he mainly creates the outline in his mind, starts writing immediately and rarely plans his paragraphs. Olav is quite representative of his group. Anita and Mette prefer to start writing immediately as well and develop the text in the process. Nina explains that she sits down for fifteen minutes before beginning to write, just to think about the text without taking notes. These findings follow Silva’s (1993) and Shaw & Weir’s (2007) research in that L2 writers do less planning and organizing of their writing when compared to L1 writers. One reason could be that students perceive encoding their thoughts into linguistic form a heavy cognitive workload in the L2 as their knowledge of lexis and grammar is inadequate to represent their ideas (Hyland, 2015): “Writing a structured text with the accurate and correct words I find very difficult” (Per). Translation of ideas from the L1 can be challenging for students, particularly when they must write in an academic language. The students may feel their knowledge of lexis or grammar is not adequate to represent their ideas and therefore find it too laborious to plan. But as a result of not planning, they may end up employing more general terms, paraphrasing, or employing simpler syntactic structures in their texts than if they planned the text carefully (Field, 2004, pp. 66-67). As a result, the appropriateness and sophistication in the language required for academic writing are difficult to achieve. “Oftentimes I must start my writing over again and proceed only with some of the ideas”, Mette explains.

Altogether, planning or not, there seems to be little doubt that the L2 writing is more cognitively demanding for the participants than writing in the L1. While the L1 requires less mental capacity, the L2 requires paying attention to several different levels (spelling, syntax, lexical retrieval) at the same time (Hyland, 2015). Several of the participants sound very ambitious about their school tasks and aim for high

competence. The planning process is an important step in achieving high competence of course, but such a process is time-consuming in a busy school day. Hence maybe the lack of planning could also be due to time limitations in addition to a challenging cognitive workload for the students.

#### 4.2.2 MODEL TEXTS AND THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY

The five-paragraph essay format appears to be an effective building block for the students to start their academic writing in upper secondary school (Nunes, 2013). None of the students in the present study seem to have tried this five-paragraph format in lower secondary school. In upper secondary they find it helpful as a guide for their writing because it provides them with a clear structure of how to build their texts and organize their ideas and thinking into an introduce-develop-conclude format. It helps them stay on the topic and not digress. Besides, it frees the students from worrying about structure and concentrate on the content.

All nine students explain that they have received instruction in academic English writing. However, the depth of the instruction differs. It seems to be common practice among the participants' teachers to introduce students to academic writing by using the five-paragraph essay. All the participants have studied the five-paragraph essay structure but to a different degree. The fact that the five-paragraph essay seems to be the most commonly used writing format in the English L2 instruction, is in accordance with Horverak's (2015) and McIntosh's (2017) studies. Particularly six of the students report in detail how their teachers early in the school year taught them how to write an academic essay based on the five-paragraph essay. The aim was to help them achieve good academic writing skills. They explain that the teachers demonstrated academic writing on the black board and provided model texts as a useful tool to develop English academic writing. The teachers illustrated the principles with details and explained how the five-paragraph essay can work as a simple and effective format for writing an academic essay with a clear line of argumentation.

One of the participants, Olav, enthusiastically shares his newly acquired knowledge about how to structure an academic text in upper secondary school using the five-paragraph essay. He sums up the procedure in careful detail:

You need to start with an introduction and then present three main arguments or sources you have studied, the third paragraph usually presenting the



“crunch”, sort of the best part. Then you need to write a conclusion at the end which connects everything and concludes what you started questioning in the first place. We have focused on beginning and ending the same way, and how to grab the reader’s attention.

Olav seems to successfully have internalized the recipe for academic writing as he is more or less quoting Weyer’s (2014) “Academic writing for success”.

Participants seem to have learnt from the five-paragraph essay that academic writing in L2 usually follows the same overall structure with an introduce-develop-conclude structure, and that each paragraph in the five-paragraph essay should contain one idea. Anders explains: “The first sentence in the paragraph sets the standard for the rest of the paragraph, and the arguments or ideas of each paragraph should be given equal emphasis so that the paragraphs have approximately the same length”.

Furthermore, the participants explained how the teachers used the five-paragraph essay to talk about how to support a thesis and write proper paragraphs with a topic sentence, evidence, and transitions. The teachers had talked about how the paragraphs should be backed up by examples and sources in response to the question at hand. Afterward, the students themselves had to apply the same principles to their assignments to show they had understood the concept. The teachers then provided feedback on these essays and gave them more model texts that could assist them in tackling new and unfamiliar genres (see 4.25 for analysis genre). This way the students could learn to understand what is to be expected of a finished product in terms of structures, conventions, and features of academic writing.

However, there is one drawback regarding the five-paragraph essay. In upper secondary school, my participants are expected to write longer assignments in an academic language. The format could be too short for developing in-depth arguments, and thus students may end up developing ideas only on a surface level (Brannon et al., 2008). In higher education, students will have to write sophisticated and in-depth papers to meet university requirements. Hence students should be made aware that the five-paragraph essay, first of all, works as a useful framework that might be expanded into several paragraphs if they want to succeed with academic writing in higher education (Smith, 2006). However, in upper secondary,

the format is great for novice academic writers to get them started with academic writing. By the time they reach college, participants will hopefully have the capacity to handle more workload as they get used to academic writing. Perhaps this is the view the participants' teachers have chosen.

The five-paragraph essay is useful in some contexts, but in college students are expected to write in multiple academic genres. Therefore, another criticism of the five-paragraph essay is that it is by many researchers considered a rigid form that could restrict students from exploring their thoughts, and that the writing format emphasizes structure over content (Campbell & Latimer, 2012). If the form becomes the valued outcome instead of the content, and the teachers grade the students' papers based on their ability to reproduce the form, then the instruction has moved in the wrong direction (Labaree, 2020). Nevertheless, for my participants who find writing a good academic essay challenging, the five-paragraph essay format makes writing a more manageable task at this stage. And students do report that they are of the impression that content is of equal importance to structure and language in upper secondary. This indicates that from the students' perspective the teachers seem to apply a healthy approach when they assess the structure, content, and language of a five-paragraph essay. In lower secondary participants report that they could have got away with a good language and structure, but not in upper secondary: "In lower secondary you could get a good grade if the language was correct, even without presenting great content" (Olav).

Nevertheless, it is in the nature of academic writing that language, structure, and content carry equal weight in academic writing: "In lower secondary, the main emphasis was on language and grammar. Content was less important while now they are equally valued, it seems" (Nina). Furthermore, Prosser & Webb (1994) found that students who perform well on their academic essays seem more able to efficiently manage to integrate the structure with content and build arguments rather than information (Elander et al., 2006). Quite a few of my participants appear to be high competence performing students and seem to have understood that they must integrate the structure with content: "I get the impression that language and content are very important in upper secondary, but how I build my text seems even more important" (Stig). The student seems to have realized that while in lower secondary

communicating grammatically correct information was enough, now the students must structure the information by building arguments.

#### 4.2.3 THESIS STATEMENT

It looks as if the participants have made different progress with academic writing. Since the interviews were conducted at the beginning of the second semester, some of the students had not thoroughly worked with a thesis statement yet and were just beginning to study the five-paragraph essay. The rest of the participants sounded quite confident in writing an introduction with a thesis statement. It can be challenging, they say, but explain that they know what a thesis statement is from L1 writing, and some of them assume it takes the same shape in English: "I have practiced writing a thesis statement in many other subjects and know how to do it" (Anita). This proves that at least some participants transfer knowledge from other subjects such as Norwegian. This confirms what Øgreid & Hertzberg (2009) said about the fact that text norms in the Norwegian subject (L1) often set the standard for writing and tend to be transferred to other disciplines and may influence other disciplines such as L2 English.

For those students who struggle with structuring texts, challenges seem to begin in the introduction where the students are expected to outline the direction their writing will take by giving necessary background information and context (Bush, 2013; Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017). In my study four out of nine students report that this can be a difficult issue: "Thesis statement can be a bit challenging", Olav admits. Such challenges with academic writing are compatible with findings revealed in Horverak's (2015) research where it was found that students in upper secondary school struggle with writing the introduction and the thesis statement. This could partly be caused by the fact that two of the participants (Mette, Per) have not yet started working in-depth with developing a thesis statement in L2 English. They seem to be unsure of how to write one and do not seem to know where in the essay it should go.

Hyland (2019) reports that challenges with academic writing is a global issue among ESL learners. ESL learners find it challenging to crystallize into a sentence or two the main idea of their text, as it requires a clear picture of what they want to express (Bush, 2013): "It is not that easy to know what to write in the introduction and the conclusion" (Terje). Students at this age often do not have this clear picture, and it

makes it even harder to express such ideas in writing in an academic tone in English L2 (Hundarenko, 2019). It should be commented though, that two of my participants (Per, Anders), are part of the group previously discussed, who do not plan their text in the first place. If these students do not plan the text nor have a clear thesis statement, they will not have a clear idea of what message they want to convey. Their texts will create confusion for readers, and the students themselves will easily get lost in an unstructured text.

#### 4.2.4 ARGUMENT AND EVIDENCE, SOURCES AND CITATION

Moving from lower secondary school where writing often concerns building information and developing opinions, to upper secondary where the students are expected to think critically, build arguments and look for underlying assumptions and ideas in texts, is demanding at a young age, and even more so when having to express these ideas in L2 academic writing.

The participants in my study sound quite familiar with using sources in different subjects when they write academic texts. The LK20 expects students to be able to “critically assess the reliability of the sources” of different factual texts (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). They seem to know they must look for sources to back up their ideas or arguments and cite these correctly in a list at the end (NTNU, 2020). They explain that using and citing sources is much more important in upper secondary than in lower secondary. Kåre says: “It was a bit challenging in the beginning knowing how to use sources and back up arguments with facts, and not only use personal opinions as we did in lower secondary”. His opinion is quite representative of the rest of the participants. Hence, this proves that participants appear to have developed a certain awareness for using sources critically. They talk about backing up opinions and being objective.

Nevertheless, Anita reports that she finds quoting sources very confusing because teachers require different formats, she claims. This happens despite the schools using the standard quotation management system “Kildekompasset”: “I feel the teachers in the different subjects want us to quote sources differently. Some want footnotes, others in-text citation and yet others only a source list at the end”. According to a study conducted by Jonsmoen & Greek (2017), it was discovered that students have limited abilities in academic writing when they leave upper secondary

and enter higher education. They found that students are not prepared for citing sources. In the case of Anita, it could rather indicate uncertainty on behalf of the teachers of how to cite sources correctly. If teachers are unsure of this, it will also create confusion in the students.

Furthermore, the LK20 expects students to be able to “use different sources in an [...] appropriate and verifiable manner”. Paraphrasing information and citing the paraphrased sources would be a way of using sources in an “appropriate and verifiable manner”. Paraphrasing sources seems to cause more trouble than citing sources for my participants: “It can be difficult to interpret sources by first reading through the content and then paraphrasing it in your own words” (Olav). Ask (2005) discovered that students in upper secondary frequently copied texts instead of paraphrasing and seemed unaware of the requirements for citation. However, students may copy simply because they have not learnt how to properly paraphrase or cite references. Then there is a risk that when students do not feel confident enough to use their own words in academic writing, or they do not understand the purpose of paraphrasing (Elizalde Esain, 2017), students might fall into the temptation of copying instead, particularly if they have a fear of failing or a desire to get a good grade.

Interestingly, Ask (2005) found that even upper secondary teachers are unsure of what academic writing comprises. Consequently, how can students be expected to master the features of academic writing if teachers struggle? Ask (2005) discovered in his study that upper secondary students lacked the ability to show critical reflections. In my research, this is supported by Kåre who explains that it is hard sometimes to articulate his own opinions properly based on sources, comment on them and provide evidence for his opinions. Nina also explains that “using other people’s opinions on a topic and refer to their views, can be complicated since in lower secondary we learnt to talk about what we personally believe, not the point of view of someone else”. As mentioned in section 4.1.3, students predominantly write articles in upper secondary school and not very often argumentative texts. Hence, they have not had much chance to develop their reflection and critical thinking: “The most challenging issue is not to come up with arguments, but to find out what researchers say about my topic. It is challenging to compare sources and find out which seems most convincing and reliable” (Kåre). However, this is what the LK20

expects students to be capable of doing “critically assess the reliability of the sources” of different factual texts (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Students may get frustrated from searching through academic texts where the language is often abstract and complex. Furthermore, students know that if evidence from sources is used inappropriately, this could damage their texts’ credibility and undermine their argument, or possibly alienate their audience (Hundarenko, 2019). In argumentative writing, students must support arguments with solid evidence from for instance scientific studies, statistics or experts (NTNU, 2020). In an article, on the other hand, the tone is more persuasive where the student explains a topic and must perhaps defend an opinion to persuade the reader, but not necessarily take a stance on an issue, which is easier as it does not require the same level of critical reflections. Research confirms (Hundarenko, 2019) that students find it more than difficult enough to express themselves in their L1. Besides, not all students have strong opinions about topics at this age, and like even less to discuss or negotiate them. Due to the possible pressure of performing, ambitious students may therefore prefer to write persuasive texts to argumentative writing because they believe it is more likely this genre will reward them the desired grade or the teacher’s approval. Likewise, teachers may select a genre that they know will benefit students’ academic writing more.

To conclude, the participants seem to be able to cite and use sources critically at least when writing articles, which they practice the most. On the other hand, students seem to be a bit more uncertain of how to paraphrase information and adjust it into an argumentative text to provide evidence for their own opinions reflected through other sources. Academic writing forces students to think critically. Research can only give the students the information they need, but after that, it is their responsibility to analyze the information and have an opinion on their findings. This seems to be rather challenging. However, it is paramount that teachers themselves have the competence to model how this is done if the students are to succeed with academic writing. Many teachers today feel that they lack the knowledge and experience to teach L2 academic writing (Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017) and as a result, risk transferring this uncertainty to the students.

#### 4.2.5 GENRE AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP TEXT AWARENESS

According to Hyland (2008), academic writing constitutes a genre in itself and he therefore claims that a genre approach will be a useful approach when preparing students for academic writing at university. Practices of English writing instruction from the participants' perspective seem to comply well with Hyland's genre pedagogy. The participants report that they do not talk about genre in class. They know what it is from the L1, but genre as a concept does not seem to be a subject in the L2. Instead, they work with "different types of texts" like the LK20 states. Nina explains: "We do not talk much about the purpose and genre of our texts".

Since genre is not a concept any longer in the English subject curriculum, genre has been replaced by the expression "write different types of formal texts [...] adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation" (LK20) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). The LK20 states that the students need to learn to write *different* types of texts. This signals that variation is important, not only for the students' sake but because the LK20 requires that students learn *various* types of writing. In addition, they are expected to learn to structure texts according to purpose and situation. This involves an emphasis on context, which is a relevant aspect in genre-pedagogy (Hyland, 2019). Hence, when the competence aims state that students should study different types of texts, in practical terms it could be interpreted as having to work with different genres. Students report that they practice writing different genres (different texts), but the teachers concentrate the instruction on one genre at a time before the students themselves dive into writing tasks associated with the same genre. Anita explains: "When we study different academic texts, we learn about them, but I do not know if we get to practice all types of academic texts. We get to practice the ones we study."

The emphasis on various text types is an instrumental approach for teaching academic writing to students and should reflect a range of genres: "We have studied literary and factual based texts. I feel we have studied various texts, but we have not entered into depth in all of them" (Anita). Participants work with different genres such as poems, songs, speeches, short stories, novels, articles, or essays in textbooks. It seems to be the teachers' objectives that the participants learn the common features of various types of texts and thus how to respond to them appropriately (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014; Hyland, 2019). They seem to be conscious of linking the different text types with

contexts that aid the students' academic writing: "The teacher gives us copies of example texts to study" (Mette).

Studying content and language in different types of texts helps the students understand the intended purpose of texts (Horverak, 2016; Hyland, 2007). When teachers break down the features of texts, students learn to develop writing skills as they gain knowledge of appropriacy expected in certain texts depending on the receiver and situation. As the participants are exposed to various texts, they are likely to develop a consciousness of how texts adapt to purpose and situation and learn to apply the same principles when they write their own academic texts. This is paramount as at university level greater demands will be required from their writing competence (Drew & Sørheim, 2009).

The genre approach may help students to be able to identify what kinds of texts they must write in their different chosen disciplines. Asking students to write too early without this preparation, on the other hand, may lead students to produce unstructured or inappropriately organized texts. Taking the time to first examine the types of texts students are expected to write, will help their communication become more appropriate for the task they are completing. This could be the reason why two students reported they have not started studying the five-paragraph essay too much in detail yet. Perhaps the teachers wanted the participants to get used to different types of texts before diving into academic writing.

As the competence aims in the LK20 curriculum are much in line with what a genre-pedagogy focuses on, it is not surprising that the L2 academic writing instructions in this study seem to comply well with a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching academic writing (Hyland, 2008). Nevertheless, some issues can create problems regarding how complete a genre instruction the different participants will receive. First, the teachers may have different opinions on how detailed the instruction should be (Horverak, 2015). Some teachers may fear that if they are too explicit in their instruction, it will impede the students' creativity. Other teachers might prefer creativity within a certain writing frame, such as the five-paragraph essay. Since there are very few concrete instructions provided in the choice of writing methodology in the English curriculum, teachers are free to choose their instruction method. Consequently, the choice of texts depends on the teachers and their preferences. Hence the instruction the participants



receive will depend on their teachers' practices and beliefs (Hyland, 2014). As a result, students may end up becoming unequally prepared for L2 academic writing in college.

Secondly, a variety of genres is usually found in students' textbooks, but many participants report that they hardly use their textbooks this year. Instead, teachers seem to pick material from other sources to comply with the LK20 competence aims: "I do not think we have used the texts from the textbook". We receive copies from other material" (Mette). This could be because new textbooks have not yet successfully been adjusted to the new curriculum (LK20), and teachers prefer searching elsewhere for useful sources to teach academic writing. It could also indicate that teachers have not adapted to the new curriculum yet and choose to stick with the old material they have always employed. Such teacher practices could consequently undermine participants' opportunity to improve their chances of getting better prepared for academic writing in English, which is one of the LK20's main competence aims.

Lastly, the fact that students mostly work with writing articles and not argumentative writing, as aforementioned, could be caused by a lack of confidence with the argumentative genre for both students and teachers. With limited exposure to this type of writing, the participants have insufficient knowledge to produce good argumentative texts. According to participants, in lower secondary there was more focus on grammar and structure than adjusting texts to purpose and situation: "As long as the text was grammatically correct in lower secondary, everything was fine. However, in upper secondary there is more emphasis on structure" (Per) [...]. "In lower secondary showing you could write in English was most important, but now you must also prove that you manage to write good texts" (Nina). This focus on grammar and structure could be yet another reason why participants lack the imperative writing skills to produce argumentative texts. Additionally, a lack of knowledge and experience with teaching academic writing could be an underlying reason why teachers do not engage in it (Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017). This will in turn impact the students' academic writing skills.

Teaching genre awareness is paramount to help L2 learners become independent academic writers at university. Such awareness helps students understand the

purpose of texts and enable them to adapt their academic writing to receiver and situation.

## **5 DIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS**

Although it may seem premature to offer suggestions for teaching based on findings from a small group of participants, several implications are evident that can enhance L2 academic writing instruction. First, students perceive a lack of knowledge in formal and argumentative writing as a major obstacle in learning academic writing. For language instructors, it is an important responsibility to develop materials targeting this knowledge. Although many good writing instruction practices have been revealed in this study, there seems to be a lack of systematic practice that gives all L2 learners equal opportunities to develop academic writing skills. It seems that the practices of writing instruction are developed in school by the individual teacher based on their experiences and beliefs. It is necessary to develop teaching material in L2 academic writing that is available for everyone, to ensure equal opportunities for students to develop English academic writing skills. The material should target the part of academic writing where L2 learners struggle the most, which in this study constitute formal and argumentative writing skills. Within these areas this study shows that students struggle with such elements as expressive and oral language, the use of academic vocabulary and creating coherence. While in argumentative writing students struggle with reflective and critical thinking, paraphrasing information and providing evidence for sources.

In teacher training institutions there seems to be a lack of focus on argumentative writing instruction. This may have resulted in teachers avoiding instructing the part of academic writing which constitutes argumentative writing. Hence, improvement in teacher instruction in this genre is imperative if students are to be properly prepared for higher education. If we want L2 learners to become competitive professionals in any field of study, they should particularly work with argumentative writing if they are to become persuasive writers who make their research comprehensible for the world. Therefore, ESL academic writing should be introduced in lower secondary school and developed further in upper secondary as it takes time to become a competent L2 academic writer. My study of L2 academic writing has made me reconsider my own approaches to teaching academic writing. Introducing a course in ESL academic

writing at the beginning of the school year, I believe is a must of current reality. If teachers are to prepare students for academic writing in higher education, they should start developing students' academic writing skills as early as possible. In fact, L2 teachers should ask students at the beginning of the year what difficulties they have and consider students' input when they plan instructional activities.

Furthermore, to ensure the quality of academic writing upon entry at university, students should attend a specific course where they learn how to write academic papers in higher education. Today it is expected that the students have this knowledge upon entry into the academic world. When even native speakers of English need to take courses to improve their academic writing skills, there is no reason why Norway should not make this obligatory in upper secondary school and higher education.

Learning academic writing in a second language is extraordinarily difficult, and instructing students about how to do it is just as challenging. This study shows that it requires much practice, time, and effort to learn to master academic writing in L2. An understanding of what L2 learners know about academic writing in English, and how they practice L2 academic writing in preparation for higher education, may help teachers better understand learners' perceived difficulties with academic writing and what kind of instruction L2 students need to succeed with academic writing in higher education. To gain a deeper understanding of this matter, it would be an idea to investigate how students work with academic writing in lower secondary and later study students' experience with academic writing when they enter university.

## **6 VALIDITY**

According to Cohen et al. (2018), validity refers to the degree to which "a particular instrument measures what it intends, purports or claims to measure". Kvale (1996) (cited in Cohen 2018) argues that there are as many different interpretations of qualitative data as there are researchers. Fortunately, various versions can coexist as no reality is unitary. As researchers we want our data to be as sound as possible. Reliability can "be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in a natural setting that is being researched" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 270). While validity is concerned with the accuracy of a measure, reliability is concerned with the consistency of a measure.

When conducting this study, some limitations became evident. First, only a small group of participants were investigated which makes it difficult to apply the findings to other contexts. Data based on larger groups would produce more salient and reliable findings, as large data is more likely to produce discrepancies. Therefore, greater insight could have been gained if more participants had been included in the study. Also, measuring the effects of the new LK20 after only half a year is a short time. Hence conducting interviews in the latter semester of year 11 would have strengthened the research validity.

Second, more knowledge could have been gained about academic writing in L2 English if additional methods were used over a longer time period such as observing how the students work with academic writing. One could have conducted a longitudinal study where participants' academic writing was assessed at the beginning and end of the school year. Additionally, upper secondary teachers could have been interviewed about their L2 academic writing instruction. Despite these limitations, the study produced some useful data that can increase teachers' awareness of how students should work with academic writing. The study may not be generalizable, but the group of informants represent a varied group of L2 English learners, and therefore present knowledge that can be transferred to similar contexts. It is reasonable to expect that the findings in this study reflect existent practices and opinions in many L2 English classrooms in Norwegian upper secondary schools. Hopefully, they will provide a rich understanding of important aspects related to L2 academic writing.

Another limitation of the study is that participation was voluntary. Due to recruiting difficulties during the pandemic period, few students volunteered. Teachers had to ask some students directly. Hence selection bias might have been a threat to the validity of the study since the teachers' choice of participants may not have been random (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010, p. 278). They could have chosen the most resourceful and committed students in the group. In addition, more males than females volunteered to participate. As a result, gender could represent a potent source of bias (R. M. Lee, 1993). Additionally, maybe only students who feel confident will volunteer in such a task. These are all factors that could have impacted the validity of the findings and present a more positive picture of L2 academic writing

practice in upper secondary than is currently the state. I did not, however, know anything about the students' academic abilities in advance.

It is inevitable that the interaction between the interviewer and respondent does not influence the data (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). For instance, as a researcher, I could possibly have built better rapport with some interviewees than others. Generally, students were very positive, but some were more communicative than others. Hence, what some students say gets more attention and referrals than the contributions of other less communicative students. Consequently, some respondents influence the outcome of the study more.

Since I am reporting the situation through the eyes of participants (Geertz, 1974), there is the risk I do not manage to catch the meaning participants give to data and draw the correct inferences from it. I may even have misperceived what respondents implied in their answers. Another limitation is that the interviews may have been affected by a researcher bias (Maxwell, 2012). The fact is, based on my experience as a teacher in L2, that my attitudes, opinions, and expectations as a researcher could have influenced the way results are interpreted or what answers are sought in the interview. I could have selected data simply to fit a preconceived or ideal conception of what I am investigating, thus risking interpreting or looking for the results that fit my theory (Cohen et al., 2018).

In the case of the interviews, the validity of the data relies on the respondents being honest, and that they understand the questions they are being asked. The students were informed that the interview was anonymous, which gave them every reason to be honest in their responses. One of the strengths of the study was the open-ended questions, which allowed respondents to illustrate their view of the world. Respondents had the freedom to pursue areas of personal interest with minimal guidance from the interviewer (Cohen, 2011, p. 69). Such questions allowed for unanticipated issues to be raised and illuminate elements that may not have surfaced otherwise. I used an interview guide that I adjusted in the process as some questions did not catch the essence, whereas others were too leading (p. 273), but mostly they were applied as a reliability check of what the respondent had already said. As a result, questions were adjusted accordingly after each interview and therefore improved continuously, which

may have affected the reliability of some data depending on when respondents were interviewed.

Although there are limitations of the methodology applied in this study, I would argue that it is sufficiently reliable and valid to yield some useful insight into L2 academic writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school. I have done my best to report the situation through the eyes of participants (Geertz, 1974). I have looked for consistency between findings and with literature (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 250). My background as a teacher is likely to have influenced how I interpret the data, but the students' personal involvement and response during the interviews should secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The aim of my thesis has been to investigate how the current ESL instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school helps students develop academic writing skills. The following was the research question for my thesis: *What do students in Norwegian upper secondary school know about writing academic English, and how do they practice writing English as a preparation for higher education?* By learning about the challenges students face, teachers can gain valuable insights to inform their practice. This study has concentrated its investigation on the elements of language, structure, and content of L2 English academic writing.

The study showed that the participants perceive many aspects of academic writing to be challenging. The transition from lower secondary to upper secondary school was laborious, and students found language formality to be one of the most challenging elements of academic writing. The participants appear to lack a general awareness of the difference between formal and informal writing from lower secondary school. They have difficulties with contractions and use oversimplified language, and they tend to use personal pronouns instead of an objective tone which makes the writing seem non-academic. The participants report that they had to work thoroughly with the difference between formal and informal writing this semester before being introduced to academic writing.

This study shows that students have worked with various types of texts, but to different degrees depending on the teacher. Some educators seem more explicit than others in terms of teaching academic writing. The participants have developed a genre awareness of certain text types and have learnt to apply the same awareness when they write their own academic texts. Nevertheless, the study reveals that the students feel that they do not possess the necessary language resources to write effectively in a range of genres and to understand the L2 argument structure. This affects how much attention they can devote to planning and reflection of what they have written, and most of the participants prefer to jump straight into writing. Fortunately, to aid the academic writing, participants receive model texts from the teachers to help the students organize their ideas and thinking while building a text. The five-paragraph essay is used by all the students' teachers and provides the students with an effective skeleton that works for various types of texts. Hence, participants can concentrate on content and language and need not worry too much about structure.

Furthermore, the study shows that students have difficulties with the research element of academic writing and are uncertain of how to paraphrase information and adjust it into an argumentative text to provide evidence for their opinions. Participants find it difficult to generate arguments, produce justification, and paraphrase sources, and they appear to lack critical thinking skills from lower secondary where narrative modes and building information instead of building arguments dominated the instruction. The challenges reported in this study are similar to those reported in previous studies on L2 English academic writing such as Horverak (2015, 2019), Hyland (2019), Eland et al. (2006), and Berge et al. (2005) to mention a few. Besides, there seems to be limited opportunities for the participants to develop their argumentative writing skills, and the lack of practice with argumentative writing seems to persist in upper secondary where the L2 teachers appear to have a preference for writing articles instead.

Overall, students in upper secondary today appear to be more prepared for academic writing in upper secondary than when Sparboe conducted his research in 2008 (Sparboe, 2008). However, although the LK20 has more emphasis on academic writing in L2 than previous curriculums, the writing instruction has not necessarily followed the same course. What approaches to apply to teach L2 academic writing is still up to the teacher due to very few concrete instructions in the choice of writing methodology also in the LK20. Consequently, this could lead to students getting prepared differently for

higher education depending on their teacher. Nevertheless, this is early to conclude since the new reform has just been introduced this very autumn.

Learning to write academic texts in a second language is extraordinarily difficult, and instructing students on how to do it is just as challenging. This study shows that it requires much practice, time, and effort to learn to master academic writing in the L2 as students must work out what ideas they want to express, create sentences with the intended meaning, adjust the language to appropriate levels of formality and modality, use sources in an independent and correct manner, and organize paragraphs into a structure that captures the argument as a whole. Nevertheless, an understanding of what L2 learners know about academic writing in English, and how they practice L2 academic writing in preparation for higher education, may help teachers better understand learners' difficulties with academic writing and what L2 students need in order to succeed with academic writing in higher education.

This thesis contributes some useful insights about what upper secondary students know about writing academic English, and how they perceive the practice of writing academic English as a preparation for higher education. The majority of the students expressed an uncertainty concerning their academic writing competence in the L2. Students perceive a lack of knowledge in formal and argumentative writing as a major obstacle in learning academic writing. There seems to be a lack of systematic practice that provides all L2 learners with equal opportunities to develop academic writing skills. Such writing instructions are developed in schools by the individual teacher based on their experiences and beliefs. In other words, the teacher's ability to instruct L2 academic writing will influence how successful students become at academic writing in the future. This is a lot of responsibility to give to L2 teachers.

In conclusion, although I had expected that students would be better prepared for L2 academic writing with the new reform (LK20), this study shows that L2 instruction may not sufficiently prepare upper secondary students for L2 academic writing in higher education. It shows that students' knowledge about academic writing is varied. To prepare for higher education, participants have practiced writing academic English by studying various genres or different types of texts required by the LK20. Nevertheless, teachers' instruction and beliefs still run the show, and there seems to have developed a common practice among teachers to



teach academic writing using the model text the five-paragraph, which makes academic writing a manageable task for both learners and teachers. The challenge is that argumentative writing appears to be a neglected genre. Instead, students work the most with articles, which does not demand the same level of reflection as argumentative writing, but more explaining than arguing. University levels, on the other hand, require that students master argumentative skills to succeed with academic writing. In fact, there seems to exist a lack of knowledge and experience with teaching argumentative writing among L2 teachers, which might be the reason why teachers and participants devote limited time to this genre. Hence, improvement in teacher training institutions with regard to instruction of argumentative writing is imperative if students are to be properly prepared for higher education.

Finally, this study displays that in the same way as students enter upper secondary school with limited experience in formal writing, they enter higher education with limited experience in argumentative writing. The LK20 may help to close this knowledge gap, but it is too early to assess the outcome since the LK20 has just been in force for half a year. The fact is that the LK20 is a much-needed change that may help to improve L2 academic writing instruction.

Topics for future research could be to investigate how students work with academic writing in lower secondary school and study students' experiences with academic writing when they enter university. In this way, upper secondary teachers would gain valuable insights into the challenges students face with L2 academic writing and could adjust their instruction accordingly.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### Structure a 5 Paragraph Essay (Søvik, 2018)

#### **Introduction**

The introduction to a text is extremely important. A good introduction should accomplish three things:

- Firstly, it should capture the reader's interest and create a desire to read on and learn more. There are many ways to achieve this. For example, you can start with a good quote from a famous person or a short anecdote. You could also present some interesting statistics, state a startling fact or simply pose a challenging question.
- Secondly, you should inform the reader what the essay is about. In the introduction you should present your approach to the topic or thesis statement (Am. Eng.). The thesis statement is the main idea of the essay expressed in a single sentence. Make sure your thesis statement comes out clearly in your introduction.
- Thirdly, you should inform the reader how you have structured the text. After having read the introduction, the reader should have an idea of how you are planning on taking him through the topic.

#### **Body**

The body of the essay consists of three paragraphs (three hamburgers), each limited to one idea that supports your thesis. Each paragraph should have a clear topic sentence; a sentence that presents the main idea of the paragraph. The first paragraph should contain the strongest argument and the most significant examples of the topic, while the third paragraph should introduce the weakest arguments and examples. Include as much explanation and discussion as is necessary to explain the main point of the paragraph. You should try to use details and specific examples to make your ideas clear and convincing.

In order to create a coherent text, you must avoid jumping from one idea to the next. Always remember: one idea per paragraph. A good essay needs good transitions between the different paragraphs. Use the end of one paragraph and/or the beginning of the next to show the relationship between the two ideas. This transition can be built into the topic sentence of the next paragraph, or it can be the concluding sentence of the first.

You can also use linking words to introduce the next paragraph. Examples of linking words are: *in fact, on the whole, furthermore, as a result, simply put, for this reason, similarly, likewise, it follows that, naturally, by comparison, surely, yet, firstly, secondly, thirdly...*

#### **Conclusion**

This is your fifth and final paragraph. The conclusion is what the reader reads last and remembers best. Therefore, it is important that it is well written. In the conclusion you should summarize your main points and re-assert your main claim. The conclusion should wrap up all that is said before, without starting off on a new topic. Avoid repeating specific examples.

There are several ways to end an essay. You need to find a way to leave your reader with a sense of closure. The easiest way to do this is simply to repeat the main points of the body of your text in the conclusion. Another way to do it is to answer a question that you posed in the introduction or you could use a quote that sums things up.

## APPENDIX 2

### Interview guide in English

#### **Background students**

1. Who are you?
  - a) What is your name? Class?
  - b) Can you tell me a bit about your background in English?

#### **What students in English vg1 know about academic writing in English**

2. What do you think about when you hear the word “academic writing”?  
(you may have to explain to the student what academic writing involves)  
Characteristics academic writing:
  - Formal, to the point, objective and concise
  - Language with a logical structure
  - Content w/a critical perspective and carefully structured
  - Reliable sources
  - Structure: Introduction, Body (theory and discussion) and Conclusion
  - Relevant information for the thesis statement– i.e. a common thread through the whole assignment
3. What type of texts do you associate with “academic writing”?
  - Evaluating
    - argumentative/rhetorical/reflective text
    - analytical, persuasive and critical
      - ex. textbooks, articles, research papers, essays, speeches
  - Descriptive
    - explanation, instruction, report
4. How do you perceive academic writing in English?
  - a) How important do you perceive academic writing to be, in order to perform well in English vg1?
  - b) The students’ competence: what have they learnt in vg1 that they did not learn in lower secondary school?
  - c) How do you talk about academic writing in class?
  - d) What is challenging with academic writing in English?
  - e) What type of academic writing do you like the most? Which do you like the least? Why?

## How students in upper secondary school practice writing academic texts in English

5. How does your teacher instruct you in English academic writing?
  - a. Composition, structure, argumentation
  - b. Model texts:
    - ✓ Articles, essays, factual texts, speeches ....
  - c. Language:
    - ✓ Formality/Synonyms
    - ✓ Transitions: Connectors
  - d. Feedback writing:
    - ✓ Oral/written/correction errors
  - e. Genre (purpose and receiver)
  
6. How do you work with academic writing in English?
  - a. Do you get the opportunity to practice writing different academic texts?
    - ✓ tests/assignments
    - ✓ folder assessment/process writing
  - b. Which academic writing do you work with the most?  
Which part do you feel requires most instruction?
    - ✓ analytical
    - ✓ argumentative/rhetorical/reflective texts
  - c. What type of guidance do you receive on writing before tests and assignments?
    - ✓ Assessment criteria
    - ✓ Oral/written
    - ✓ Content, structure, language (vocabulary, formality, contractions, objectivity)
    - ✓ Group/alone/individual
  - d. Which textbook do you use?
    - ✓ How does it contribute to improving your academic writing in English?
  - e. How do you work with feedback from your teacher?
    - ✓ Correct errors
    - ✓ Self-evaluation
  - f. How do you know if you have improved your English academic writing during the school year?
  - g. Are there specific areas where you feel you struggle with academic writing in English (see question 5)
  - h. How do you best learn to write academic English?
    - ✓ Do you use certain strategies when you write?
    - ✓ Writing strategies/learning strategies
  
7. How do you prepare and plan for academically written assignments?
  - a. Planning:
    - brainstorm facts/thoughts/ideas
    - organize according to systems/characteristics/similarities/differences
    - tables/diagrams
    - definitions/examples

- advantages/disadvantages; causes/effects
  - point of view
  - discussion: structure arguments/evidence arguments
  -
- b. Structure: How have you learnt to structure academic texts in English in upper secondary? Lower secondary?
- Structure: main body and paragraphs, topic sentences, punctuation
  - Structure
  - Thesis statement
  - Discussion: for/against
  - Transitions and cohesion
  - Formality/language
  - Argumentation (analytical, persuasive, critical)
8. How prepared are you for academic writing in English?
- a. How prepared did you feel in upper secondary school for academic writing in English with your background from lower secondary school?
  - b. How prepared do you think you will be for academic writing in English when you start studying at university?
9. Is there anything you would like to add about academic writing in English?



## APPENDIX 3

### Interview guide in Norwegian

#### **Bakgrunn elever**

1. Hvem er du?
  - c) Hva heter du? Klasse?
  - d) Kan du fortelle om din bakgrunn i engelsk?

#### **Hva elever i engelsk vg1 vet om akademisk skriving på engelsk**

2. Hva tenker du på når du hører ordet «akademisk skriving»?

(mulig må forklare elev hva akademisk skriving innebærer)

##### Kjennetegn akademisk skriving:

- Formelt, saklig, objektivt og tydelig
- Språk m/logisk oppbygning
- Innhold m/kritisk perspektiv og godt strukturert,
- Klare referanser
- Struktur: Innledning, Hoveddel (Teori og Diskusjon) og Avslutning
- Teksten som er relevant for problemstillingen –dvs rød tråd gjennom oppgaven

3. Hvilke type tekster assosierer du med «akademisk skriving»?

- Evaluerende
  - argumenterende/diskusjons/refleksjons tekst
  - analytisk, overbevisende og kritisk
    - eks textbooks, articles, research papers, essays, speeches
- Beskrivende
  - forklaring, instruksjon, rapport

4. Hvordan opplever du akademisk skriveundervisning i engelsk?

- f) Hvor viktig opplever du at akademisk skriving er i engelsk for å gjøre det bra i faget?
- g) Elevenes kompetanse: hva har de lært på vg1 som de ikke lærte på ungdomskolen?
- h) Hvordan snakker dere om akademisk skriving i undervisningen? (grp/klasse)
- i) Hva er utfordrende med akademisk skriving på engelsk?
- j) Hvilken type akademisk skriving liker du best? Hvilken type liker du minst? Hvorfor?

#### **Hvordan elever i norsk videregående skole øver på å skrive akademiske tekster på engelsk**

5. Hvordan underviser læreren deg i akademisk engelsk skriving?

- a. Oppbygning, struktur, argumentasjon
- b. Modelltekster:
  - ✓ artikkel, essay, fagtekster, taler
- c. Språk:
  - ✓ Formalitet/Synonymer
  - ✓ Overganger: Connectors
- d. Feedback skriving:
  - ✓ Muntlig/skriftlig/retting av feil
- e. Sjanger (hensikt og målgruppe)

6. Hvordan jobber du med akademisk skriving i engelsk?
- a. Får du anledning til å øve på å skrive ulike akademiske tekster?
    - ✓ prøver/hjemmeoppgaver
    - ✓ mappevurdering/prosess skriving
  - b. Hvilken type akademisk skriving jobber du mest med?  
Hvilken type trenger du mest undervisning i?
    - ✓ analytisk
    - ✓ argumenterende/diskuterende/refleksjons tekster
  - c. Hvilken veiledning mottar du om skriving før prøver/innleveringer?
    - ✓ Vurderingskriterier
    - ✓ Muntlig/skriftlig
    - ✓ Innhold, struktur, språk (ord, formalitet, sammentrekning, objektivitet)
    - ✓ Gruppe/alene
  - d. Hvilken lærebok bruker du?
    - ✓ Hvordan bidrar den til at du blir bedre på å skrive akademisk engelsk?
  - e. Hvordan jobber du med tilbakemeldinger fra læreren din?
    - ✓ Retter feil
    - ✓ Selvevaluering
  - f. Hvordan kan du vite at du har blitt bedre på å skrive akademiske tekster på engelsk ilt året?
  - g. Finnes det bestemte områder hvor du opplever at du sliter m/akademisk skriving i engelsk? (se spm 5)
  - h. Hvordan lærer du best å skrive akademisk engelsk?
    - ✓ Bruk av bestemte strategier når du skriver
    - ✓ Skrivestrategier/lærestrategier
7. Hvordan forbereder du deg og planlegger for oppgaver med akademisk skriving?
- a. Planlegger
    - brainstorm fakta/tanker/ideer
    - gruppering etter mønster/deler/likheter/ulikheter
    - tabeller/diagrammer
    - definisjoner/eksempler
    - fordeler/ulempes; årsak/virkning
    - synsvinkel
    - diskusjon: oppbygning argumenter/bevis argumenter
  - b. Struktur: Hvordan har du lært å strukturere akademiske tekster på engelsk i vg? i usk?
    - Oppbygning: hovedtekst og paragrafer, tema setninger, tegnsetting
    - Struktur
    - Problemstilling
    - Drøfting: for/imot
    - Overganger og indre sammenheng
    - Formalitet/språk
    - Argumentasjon (analytisk, overbevisende, kritisk)

8. Hvor forberedt er du for akademisk skriving i engelsk?
  - a. Hvordan opplevde du at du var forberedt på akademisk skriving i engelsk på videregående med din bakgrunn fra ungdomskolen?
  - b. Hvordan føler du at du er forberedt på akademisk skriving på engelsk når du skal begynne å studere?
  
9. Er det noe mer du vil legge til når det gjelder akademisk skriving på engelsk?

## APPENDIX 4

### Approval by the Data Protection Official for Research in Norway (NSD)



#### Melding

04.01.2021 09:16

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 756017 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt:

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet den 04.01.2021 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

#### MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: [nsd.no/personverntjenester/fyll-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema](https://nsd.no/personverntjenester/fyll-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema)

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

#### TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 29.08.2021.

#### LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

#### PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

#### DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

#### FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1 f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

#### OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Simon Gogl

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

## APPENDIX 5

Information letter in Norwegian about the master project to students and PARENTS

### **Informasjonsskriv til elever og foresatte om forskningsprosjekt**

#### **Problemstilling prosjektet:**

Hvordan kan undervisning i engelsk hjelpe elevene i videregående skole til å utvikle akademiske skriveferdigheter i engelsk?

Masterstudent: Idun Munkejord

Kontaktinfo: Tlf: 97191960

Mail: [idunm15@student.uia.no](mailto:idunm15@student.uia.no).

Undersøkelser viser at mange elever sliter med å skrive gode akademiske tekster på engelsk.

God kompetanse i engelsk skriving er viktig i Norge blant annet på grunn av en økende bruk av engelsk som undervisningsspråk i høyere utdanning, samt en økende politisk og kommersiell kontakt med resten av verden. Svært mye av den vitenskapelige informasjonen som i dag finnes, er skrevet på engelsk. Elevene trenger derfor å lære seg engelsk godt for å kunne foreta både undersøkelser, samt skrive og lese forskningsartikler på engelsk. Det er derfor viktig at elever utvikler sine engelske akademiske skriveferdigheter for å mestre studiene når de starter med høyere utdanning.

Dette prosjektet går ut på å intervjuere elever om hvordan det jobbes med akademiske skriveferdigheter i engelsk på videregående skole. Vi vil undersøke hvordan elevene oppfatter undervisningen, og om de opplever at den forbereder dem for engelsk akademisk skriving på høyere studier. I denne forbindelse ønsker vi å intervjuere elever på vg1 engelsk studieretningsfag.

Elevene vil bli intervjuet én gang i 30-40 minutter. Det tas lydopptak. Alle opplysninger lagres anonymt, og opplysningene transkriberes for en dypere analyse, men slettes umiddelbart etter at transkribering er utført.

Ta kontakt dersom dere har noen spørsmål til dette. Forskningen foregår i samarbeid med Universitetet i Agder (UiA).

**Med vennlig hilsen**

**Idun Munkejord**

**Masterstudent ved UiA**

## APPENDIX 6

### Detailed information letter about the master project

#### **«Hva vet elevene i norsk videregående skole om akademisk skriving på engelsk, og hvordan jobber de med akademisk engelsk skriving som en forberedelse til høyere utdanning?»**

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å finne fram til hvordan elevene i videregående skole kan jobbe med akademisk skriving i engelsk på best mulig måte for å forberede dem på høyere utdanning. **I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.**

#### **Formål**

Dette er en masteroppgave som har til formål å finne ut hva elevene vet om akademisk skriving på engelsk i norsk videregående skole, samt finne ut hvordan de jobber med dette for å forberede seg til høyere utdanning. Elever på vg1 engelsk intervjues én gang i 30-40 minutter omkring problemstillingen som beskrevet nedenfor.

Problemstillingen er «Hva vet elevene i norsk videregående skole om akademisk skriving på engelsk, og hvordan jobber de med akademisk engelsk skriving som en forberedelse til høyere utdanning?»

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

*Universitetet i Agder, Institutt for fremmedspråk og oversetting er ansvarlig for prosjektet.*

*Prosjektveileder er Sigrunn Askland*

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

Vi henvender oss til elever i studieretnings faget engelsk på vg1 i Agder. Henvendelsen går ut til 8-10 elever fordelt på begge kjønn tilknyttet vårt skolenettverk i XXXXX og omegn. Elevene vil få invitasjon til deltakelse gjennom faglærer i engelsk ved de aktuelle skolene.

God kompetanse i engelsk skriving er viktig i Norge blant annet på grunn av en økende bruk av engelsk som undervisningsspråk i høyere utdanning, samt en økende politisk og kommersiell kontakt med resten av verden. Svært mye av den vitenskapelige informasjonen som i dag finnes, er skrevet på engelsk. Elevene trenger derfor å lære seg engelsk godt for å kunne foreta både undersøkelser, samt skrive og lese forskningsartikler på engelsk. Det er derfor viktig at elever utvikler sine engelske akademiske skriveferdigheter for å mestre studiene når de starter med høyere utdanning.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Dette er en masteroppgave som skal gjennomføres på Universitetet i Agder. Prosjektet går ut på å intervju elever om hvordan det jobbes med akademiske skriveferdigheter i engelsk på videregående skole. Vi vil undersøke hvordan elevene oppfatter undervisningen, og om de opplever at den forbereder dem for engelsk akademisk skriving i høyere utdanning. I denne forbindelse ønsker vi å intervju elever på vg1 engelsk studieretningsfag. Jeg tar lydopptak og notater fra intervjuet.

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du deltar i et intervju som varer i 30-40 minutter én gang. Intervjuet inneholder spørsmål som:

- Hvordan jobber dere med akademisk skriving i engelsk på skolen?
- Hvordan instruerer læreren din deg i akademisk engelsk skriving?
- Hvilken type akademisk skriving har du jobbet mest med?
- Hvordan har du lært deg å strukturere de akademiske tekstene dine på engelsk i vg?

Alle opplysninger fra intervjuet lagres anonymt, og opplysningene transkriberes for en dypere analyse, men slettes umiddelbart etter at transkribering er utført.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

- Det er frivillig å delta, alt materiale og opplysninger vil behandles konfidensielt og avidentifiseres.
- Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det vil kun være masterstudent og veileder som har tilgang til materialet
- Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil jeg erstatte med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data
- Datamaterialet lagres i et innelåst arkiv

Du som deltaker vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjoner. Det er kun opplysninger om hva elever i engelsk studieretningsfag vg1 generelt vet om formell skriving i engelsk som publiseres, samt hvordan det jobbes med dette i skolen.

### **Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes og oppgaven er godkjent, som etter planen er *31. august 2021*. Etter denne datoen makuleres alle opplysninger fra deg.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Agder har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at du burde heller mye skal vi må bare slå av de her nå så jeg skal sjekke kanskje noe behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med:

- Universitetet i Agder ved Sigrunn Askland, mobil 90990922, [sigrunn.askland@uia.no](mailto:sigrunn.askland@uia.no) eller ansvarlig for masteroppgaven Idun Munkejord, mobil 97191960, [idunm15@student.uia.no](mailto:idunm15@student.uia.no).
- Vårt personvernombud: Ina Danielsen, mobil 45254401, [ina.danielsen@uia.no](mailto:ina.danielsen@uia.no)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Sigrunn Askland  
(veileder)

Idun Munkejord