# Lexicogrammatical meaning-making in German as a foreign language: An investigation of Norwegian upper secondary school learners' texts

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# Summary in Norwegian

I avhandlingen undersøker jeg språklig meningsskaping i tekstbesvarelser skrevet av norske videregående elever som tar tysk som fremmedspråk. Ifølge funksjonelle språkteorier skaper vi alltid mening når vi kommuniserer, særlig gjennom måten vi bruker grammatiske ressurser på. Ved å beskrive hvordan elever som lærer tysk som fremmedspråk bruker leksikogrammatiske ressurser fra et funksjonelt perspektiv, vil jeg vise hvordan visse kommunikative mål uttrykkes og forhandles på tvers av elevers ulike oppgavebesvarelse. I avhandlingen bygger jeg teoretisk på systemisk-funksjonell lingvistikk (SFL), som nærmer seg grammatikk som et sett med mulige valg av ressurser for meningsskaping, og ikke som regler for korrekthet (f.eks. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007).

Avhandlingen er artikkelbasert og består av tre artikler og et utvidet sammendrag ("kappa"). Sistnevnte inkluderer en introduksjon, noe teoretisk bakgrunn om fremmedspråkskriving og SFL, en oversikt over andre relevante SFL-baserte studier, en beskrivelse av metodikken, en oppsummering og diskusjon av de tre artiklene og en konklusjon. Avhandlingens empiriske basis utgjøres av språkkorpuset TRAWL (Tracking Written Learner Language), som består av autentiske skoletekster skrevet av norske elever på norsk, engelsk, fransk, spansk og tysk. Et premiss for ph.d.-prosjektet var at forskningen skulle være tilknyttet TRAWL-korpuset.

Det overordnede forskningsspørsmålet i avhandlingen er: Hvordan bruker videregående elever i tysk som fremmedspråk leksikogrammatiske ressurser for å skape mening i tekstene sine? I alle de tre artiklene tar jeg opp dette spørsmålet ved å beskrive mønstre på tvers av ulike typer tekster med søkelys på bestemte leksikogrammatiske ressurser. Strukturene og tekstene som ble undersøkt i hver artikkel bygger på det tyske del-korpuset i TRAWL. Alle datasett som jeg analyserer, består av elevtekster skrevet som svar på oppgaver til heldagsprøver av elever som tar tysk som fremmedspråk i alderen 17–18 år, på trinn 12 i deres femte år med tyskundervisning. Avhandlingen har en utforskende og kvalitativ tilnærming, med et såkalt fremvoksende («emergent») forskningsdesign. Den analytiske tilnærmingen og metoden som jeg bruker i alle artiklene er skriftlig diskursanalyse basert på SFL. De analytiske tilnærmingene bygger i stor grad på Hallidays funksjonelle grammatiske beskrivelser (f.eks. Halliday, 1994, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Målet for Artikkel I var å beskrive karakteristiske mønstre av leksikogrammatiske valg i 12 korte tekster skrevet som svar på samme oppgave, knyttet til tolkning av en filmtittel. Tekstene ble analysert med tanke på ideasjonell meningsskaping, altså hvordan innhold er representert. I undersøkelsen identifiserte jeg flere karakteristiske mønstre på tvers av svarene, som var sentrale for å nå det kommunikative målet som er angitt i oppgaveteksten. Relasjonelle prosesser av type *X er Y* var en viktig nøkkelstruktur som ble identifisert. Studien viste også at enten *X* eller *Y* er videre forbundet med bruk av, for eksempel, substantivkomplekser eller definerende relative setninger. Studien fremhevet også at alle elever brukte komplekse meningsskapende mønstre i sine svar, til tross for varierende grad av korrekthet i språkbruken.

I artikkel II undersøkte jeg hvordan elever svarer individuelt på samme oppgavetekst, i dette tilfellet fem elevsvar på en oppgave og to elevsvar på en annen oppgave. Tekstene stammer fra to ulike oppgavesett, for også å utforske variasjon i meningsskaping på tvers av ulike kommunikative situasjoner. Totalt består altså dataene av syv elevsvar. Jeg identifiserte og beskrev elevenes meningsskapende valg ikke bare med hensyn til elevenes representasjon av innholdet (ideasjonelt), men også med hensyn til hvordan elever etablerer sosiale relasjoner (mellompersonlig) og skaper informasjonsflyt (tekstuelt) i sine tekster. Jeg diskuterte disse forskjellene med tanke på 'task representation'. Et videre formål av artikkelen var å undersøke hvilke konsekvenser elevenes meningsskapende valg har for språkbruken. I Artikkel II fant jeg blant annet at elevenes svar på hver oppgave hadde likhetstrekk, særlig med hensyn til hvordan elevene realiserte organisasjonsstrukturen og valgte leksikalske verb. Samtidig avdekket analysen også forskjeller i hvordan elevene skapte mening, særlig i forbindelse med hvordan elevene tar opp et "tema" i begynnelsen av hvert avsnitt, og hvordan de etablerer kontakt og dialogisitet i sine tekster. Forskjellene som ble observert så også ut til å ha implikasjoner for elevenes språklige problemløsningsprosess.

Målet i Artikkel III var å få en bedre forståelse for mellompersonlig meningsskaping i korte tekster skrevet av norske videregående elever i tysk som fremmedspråk. Denne meningsdimensjonen handler om hvordan elever etablerer sosiale relasjoner og uttrykker holdninger og vurderinger i tekster. Jeg valgte her å utforske elevenes bruk av modale vurderingsstrategier i svar på fire ulike oppgaveformuleringer. I analysen fokuserte jeg på å identifisere og kategorisere

modale verb, modale adjunkter og tilsvarende strukturer på setningsnivå i totalt 52 elevbesvarelser. Artikkel III fant at forskjellige modale vurderingsstrategier ble brukt for å svare på de ulike oppgavene, selv om det virket som at hver oppgaveformulering var knyttet til én strategi som dominerte på tvers av elevtekstene. Funnene tyder på at disse dominerende strategiene er ikke alltid var direkte eller indirekte knyttet til ordlyden og innholdet i oppgaveformuleringen, men kanskje like gjerne kunne komme av elevenes individuelle perspektiver på emnet. Funnene viser også at bruk av spesifikke strategier førte til at ulike typer sosiale relasjoner og holdninger ble etablert.

Det viktigste empiriske bidraget fra avhandlingen er økt forståelse av hvordan norske videregående elever i tysk som fremmedspråk bruker leksikogrammatiske ressurser for å skape mening i sine tekster. Dette inkluderer innsikt i de leksikogrammatiske kravene til meningsskapingsprosesser i forbindelse med spesifikke oppgaver. Studiene viser også at tyskelevene i stor grad er vellykkede meningsskapere som kan trekke veksler på et stort repertoar av språklige ressurser. Det viktigste teoretiske bidraget innenfor språkvitenskap og fremmedspråksdidaktikk er at funnene framhever den direkte relasjonen mellom form og mening på tvers av ulike tekster skrevet av videregående elever som tar tysk som fremmedspråk. Ved å konseptualisere skriving som meningsskaping, viser avhandlingen hvordan elevenes bruk av grammatikk er meningsbasert, kontekstualisert og systematisk mønstret, uavhengig av skriveformålet og formatet på oppgaveformuleringer. Det viktigste metodiske bidraget i avhandlingen er at den understreker anvendeligheten av SFL-basert diskursanalyse for å kunne beskrive alle slags typer av tekster når det gjelder form og funksjon.

Gitt at norske videregående elevenes skriving i tysk som fremmedspråk er betydelig variert og at meningsskaping kan tilnærmes fra ulike perspektiver, har denne avhandlingen måttet være selektiv og pragmatisk når det gjelder å utforske bruk av leksikogrammatiske ressurser. Den selektive tilnærmingen, i tillegg til det lave antallet tekster som er analysert og at elevtekster er eneste type empirisk data, gjør at det er flere begrensninger for funnene i avhandlingen. Ut fra hva jeg har kunnet spore, er det imidlertid en betydelig mangel på forskning på videregående elevers fremmedspråkstekster Jeg argumenterer derfor for at funnene på ulike måter bidrar til økt forståelse av hvordan ulike typer elevtekster fra denne og lignende kontekster kan analyseres og beskrives med hensyn til meningsskaping.

Dessuten kan beskrivelsene også fungerer som et viktig utgangspunkt for videre forskning på skriving på andre fremmedspråk enn engelsk.

Hovedkonklusjonen ut fra tekstanalysene i avhandlingen er at fremmedspråkskriving utført av videregående elever bør sees og tilnærmes fra et meningsbasert perspektiv som konsoliderer grammatikk, innhold, interaksjon og tekstlig organisering. Funnene viser i detalj at et fokus på grammatikk på den ene siden, og på kreativt uttrykk eller innhold på den andre, ikke representerer en dikotomi, men snarere at de to uunngåelig henger sammen. På et mer generelt nivå antyder funnene fra analysene av elevtekstene også at skriving bør være en integrert del av undervisning i alle fremmedspråk, slik at elevene får ha varierte muligheter for meningsfull tekstskriving slik at de kan utvikle sine ferdigheter som meningsskapere.

# Part I: Extended abstract

# Figures and Tables

## List of Figures

## List of Tables

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| FL | Foreign Language |
| GFL | German as a Foreign Language |
| IFG | Introduction to Functional Grammar |
| L1 | First Language |
| L2 | Umbrella term for both second and foreign languages |
| L3 | Third Language |
| LLP | Language Learning Potential |
| LW | Learning-to-Write |
| LWC | Learning-to-Write-Content |
| SFL | Systemic Functional Linguistics |
| SL | Second Language |
| SLA | Second Language Acquisition |
| WLL | Writing-to-Learn the Language |

# Part II: Articles

### Article I

Hamann, V. (2022). Writing in German as a foreign language in Norwegian upper secondary school: An investigation of patterns of language choices for meaning-making. *Nordic Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, *10* (2), 156–181.

### Article II

Hamann, V. (2023). Task representation in German as a foreign language: A systemic functional analysis of Norwegian students' written responses. *Linguistics and Education 77* (2023), 101193.

### Article III

Hamann, V. (in press). Looking beyond the content plane – Modal assessment in Norwegian learners' texts in German as a foreign language. *Zeitschrift für interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*. 22 pages.

# 1. Introduction

This thesis is the result of research carried out as part of a specific Ph.D. position to which I applied, the goal of which was to conduct research on excerpts of learner texts provided by the Tracking Written Learner Language (TRAWL) Corpus. This corpus has been under compilation since 2015 and comprises authentic school texts written by Norwegian students in Norwegian, English, French, German and Spanish. In light of the scarcity of corpora with data of young foreign language (FL) learners, the TRAWL Corpus is stressed by Dirdal et al. (2022) and Hasund et al. (2022) as particular in various ways. Inter alia, it is the only existing corpus that comprises texts from authentic classroom settings written by secondary school students of French, German and Spanish as foreign languages (FL). Due to its design (see also section 1.1.), the TRAWL Corpus also allows "valuable insights for teachers, teacher training and policymaking within the national context of Norway" (Dirdal et al., 2022, p. 115).

Because of my previous experience teaching German as a foreign language (GFL) and the paucity of research on secondary school GFL writing, it was clear to me that I wanted to investigate TRAWL Corpus data written in German more closely during my Ph.D. research. To that end, my main motivation was to obtain a better understanding of how Norwegian secondary school learners of GFL act as writers and use language in communicative terms (e.g. Council of Europe, 2001, 2020; Lund & Casado Villanueva, 2020), which entails investigating how the students use language meaningfully. This overall goal is further motivated by my impression that GFL learning, including the activity of writing, is widely associated with a focus on overall language acquisition and on learning certain grammatical or lexical phenomena isolated from the writing situation, both in Norway and other writing contexts (e.g. Allen, 2018; Reichelt, 2019; for the Norwegian context e.g. Kvam, 2012; Lindemann & Speitz, 2002). As this focus may pose a threat to an already low sense of motivation in settings like the GFL classroom (e.g. Carrai, 2014; Lindemann & Speitz, 2002; Reichelt, 2019; Sandvik, 2012) and only fragmentally takes account of classroom tasks as communicative tasks (Hyland, 2019, pp. 3–6), there is an immediate need to gain a better understanding of L3 writing as stated in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (*CEFR*):

> Classroom tasks, whether reflecting 'real-life' use or essentially 'pedagogic' in nature, are communicative to the extent that they require learners to comprehend, negotiate and express meaning in order to achieve a communicative goal. The emphasis in a communicative task is on successful task completion and consequently the primary focus is on meaning as learners realise their communicative intentions. However, in the case of tasks designed for language learning or teaching purposes, performance is concerned both with meaning and the way meanings are comprehended, expressed and negotiated. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 158)

The current thesis has the goal of increasing the understanding of secondary school writing in FLs other than English in terms of communicative tasks by investigating meaningful language patterns in learners' written texts. Given the limited understanding of what writing in these settings comprises and how it can be analysed from a meaning perspective (e.g. Reichelt, 2016), this thesis follows an explorative approach and has an emergent research design. This means that the language patterns and communicative settings investigated were not predetermined before close consideration of the corpus data. Rather, "the research focus is narrowed down only gradually and the analytic categories/concepts are defined during, rather than prior to, the process of the research" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37). Common to all studies in this article-based dissertation is, however, a clear focus on written discourse analysis (see e.g. Grabe & Zhang, 2016) as the central methodology for approaching GFL student texts (see also chapter 5). Due to the nature of the data chosen from the TRAWL Corpus, the purpose of the analysis is descriptive.

The theory which informs the written discourse analysis in this dissertation is systemic functional linguistics (SFL). According to this theory, language can be described in terms of different networks of systems for creating meaning in a particular context (e.g. Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Consequently, student texts are described in terms of lexicogrammatical meaning-making patterns, i.e. the ways in which meaning is made through the combined use of both lexical and grammatical elements in language. These descriptions are largely based on Halliday's functional grammar approach (e.g. Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), while I also draw on certain conceptualisations of language as provided by a theoretical variant within SFL referred to as the 'Sydney School' (e.g. Martin, 1992, 2009; Martin & Rose, 2003/2007). The choice of tasks, texts, meaning dimensions and lexicogrammatical resources that were ultimately investigated in the three research articles forming the current thesis was motivated by observations made from the

learner data retrieved from a sub-corpus of the German part of the TRAWL Corpus. The choices were further driven by the additional aim of showing how any kind of text retrieved from an FL classroom context – independent of length and task realisation – can be mapped in terms of meaning-making.

In this thesis, specific terminology is used to distinguish languages learnt in school contexts and to thus account for the particular nature of the research context. Partly consistent with, for example, Hasund et al. (2022), Krulatz et al. (2022) and Reichelt (2011), I differentiate between the (i.) L1 context, which is associated with the learners' first languages, (ii.) the second language (SL) context, which concerns minority language speakers using the dominant surrounding language (of schooling) that is different from their own native language, and (iii.) foreign language (FL) contexts, which revolve around languages learnt in school settings where students and teachers share another language, for instance German in public schools in Norway.[1] I further distinguish English as a foreign language (EFL) on the one hand and other foreign languages learnt after English on the other, here termed L3s or 'non-English FLs'.[2] This is because in a context like Norway, languages like German are learnt much later in school and do not have the same unique functional role and status in society as English (for the role of English in Norway, see e.g. Ørevik, 2019). As writing theories and pedagogies are often context-unspecific, the term 'L2' will also function in this thesis as an "umbrella term" (Reichelt, 2011) to define all writing done in a language that differs from the learners' native language(s) and is linked to the process of learning (Hyland, 2019, p. 2).

In the next sections of this introductory chapter, I first present the TRAWL Corpus as the major frame for this project (section 1.1.), before setting out the aim and the research questions of this dissertation project (section 1.2.). I conclude by presenting the overall structure of the extended abstract (section 1.3.).

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[1] The terminology used for classifying different language contexts may vary significantly and depends, amongst other things, on the geographical location in which a study is situated, research traditions and the focus of analysis (see e.g. Krulatz et al., 2022; Reichelt, 2011).

[2] Accordingly, this study uses terms that only partly overlap with definitions made in the TRAWL Corpus, where English is defined as an L2.

## 1.1. The TRAWL Corpus

In the following paragraphs, the TRAWL Corpus is described in a way closely in line with Dirdal et al. (2022). To that end, this section will provide information on the overall design of the corpus, its organisation, texts and size. Subsequently, further information will be given on the German sub-corpus of the TRAWL Corpus and research activities around the corpus.

As already mentioned, the TRAWL Corpus is a longitudinal corpus of authentic texts written by primary and secondary school students in Norway in Norwegian, English and the L3s French, German and Spanish. The texts collected have been written by students as part of their regular schoolwork (in-class writing, homework, tests, mock exams) during at least one school year. Thus, TRAWL differs in many regards from the few other existing corpora that include texts written in non-English FLs by younger learners, such as LEONIDE[3] and SWIKO[4], which have compiled responses to specially designed tasks (argumentative, narrative or descriptive genres) (see Glaznieks et al., 2022; Karges et al., 2019). Overall, the design of the TRAWL Corpus has been motivated by different research needs, such as the investigation of writing by young learners and beginners, writing across different languages, and teacher feedback (Dirdal et al., 2022). Accordingly, the corpus is planned as longitudinal and comprises texts written by primary and secondary school students in EFL and L3s, including texts written by the same students in EFL and Norwegian (L1) on the one hand, and in EFL and an L3 on the other. Teacher feedback has also been part of the compilation process, if texts came with feedback and if the teachers agreed to have their anonymised feedback integrated.

Due to the collection of varying texts from regular schoolwork and not pre-set task responses, the corpus has a less stringent design with considerable variation regarding the volume and nature of the material and the density of data collection points represented in the corpus. Dirdal et al. (2022, p. 121) state that the data may thus vary between language-specific sub-corpora (e.g. English, French, German), between school years and between individual students due to variation in language skills and classroom practice, or the absence of students on distinct writing occasions. While this variation has consequences for how texts have to be selected

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[3] https://www.porta.eurac.edu/lci/leonide/

[4] https://centre-plurilinguisme.ch/en/research/swiss-learner-corpus-swiko

as data in research studies, this kind of collection procedure yet allows for an easier recruitment of participants and denser data collection points, as well as providing a better picture of the actual nature of writing in Norwegian schools (pp. 121–122).

The texts in the TRAWL Corpus have been collected from different parts of Norway since 2015. The participants have been recruited either through researchers or research assistants visiting school classes, or through informed teachers recruiting the students from their own classes. As part of the recruitment processes, teachers were given detailed information letters, and the students were informed that their texts would be anonymised after collection and that they have the option to withhold individual texts. Both teachers and students were asked to confirm their voluntary participation through informed consent, together with parental consent if students were younger than 16 years old. The former Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD, now part of Sikt) also gave ethical consent for the data collection.

The classrooms from which students have been recruited comprise the school years 5–13 for Norwegian and English, and the school years 8–13 for German, French and Spanish. Depending on when classrooms were approached in the recruitment process, the collection process started in varying school years for the different students. In most cases, students have contributed data beyond the course of one school year, commonly over the course of either lower secondary school (school years 8–10) or the first two years of upper secondary school (school years 11–12) (Dirdal et al., 2022, p. 119).

At the beginning of the collection process, the learners were asked to fill in a questionnaire that provides information stored in the corpus as metadata on the participants. This student metadata includes information about the student's education programme, study level, gender and other language skills, and about how often and for what purposes the target language is used outside of school (for an overview of the questionnaire, see Dirdal et al., 2022). In the corpus, the student metadata and the texts of an individual learner can be searched by using a unique student code. This code is composed of the letter P (for "pupil") and a five-digit number, e.g. P60000. The metadata further contains information on each text collected, i.e. the text metadata, which includes information about the date on which a text was written, the format (handwritten or electronic), the task type (e.g. classroom writing, homework or test), the version (only version, first or second

5

version), and if the text contains teacher comments/feedback (in which case the teacher code is also included) (see Dirdal et al., 2022, p. 123). In addition to the metadata and learner texts, the TRAWL Corpus also comprises copies of the task instructions or descriptions of the task. Each of the tasks is coded with a four-letter task code, such as NAKR or LANG, to make it possible to find all text responses to the same task. This code corresponds to task instruction(s) given on a particular writing occasion and may relate to only one task, or to several different tasks or task choices on the same or different topics (p. 122).

The first version of the TRAWL Corpus was made available online in February 2023, organised into five sub-corpora representing each of the aforementioned languages.[5] As shown in Dirdal et al. (2022, p. 126), the size of the sub-corpus for English in this version differs significantly from those of the L3 languages: For English, the sub-corpus contains 1,238 texts from 139 students, while the average amount of texts collected in the L3s is 97 texts per sub-corpus. For German, the corpus size is 130 texts but they only stem from 13 students from one classroom (for French and Spanish, the number of students was 31 and 23 respectively). Thus, the first version of the corpus is relatively small, especially for German (p. 127).

In this research project, the data as presented in Table 1 has been available to me since 2021. It has, or will eventually, become part of the German sub-corpus of TRAWL. As the table shows, there has been very little data available and it is also varied regarding what language level the learners are at and which school years they are in. Variation also exists as to what communicative tasks and topics are indicated in the writing prompts and responses. Thus, it is difficult to judge from this data how representative the texts and tasks are of the respective language levels and school years. The texts with the largest comparability and thus those chosen as a sub-corpus in this current research project are those written by the year 12 GFL learners at language level 2 from mock exam writing contexts (see also section 5.3.). Concerning the data presented in Table 1, it also needs to be noted that it was collected in classrooms that were subject to the old Norwegian curriculum plan for the L3 subject (i.e. LK06, see section 2.2.).

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[5] https://tekstlab.uio.no/trawl/

Table 1

*Overview of available data sets from the German TRAWL sub-corpus for the research project*

| Data sets (in terms of pupil codes) | Language level[6] | School year(s) | Text size | No. of students | No. of texts w/ teacher feedback | Collection time (school years) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P60471, P60472, P60477, P60700–P60714 | Level I | 12 | 22 | 14 | 0 | 2017–2018 |
| P60260–P60272 | Level II | 12 | 38 | 13 | 0 | 2017–2018 |
| P60660–P60672 [7] | Level II | 11 + 12 | 130 | 13 | 7 | 2019–2021 |

Overall, research activities that have used TRAWL data have focused mostly on studying language/writing development quantitatively in EFL contexts, such as the research carried out by Hasund and Hasselgård (2022) who studied writer/reader visibility features. Yet, and as pointed out in the introduction, there are also quantitative inquiries into the development of sentence complexity in Spanish texts (Drange, 2022) and into lexical richness in French texts (Vold, 2022). Texts from the TRAWL Corpus have also been used in research with respect to case studies (Berg, 2020) or in a triangulating manner with interviews (Dasic, 2019) (for an overview of research studies on TRAWL, see Dirdal et al., 2022). As pointed out by Dirdal et al. (2022), however, those studies with a mixed method or intervention approach resulted from researchers being involved in the compilation process.

## 1.2. Aim of the project and research questions

The overarching aim of the current dissertation is to investigate language use in learner texts from a meaning-making perspective to increase the understanding of secondary school L3 writing in the form of responses to communicative tasks. As conceptualised in SFL theory, writers always make meanings when they communicate, and one way to do so is to use linguistic resources in particular ways. To that end, the overarching research question of this thesis is:

*How do secondary school GFL writers use lexicogrammatical resources to create meanings in their texts?*

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[6] For more information on the language level, see section 2.1.

[7] This data represents the GFL sub-corpus of the first version of the TRAWL Corpus.

In describing how GFL writers employ lexicogrammatical resources, I seek to make visible how certain communicative goals are expressed and negotiated across different learners' responses. From a broader perspective, this dissertation is also intended to contribute to an increased understanding of the situated nature of FL writing practices (see e.g. Byrnes et al., 2010; Manchón, 2009). Furthermore, I seek to obtain a deeper knowledge about how meaningful language use can be approached in different authentic task settings in the secondary school L3 learning environment. As mentioned before, the research design of the current thesis is emergent. From considering a sub-corpus of mock exam texts by GFL students (aged 17–18) in year 12 and their fifth year of GFL learning, the following research emphases have emerged:

In Article I, I inquire into a set of student texts that appeared to be considerably similar, with complex linguistic choices. The main objective resulting from the data has been to describe characteristic patterns of language choices from a meaning-making perspective. The short texts are mapped in terms of expository writing, which suggests a focus on how the learners created ideational meaning (i.e. content, see section 3.4.). The research question of Article I is: *Which patterns of language choices can be identified in learners' responses to tasks to make ideational meaning to an interpretation in the genre of film analysis in the secondary school GFL context in Norway?* Article I has been published in the *Nordic Journal of Language Teaching and Learning* as part of the special issue "Young Learner Writing. Studies of the TRAWL (Tracking Written Learner Language) Corpus".

> Hamann, V. (2022). Writing in German as a foreign language in Norwegian upper secondary school: An investigation of patterns of language choices for meaning-making. *Nordic Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, *10* (2), 156–181.

In Article II, I investigate learner texts in response to task choices that were given to learners in connection with a mock exam. This task setting seemed to allow learners multiple individual choices in realising their responses. The main objective of this article is to understand in detail how different learners respond to writing tasks and what consequences their individual choices have on language use. In this study, these differences are conceptualised in terms of task representation. The research questions of Article II are: *(1) What do the responses*

8

*of Norwegian upper secondary school learners of German as an FL to two tasks within a mock exam context reveal about their task representation? (2) What differences can we observe across the task responses in terms of language choices and what do they reveal about the demands and opportunities for language use?* Article II has been published in the journal *Linguistics and Education*.

> Hamann, V. (2023). Task representation in German as a foreign language: A systemic functional analysis of Norwegian students' written responses. *Linguistics and Education 77* (2023), 101193.

In Article III, I focus on short learner texts of similar surface structure, yet which appear to set out different kinds of interpersonal relations with their reader(s). The main objective of this article is to obtain a better understanding of secondary school GFL writers' interpersonal meaning-making in the responses of the sub-corpus chosen. This aim is addressed by investigating the use of modal assessment strategies in responses to four different writing prompts. The research questions of Article III are: *(1) What modal assessment strategies are used in Norwegian GFL students' written responses of short text length? (2) What differences in the use of modal assessment strategies can we observe, and how do they contribute to shaping distinct enactments of social relationships and expressions of students' own attitudes and assessments?* Article III has been submitted to the *Zeitschrift für interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht* and is currently under review.

> Hamann, V. (in press). Looking beyond the content plane – Modal assessment in Norwegian learners' texts in German as a foreign language. 22 pages.

## 1.3. The structure of this extended abstract

This thesis comprises two parts, the extended abstract (Part I) and three articles (Part II). The first part consists of seven chapters, including the current introductory chapter. The chapters to follow are: "L3 writing in Norwegian secondary schools" (Chapter 2), "An SFL approach to writing as meaning-making" (Chapter 3), "Previous SFL-based studies of L2 writing" (Chapter 4), "Methodology" (Chapter 5), "Summary and discussion of the articles" (Chapter 6) and "Conclusion" (Chapter 7).

Chapter 2 is about secondary school L3 writing in Norway. To account for the complexity of L3 writing, this chapter starts out with a broad section on theoretical

frameworks and the contextual factors surrounding L2 writing. The second section presents the goals and conditions of L3 education in Norwegian secondary schools in general and with respect to writing.

Chapter 3 depicts the theoretical framework. In line with, for example, Byrnes (e.g. 2011), I first situate writing as meaning-making. I then present SFL theory in general, including distinct theoretical variants, before zooming in on the selective approach and lexicogrammatical systems considered in this thesis.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of SFL-based research studies on L2 writing that have been relevant to the analytical approaches of the current thesis. As this chapter will also show, SFL theory can be applied in various ways in the investigation of L2 writing.

Chapter 5 describes the methodological approach of this thesis. To that end, I first present the research design, which is qualitative and centres on written discourse analysis based on SFL. I then account for the empirical data and the analytical approaches of the three research articles. In the final two sections of this chapter, I elaborate on ethical considerations and discuss the research quality criteria and limitations of the research design.

Chapter 6 is twofold. First, I give a summary of all three articles included in the thesis. Second, I discuss the contributions of the studies to research, with a focus on their empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions. To that end, I also discuss the limitations of the research findings.

Chapter 7 presents my concluding remarks. This conclusion comprises suggestions for future research and implications for education.

# 2. L3 writing in Norwegian secondary schools

In this chapter, I elaborate on L3 writing in the Norwegian educational environment. To take account of the fact that L3 writing is complex and can be approached in various ways, this chapter is twofold. First, I elaborate on L2 writing in general and L3 writing in particular (section 2.1.). Secondly, I present the frameworks and conditions of the L3 classroom in Norwegian secondary schools (section 2.2.), first from a general perspective and then with a focus on writing.

## 2.1. Theoretical frameworks and aims of L2 writing

L2 writing is complex and multifaceted, in part because it "is profoundly interconnected with other human abilities (such as literacy, language proficiency, or knowledge), conventions of social practice, societal institutions, and interpersonal relationships" (Cumming, 2016, p. 65; see also e.g. Manchón et al., 2009; Schoonen et al., 2009). For these reasons, and due to the variety of purposes of L2 writing and the variety of perspectives involved in it (i.e. those of the writer, the text or the reader), there are numerous ways of theorising, approaching and translating L2 writing into appropriate methodologies (e.g. Cumming, 2016; Hirvela et al., 2016; Hyland, 2019; Norris & Manchón, 2012). Yet Manchón (2011a, p. 3) points out that the different L2 writing scholarships and practices are traversed by three main perspectives on writing, which are learning-to-write in an L2 (LW), writing-to-learn the language (WLL) and learning-to-write content (LWC). As LW and WLL are recurring terms in discussing L2 writing, they will inform the presentation of major theoretical frameworks and pedagogies in the following subsections.

### 2.1.1. Learning-to-write (LW)

The LW dimension is about the development of expressing oneself in writing (Manchón, 2011a, p. 3). This perspective is dominant in the field of L2 writing due to its traditional link to investigations of SL writing based on L1 composition research, and associated with either process or genre approaches (e.g. Hirvela et al., 2016, Hyland, 2019; Manchón, 2011a). Process approaches theorise writing in terms of cognitive models of composing, while genre approaches conceptualise writing as text.

11

Cognitive theories of composing focus on learners' mental activities and behaviours linked to the production of writing, and view writing as linguo-cognitive problem-solving (Cumming, 2016; Hirvela et al., 2016). This involves cognitive processes and subprocesses such as planning, translating and reviewing in relation to the writer's knowledge and the individual task environment (e.g. Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hayes, 2012). The writer's knowledge comprises, amongst other things, linguistic knowledge, knowledge about the topic, and genre knowledge, while the task environment encompasses the writing task with its topic and audience. Additionally, linguo-cognitive problem-solving is related to the learner's level of control (e.g. regarding motivation, goal setting and writing schemata) and the learner's resource level (e.g. attention, long-term memory) (e.g. Cumming, 2016; Hayes, 2012). In research informed by process theory, much focus has been placed on the questions of whether linguistic demands inhibit composing processes in the L2 and enhance the problem-solving activity (e.g. Roca de Larios et al., 2016; Schoonen et al., 2009; Stevenson et al., 2006). With respect to writing pedagogies, process-oriented approaches focus on the activity of writing, with L2 students being guided through the writing process by means of strategy use at different stages (e.g. Hirvela et al., 2016; Hyland, 2019).

Theories that centre on L2 writing as text are often associated with the notion of genre (e.g. Hirvela et al., 2016). One central idea associated with genre writing is that people do not just compose texts individualistically – rather, they use language in "abstract, socially recognised ways" (Hyland, 2003, p. 21). Overall, three distinct genre theories have emerged in relation to particular social contexts and linguistic frameworks: the 'Sydney School', English for specific purposes (ESP) and 'New Rhetoric' (Hyon, 1996). As the notion of genre is prominent in writing research in general, and also represents an important framework in this extended abstract, I describe the three main genre theories in further detail in the next three paragraphs.

The Sydney School (e.g. Christie, 1991; Martin, 1992) is based on SFL theory (see chapter 3) and has evolved in Australian education contexts. Related to Basil Bernstein's (e.g. 1990) belief that all students, especially those who are not middle-class L1 students, need a visible pedagogy for the sake of equity and social justice, mainstream literacy practices in Australian schools have been identified in terms of core genres (see e.g. Martin & Rose, 2008). These genres have been mapped and described in terms of patterns of stages, phases and their configuration of

meaning-making resources (see also section 3.3.1.). Regarding the teaching of those core genres, a genre-based approach has evolved from the works of the Sydney School that consists of the following three stages of a teaching-learning cycle: (1) deconstruction based on model texts to create a common metalanguage, (2) joint construction with this metalanguage as a scaffolding, and (3) independent construction (e.g. Rothery & Stenglin, 1994).

ESP genre theory has evolved with the aim of addressing the communicative needs of L2 students of English who write for academic, professional or technical purposes (e.g. Hyland, 2022). To that end, it is considered important that writers establish a "systematic understanding of the ways language is patterned in particular domains" (Hyland, 2003, pp. 18−19). A central contribution to ESP has been John Swales' work on genre analysis, in which he defines genre as composing "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes […] [which] are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community […]" (Swales, 1990, p. 58). Insights into the social function of language in genres are commonly gained from descriptions of the move structure (macro-level) and sentence- and clause-level choices (e.g. Paltridge, 2014; Tardy & Swales, 2014). Due to the advances in computer-assisted analysis and a growing availability of (learner) corpora, language use has increasingly been described across a range of specific settings and genres (e.g. Biber, 1989; Biber et al., 1998; see also Tardy & Swales, 2014).

The New Rhetoric has focused on gaining an understanding of genres as phenomena of unique social contexts, which also means understanding how written genres are acquired, used and developed by individuals and groups (e.g. Bazerman, 1988; Miller, 1984). Thus, New Rhetoric has contributed largely to challenging a static view of genre and the authority of the discourse community. As Cumming (2016) stresses, it has also provided important ideas to other theories, such as multiliteracies that has become particularly influential in L1 education settings (see e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kalantzis et al., 2016; Kern, 2000). Also the 'Wheel of Writing' model by Berge et al. (2016) takes account of the idea that texts are culturally and linguistically diverse and represent different purposes.

## 2.1.2. Writing-to-learn the language (WLL)

From a WLL perspective, L2 writing is seen as a site for language learning. This dimension is strongly associated with the investigation of FL writing and typically constitutes a field within second language acquisition (SLA) studies (Hirvela et al., 2016; Manchón, 2011a).

Traditionally, writing to widen language learning outcomes has been related to viewing writing as a product, which is "construed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge" (Hyland, 2019, p. 4). Influenced by structural linguistics and behaviourist learning theories, writing development has thus had a strong association with the development of overall L2 proficiency, and more specifically with the acquisition of grammatical accuracy and the expansion of lexical knowledge as modelled by the teacher or researcher (e.g. Hyland, 2019, pp. 4, 48). In research on language development in L2 writing, the role of writing as a developmental goal in its own right may even be further reduced, in a way that made Norris and Manchón (2012, p. 224) wonder if writing merely is a medium for eliciting insights into language development along the indicators of complexity, accuracy and fluency. In teaching writing from a product-based perspective, Hyland (2019, p. 4) identifies four typical stages in the writing activity: (i.) familiarisation with certain grammar or vocabulary phenomena, (ii.) controlled writing activities in which fixed patterns are manipulated, (iii.) guided writing activities on the basis of model texts and (iv.) free writing activities.

Investigations of the language learning potential (LLP) of L2 writing have increasingly also been framed in terms of cognitive and sociocultural SLA theories (e.g. Manchón, 2011b; Manchón & Vasylets, 2019). Cumming's (1990) study that found that about a third of learners' thinking episodes in L2 writing are of a metalinguistic nature is especially noteworthy. From this, and based on Swain's (1985) notion of 'comprehensible output', Cumming (1990) concluded that writing can contribute to the expansion and consolidation of linguistic knowledge in the L2 (see also Swain & Lapkin, 1995). Other important theoretical underpinnings in the discussion and investigation of the LLP of writing are Focus on Form approaches (e.g. Doughty & Williams, 1998) and the Noticing Hypothesis (e.g. Schmidt, 2001), which both emphasise the crucial role of attention to language in the composition process (for an overview of the different cognitive theories, see e.g. Manchón, 2011b). In research, there are three major factors that have received

particular consideration in discussing the LLP of writing in terms of effects, which are task modality, task-related factors including task complexity, and written corrective feedback. As Manchón and Vasylets (2019, see also Manchón & Williams, 2016) state, the mode of writing (as opposed to speaking) and written corrective feedback are apparently beneficial for language learning due to their pace, permanence and visibility, which allow learners to have more control of their attentional resources, and which provide opportunities for metalinguistic reflection and analysis. Manchón and Vasylets (2019) further stress that the meaning-making activity associated with complex forms of writing seemingly leads to deeper linguistic processing (see also Byrnes & Manchón, 2014). From a sociocultural perspective, the potential learning effects of writing are associated with metatalk, the reflection of linguistic concerns and scaffolding which results from collaborative problem-solving and feedback processing activities (Hirvela et al., 2016; Swain, 2006).

### 2.1.3. L2 writing as social practice

As laid out in the previous sections, L2 writing is complex and multifaceted. Interrelated with that, modern conceptions of L2 writing also see it as a social practice and recognise its situated nature (e.g. Hirvela et al., 2016; Manchón, 2011a). The 'social turn' (Matsuda, 2003) in L2 writing research has been influenced by works of Western scholars in the 1980s and early 1990s in the fields of anthropology, education and sociolinguistics (Casanave, 2016). Hence, research has increasingly recognised the different purposes and values of writing as a social practice for both the individual and groups of writers across various settings and communities.

Theories linked to this social turn are, inter alia, genre theories and the related SFL theory, sociocultural theory and dynamic systems theory (e.g. Norris & Manchón, 2012; Roca de Larios et al., 2016). As indicated in section 2.1.2., research framed by SLA and cognitive theories has also increasingly accounted for the socially situated nature of L2 writing (see also Casanave, 2016). Inter alia, research studies inquiring into L2 writers' metacognitive knowledge on the one hand, and possible effects on the LLP and writing performance on the other, have taken account of multidimensional concerns in the learners' model of writing regarding its ideational, textual and linguistic dimensions (e.g. Manchón & Roca de Larios,

2011). Research has also focused on composing in terms of task representation (e.g. Ruiz-Funes, 2001, Zarei et al., 2017), which means investigating how writers translate a specific rhetorical situation into the act of composing (Flower, 1990, p. 35).

To account for the situated nature of L2 writing, Norris and Manchón (2012) stress the need to pay even closer attention to task-specific writing both in LW and WLL situations. According to them, "task is an important and largely under-recognized force, both in determining what learners learn and what it is that we are able to observe when they write" (pp. 232–233; see also Manchón, 2014; Roca de Larios et al., 2016).


### 2.1.4. Approaches to writing in L3 settings

In contrast to other L2 contexts, there is a general lack of understanding of what L3 writing is and aims for. In line with that, it is also less clear what role writing plays and can play in the L3 classroom. Overall, research on L3 writing is scarce, and particularly so regarding primary and secondary school L3 learners. Additionally, there is a lack of a clear research agenda and a common body of literature in the field. Thus, L3 writing researchers frame their work by drawing on research done on L1, L2 or EFL writing, SLA or literacy (Reichelt, 2016). As Reichelt (2016) also stresses, the issue of fragmented research findings on L3 writing "is exacerbated by the fact that the findings of research on writing in any particular L2 […] cannot necessarily be generalized to writing in other L2s, nor to writing done by writers from other linguistic backgrounds in other contexts" (p. 185). Yet Reichelt (2016) sums up some findings that make tentative claims about the nature of L3 writing. For example, she points to research studies by Ruiz-Funes (2001) and Way et al. (2000) which indicate that the type of writing task and the nature of task conditions affect some aspects of students' texts.

One major issue in determining the nature and role of L3 writing is the absence of specific purposes and target language discourse communities. In contrast to what is characteristic of L1, SL and increasingly also EFL writing contexts, L3 learners may often lack clear, immediate or future needs for writing (e.g. Reichelt et al., 2012; Reichelt, 2019; Schultz, 2011). In addition to that, communicative settings in FL settings are prone to being multi-layered (Halliday 1999, pp. 11–12; see also Ørevik, 2019). This means, for example, that the activity of writing to a pen pal as

part of the L3 classroom is not only about participating in the target language community as one layer, but also involves another layer that includes the activity of FL learning and the teacher. Against this backdrop, the crucial question remains as to what the purposes of L3 writing in fact are.

Related to the 'social turn' (see section 2.1.3.) and the introduction of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020), communication has become the main purpose of L3 writing over recent decades. This means that L3 learners write to achieve a communicative goal. Yet L3 writing traditionally has a strong association with overall target language acquisition and the WLL perspective. In that respect, a prominent view is that writing is a 'secondary skill', meaning that learning to write in an L3 is viewed as the last and most difficult skill, only to be acquired with sufficient language proficiency (Allen, 2018; Racelis & Matsuda, 2013; Williams, 2012). Thus, a dominant purpose associated with L3 writing is to support overall target language acquisition and to reinforce orthography, grammar and vocabulary, which is again strongly linked to a product-oriented approach to L3 writing (e.g. Allen, 2018; Hyland, 2019; Lefkowitz, 2011; Reichelt & Waltner, 2001). Even though a shift to process-oriented approaches has taken place, research still often finds feedback practices on L3 writing to be focusing on surface-level errors (e.g. Allen, 2018; Busse, 2013; Vyatkina, 2011).

Regarding the Scandinavian L3 writing classroom, it appears that the last decades have seen a major debate about grammar versus creativity (Kabel et al., 2022). Part of that debate has seemingly also been about how much emphasis should be paid to grammar and how grammar and language learning should be approached. Linguistic theories and (opposing) pedagogical approaches to grammar that frame this discussion are, for example, structuralism vs. functional linguistics or explicit vs. implicit grammar-teaching approaches, with explicit approaches being about language as an object and associated with output-oriented, production-based tasks targeting the automatisation of patterns, and implicit approaches being about language as a tool and associated with input-oriented and meaning-oriented tasks (e.g. Ellis 2002, 2012). The debate about grammar vs. creativity in the L3 writing classroom may also have another aspect to it, namely that creativity is not seen as being naturally linked to the issues of grammar and language learning. Regarding this discussion, the CEFR makes clear recommendations that grammar instruction should be contextualised and should raise awareness of the link between form and meaning in communicative situations (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020).

In the overall debate on the nature and purposes of L3 writing, some specific approaches to teaching are advocated in the research field. Particularly for the university L3 context, task-based and genre-based approaches (e.g. Byrnes et al., 2010; Byrnes, 2014) or a focus on literacy (e.g. Kern & Schultz, 2005; Schultz, 2011) are encouraged. On a more general level, Manchón (2009) speaks to a specific focus on language learning in L3 writing, as it constitutes the most important aim given the lack of immediate needs for L3 learners to learn to write.

## 2.2. Frameworks and aims of L3 writing in Norwegian schools

The Norwegian education system consists of primary school (years 1–7, ages 6–12), lower secondary (years 8–10, ages 13–15) and upper secondary school (years 11–13, ages 16–19). In this chapter, I first present the general frameworks of L3 education in Norwegian secondary schools before elaborating on L3 writing in particular.

### 2.2.1. L3 education in Norway – general frameworks and conditions

While instruction in EFL ("engelsk") begins in Norway in school year 1 and continues up to at least year 11, learning an L3 ("fremmedspråk") is first presented to learners in year 8. On this first occasion, the students enter an optional three-year L3 language programme (years 8–10), leading to level one ("nivå 1", total amount of hours of teaching: 222). French, German and Spanish are the three main L3s learnt in Norway. In the school year 2022/23, a little less than three-quarters of all year 8 students chose to study an L3, of which around 22% took German, 39% Spanish and 12% French (The Foreign Language Centre, 2023).

While taking an L3 as a subject is presented as optional, it is obligatory for upper secondary students in study specialisation programmes. In year 11, the students may then either begin a new L3 leading to level one ("nivå 1") as a two-year programme or continue with the L3 they have studied in lower secondary school[8]. In the latter case, the two-year programme leads to level 2 ("nivå 2", total amount of hours of teaching: 215). Frequently, learners choose to study the same L3 from

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[8] https://www.vilbli.no/en/nordland/a/choice-of-foreign-languages-6 (31.12.2023). Students who did not elect to take an L3 in year 8 can take a three-year programme which completes levels 1 and 2 during the school years 11–13 (hours of teaching: 365).

years 8–12. By completing level 2, the learners are aiming to acquire the CEFR competence level A2 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a).

In Norwegian schools, learning aims are linked to subject-specific national curricula. All current subject curricula, termed LK20, have been developed following a national reform in 2020 called 'fagfornyelsen'.[9] The new curriculum plan for the subject 'foreign languages other than English' presents common aims for a total of 44 L3s that can be assessed through an exam.[10] It has the code FSP01-03 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a) and has been in place since January 2023. Based on an introductory plan called FSP01-02 (in force from 1.8.2020 to 31.12.2022), it has been gradually introduced to those students who began an L3 education programme in the school year 2020/21. FSP01-03 has replaced the plan FSP01-01 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006), which had been established as part of a major school reform in 2006 ("kunnkapsløftet"[11]) and represents the framework within which the data used in the current study was created. Some aspects that came into focus during this earlier reform and were further strengthened in the renewed plan are 'critical thinking', 'student agency' and 'deep learning', with the latter being about understanding, making interconnections, re-thinking and reflecting on their own learning processes (The Foreign Language Centre, 2019). These aspects are also at the heart of the framework of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020), which has in turn informed the development of the L3 curricula LK06 and LK20.

The competency aims in both curricula (LK06 and LK20) revolve around subject areas or core elements respectively, such as 'communication' and 'language learning'. Regarding the central element of 'communication', the plans state that L3 learning is about understanding and being understood, and about developing skills and knowledge that enable the students to communicate appropriately in oral and written discourse (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006, 2020a). In the most recent reform, competency aims and evaluation practices were made even more precise (The Foreign Language Centre, 2019). Inter alia,

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[9] www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/fagfornyelsen/ (31.12.2023)

[10] For an overview of the languages in which proficiency can be documented, see www.vilbli.no/en/en/no/dokumentasjon-av-kunnskaper-i-fremmedsprak/a/036965 (31.12.2023).

[11] www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kilde/ufd/prm/2005/0081/ddd/pdfv/256458-kunnskap_bokmaal_low.pdf (31.12.2023)

'can-do' descriptors have been refined to specify what situations learners should be able to communicate in, with these situations having a strong link to the students' world of experience (see also Table 2 in section 2.2.2.). Also, the student's and teacher's role in evaluation practices is defined more explicitly. For example, teachers are to guide the learners as to how they can develop communicative competence further and to facilitate the learners' motivation (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a)

As a goal-oriented curriculum, the L3 Norwegian plan makes statements about aims and elements to be integrated into the L3 classroom, without determining content or methodology and leaving these decisions to the schools and teachers (Speitz, 2020; Vold, 2020). As Speitz (2020) and Lindemann (2020) point out, this lack of information about topics, phenomena and methodologies makes the curriculum challenging for teachers. In her pilot study on GFL teachers' needs for training opportunities, Lindemann (2020) found that teachers may also struggle with understanding and/or translating certain core elements like 'language learning and multilingualism' into content and activities in the L3 classroom. Against this backdrop, the textbook plays a major role in the Norwegian L3 classroom (e.g. Haukås et al., 2016; Lindemann & Speitz, 2002; Lindemann, 2020). Further important frameworks for teachers are also national exams and goal attainment criteria (see The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b, 2020c). Even though general descriptions of the national exams are lacking, as they concern 44 languages (Lindemann, 2020), teachers and learners have access to previous exams and sample tasks for gaining an understanding of the exam structure for each L3.

### 2.2.2. L3 writing in Norwegian schools

In connection with the "kunnskapsløftet" reform, writing has been emphasised as a central tool for learning in all subjects (The Writing Centre, 2021). For the subject L3, this implies the following:

> To be able to write in a foreign language is to create different types of texts that communicate content. The development of writing skills in a foreign language goes from writing simple texts on everyday subjects to producing increasingly complex texts on subject-relevant topics. This also involves acquiring a gradually wider vocabulary, adopting more linguistic structures,

and using aids in an appropriate way.[12] [...] (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a)

The curriculum further outlines that written communication is based on using simple to basic linguistic structures, relevant learning and communication strategies, digital resources, and experiences from previous language learning processes (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). As explained previously, the curriculum also comprises specific competency aims. Table 2 presents those linked to writing at level 2 (i.e. the language level representing the data for this thesis) as stated in LK06 and LK20. According to Lund and Casado Villanueva (2020), these aims appear to be mostly associated with "learning-to-write", while "learning-to-write content" and "writing-to-learn the language" also have their place in the development of L3 language competencies.

Table 2

*Competence descriptors linked to writing skills at level 2, as presented in LK06 and LK20 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006, 2020a)*

| LK06 | LK20[13] |
|---|---|
| • write cohesive texts in various genres <br> • adapt the language to various communication situations <br> • use words, sentence structures and text connectors in a varied and appropriate way | • write different types of texts on personal and subject-relevant topics, and express and explain one's own opinions <br> • use basic linguistic structures […] to communicate in a situationally appropriate manner <br> • explore and present artistic and cultural expressions from target language areas, and give an account of one's own experiences |

Apart from what is stated in the Norwegian curriculum plan, knowledge is scarce as to what role writing has in the L3 context in Norway and how it is approached. Existing research literature suggests, however, that the Norwegian L3 classroom is characterised by a product-oriented approach to writing, with a significant focus on grammatical exercises, overall language acquisition, error-oriented feedback practices and written productions that are remarkably short (Lund & Casado Villanueva, 2020; for the GFL classroom see Kvam, 2012; Lindemann & Speitz,

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[12] This quote was translated from Norwegian into English by the author.
[13] The criteria were translated from Norwegian into English by the author.

2002; Lindemann, 2020). Even though Vold (2020) sees indications that grammar instruction in the Norwegian L3 French classroom has also become more meaningful and contextualised, research on grammar teaching points to a significant focus on filling-the-gaps exercises and explicit approaches (e.g. Askland, 2019; Haukås et al., 2016). Sandvik (2012) also found that assessment practices lack a clear focus on holistic writing development in this L3 setting.

Based on the nature of the L3 TRAWL material, the structure of the national exams, and dialogues with teachers, it seems that the development of writing as socially situated language use has a rather small role in Norwegian L3 classrooms, particularly in lower secondary school. For example, the national exam at the end of grade 10 is only an oral exam, which means that important wash-back effects on writing practices are missing. Writing skills are only tested centrally in the second national exam at the end of grade 12/13. Even though the new structure of the year 12/13 national exam, linked to the recent LK20 reform, now comprises distinct written tasks with clear instructions on how to answer them (for example, a communicative task such as "write an application" comprises the instructions "introduce yourself" or "give a reason why you want this job"), the written exam tasks under the previous structure were much more variable and unspecific regarding the communicative aims and topics indicated. This, along with goal attainment criteria in exam guides that have been described as too unspecific by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020c), may have made it difficult for writing to be approached in terms of purpose and context.

Moreover, Norwegian L3 learners are also found to have an unfavourable attitude towards writing and experience it as difficult, which might even result in a resistance to writing (e.g. Carrai, 2014; Lindemann & Speitz, 2002). The fact that learners might even struggle to begin with writing after pre-planning activities is associated with the learners' insecurity, a lack of linguistic and text competencies, and the fear of failure (Lund & Casado Villanueva, 2020; see also Knospe, 2017, on learner variables among Swedish secondary school GFL writers). Thus, Lund and Casado Villanueva's (2020) didactical bids for supporting L3 writers advocate a stronger focus on goal attainment criteria in feedback activities, as well as the integration of collaborative activities revolving around metatalk and of scaffolding techniques such as writing frames. Sandvik (2012) also stresses the need for understanding writing as a synthesis between process, purpose and context.

# 3. An SFL approach to writing as meaning-making

In this chapter, I first explain why this thesis approaches writing as meaning-making and why it is situated within the framework of SFL (section 3.1.). Subsequently, I elaborate on SFL theory and the architecture of language (section 3.2.), before presenting theoretical variation in SFL theory and the focus taken in this dissertation, which centres on Halliday's functional grammar (IFG) approach (section 3.3.). In section 3.4., I elaborate on those lexicogrammatical systems which are most relevant for the analytical approach. Section 3.5. sums up the main points of this chapter.

## 3.1. Writing as meaning-making

As outlined in section 2.1., L2 writing is often conceptualised either in terms of "learning-to-write" or "writing-to-learn language" (Manchón, 2011a). On an overall level, Byrnes and Manchón (2014, p. 6) conclude, however, that "[n]o matter what else composing is and does, it is about creating new textual worlds where language plays a constitutive role […]". To Byrnes (2020, p. 75), this definition captures the interfacing nature between writing expertise and linguistic knowledge. Accordingly, she proposes to conceptualise writing in terms of *textual meaning-making* (see also Byrnes, 2011), arguing that the focus on meaning-making stresses the high functional load of written language independent of the language learning context. The notion of meaning-making is also crucial to the communicative and real-world-oriented paradigm of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020) and has been influential in research and writing pedagogy approaches to writing as a socially situated practice (see section 2.1.3.).

Byrnes has been a particularly influential voice in stressing the functional nature of language use in all L2 settings (e.g. 2006, 2011, 2013, 2020), in part due to her work in carrying out a meaningful educational reform within a particular GFL studies programme (see Byrnes et al., 2010). She provides central reasons for why writing is also understood as meaning-making in this thesis. First, Byrnes (2020, p. 75) maintains that all writers have the capacity to consider written texts as a particular mode of communication, where – in contrast to oral language use – an interpretative context must be established through language resources. She warns that if this capacity is not accounted for in writing in the beginner language learning classroom, it "seriously undermines the entire argument for an L2-

writing-language learning link with obvious consequences for investigating it substantially" (pp. 75–76). Byrnes (2006) also provides another central argument for viewing writing as meaning-making in all L2 contexts, and this concerns the democratic dimension of language use. She states:

> […] what might, in the past, have been a privileged enterprise necessary and suitable for only a few, namely the acquisition of language capacities that can be used in academic, institutional and professional contexts, as contrasted with primarily personal and social contexts, is now 'beyond option or privilege', Moreover […] many of the assumptions that have undergirded mostly beginning- and intermediate-level language instruction are in any case being questioned severely, thereby at least attenuating their validity (e.g., single and/or fixed norms, […], structurally rather than functionally oriented notions of language and language learning) (Byrnes, 2006, pp. 11–12).

A framework commonly proposed for conceptualising and analysing writing in terms of meaning-making is SFL (e.g. Byrnes, 2020; Yasuda, 2017; see also chapter 4). This is because SFL may allow "L2 researchers to move beyond traditional static linguistic approaches to analyzing texts in their target discourse domains" (Yasuda, 2017, p. 579). As Yasuda (2017) explains in detail, the SFL framework enables researchers, teachers and writers to understand and analyse how various dimensions of using language interrelate in the construction of meanings and how certain choices of meaning-making resources are optimally linked with communicative success in discourse contexts. Accordingly, this means understanding grammar as a series of possible choices and not rules of correctness (Schleppegrell & Go, 2007, p. 530). Additionally, Yasuda (2017) mentions SFL as a framework for understanding L2 learning aims and development "in terms of a learner's meaning-making capacities across contexts, from oral to written, casual to formal, concrete to abstract, and congruent to incongruent" (p. 580). For these reasons, I have chosen to work within the theoretical framework of SFL.

## 3.2. SFL and the architecture of language

Michael Halliday laid the foundations of SFL theory. *Systemic* indicates that it is a "theory of meaning as choice" (Halliday, 1994, p. xiv). In that regard, language – as one of many other semiotic systems (e.g. paintings, paralanguage or mathematical symbols) – then represents a network of systems, i.e. a large and interrelated body of options, that speakers can choose from to create meaning in

contexts (pp. xiv, 15; Eggins, 2004, pp. 13–20). Being also a *functional* theory, SFL does not focus on what forms mean but on how meaning is realised through forms (Halliday, 1994, p. xiv.). Therefore, SFL conceptualises language not only as a set of rules but as something that "shapes, and is shaped by, the contexts in which it is used" (Schleppegrell, 2012, p. 21).

The most central descriptive framework within SFL theory is Halliday's functional grammar approach, presented in the various versions of *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (IFG) (e.g. Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This framework was intended to establish a grammar to "say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written, […]" (Halliday, 1994, p. xv). IFG is both a theory of the architecture of language and a descriptive framework of grammar. These descriptions, along with their functional labels pointing to the contribution they make in terms of meaning-making, can then be used in discourse analysis (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell, 2012).

In IFG, Halliday put forward the central idea of SFL theory: that each speaker or writer always creates three meanings simultaneously when using language. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014, p. 31) stress that those meanings are intrinsic to language and can thus also be termed *metafunctions* as they are decisive for the architecture of language. These three major strands of meanings are termed ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning. Ideational meaning covers the construction of experience, i.e. the goings-on in a situation. Interpersonal meaning is concerned with the enactment of personal and social relationships, including the expression of values and attitudes. Textual meaning centres on the information flow in texts, i.e. on how ideational and interpersonal meanings are distributed, and on the creation of relevance to a context (pp. 30–31).

According to Halliday, ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings are linked to language in that each clause is simultaneously a representation of some content, an exchange, and a message (e.g. Halliday & Matthiesen, 2014, pp. 83–84). To describe the resources that create experience, construe a particular relationship with the reader and organise the information flow, Halliday considers the dimensions of *structure* and *system*. *Structure* concerns the composition of elements in terms of patterns for the organisation of meaning, while the elements constitute choices for the speaker from *systems*. Systems are defined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) as "[a]ny set of alternatives, together with its condition of

entry" (p. 22), which are located in a metafunctional context and originate at a particular rank (clause, group/phrase and their associated complexes) (p. 49). In section 3.4., I elaborate further on the structures and systems derived from Halliday's architecture of language.

Overall, Halliday conceptualises language as being organised into four strata operating inside context. These strata are phonetics and phonology on the stratal plane of expression, and lexicogrammar and semantics on the stratal plane of content. This stratified model of language (see Figure 1) accounts for the fact that each stratum is connected to another stratum via realisation. For writing, this means that each letter realises written language from each morpheme up to the clause, which again realises the content plane operating in context. The interfacing part between wording (i.e. lexicogrammar) on the one hand, and the experiences and interactions in the outer world (i.e. context) on the other then constitutes the strata of semantics or meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 24–27, 43).

Figure 1

*Stratified model of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 26)*
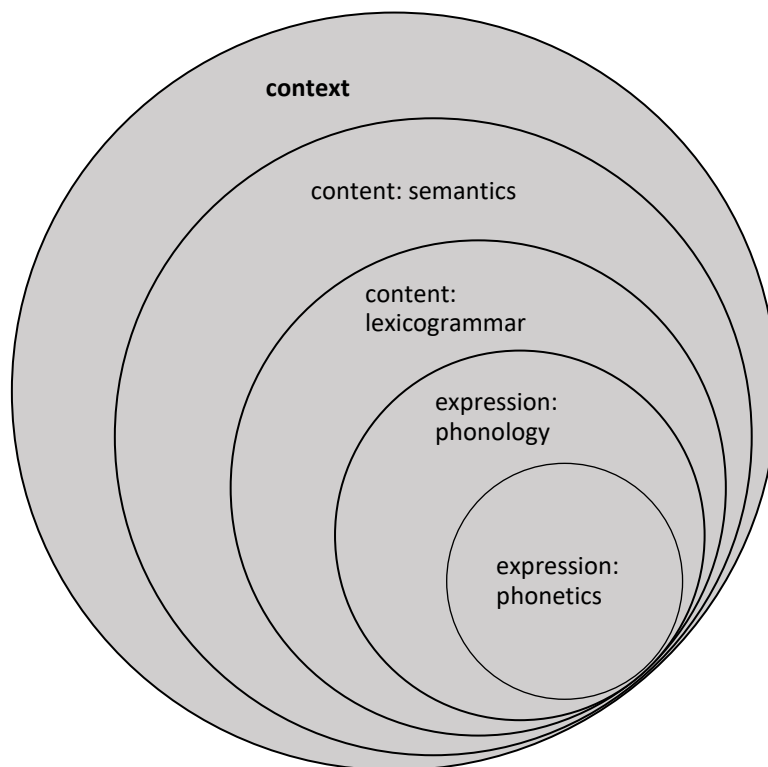
The conceptualisation of context in IFG is particularly influenced by the works of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s and 1930s, who discovered that texts originating from a Pacific Island group are only comprehensible when accompanied by descriptions of the total environment of meanings, i.e. of contexts of situation and of culture (e.g. Halliday & Hasan, 1989). In IFG, context ranges "from the overall contextual potential of a community to the contextual instances involving particular people interacting and exchanging meanings on particular occasions" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 32). Given that it is much easier to describe instances of specific communicative situations than the overall contextual potential of a culture, the IFG presents categories for describing situation types (p. 33). The categories, or register variables, defining the environment of meanings in which language operates are termed *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. *Field* describes what is going on in a situation, *tenor* covers who is taking part in a situation and the values that those interacting in a situation have toward what is said, done etc., and *mode* concerns, amongst other things, the role language plays in a situation (p. 33; see also Halliday & Hasan, 1989). All three variables resonate with and determine the three strands of meaning at risk in each situation type: ideational meaning resonates with field, interpersonal meaning with tenor, and textual meaning with mode (Halliday, 1978).

The grammar descriptions in IFG focus on the stratum of lexicogrammar. In contrast to traditional, "formal" grammar approaches, Halliday locates both grammar and vocabulary in this stratum. By presenting the examples of *didn't succeed*, *in no way succeeded* and *failed*, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 67) stress that expressions may lie on different points of the continuum of grammaticalised and lexical forms without making a difference in the construction of meaning. IFG further defines the clause as the upper bound of the stratum of lexicogrammar, along with its constituents at lower rank (group/phrase, word, morpheme) and its tactical combination with other clauses in terms of clause complexes. Those units can then be paired with messages, moves, figures – and in relation to clause complexes also sequences – at the stratum of semantics. Even though lexicogrammar and semantics are inevitably linked, they differ in that the stratum of lexicogrammar has an upper bound while semantics "extends compositionally beyond messages, moves, figures and sequences all the way up to whole texts […]" (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023, p. 165). The articles of this thesis mainly engage with systems and resources at the stratum of lexicogrammar.

### 3.3. Theoretical variation in SFL theory and the focus of this thesis

According to Matthiessen (2010, p. 15), SFL represents a 'flexi theory', as its theoretical space has been expanded in multiple ways over recent decades and because it allows for variation (for an overview of the development of SFL theory, see Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023). As a flexi theory, SFL also allows for the playing off of different dimensions against each other in the exploration of domains of phenomena (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023, p. 50).

Accordingly, this thesis also uses SFL theory selectively in the attempt to uncover distinct patterns and differences across often short and varying L3 learner responses. While Halliday's IFG serves as the base for the analytical approaches to meaning-making, these are also partly framed by theoretical variants and focus on distinct metafunctions and systems. In the following sections, I first present one theoretical variant that has partly informed this thesis, namely that of the Sydney School (see also section 2.1.1.), before I elaborate more generally on the selective approach taken in the analysis.

### 3.3.1. The Sydney School's modelling of language

The Sydney School has its origin in the interface of SFL and education and is engaged in researching and developing curricula and teaching programmes with a focus on meaning-making (see also section 2.1.1). In their modelling of language, the focus shifted from the clause to the text, and the notion of *genre* has become particularly important (see e.g. Martin 1992, 2009; Martin & Rose, 2003/2007).

The concept of genre has evolved from Martin's (1992) stratification of the context layer into a layer of register and genre, to account for both the context of situation (register) and the context of culture (genre) (see also section 3.2.). Martin (2009) defined the job of genre as being "to coordinate resources, to specify just how a given culture organizes this meaning potential into recurrent configurations of meaning, and phases meaning through stages in each genre" and to enable "talking holistically about the social purpose of texts" (p. 12). To that end, Martin (2009) defines genre as a "staged goal-oriented social process" (p. 13). Important to the notion of genre are thus also stages and phases, with stages representing highly predictable configurations in genres, while phases are viewed as more variable elements (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 82).

Further elaborations of Halliday's model of language originate in Martin's (1992, 2009) criticism that lexicogrammatical descriptions in IFG (see sections 3.2. and 3.4.) lack accounts of text-oriented resources for meaning. Thus, Martin (1992) and Martin and Rose (2003/2007) proposed descriptions of text-oriented meaning-making resources located on a stratum called discourse semantics. These resources are assigned to six key sets, which are appraisal, ideation, conjunction, identification, periodicity and negotiation. These key sets differ in how closely they are related to the lexicogrammatical systems described by Halliday (e.g. 1994). With respect to ideation, for example, Martin and Rose (2003/2007) extend the system of Transitivity (see section 3.4.2.) with accounts of lexical relations (taxonomic relations, nuclear relations, and activity sequences) as a major strategy for ideational meaning-making on the text level. Concerning appraisal, which revolves around the resources concerned with evaluation, a distinct approach called 'Appraisal theory' (see Martin & White, 2005) has even evolved. It focuses on systems for evaluative and emotive language resources (attitude, engagement and graduation) – for example, distinct attitudinal lexis, intensifiers or projections of sources.

### 3.3.2. A selective approach to analysing meaning-making

Research on meaning-making in learners' texts commonly approaches writing in relation to the context layer of genre (see chapter 4). Informed by genre descriptions such as those provided by Martin and Rose (2008), studies often aim at identifying and evaluating central and noteworthy meaning-making patterns based on widely recognised context criteria. While this research project does consider the notion of genre as important, the "mapping" of genres for the pre-tertiary GFL context is a difficult task (see chapter 1 and sections 2.1.4. and 2.2.), and has, to the best of my knowledge, not been approached empirically. Thus, a selective approach to genre is taken that is closely in line with Ørevik (2019).

As described in more detail in Article I and section 4.1., Ørevik (2019) conceptualises genre in terms of Martin (2009), while also taking a complementary perspective on genre in terms of genre and text type, and distinguishing main and individual genres. In order to be able to assign texts to main genre categories (e.g. *expository*) even when they do not represent clear-cut genres, she also resorts to the 'Wheel of Writing' model developed by Berge et al. (2016) (see also section

2.1.1.). This model was established for the Norwegian L1 classroom and provides an overview of different acts of writing, which are subsumed under six purposes of writing. For example, writing acts such as *to compare* and *to interpret* are counted under the purpose of *knowledge development*, which Ørevik (2019) then assigns to expository genres. In line with Ørevik (2019), this dissertation also treats genre in a "practical, non-essentialist" sense (Lüders et al., 2010).

In addition to the notion of genre, accounts on discourse semantics resources by Martin and Rose (2003/2007) have also been influential for the analysis in Article I. This allowed an additional perspective on ideational meaning-making in short learner texts and is presented in more detail in section 3.4.1.

The research articles that comprise this dissertation also take a selective perspective regarding which metafunctions and lexicogrammatical systems to consider. For example, Articles I and III only inquire into one metafunction each, which is the ideational metafunction in Article I and the interpersonal in Article III. This was, amongst other things, motivated by the aim to obtain deeper insights into patterns. In Article II, all metafunctions have been analysed and described. As inquiring into all meaning dimensions in learner responses is a complex endeavour, however, the analytical approach is partially based on Schleppegrell and Go's (2007) highly ideational approach to all three meaning dimensions (see sections 3.4. and 4.2.). The way in which the lexicogrammatical systems have been approached selectively across the analyses is presented in more detail in sections 3.4. and 5.4.

Generally, the analytical approaches in the current research project reflect a practical attempt to inquire into lexicogrammatical meaning-making in L3 learner texts. It further needs to be stressed that meaning-making by beginner to intermediate L3 learners may differ significantly from that by proficient L2 users. While the latter often have the repertoire to choose between alternative sets of language resources on the lexicogrammatical stratum, language learners must successively develop these alternating sets. Hence, the descriptions established in this current research project mainly have to be viewed in terms of what *can* be seen, instead of pondering on the systems that could have been used instead.

## 3.4. Lexicogrammatical systems of meaning-making resources

In this section, the different systems and meaning-making resources that are relevant to the analysis of this dissertation are described. As pointed out above, these descriptions rely substantially on descriptions from the IFG but also include accounts of meaning-making resources as described by Martin and Rose (2003/2007) and of resources that are considered as agnate structures by Schleppegrell and Go (2007).

As indicated in section 3.2., Halliday locates lexicogrammatical systems in a metafunctional context and derives them from grammatical structures. Thus, these systems cannot be presented in detail without accounting for their metafunctional location and structural origin. Accordingly, IFG presents three major structures and systems on the clause level that are core to making ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning.

For the experiential metafunction as one of two distinct components of the ideational metafunction, Halliday defines the structure of *process + participant + circumstance* for realising the *clause as representation*, with *Transitivity* as the lexicogrammatical system containing the options available. Regarding the realisation of the *clause as an exchange* (interpersonal metafunction), Halliday proposes the structure of *Mood + Residue* and the system of *Mood*, and regarding the *clause as message* (textual metafunction), the structure of *Theme + Rheme* and the system of *Theme* (see Table 3). Schleppegrell (2012) exemplified these major structures and systems using the clause *Discourse analysis seeks patterns in linguistic data.* Ideationally, the content is represented through a process ('seeks') that describes that a participant with the role of 'Actor' ('Discourse analysis') is doing something. The circumstance 'in data' augments this process further by indicating location. Interpersonally, the clause realises a statement as the Subject precedes the Finite. Concerning the textual dimension, the clause presents the constituent 'Discourse analysis' as point of departure (Theme), while the rest of the clause is displayed as new information (Rheme) (Schleppegrell, 2012, pp. 21–22). In addition to Transitivity, Mood and Theme, Halliday proposes the systems of *Taxis* and *Logico-semantic relations* for describing the second component of the ideational metafunction, namely logical relations. Table 3 provides an overview of the different structures and systems.

Table 3

*Lexicogrammatical systems in relation to the metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 83–87)*

| Metafunct. | Ideational | | Interpersonal | Textual |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Logical** | **Experiential** | | |
| **Meaning** | Construing logical relations | Construing experience | Enacting social relationships | Organising discourse |
| **Clause as** | | representation | exchange | message |
| **Structure** | | Process + participant (+ circumstance) | Mood [Subject + Finite] + Residue | Theme - Rheme |
| **System: clause rank** | | | | |
| | Log.-sem. type, Taxis | TRANSITIVITY | MOOD | THEME |
| **System: group rank** | | | | |
| **Nominal** | Modifi-cation | Thing type, Epithesis, Qualification, Classification | Nominal Mood, Person, Assessment | Determination |
| **Verbal** | Tense | Event type, Aspect | Polarity, Modality | Contrast, Voice |
| **Adverbial** | Modific. | Circumstance type | Comment type | Conjunction type |

Table 3 also shows structures and systems described at group rank in IFG. These systems are interrelated with distinct structural elements of nominal, verbal or adverbial groups. In contrast to the grammar of the clause, groups do not have structures associated with the three distinct lines of meanings. Rather, they are displayed as having an experiential and a logical structure (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 361–364).

In the next sections, I present the main systems at the clause rank, which are most central to this dissertation. This account first focuses on the two components of the ideational metafunction – the logical (3.4.1.) and the experiential (3.4.2.) – followed by the interpersonal (3.4.3.) and the textual metafunction (3.4.4.). Subsequently, I also elaborate on relevant aspects of the structures and systems at group rank (section 3.4.5.). The descriptions to follow are mostly based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), Andersen and Holsting (2015), and Steiner and Teich (2004).

The latter two works are important to this thesis as IFG descriptions of the English language cannot be used unrestrictedly with respect to another language. Halliday (1994) states that "[e]ach language has its own semantic code, although languages

that share a common culture tend to have codes that are closely related" (p. xxx). The need for language-specific lexicogrammatical descriptions is also clearly outlined by Holsting (2018), who identified key differences in the systems of Mood and Theme and the semantic domain of projection between English, Danish and German, i.e. three Germanic languages. Accordingly, the last decades have seen a growing number of lexicogrammatical descriptions of languages other than English (see, for example, Caffarel et al., 2004), including a concise overview of descriptions of German as provided by Steiner and Teich (2004). Andersen and Holsting (2015; see also Holsting, 2013) even established extensive functional grammar descriptions of a Germanic language quite close to German, i.e. Danish.

Considering the need to be language-specific, the following sections also include examples in German. Most of them, including all examples on the clause (complex) level, were created by me. Due to space constraints, translations are not included.

### 3.4.1. Logical systems and resources

Basic to construing logical relations is the unit of the *clause complex*, which represents sequences of figures in the form of textually related messages (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 429). IFG presents two basic systems "that determine how one clause is related to another" (p. 438): *Logico-semantic type* and *Taxis*.

*Logico-semantic relation types* concern the different relations between the clauses of a clause nexus. IFG differentiates between two main categories of sequences: *Expansion* and *projection*. Relation types of *expansion* expand a primary clause and comprise three subtypes: *elaboration*, *extension* and *enhancement* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 460–487). *Elaborating* clauses expand the meaning of a primary clause by specifying, exemplifying or restating it, or by characterising it further, like in example *i. Extending* clauses add a new element, an exception or an alternative to the meaning of the primary clause (see example *ii.*), while *enhancing* clauses qualify another clause further by reference to time, place, manner, cause or condition (see example *iii.*).

i.    *Ich mag meine Kollegen, ‖ mit denen ich schon seit Jahren zusammenarbeite.*

ii.    *Mir gefällt fast alles bei meiner Arbeit, ‖ aber ich halte nicht gerne Vorträge.*

iii.    *Als ich letztens leider zur spät zur Arbeit kam, ‖ war meine Chefin sehr sauer.*

33

> iv. *Ihr Kollege erklärte, ‖ dass es falsch sei. (= Der Kollege sagt: „Es ist falsch.“)*
>
> v. *Hilde meinte, ‖ dass der Lohn soweit stimmt. (= Hilde denkt: ‚Der Lohn …‘)*

Unlike expansion, *projection* is a logico-semantic relation between a clause expressing a semantic phenomenon of a locution or idea, and a primary clause projecting this secondary clause (pp. 443–444). In what Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 720) call the congruent system, projection clause nexuses thus contain a projecting clause revolving around the process of saying or thinking, and a clause being a projection of wording (*reported clause*, see example *iv.*) or meaning (*idea clause*, see example *v.*). Projection is a common resource for attributing sources, indicating viewpoints, creating dialogic narrative patterns or for framing questions (p. 509).

*Taxis* concerns the degree to which two clauses are interdependent (pp. 438–442). If two interrelated clauses are of equal status, this degree of interdependency is described as *parataxis* (see example *ii.*). In contrast, *hypotaxis* describes an unequal status between two interrelated clauses, where the modifying clause functions to support its main clause and does not represent an arguable proposition (see examples *i.*, *iii.–v.*). Hypotaxis is particularly common for clause complexes with enhancing relations and even standard for those of idea type (projection) (pp. 447–448)

In Article I, I use the system of Logico-semantic relations, together with the experiential system of Transitivity (see section 3.4.2.), to identify patterns that are characteristic to ideational meaning-making in the learners' responses (see also section 5.4.1.). Attention to this logical system has also been motivated by research that has pointed out the relations of expansion and projection as crucial to expository writing (see Article I for further elaborations on this matter). Against the assumption that logico-semantic relations may not make a significant contribution to construing experience in short text responses, however, I also inquire into logical relations in terms of the discourse semantic resources of taxonomic relations (see section 3.3.). Martin and Rose (2007) define them as "the chains of relations between elements as the text unfolds […] [which] progressively construct taxonomies of people, things, places and their qualities" (p. 75). They distinguish between the relations of *repetition*, *synonymity*, *contrast* (*opposition* and *series*), *class* (*class to member* and *co-class*) and *wholes/parts* (pp. 73–90).

In Article II, the inquiry into logical systems only plays a minor role. Yet some attention is paid to the analysis of shifts in the tense system, which is located at the group rank (see Table 3 in the previous section) and described in more depth in section 3.4.5.

### 3.4.2. Experiential systems and resources

The experiential function concerns the representation of experience through words and carries, as Andersen and Holsting (2015, p. 61) point out, a considerably high load in enabling the expression of all kinds of actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts. Thus, the interrogation into experiential systems is crucial to the analysis of ideational meaning-making, as is demonstrated in both Article I and Article II. As the experiential function is also associated with the highest number of descriptions of lexicogrammatical systems and lexical meanings (p. 61), these descriptions receive considerable attention in this section.

Core to describing the clause as a representation of experience is the *Transitivity* system, which Halliday describes as the structure of *processes*, *participants* and *circumstances*. In this structure, *processes* constitute the centre. They are realised through verbal groups and describe a change in the flow of events, also called a 'figure' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 213, 220). The figures construed are of different type, called process types. *Participants* involved in processes are usually realised through nominal groups and are distinguished by Andersen and Holsting (2015, pp. 66–67) into two main groups in terms of meaning. First, creatures and things, of which the non-conscious elements comprise the categories of animals, substances, organisations and objects (both concrete and abstract items). Second, participants concerning quality (class, property, measure/scale, identity), which are only associated with the relational process type. Processes and participants constitute the inner and outer centre of the Transitivity system, while circumstances are usually optional and can occur freely in the different process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 221, 310). They are typically realised through prepositional phrases or adverbial groups and specify, for example, the extent (e.g. 'während der Veranstaltung'), manner (e.g. 'auf eine gute Art und Weise') or cause (e.g. 'wegen des Regens') of a process. Inter alia, circumstances can also express sources or viewpoints in terms of projection (e.g. 'seiner Meinung nach') (pp. 311–314).

In the analysis of Transitivity in Articles I and II, the focus is nearly exclusively on the configuration of processes and participants, as they in particular allow statements about how experience is construed throughout a text (see also Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 219). Thus, in the remaining section, I elaborate in more detail on the different process types and participants involved.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe six process types (material, mental, verbal, relational, existential and behavioural), while Andersen and Holsting (2015) distinguish only between four types: *material*, *mental*, *verbal,* and *relational* processes, with the latter being described as containing also the subtype of *existential* processes. As Andersen and Holsting's (2015) grouping is most concise and most relevant for this thesis (see also Steiner & Teich, 2004), I also draw on their categories. Table 4 gives an overview of the four process types, along with the meanings they realise, characteristic participants involved, and examples.

Table 4

*Major process types and their meanings (Andersen & Holsting, 2015; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)*

| Process | Meaning | Participants | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Material | 'doing' | **Actor**, Goal | *Sie traf den Freund ihres Sohns.* |
| | | **Actor**, Scope | *Noah spielt Tennis.* |
| Mental | 'sensing' | **Senser**, Phenomenon | *Der Polizist sah den Unfall.* |
| Verbal | 'saying' | **Sayer**, Receiver, Verbiage | *Paul erzählte Laura ein Geheimnis.* |
| Relational: | 'being' | | |
| | 'attributing' | **Carrier**, Attribute | *Die Rose ist besonders schön.* |
| | 'identifying' | **Identified**, Identifier | *Die Rose ist das Zeichen für Liebe.* |
| Relational > Existential | 'presentative' | Existent | *Es gab viel zu tun.* |

*Material* processes describe actions and happenings, ranging from concrete to abstract activities and incidents. Andersen and Holsting (2015, p. 70) point out that this process type is the one with the highest lexical variety. Most typically, verbal groups expressing an action in the active form involve participants with the role of *Actor* and *Goal*, with the Actor being the one doing the action and the Goal being the one influenced or shaped by an action. In processes expressing a happening, a typical participant is *Scope*, which expands the process with further information (pp. 71–80) (see Table 4 for examples).

*Mental* processes represent perceptions, thoughts, feelings or wishes from the inner perspective of a participant functioning as *Senser*. Commonly, they are further divided into the subtypes *perceptive* (e.g. 'fühlen'), *cognitive* (e.g. 'glauben'), *desiderative* (e.g. 'wünschen'), and *emotive* (e.g. 'lieben') (for an overview, see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 257). What is felt, planned or perceived is represented by a participant termed *Phenomenon*. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 251), this participant is particular in that it can be any creature or thing, as well as an *act* (*Macrophenomenon*) (see example *i.*) or *fact* (*Metaphenomenon*) (see example *ii.*, on act and fact clauses, see also section 3.4.5.). Moreover, mental clauses may also project ideas, which is typically the case in mental processes of desiderative and cognitive type (pp. 253–254) (see example *iii.*).

> i. *Die Wandergruppe fühlte [[, wie die Luft immer dünner wurde]].*
> ii. *Frederick ärgerte sich (darüber) [[, dass er den Brief nicht abgeschickt hat]].*
> iii. *Die Studienteilnehmer glaubten, ‖ dass der Versuch nur einmal stattfindet.*

*Verbal* processes are associated with describing exchanges of meanings in terms of 'saying' (Andersen & Holsting, 2015, p. 94). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 302–303) present these clauses as an important resource in discourse – for example, for quoting others, or for representing viewpoints (see example *iv.*) or dialogicity (see example *v.*). There are four main participants that can be involved in verbal processes (pp. 303–307): the *Sayer*, who puts out a verbal signal (in German this is almost always a creature); the *Receiver* of the signal; the *Target* affected by a verbal action (see example *iv.*); or the *Verbiage* realising the verbal signal (see Table 4). The latter may also constitute projected wordings (see example *v.*), i.e. reported clauses.

> iv. *Die Politiker hinterfragten die Expertenantworten.*
> v. *Lina fragte ihn, ‖ wie sie zum Museum gelangt ist.*

*Relational* processes contrast with all the other process types in that they are of static form and describe only relationships instead of distinctive actions of consciousness (Andersen & Holsting, 2015, p. 137; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 259–262). They represent the condition of 'being' or 'having', with the two interrelated participants carrying the experiential load. Relational processes are differentiated in two major ways (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 262–267):

First, relations can be classified as being either of *intensive*, *possessive* or *circumstantial* type. *Intensive* clauses represent the relation of someone/something being someone/something ('*x* is *a*', see example *vi.*), *possessive* clauses express ownership, containment or involvement ('*x* has *a*', see example *vii.*), while *circumstantial* clauses represent the relation of, for example, place, manner or cause ('*x* is at *a*', see example *viii.*). In this way, these three distinct relations also embody different types of expansion on the clause rank (see section 3.4.1.): intensive clauses are linked to elaboration, possessive clauses to extension, and circumstantial clauses to enhancement (p. 667).

    vi.    *[[Woher Karls Ehrgeiz kommt,]] ist ungewiss.*

    vii.    *Karl hat viele gute Noten.*

    viii.    *Die Abiturnote setzt sich aus vielen Einzelnoten zusammen.*

    ix.    *Karl ist derjenige, [[der das beste Zeugnis hat.]]*

    x.    *Klasse 8c hat den besten Notendurchschnitt des Jahrgangs.*

Second, relational clauses can either be *attributing* or *identifying* type. In *attributing* clauses (see examples *vi.–viii.*), someone/something (the *Carrier*) is classified by an *Attribute*, creating the abstract experience of class membership. In *identifying* clauses (see examples *ix.*, *x.*), someone/something is being identified by another participant, establishing the abstract experience of identity. The latter two participants are often termed *Identified* and *Identifier*, while Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 278–288) also use the terms *Value* (doing the 'naming' and 'defining' as a linguistic exercise) and *Token* (doing the 'calling'), against the backdrop that it is not always clear which element is to be identified and which provides the identity (*Who is the one with the best report? Who is Karl?*). As to the form of the participants, the Attribute differs from the Value, Token and Carrier in that it is restricted to nominal groups with nouns or adjectives as Head (see examples *vi.*, *vii.*), or prepositional groups (see example *viii.*).

A subtype of relational processes is the *existential* process, expressing the existence of creatures or things (Andersen & Holsting, 2015, pp. 138–139). It centres on a limited set of lexical verbs of undynamic nature, with 'geben' as the most prototypical verb in German, and involves the participant *Existent* (e.g. 'kein Eis' in *Es gibt kein Eis.)*

### 3.4.3. Interpersonal systems and resources

As discussed in section 3.2., the interpersonal function of language is to enact interaction and social relations between people. In describing how exchange is realised, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) consider the structure of the clause in terms of *Mood* and *Residue*, with the Mood-element comprising the constituents Subject and Finite. Inquiries into Mood usually aim at analysing the order of the Subject and Finite for gaining insights into sentence types (declarative, interrogative or imperative), which are associated with the speech functions statement, question (both defined as propositions) or request (defined as proposal) (pp. 135–151; Andersen & Holsting, 2015, pp. 185–202).

In this dissertation, inquiries into Mood are not viewed as productive for describing interpersonal meaning-making for two main reasons: First, written language, including learners' texts, only presents a small degree of variation in speech functions, with the declarative as the most characteristic form (Andersen & Holsting, 2015, p. 212). Second, the Mood-element in German is less clear-cut and sometimes even discontinuous (e.g. *Stand gestern der Verkehr still?*), which gives the position of the Finite and its verbal mode (i.e. indicative vs. imperative) the most important role in the realisation of sentence type in German (Steiner & Teich, 2004). Consequently, investigations into interpersonal meaning-making in Articles II and III are mainly based on another interpersonal system termed 'modal assessment' by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). In the next paragraphs, I describe this system in detail given its important role in the analysis in Article III.

Modal assessment (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) or point of view (Andersen & Holsting, 2015) have been described as comprising those resources which add nuance to incidents or actions interpersonally in terms of *polarity*, *modality*, *intensity*, *temporality* and *comments*. *Polarity* concerns the resources available to realise expressions of confirmation or denial ('yes' or 'no'). *Modality,* which subsumes the types (i.) *modalisation* and (ii.) *modulation*, either (i.) locates a proposition between the poles of 'it is so' and 'it isn't so' regarding how likely (*possibility*) or usual (*usuality*) the validity of a proposition is (modalisation), or (ii.) expresses intermediate degrees of proposals between the positive and negative poles of 'do it' and 'don't do it' (modulation) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 177–178). Assessments of modulation hence concern the potential for an action being performed in terms of *allowance*, *liability*, *will* and *ability* (Andersen &

Holsting, 2015, pp. 219–220). The assessments of *intensity*, *temporality* and *comments* partly overlap with *modality*, but they still represent specific categories: *intensity* centres on ways to either strengthen or weaken the force of an incident, *temporality* concerns the speaker's idea about time, and *comments* concern various ways of commenting on a message – for example, as to under which conditions something is valid (pp. 221–226; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 183–193). All types of modal assessment are expressed through specific resources, which I have grouped into three main types in Article III: modal verbs (e.g. 'können', 'wollen') (restricted to modality), modal Adjuncts realised by either adverbial groups or prepositional phrases (e.g. 'oft', 'endlich', 'dummerweise', 'dem Anschein nach'), and resources that I have labelled as paraphrased forms (e.g. *Ich nehme an, dass ... ., Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass … .*). The distinct types of modal assessment strategies and resources are presented in a condensed overview in Article III. Yet paraphrased forms, as well as the assessments of *possibility* (as subtype of modalisation), *modulation* and *comment*, are particularly complex. Thus, I elaborate further on these matters in the following paragraphs, beginning with an account of paraphrased forms.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe forms I have labelled as *paraphrased* in more detail and define them as explicit, metaphoric (incongruent) types of resources (pp. 186, 677–701). In contrast to implicit forms (e.g. *Er ist <u>vielleicht</u> ... .)*, explicit forms are at clause rank within the clause nexus of an 'interpersonal' projection. As such, and unlike congruent (logical) projection (see section 3.4.1.), the secondary clause in explicit forms does not represent a projected idea or locution. Rather, it represents a proposition, with the primary clause serving as a modal Adjunct that enacts the speaker's opinion. Explicit forms are stressed by Halliday and Matthiesen (2014) as particular as they follow the speaker's urge to express their own point of view effectively by "dress[ing] it up as if it was this that constituted the assertion ('explicit' *I think* …) – with the further possibility of making it appear as if it was not our point of view at all ('explicit objective' *it's likely that ...*)" (p. 698). Thus, they classify explicit forms further into a subjective orientation, formed with 'Ich' as Senser/Sayer and a mental/verbal process (e.g. *Ich denke, ... .*), and an objective orientation revolving around the relational *Es ist ... .* The fact that explicit forms represent an orientation, identifies them as ideational and not interpersonal manifestations of assessment (p. 679).

*Possibility* as a modal assessment category is associated with the pragmatic category of epistemicity (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 692; Maden-Weinberger, 2008, p. 142), which means that a speaker expresses his or her assessment of how valid the proposition is, with no existing semantic relationship between the modal expression and the subject (Diewald, 1993, p. 221). Epistemically used modal expressions can be subdivided regarding the speaker's level of certainty about a piece of information along a continuum between high and low possibility, such as in *Sie ist mit Sicherheit / höchstwahrscheinlich / vermutlich / vielleicht krank.* or *Er muss / müsste / dürfte / kann / könnte schon im Urlaub sein.* (e.g. Maden-Weinberger, 2008, p. 149). Commonly, possibility is expressed through modal Adjuncts in German (e.g. Maden-Weinberger, 2009, p. 61). Instead of or in addition to modal Adjuncts, explicit forms (e.g. *Ich denke, ...*.) or modal verbs can also express possibility. In terms of modal verbs, four are most noteworthy: 'können' (including its subjunctive mood form 'könnte') as the most common variant, 'müssen' (including 'müsste'), 'mögen' and the subjunctive mood form 'dürfte'.

Modal assessment of *modulation* type is often called non-epistemic or deontic (e.g. Diewald, 1993, p. 220; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 692). Non-epistemic modality is only associated with a small range of modal Adjuncts and is mainly expressed by modal verbs, which differ from epistemic modal verbs in various ways. Looking at a contrast like *Er will / darf allein zur Schule gehen.*, it becomes obvious that mutual substitution of non-epistemically used modal verbs is limited (Diewald, 1993, p. 226) and that their meaning dimensions are specific. This also concerns the subjunctive mood forms of 'sollen' ('sollte') and 'mögen' ('möchte'). Table 5 gives a brief overview of the meanings of the non-epistemic modal verbs.

Table 5

*Meanings of modal verbs expressing modulation (after Maden-Weinberger, 2009, p. 107)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **allowance** | *dürfen* | permission for realisation (direction of subject and legitimisation by external authority) |
| | *können* | |
| **liability** | *müssen* | ascertainment that a necessity exists for a realisation |
| | *sollen* | an external authority dictates the direction of the realisation |
| | *sollte* | suggestion (realisation uncertain) from an external authority |
| **will** | *wollen* | volition, intention, plan, subject controls direction of action |
| | *möchte* | attenuated volition (wish) |
| **ability** | *können* | possibility of realisation due to external circumstances, skills, habits |

Non-epistemic modal verbs are also part of open and loosely structured lexical fields (e.g. Maden-Weinberger, 2009, pp. 104–105). For example, the modal verb 'können' constitutes the lexical field of 'ability' together with 'paraphrastic' forms like 'fähig sein', 'in der Lage sein' or 'imstande sein' (p. 291). The width of those lexical fields means that non-epistemic modal meanings can also be found within certain explicit structures (see examples *i.* and *ii.* associated with the modal verb 'müssen'), and in various lexical verbs as part of the Residue (Predicator) (see example *iii.*). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 186) consider the latter expression as an implicit form.

    i.    *Es ist nötig, dass sie endlich ihren Führerschein macht.*

    ii.    *Ich halte es für nötig, dass sie … .*

    iii.    *Sie ist dazu genötigt, endlich ihren Führerschein zu machen.*

Modal assessments of *comment* type concern a broad category (e.g. Andersen & Holsting, 2015, p. 224). Accordingly, defining this category is challenging. On the one hand, some comment Adjuncts presented by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Andersen and Holsting (2015) are also discussed under the heading of modality or intensity (see also Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 190). On the other hand, comment types are defined in various ways: Andersen and Holsting (2015) describe comment meaning dimensions in a simplified way by drawing on the dimension of how 'desirable / correct / expected' something is and on the dimensions of 'I admit' and 'I assure you'. In contrast to this, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 190–193) present a detailed overview of comment Adjuncts, including nuanced subtypes and further categorisations such as 'asseverative' or 'persuasive'. To that end, they also group comment Adjuncts as being either of propositional type (ideational type), "commenting either on the proposition as a whole or on the part played by the Subject" (p. 190) (see example *iv.*), or of speech-functional type, which are associated with projection via modal Adjuncts extendable by 'speaking' (see examples *v.*) or claims of veracity, signals of assurance or of admission (see example *vi.*).

    iv.    <u>*Leider*</u> *musste er sein Studium aufgeben.*

    v.    <u>*Ehrlich gesagt*</u> *hätte er sich besser noch einmal beraten lassen.*

    vi.    <u>*Glaub mir,*</u> *er kann damit nicht zufrieden gewesen sein.*

For German, there are, to the best of my knowledge, no SFL-based descriptions for comment Adjuncts. Yet standard grammar descriptions such as those by Helbig and Buscha (2013) provide information on 'Modalwörter' including comment Adjuncts (see also the section on 'Kommentaradverbien' in Duden-Grammatik, 2016). Helbig and Buscha (2013, pp. 431–439), for example, differentiate groups of modal Adjuncts along the criteria 'speaker reference' or 'subject reference' as well as further categories such as 'emotional' or 'evaluative', and thereby also point to the function of certain Adjuncts in terms of commenting on a proposition or on the part played by the subject. In connection with "Modalwörter", Helbig and Buscha (2013) also list explicit structures as competing forms for the modal verbs (e.g. *Es ist wichtig, dass ... ., Ich bedauere, dass ....*) and describe further resources under the category of 'Modalwort-ähnliche Ausdrücke' (expressions similar to modal words), which include amongst others:

(i)    'Einordnungsadverbien' such as 'wissenschaftlich' or 'theoretisch', i.e. shortened participle constructions expandable by 'betrachtet' or 'gesehen' (e.g. 'theoretisch betrachtet'). They express the speaker's attitude towards a proposition while also limiting it and are thus of propositional type.

(ii)    'Parenthetische Adverbiale' comprising participle constructions such as 'offen gesagt(,)' or 'einfach formuliert(,)'. They are the only expressions defined as being of speech-functional type (Helbig & Buscha, 2013, p. 437).

As outlined, modal assessments of possibility, modulation and comments in particular can be realised as implicit forms (modal verbs, modal Adjuncts or periphrastic forms) or objective/subjective explicit forms (for an overview of periphrastic and explicit modal assessment resources in German, see Maden-Weinberger, 2009, pp. 290–291). As Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 686) also point out, clausal assessments such as *Klugerweise entschied sie sich um* are also transformable into nominal assessments on group rank ('interpersonal Epithet', see also section 3.4.5.), as in 'die kluge Wendung', as both are projections of the speaker's assessment. These diverse ways of expressing and transforming interpersonal meaning may make it challenging to analyse modal assessment strategies comprehensively. This is complicated by the similarity between explicit metaphorical and congruent forms (e.g. *Ich vermute, dass er krank ist.* vs. *Er vermutet, dass er ... .*) and modal Adjuncts and circumstances (e.g. *Ich übe <u>jeden</u>*

*Tag.* vs. *Ich übe am Sonntag.*), and the nuanced meanings of paraphrastic implicit forms (on this aspect, see Maden-Weinberger, 2009, pp. 170–171).

Article II and Article III both interrogate modal assessment strategies used in the learners' texts. Yet in Article II, only certain modal assessments are investigated and the analysis adopts an ideational perspective consistent with the underlying approach taken by Schleppegrell and Go (2007) (see sections 4.2. and 5.4.2.). The features analysed mostly concern mental and verbal clauses with 'Ich' as Senser or Sayer (e.g. *Ich glaube ... .*) and circumstances of Angle (see sections 3.4.1. and 3.4.2.), thus structures which Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 49) point out as as being 'agnate' to interpersonal resources. As shown in Table 6, this means that the lexicogrammatical systems of projection nexus, mental/verbal clauses (e.g. *Ich denke, dass ... .*), circumstances of Angle (e.g. *'für mich'*) and modal assessments are all systemically related.

Table 6

*Manifestation of expansion and projection at clause rank (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 676)*

| logical | INTERDEPENDENCY | projection nexuses |
|---|---|---|
| **experiential** | PROCESS TYPE | mental/verbal |
| | CIRCUMSTANTIATION | angle/matter |
| **interpersonal** | MODALITY ASSESSMENT | modality, polarity, comment |

### 3.4.4. Textual systems and resources

Regarding the textual function, the clause is seen as being a message which represents a "quantum of information in the flow of discourse" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 88). The structure central to the clause as message is that of Theme and Rheme, with *Theme* being the element that guides the addressee in connecting the message to what has been said before and in developing an understanding of the remaining part of the message. Thus, it is central for realising texture in whole texts as well, and for interpreting experiential and interpersonal meanings in preceding messages (e.g. Andersen & Holsting, 2015, p. 230). Given the importance of the Theme structure, it is also addressed in Article II.

Generally, the Theme is defined as the first constituent (a group or phrase) which precedes the Finite, while the *Rheme* is the remainder of the clause (Halliday &

Matthiessen, 2014, p. 90). Theme is frequently discussed in terms of the speaker's choice to give prominence to a specific element. Yet the order of constituents is also associated with the interpersonal and logical function, as is the case with interrogative and imperative sentence types and dependent clauses. In interrogative clauses, for example, the Theme is realised by either a *w*-element (e.g. 'welche', 'wessen'), Finites or Predicators (e.g. 'hat', 'gehe'). In dependent bound clauses – which are often analysed as part of the Theme-Rheme structure of the free clause – the Themes are either *w*-elements, relative pronouns, conjunctions or prepositions, along with a subject as fixed experiential element (Andersen & Holsting, 2015, pp. 236–241), as in *Er fragte mich, ob ich Zeit habe*.

In contrast to interrogatives, imperatives and dependent clauses, declarative clauses have a variable Theme structure. Commonly, these Themes depend on previous statements made (Andersen & Holsting, 2015, pp. 244–245). If a speaker states *Auf der linken Seite liegt das Rathaus.*, the clause to follow likely has the Theme structure *Gegenüber befindet sich der Dom.*, instead of *Der Dom befindet sich gegenüber.* Overall, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) differentiate between *topical*, *interpersonal* and *textual* Themes. *Topical* Themes consist of experiential elements and are usually participants (see examples *i.-iii.* below) or circumstances (e.g. 'auf der linken Seite', 'gegenüber'), and less frequently lexical processes (see example *iv.*). Regarding participants as Themes, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 97–98) stress that they are particularly often realised by the item 'ich' and also other personal pronouns in  everyday conversation, followed by other nominal groups and nominalisations (see also section 3.4.5.). Regarding German, example *iii.* further shows that nominal groups as Themes can also comprise an element of phrasal verbs (i.e. prepositions or adverbs).

    i.   *Den Bus hatte Petra leider schon verpasst.*
    ii.   *Es*[14] *war ärgerlich, dass Petra nicht noch einmal online nachgeschaut hatte.*
    iii.   *Auf dem Fahrplan gab es falsche Informationen.*
    iv.   *Verpasst hatte sie den Bus um ganze 20 Minuten.*

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[14] Andersen and Holsting (2015, p. 245) categorise 'es' in the function of either a formal subject (e.g. *Es regnet heute.)* or a provisional subject (e.g. *Es kam jemand.*) as interpersonal Theme.

Regarding *interpersonal* Themes, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 107–108) list three kinds of Themes: Finite verbal operators (e.g. 'hast'), Vocatives as forms of address (e.g. 'Freunde' in *Freunde, wir müssen reden.*), and interpersonal Adjuncts (e.g. 'leider' in *Leider ist er nicht da.*, see also section 3.4.3.). As *textual* Themes, they name continuatives (e.g. 'ja', 'ok'), textual conjunctions, and conjunctive Adjuncts, i.e. adverbial groups or prepositional phrases such as 'anders gesagt' or 'zum Beispiel' that relate the clause to the previous text (p. 108). Interpersonal and textual Themes are stressed as "natural Themes" by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 109), as speakers wish to inform the recipient from the start about how a message fits in or how they feel about the content of a message.

Themes may also contain more than one constituent. This is the case in 'thematic equative' constructions that represent an identifying clause with a thematic nominalisation, which specify the Theme and identify it with the Rheme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 95; see also Steiner & Teich, 2004, pp. 174–176) (see example *v.*), and in 'theme-on-finite' constructions (Steiner & Teich, 2004, p. 176), which occur across process types with non-referential Subjects (see example *vi.*).

> v.  *<u>Das übertriebene Verhalten von ihr ist es, was</u> mir nicht gefällt.*
> vi. *<u>Es reicht</u> mir mit ihren Sticheleien.*

In German, multiple Themes are constrained. This is because German word order in free declaratives displays a V2 structure, with the Finite always being in second position in the German clause, while the first position called the *Vorfeld* only allows for one constituent (Steiner & Teich, 2004, pp. 169, 174). The few exceptions for multiple Themes listed by Andersen and Holsting (2015, pp. 246–247) and Steiner and Teich (2004, p. 174) comprise inter alia combinations of metafunctional Theme types (see example *vii..*) and 'experiential-multiple' types (see example *viii.*).

> vii.  *<u>Also vielleicht</u> ist er in den Urlaub gefahren.*
> viii. *<u>So schlecht gesessen</u> haben wir noch nie im Theater.*

Overall, Themes in German can be of various forms and functions. In contrast to other languages, German does not need an obligatory experiential element in Theme position and allows for both Subjects and Complements as Themes (Steiner & Teich, 2004). Thus, German has "a relatively wide potential of unmarked

Themes in terms of participant and circumstantial roles, […] and possibilities of experiential Themes where Theme is conflated with one, several, or only parts of some experiential function" (p. 169). As markedness is of less classificatory value in German, it is not considered in the analysis of the Theme-Rheme structure in Article II.


### 3.4.5. Group structures and nominalisations

It is not only clauses that consist of specific configurations of structural elements – groups and phrases also have distinct structures. Investigating them can provide further insights into different degrees of complexity and lexical range in learner texts, which was of interest in the analysis of ideational and, to some extent, textual meaning-making in Articles I and II. Thus, this section presents the most central group structures, beginning with the nominal group and continuing with the verbal and then the adverbial groups. Subsequently, I present nominalisations, first from a general and then from a specific perspective on embedded clauses.

As already pointed out in the introduction to section 3.4., groups can be described in terms of an experiential and logical structure. In presenting the groups with their structures, I do not elaborate further on nominal, verbal and adverbial group complexes, which consist of two or more structures paratactically or hypotactically linked with each other (e.g. 'Peter und seine Freundin', 'scheint zu gehen') (for an overview, see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, chapter 8).


*Nominal groups*

The experiential structure of nominal groups centres on a class of things, i.e. the Thing, while other functional elements can characterise the Thing further and categorise it in terms of membership (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 364–388). These elements are the Deictic (indication of specificity, e.g. 'die', 'meine'), Numerative (indicator of a numerical feature, e.g. 'mehrere', 'erste'), Epithet (indicator of the quality of a subset, e.g. 'neu', 'langsam'), Classifier (indicator of a specific subset, e.g. 'bürgerlich', 'mechanisch') and, following the Thing, the Qualifier. The Qualifier either takes the form of an embedded phrase (e.g. 'die Nacht [vor dem Finale]', marked by a single notation in square brackets after Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), an embedded clause in form of a defining relative clause (e.g. 'das Fest, [[das vor dem Finale stattfand]]', marked by a double

notation in square brackets), and/or another nominal group (e.g. 'das Finale, das Highlight der Woche'). Systemic choices regarding the functional elements interrelate with the Thing type (pp. 383–385). If, for example, the Thing type is a pronoun or a proper noun (e.g. 'die USA'), there is little to no need to specify the Thing further as its reference is commonly clear – either by being experientially or interpersonally (i.e. within the speech situation) defined. In comparison, common nouns as class of referents often need to be defined further. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 385–386), there are three scales that are decisive for saying more about how the Thing needs to be located in lexicogrammatical space: countability, animacy (conscious, 'he'/'she' vs. non-conscious, 'it') and generality. Also, the "metaphoric propensity of nouns" influences the experiential structure, which is "their potential for construing qualities and processes as things" (p. 386; see also the section on nominalisations below).

The experiential structure also accounts for how interpersonal and textual meanings are realised through nominal groups (pp. 387–388). The former are embodied, inter alia, in the person system, relating to pronouns (Thing type) and possessive determiners (Deictic), and in interpersonal Epithets (e.g. 'schön' in 'die schöne Kirche', see also section 3.4.3). Regarding textual meanings, the entire structure is of importance "since it determines the order in which the elements are arranged, as well as patterns of information structure [...]" (p. 387).

The logical structure of the nominal group is characterised by the relation of sub-categorisation, also termed modification (pp. 388–392). This structure comprises a Head (often overlapping with the Thing), which can be premodified by hypotactic word complexes, and compressed phrases and clauses. Outside of the logical structure, the Head can also be postmodified. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 390) stress, the positioning of an element either as a Premodifier or Postmodifier has influence on the information structure, with the Postmodifier position having the greater news potential. Overall, the interpretation of the logical structure can help explain how the nominal group "functions as a resource for construing complex things by taking off from a simple noun" (p. 390). The logical structure also makes it possible to describe such groups which occur as Attributes and have an Epithet functioning as Head (e.g. 'reich' in *Peter ist reich.*) (pp. 390–396).

*Verbal groups*

Similar to how nominal groups function, verbal groups are expansions of a verb, with the distinction that the verb is expanded only by further verbs (p. 396). Analogous to the experiential structure of the nominal group, verbal groups centre on the 'Event' which is realised by a lexical verb (including phrasal verbs such as 'zählen auf' or 'rechnen mit'). In contrast to nominal groups, however, verbal groups always contain two elements: the 'Event' and the 'Finite' ('Finite operator'). The latter element corresponds to the Deictic to relate to the 'speaker-now', either by tense (past, present, future) or modality (see section 3.4.3). The Event and Finite may occur as distinct elements ('haben' and 'sich beeilt') or they may be fused (e.g. 'beeilten sich'). In addition to both elements, the experiential structure of the verbal group can also comprise Auxiliaries as optional elements (pp. 397).

Regarding the experiential structure, interpersonal meaning is realised through deictic relations, while textual meaning is realised through the order of the elements (pp. 397–398). Yet Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 398) stress that the textual and logical meanings are only fully represented if all grammatical features encompassed in the logical structure of the verbal group are taken into consideration.

The logical structure of the verbal group consists of one Head realising the primary tense, which can be extended by other modifying elements (pp. 398–399). In the group 'wird gefangen sein', for example, the Head 'wird' expresses future as the primary tense relative to the 'speaker-now', while the modifying elements 'Event: ge-,-en' and the auxiliary 'sein' as secondary tenses build up the complete tense. Another system realised by distinct modifying elements in the logical structure is voice, i.e. the alternative between active (unmarked) and passive. The system of tense encompasses logical meaning, while voice is considered a system of textual meaning-making (p. 411).

*Adverbial groups*

Adverbial groups occur either as circumstantial Adjunct (e.g. 'toll', 'gestern') or modal Adjunct (e.g. 'wahrscheinlich', 'angeblich') in the modal structure of the clause (p. 419; see also sections 3.4.2. and 3.4.3.). Regarding their structure, they are headed by an adverb, which may be modified (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014,

pp. 419–422). Premodifiers comprise grammatical items expressing polarity (yes/no), comparison (e.g. 'am (besten)') and/or intensification (e.g. 'sehr', 'total'), while Postmodifiers only express comparisons (e.g. 'besser [[als ich es erwartet habe]]').

*Nominalisations*

The figure *Seine Eltern kamen spät an* at clause rank consists of a nominal group ('Seine Eltern'), a verbal group ('ankommen') and an adverbial group ('spät') (see also section 3.4.2.). Yet lexical verbs or adjectives functioning within groups in these figures may also become part of a nominal group through a process of nominalisation. This means that "a group, phrase or clause comes to function as part of, or in place of (i.e. as the whole of), a nominal group" (Halliday & Matthiessen, p. 422). Concerning the figure above, the lexical verb 'ankommen' may, for example, become part of a nominal group either in the form of a Premodifier (e.g. 'Die spät <u>ankommenden</u> Eltern') or as the Thing/Head itself (e.g. 'Die späte <u>Ankunft</u> seiner Eltern'). Those latter nominalisations functioning as the Thing/Head further stand out as "examples of ideational metaphors where processes and qualities are construed as if they were entities" (p. 710). As such, they can stand out as textual discourse referents and be modified further in specific and complex ways (p. 712; see also Andersen & Holsting, 2015, pp. 314–315).

Moreover, previously independent or dependent clauses can undergo the process of nominalisation by shifting rank and taking the form of embedded clauses in the nominal group structure (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 490–493), like in the example *Ingrid ist nun weggezogen. Laura ist seit Jahren mit ihr befreundet. > Ingrid, [[mit der Laura seit Jahren befreundet ist]], ist nun weggezogen*. The embedding of a clause in nominal groups is motivated by several factors. Most usually, an embedded clause functions to elaborate or enhance a Head noun in the form of a defining relative clause (see above). To that end, there are also distinct Thing types that specifically motivate enhancement, such as nouns of expansion (pp. 500–503). They are items construing circumstantial relations of time, place, manner and cause, such as 'Ort', 'Weg' or 'Grund' (e.g. 'der Weg [[, auf dem wir fuhren]]'). Also related to expansion is the embedded *act* clause, even though it is mostly not linked to a Head noun but functions itself as the Head (see example *i.*). It concerns "the name of an action, event or other phenomenon involving a process

as the nucleus" (p. 503). Typically, act clauses occur in mental clauses as Macrophenomena or in relational clauses (see also section 3.4.2.).

Embedded clauses are also linked to the relation of projection (pp. 533–536; see also section 3.4.1.). In these cases, the embedded clause functions as Qualifier of nouns that are associated with the meanings of locution or idea and represent a nominalisation of a verbal or mental process (e.g. 'Meinung', 'Argument'). The embedded clause then embodies the projected clause quoting or reporting a locution or idea (see example *ii.*). Beyond embedded reported or idea clauses, an embedded clause as projection can also imply the meaning of 'fact'. This *fact* clause may serve as a Postmodifier/Qualifier linked to a fact noun as Head/Thing (e.g. 'Tatsache') or as Head itself in a nominal group (see example *iii.*).

    i.    *Er sah [[, wie sich die Leute ärgerten]].*

    ii.    *Seine <u>Aussage</u> [[,dass es zu spät sei]], war nicht glaubwürdig.*

    iii.    *Der Veranstalter bedauerte (<u>die Tatsache</u>)[[, dass so wenig Besucher kamen]].*

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), embedded clauses differ from dependent clauses in hypotactic clause nexuses (see section 3.4.1.) as they function in group structures within a clause structure.[15] Nonetheless, embedded and dependent clauses both have in common that they are always marked in German by binders (e.g. 'dass'), conjunctive prepositions (e.g. 'wegen') or relative/ interrogative pronouns, and that the position of the Finite is Finite-last.

## 3.5. Summary

In the preceding sections, I presented SFL theory and its take on grammar as a network of interconnected meaningful choices in terms of distinct systems (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 49). As I also discussed, SFL theory can be used in several ways to describe how meanings are created in relation to different contexts. Schleppegrell (2012, p. 23) presents two major questions that SFL-based descriptions can answer: *How does this text mean what it does?* and *How does this text contribute to shaping the social context?*

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[15] Andersen and Holsting (2015) consider all clauses as embedded that enhance the experiential meaning of the dominant clause and can be expressed using paraphrased groups or phrases (pp. 277–278), such as in the example *Geh heim, wenn die Arbeit getan ist (=Geh nach getaner Arbeit heim)*.

In the present dissertation, the analytical approaches draw largely on Halliday's functional grammar descriptions, as they are of a comprehensive nature and concern a broad range of systems that can be used to describe different meaning dimensions across all situation types. As explained in section 3.3., SFL theory is still used selectively in this thesis for exploring meaning-making patterns in short and partly varying learner texts. Inter alia, this means that the cautious notion of genre as context layer is accommodated and that the metafunctions and lexicogrammatical systems are investigated in selective ways. The systems relevant to the analytical approaches of this thesis were outlined in section 3.4.

# 4. Previous SFL-based studies of L2 writing

As indicated in the previous three chapters, SFL is an education-friendly theory (e.g. Halliday, 2007), and has a dialogic interface with the discipline of education that goes back to the 1960s (Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023, pp. 53–54; see also section 3.3.1.). Accordingly, a large and significantly growing body of research on L2 writing is also framed by SFL theory (for an overview, see e.g. McCabe, 2021; Troyan, 2020). In this chapter, I elaborate on SFL-based research studies of L2 writing that have been relevant to the investigation of meaning-making in short texts written by L3 learners.

Commonly, SFL-based studies of L2 writing investigate longer text productions representing clear-cut genres (e.g. a personal letter, an argumentative essay, an anecdote) written by EFL learners. In contrast to that, the number of SFL-based studies on L3 writing is much smaller (see Troyan, 2020). To the best of my knowledge, there is no research on L3 writing that investigates authentic and more variable data as to how communicative goals are realised. For this dissertation project, I have thus considered various works on L3, EFL and SL writing that use different approaches to investigating meaning-making in learner texts. These can be grouped as descriptive studies (section 4.1.), evaluative studies that inquire into learners' use of language patterns central to realising the different lines of meaning in genre writing tasks (section 4.2.), and evaluative studies investigating writing development based on distinct resources that follow SFL principles (section 4.3.). In the final section of this chapter, the main methodological tendencies are summarised.

## 4.1. Descriptive studies

One descriptive study that makes an important contribution to relating writing to context is Ørevik's (2019) investigation of writing in the Norwegian EFL classroom. She describes patterns of genres and text types in textbooks, inter alia, through both a quantitative analysis of writing prompts and the distribution of genres for reception, and through a qualitative analysis of lexicogrammatical variation among distinct reception text samples. In her qualitative analysis, Ørevik (2019) describes the realisation of register variables and metafunctions coming about through comprehensive functional grammar analysis, i.e. an analysis of the

simultaneous systems of Mood, Transitivity, and Theme, and of clause complexes (see section 3.4.).

While the extensive and diverse data which Ørevik analyses is not comparable to the Norwegian secondary school L3 classroom, her study still contributes in two ways to the current project (see also section 3.3.2. and Article I). First, Ørevik (2019) maps texts from a complementary perspective on genre in terms of genre and text types, given that the use of a writing task "for purposes of language learning leads to a 'repurposing' of the genre according to the aims of the language subject" (p. 36). To this end, Ørevik's (2019) definition of genre is informed by both Martin (2009) and Swales (1990), i.e. it also integrates the notion of communicative purpose (see sections 2.1.1. and 3.3.2.). Most importantly, she also distinguishes between individual and main genre categories, with the latter being associated with predominant text types and partly also with the macrofunctions of language use as listed in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001; see also Hasund, 2022, on the use of Ørevik's model for annotating young learner EFL writing in a TRAWL genre subset). Second, Ørevik (2019) concludes that the analysis of verbal processes, clause complexes and those aspects relating to interaction are particularly relevant for distinguishing genre.

With regard to L3 settings, SFL-based descriptions of distinct genres have become more common in recent years. Mostly, these descriptions concern genres such as personal texts (Troyan & Sembiante, 2020) or anecdotes (Ryshina-Pankova, 2020) and serve either as criteria to be integrated into genre-based approaches or to make teachers aware of such approaches to teaching. The most comprehensive descriptions of genre-specific meaning-making in L3 contexts seem to have emerged in connection with Byrnes et al.'s (2010) curricular design of a collegiate GFL undergraduate programme in the US, for which the authors classified genres according to key linguistic features, such as passive voice, varied sentence structure, and generic and specific participants.

For this current project, Troyan and Sembiante's (2020) work has been of particular importance in terms of how they proposed general questions and corresponding units of analysis for interrogating the meanings of the three register variables, retrieved from the works of Brisk (2015), Derewianka (2011), Eggins (2004) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) (see also Troyan, 2016, in section 4.1.2.). The questions regarding the field variable revolve around inquiries into

what is happening, and the analytical units concern the structural elements of the Transitivity system. Regarding the tenor variable, the inquiries and units of analysis are more multifaceted and interrogate (i) how the reader/interlocutor is engaged through a focus on questions, statements and commands, (ii.) the intensity of the attitude through investigating positive vs. negative word choice, and (iii.) the position taken by a writer in terms of modality. Concerning mode, Troyan and Sembiante (2020) propose to consider the text structure based on an analysis of the Theme and Rheme, chains of reference and cohesive devices. While Troyan and Sembiante's (2020) list of questions and units of analysis is intended for describing any genre in terms of meaning-making, they still only provide selective examples with regard to distinct texts. Therefore, this project also considers studies that conducted analyses as part of evaluative research aims. These are presented in the following sections.

## 4.2. Evaluative studies of L2 learners' realisations of the metafunctions

Even though the analytical approaches of this thesis are descriptive, they are in part also informed by studies that evaluate learners' use of language patterns which are core to realising the different lines of meaning in genre writing tasks.

Three studies that shed light on how different strands of meaning can be approached in contexts somewhat similar to the current one, are those by Troyan (2016), Schleppegrell and Go (2007), and Maxim (2021). Troyan (2016) analyses how a fourth-grade learner of Spanish as an FL made meaning within the genre of touristic landmark description, Schleppegrell and Go (2007) investigate middle school SL learners' meaning-making recounting an experience in the United States, while Maxim (2021) analyses, amongst other things, GFL learners' emergent meaning-making across curricular-based writing tasks within an undergraduate programme at a US university.

Regarding the evaluation of the learners' ideational meaning-making, all three studies focus on the analysis of Transitivity. Additionally, Maxim (2021) interrogates further into the learners' use of logico-semantic relations and taxis. Much more variation can be found as to how interpersonal and textual meaning-making is approached across the studies. Only Troyan (2016) and Schleppegrell and Go (2007) focus on the interpersonal dimension. To that end, both inquire into how attitude or evaluation is expressed by the learners, yet both draw on deviating

criteria. Troyan (2016) focuses on positive vs. negative word choice, while Schleppegrell and Go (2007) resort to analysing specific ideational patterns further, namely mental processes expressing feelings or thoughts, and descriptive processes (see also section 3.4.3.). A focus on specific ideational systems also characterises Schleppegrell and Go's (2007) analysis of the organisation of the text. To that end, they analyse circumstances, participants and tense. She further analyses aspects of cohesion and coherence (e.g. chains of reference, connectors), which is in line with Troyan (2016). In contrast to that, Troyan (2016) additionally accounts for textual organisation in terms of stages, while Maxim (2021) only looks into patterns of thematisation.

Overall, the approaches presented above differ in how they draw on SFL theory. For example, Maxim's (2021) interrogation of long written texts by advanced learners is entirely based on Halliday's functional grammar approach. In contrast to that, Troyan (2016) makes uses of descriptions by both the IFG and the Sydney School (see also Troyan & Sembiante, 2020, in section 4.1.).

## 4.3. Inquiries into FL writing development based on SFL resources

Commonly, and as the current thesis also does to some degree, L2 writing studies focus on distinct resources that follow SFL principles in the analysis. This approach is generally motivated by tracing writing development quantitatively, sometimes explicitly with the aim of analysing meaning-oriented indicators of writing development that go beyond the traditional assessments of FL writing in terms of fluency, diversity and complexity (e.g. Yasuda, 2019).

Interpersonal resources which have received much attention in evaluating L2 learners' writing development are associated with the SFL framework of Appraisal (Martin & White, 2005, see section 3.3.1.). These features have, for example, been analysed in personal letters written by younger learners of EFL (e.g. Lindgren & Stevenson, 2013; Yasuda, 2019) or in recounts of a habitual event by university students of Arabic as an L3 (Abdel-Malek, 2020). Other interpersonal features widely investigated in learner texts are those associated with modal assessment (see section 3.4.3.), such as modality or more general writer/reader visibility features. SFL is often also combined with other theoretical perspectives, such as stance (see e.g. Hyland 1999) or metadiscourse (e.g. Hyland 2005) (see also Article III). As described in more detail in Article III, these resources are commonly

investigated through corpus-based studies, such as those carried out by Aijmer (2002), Hasselgård (2009), and Hasund and Hasselgård (2022) for the EFL context, or Maden-Weinberger (2008, 2009) for the GFL context. Ryshina-Pankova (2011) also investigates the use of interpersonal resources, but focuses on the development of interpersonal vs. ideational themes in book reviews written by GFL university learners.

Theme choice has also been examined in other studies regarding textual organisation. For example, Hasselgård (2009) examines Norwegian EFL learners' use of patterns in their choices of thematic structure in comparison with grammatical and stylistic norms in relevant genres of English. Other textual resources that have been investigated further as indicators of writing development were, for example, cohesion devices (e.g. Yasuda, 2019).

In addition to those features associated with distinct strands of meaning, a large body of research has also investigated how grammatical metaphors develop in writing across different genres (e.g. Byrnes, 2009; Liardét, 2013; Ryshina-Pankova & Byrnes, 2013). The ideational grammatical metaphor, which denotes that sequences are rankshifted 'downwards' to figures, figures to groups and elements to words (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 712–713, see also section 3.4.5 on nominalisations), has been defined as a central indicator for the development of complexity in advanced academic writing (e.g. Christie, 2002; Halliday, 1994).

While all of the studies accounted for in this section represent quantitative inquiries, many of those studies also supplement their approach with a qualitative, close reading (e.g. Abdel-Malek, 2020; Byrnes, 2009; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022; Yasuda, 2019). In their quantitative analysis, Ryshina-Pankova and Byrnes (2013) even obtained inconclusive results with regard to the role of the grammatical metaphor in certain areas of knowledge construction, while their qualitative exploration allowed them to determine the role of the resource.


## 4.4. Summary

This chapter has presented various methodological applications of SFL and several ways of inquiring into L2 learner texts. At the same time, it has also shown that SFL-based studies of L2 writing commonly describe patterns and developments on the basis of either large and specific data sets or data that can be related to clear-

cut genre criteria. The latter means that studies approach language use in written productions with a clear understanding of which central patterns or systems to look out for regarding the specific genre analysed.

Against the significant emphasis on both quantitative and deductive approaches in research into meaning-making patterns, I would like to end this chapter by referring to the study by Bunch and Willett (2013), which, to the best of my knowledge, is the only study that in fact proposes an inductive and recursive SFL-based approach. As Bunch and Willett (2013) state, they used their "meaning-making lenses" in the analysis of 40 essays written by middle school SL learners of English. To that end, they approached a small number of those essays, which were realised by the students as two different genres, with the following three broad questions in mind: "How did students respond to the prompt?"; "What made students' arguments convincing?"; and "What strengths and weaknesses were evident in the writing?" (p. 147). This procedure was then followed by multiple rounds of analysis of the entire data set based on different theoretical and analytical approaches, such as those adopted by Bazerman (2004), Halliday and Hasan (1976), Hyland (2005), and Martin and Rose (2003/2007). The approach taken by Bunch and Willett (2013) on the one hand clearly shows the need for each researcher to be selective in discourse analysis and, on the other, stresses that research may also begin inductively by using "meaning making lenses". Both aspects have also been of major importance to the current research project.

# 5. Methodology

In this chapter, I elaborate on the research design of this dissertation, explain the empirical data and analytical approaches considered, and discuss the research design in terms of ethical considerations and quality criteria.

## 5.1. A qualitative discourse analysis approach based on SFL

The aim of the current study is to obtain a better understanding of how secondary school GFL writers use lexicogrammatical resources to create meanings in their texts. As shown in section 2.1.4., research on secondary school L3 writing in general, and in natural settings in particular, is scarce, which is also connected to the fact that the criteria and purposes for writing in this context are often diverse and unspecific. Against this backdrop, I consider a qualitative research design most apt: that is, what Yilmaz (2013, p. 312) describes as an inductive and interpretive approach to studying, for example, cases and phenomena in their natural settings with the aim of describing the meanings attached to them. Given the variety associated with secondary school L3 writing, the study cannot aim at providing a full picture but rather seeks to obtain more detailed findings in relation to a limited amount of data (Mackey & Gass, 2005, pp. 162–164).

The findings are obtained through an analysis of learner responses from the TRAWL Corpus. Normally, corpus data advocates a corpus linguistics approach, such as is adopted by, for example, Aijmer (2002) or Hasund and Hasselgård (2022) (see also sections 1.1. and 4.3.). This approach characteristically draws on computational technology and a large amount of data that has been collected on distinct principles (e.g. Bennett, 2010; Granger, 2011; McEnery et al., 2019), making it a much more common approach in EFL writing research due to the greater availability of data (for an overview of different corpora, see Hasund et al., 2022). Even though Drange (2022) and Vold (2022) also present examples of studies investigating patterns of grammatical and/or lexical features in secondary school L3 writing from the TRAWL Corpus, they both also stress the limitations linked to the small amounts of data used in their studies. Vold (2022) also points out that naturally occurring data such as is represented in this corpus makes it particularly challenging to control for genre and topic in a sub-corpus. Given the fragmented nature of the L3 data in the TRAWL Corpus (see section 1.1.) and the aims of the thesis, this study thus approaches learner texts based on the

methodology and method of written discourse analysis (e.g. Grabe & Zhang, 2016; Hyland, 2010, 2016). One commonality between all written discourse analysis approaches is that they seek to "discover how writers organize language to produce coherent, purposeful prose for particular groups of readers" (Hyland, 2016, p. 123). This distinguishes discourse analysis from other text analytical approaches that consider texts as isolated samples of competence (Hyland, 2010, p. 194). Overall, discourse analysis is a method that is typically characterised as qualitative research, as discourse is complex and can thus not be fully described (Hyland, 2010; Riazi, 2016). Accordingly, each analyst is also challenged as to what features to focus on as core to a social activity (e.g. Martin & Rose, 2003/2007).

As outlined in chapters 1 and 3, the current approach is based on the framework of SFL, which offers descriptions for analysing how writers use language meaningfully in different social contexts. Schleppegrell (2012) even emphasises SFL with its "powerful tools for comprehensively exploring meaning in language at the levels of genre, register, and clause [...]" as "the most elaborated meaning-based grammar available to discourse analysts" (p. 29). SFL is also a theory mainly associated with qualitative research, as it is "designed not so much to prove things as to do things. It is a form of praxis" (Halliday, 2003, p. 197). Against this backdrop, SFL has also been chosen as the central framework for discourse analysis in the current research design.

In SFL-based approaches to discourse analysis, language features under investigation are commonly associated with the notion of genre and genre categories (e.g. Cook, 2011; Hyland, 2016; Schleppegrell, 2012; see also chapter 4). This also means that genre as context provides information about which language resources are potentially central to the analysis. Nevertheless, the role of genre as a framework is limited in the current research project for various reasons: First, writing tasks in secondary school L3 classrooms often seem to target creative expression or the expression of content (see e.g. Hyland, 2019), without clear expectations as to how the texts should be realised. Interrelated with that, writing prompts in the studied setting may lack clear indications of communicative purpose. Additionally, L3 writing is often multi-layered, which means, amongst other things, that the text as an outcome of the writing prompt is significantly influenced by the learners' and teachers' understanding of shared communicative purposes and the attention they pay to these (see also sections 1.1., 2.1.4., 2.2.2. and 5.3.).

Considering the value of genre in discourse analysis on the one hand, and the limitations of this framework for the given research context on the other, two consequences arise from this. First, the learners' responses are framed by genre in a "practical, non-essentialist" sense (Lüders et al., 2010, p. 954; see also section 3.3.2.). Thus, the current approach differs from genre-analytical approaches that usually take a top-down perspective (e.g. Cook, 2011). Secondly, the selection of features within the analytical process of this dissertation is linked to an emergent research design process (e.g. Dörnyei, 2007). This is described by Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 163) as "an inductive path that begins with few perceived notions, followed by a gradual fine-tuning and narrowing of focus". In searching for patterns relevant to being analysed, Martin and Rose (2007, p. 266) also recommend that researchers "look for patterns that are revealed by the field unfolding through the text phases" with the next step being "to ask how these patterns are managed by discourse systems". As part of the emergent research design, also the selection of the data from the corpus was based on interesting patterns discovered (see section 5.3.).

## 5.2. Overview of the research design and research articles

To obtain a better understanding of how secondary school GFL writers use lexicogrammatical resources to create meaning in their texts, the research design comprises three projects in which patterns in responses for different purposes and on different topics are qualitatively described from various perspectives on meaning-making by drawing on SFL theory and its sets of tools.

Table 7 provides an overview of the research design of the three articles. Even though the method common to all research articles is discourse analysis based on SFL, the research questions of the articles all have different foci. These have resulted from observations made in the corpus data and are presented further in section 5.3. As already indicated in section 1.1., all data comes from a TRAWL sub-corpus comprised of mock exam texts by year 12 learners in their 5th year of studying GFL. More detailed explanations of the data and the analytical approaches are given in the sections that follow.

Table 7

*Overview of the research articles*

| | Article I | Article II | Article III |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title** | Writing in German as a foreign language in Norwegian upper secondary school: An investigation of patterns of language choices for meaning-making | Task representation in German as a foreign language: A systemic functional analysis of Norwegian students' written responses | One topic, different perspectives – Modal assessment in Norwegian learners' texts in German as a foreign language |
| **Method** | Discourse Analysis based on SFL | | |
| **Research question** | Which patterns of language choices can be identified in learners' responses to tasks to make ideational meaning to an interpretation in the genre of film analysis in the secondary school GFL context in Norway? | What do the responses of Norwegian upper secondary school learners of German as an FL to two tasks within a mock exam context reveal about their task representation? // What differences can we observe across the task responses in terms of language choices, and what do they reveal about the demands and opportunities for language use? | What modal assessment strategies are used in Norwegian GFL students' written responses of short text length? // What differences in the use of modal assessment strategies can we observe, and how do they contribute to shaping distinct enactments of social relationships and expressions of students' own attitudes and assessments? |
| **Data** | Responses to mock exam tasks by year 12 learners (aged 17–18), 5th year of GFL learning, from TRAWL Corpus | | |
| | 12 responses to one obligatory task eliciting an interpretation in the genre film analysis | • 5 responses to one task choice, eliciting expository writing <br> • 2 responses to a second task choice, eliciting personal, descriptive or persuasive writing | 51 responses in total (13/12/13/13 responses to four different writing tasks that ask the learners to either describe or reason on a topic) |
| **Analytical focus** | Common patterns within the same task | Different realisations of the same tasks | Different perspectives expressed towards the same topics |
| | Ideational meaning | All meaning dimensions | Interpersonal meaning |
| **Ethical reflections** | See section 5.5. | | |
| **Quality criteria** | See section 5.6. | | |

## 5.3. Empirical data

In this dissertation, the empirical data stems from the German part of the TRAWL Corpus. As stated in the introduction, the TRAWL data offers considerable insights into L3 writing in a natural setting. Thus, this data is viewed as particularly fruitful for exploring functional language use in authentic L3 writing contexts.

From the German part of the TRAWL data, a sub-corpus has been considered in the emergent research design process. It comprises texts written by year 12 learners (aged 17–18)[16] in their fifth year of GFL learning (see also section 1.1.). The sub-corpus has been further limited by taking only those texts into consideration that stem from mock exam contexts. There are three reasons for this: First, the mock exam context ensures that the texts have been written under comparable conditions (a specific time frame, only limited access to translation programs and other aids). Second, the overall structure of the tasks is rather similar, as the mock exams aimed at preparing the learners for the structure of the LK06-related final exam that was common for all GFL (see section 2.2.). This means that all mock exams contained both obligatory tasks and task choices, and tasks which elicited both short and longer responses. Third, the fact that the mock exams are intended to prepare students for the final exam suggests that the topics and communicative purposes of the mock exam tasks can provide more representative insights into tasks given to year 12 GFL learners in level 2 classrooms. To sum up, the responses to mock exam tasks by year 12 learners (aged 17–18), in their 5th year of GFL learning, have been selected from the TRAWL Corpus as the most coherent sub-corpus, which again allows broader insights into the variety of writing prompts and the corresponding responses in one specific context. From this sub-corpus, individual data sets have then been selected based on the following observations:

In Article I, the data set chosen presented a set of responses that were realised in significantly similar ways but that clearly differed in their levels of correctness. This was seen as an indication that the task required the learners to use more complex language. From those observations, the research aim emerged to analyse the texts for characteristic patterns of lexicogrammatical resources.

In Article II, the data set selected showed that the learners were not only presented with options as how to create meaning in response to one task, but also with task

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[16] In Article I and II, I incorrectly stated the age of the learners as 16–17 years old.

choices on an overall level. Regarding the choices given to the learners, different linguistic problem-solving processes were observable. From that, the research aim of identifying differences in the learners' meaning-making patterns evolved.

In Article III, the data sets chosen constitute responses to four different writing prompts with a similar surface structure. While some of them appear to elicit responses with similar interpersonal strategies, others seem to stimulate much more variety. These observations gave rise to the aim of investigating the learners' interpersonal meaning-making across different communicative situations.

The different data sets were also chosen as they present diverse data in terms of topics and meaning-making patterns. This allows broader insights with respect to lexicogrammatical patterns and regarding how different kinds of learner texts can be mapped in terms of meaning-making. Overall, the data stems from six mock exam data sets, from which only one task has been considered in each article. Table 8 gives an overview of the data. It presents the four-letter code of the selected data sets (see section 1.1.), the task that is chosen as a subset, the genre/writing act clues identified in the writing prompts in terms of Ørevik (2019) and Berge et al. (2016), the number of responses contained in each subset, and the word count (word count of the data in total and mean number of words per text).

Table 8

*Overview of the empirical data*

|  | Article I | Article II | Article III |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Dataset(s)** | DLDA | NAKR | SCHU, FREU, GESE, JUNG |
| **Subset(s)** | First of a total of eight tasks that centre on the same topic ("Das Leben der Anderen") | Third task containing a choice of four subtasks, from which two are studied (here coded as NAKR-A, NAKR-B) | First task of each mock exam set. These tasks have the same overall structure. |
| **Genre clues of the prompt** | Interpretation in the genre film analysis | NAKR-A: Exposit. article NAKR-B: Personal, descriptive or persuasive text | SCHU, FREU, GESE: Request to describe JUNG: Request to reason |
| **No. texts per subset** | 12 | NAKR-A: 5 NAKR-B: 2 | SCHU: 13    GESE: 13 FREU: 12    JUNG: 13 |
| **Total word count** | 628 | 1496 | 2590 |
| **Mean word per text** | 53 | 213 | 51 |

## 5.4. Analytical approaches in Articles I, II and III

As described in section 5.1., the method used in all three research articles is discourse analysis based on SFL. The analytical criteria are mainly established based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Andersen and Holsting (2015), while the selective approaches are influenced in particular by Ørevik's (2019) and Schleppegrell and Go's (2007) works (see sections 3.3.2., 4.1. and 4.2.), and by research studies into interpersonal meaning-making resources (see section 4.3.). Table 9, which is the lower part of the table presented in section 3.4., gives an overview of the systems into which the different articles (I, II and III) inquire. After publishing Article I and II, I noticed that certain grammatical terms have been used inaccurately, which I account for in Appendix 1.

The individual analytical approaches are presented in further detail in the subsections 5.4.1.–5.4.3. All studies analysed learner language in its original form but parts where learner language was difficult to interpret are treated with caution.

Table 9

*Lexicogrammatical systems considered in the analyses (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 87)*

| Metafunct. | Logical | Experiential | Interpersonal | Textual |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **System: clause rank** | | | | |
| | Log.-sem. type **(1)**, Taxis | Transitivity **(1, 2)** | Mood | Theme **(2)** |
| **System: group rank** | | | | |
| **Nominal** | Modification **(1, 2)** | Thing type **(1, 2)**, Epithesis **(1)**, Qualification **(1, 2)** | Nominal Mood, Person, Assessment | Determination |
| **Verbal** | Tense **(2)** | Event type **(1, 2)**, Aspect | Polarity, Modality **(2, 3)** | Contrast, Voice **(2)** |
| **Adverbial** | Modification | Circumstance type | Comment type **(3)** | Conjunction type |

### 5.4.1. Analysis in Article I

The 12 learner responses forming the data in the first article are analysed for lexicogrammatical patterns that realise ideational meaning. The focus on this line of meaning was particularly motivated by the fact that the writing prompt asks the learners to write an interpretation in the genre of film analysis, which as expository writing is linked to a major orientation towards field (Halliday & Matthiessen,

2014, pp. 36–41). To identify characteristic ideational patterns of language choices in the learner texts, the analysis draws on descriptions by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Martin and Rose (2003/2007) concerning Transitivity and taxonomic relations (see sections 3.4.1. and 3.4.2.). Additionally, the analysis takes account of the notions of genre, field and phases (see sections 3.2. and 3.3.1.).

In the first step of the analysis, the field variable is described based on all learner responses. To that end, common phases are identified across the responses which were central for realising the field. By distinguishing phases, the aim was to detect ideational patterns in a more straightforward way. In a second step, all learner responses are described in terms of patterns of ideational meaning-making patterns. Table 10 shows the analytical criteria of the study. In the analysis, particular attention is also paid to the nature of nominal groups in terms of complexes, qualification/modification, embeddings and Thing types, and to the nature of the lexical verbs (i.e. Event type) (see section 3.4.5.). Based on all 12 individual analyses, summary descriptions of common patterns of lexicogrammatical choices for making ideational meaning are established.

Table 10

*Methodological approach of Article I*

| Field | What is the topic about? |
|---|---|
| **Focus on** | What are typical …. |
| | … processes? |
| | … participants and what are they like? |
| | … logico-semantic relations? |
| | … taxonomic relations? |

## 5.4.2. Analysis in Article II

The seven learners' responses that constitute the data in my second article are analysed for meaning-making choices along the ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions in order to describe specific patterns and differences across the learners' individual task representations. Yet inquiring into all lines of meaning is a complex task. Thus, the analysis of Article II is partially based on Schleppegrell and Go's (2007) highly ideational approach and makes use of systemic relations between the ideational and interpersonal line of meaning (see section 3.4.3.).

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Accordingly, this study inquires into lexicogrammatical choices with a large focus on the Transitivity system (see section 3.4.2.). Concerning the interpersonal dimension, only those verbal and mental clauses are considered that are central for establishing a relationship between writer/reader and dialogicity, i.e. clauses in which the Senser or Sayer represents the learner/writer of the text ('Ich'). In addition to Transitivity, clauses are also analysed for their Theme-Rheme structure, and groups for distinct aspects of modal assessment and voice (see sections 3.4.3., 3.4.4. and 3.4.5.). Full analyses of logico-semantic relations are omitted in favour of a balanced focus on the ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions. Yet instances of logico-semantic projection with 'Ich' as the Sayer/Senser (see section 3.4.1.) and shifts in the Tense system (see section 3.4.5.) are identified but described in connection with the interpersonal and textual dimension. The analysis also inquires into the complexity of and lexical range within nominal and verbal groups (see section 3.4.5.). Table 11 presents all analytical criteria.

Table 11

*Methodological approach of Article II (adapted from Schleppegrell & Go, 2007)*

| Ideational: Transitivity | Interpersonal: | Textual: Theme/Rheme |
|---|---|---|
| • Main process types, process verbs and participants | • Mental and verbal clauses<br>• Circumstances indicating angle<br>• Modal operators | • Theme/Rheme<br>• Tense/voice[17] markings |

### 5.4.3. Analysis in Article III

In the analysis of the 52 learner responses that constitute the data in my third article, modal assessment strategies are identified as one aspect of interpersonal meaning-making. This is to address the significant gap in research regarding interactional strategy use by secondary school L3 learners – particularly in texts not representing personal genres. The analysis aims at describing how learners use distinct modal assessment resources in responses to four different writing prompts and how this contributes to shaping distinct enactments of social relationships and expressions of their own attitudes and assessments. The resources analysed through both a quantitative and qualitative inquiry are modal verbs, modal

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[17] See Appendix 1

Adjuncts, paraphrastic expressions within the clause, and explicit forms beyond the clause (see section 3.4.3.). By also considering explicit forms, the analysis seeks to identify what Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe as "rather motivated and principled extensions of the congruent system" (p. 707).

As also pointed out in section 3.4.3., instances of interpersonal assessments are associated with broad semantic categories, which makes it difficult to identify these resources straightforwardly in diverse learner texts. Thus, the analysis only accounts for those assessment resources presented above. In that, this study differs from other approaches on interpersonal meaning-making that commonly draw on Appraisal theory and the respective resources as described by Martin and White (2005; see also Martin & Rose, 2003/2007, and sections 3.3.1. and 4.3.).

## 5.5. Ethical considerations

Since this research involves human subjects, it is of major importance for this study that informed consent is given by the participants (Mackey & Gass 2005, pp. 25–28). As presented in section 1.1., the compilation of the TRAWL data has been approved by the former Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD, now part of Sikt), a necessary procedure for doing research in Norwegian schools, and all persons participating in the compilation have given their consent that their data can be used in research and can be accessed by all persons working with the corpus.

Confidentiality of data is another major ethical standard in L2 research (Mackey & Gass, 2005), which has also been paid attention to in the TRAWL compilation process. All participants were informed when giving consent that their data would be anonymised (see section 1.1.). Yet one standard in research on the TRAWL Corpus is that learner codes always appear in their original form in research studies, to allow for cross-sectional or longitudinal conclusions. Even though the coded form is used, this means that learners' texts may appear in various studies and, taken together, may present a large amount of information about an individual learner. This may be an ethical issue particularly with respect to texts written in L3s, as they often revolve around the learners' world of experience.

Another ethical standard that is adhered to in the TRAWL project is that no benefits or negative effects result from the research (see Mackey & Gass, 2005). As presented in section 1.1., each individual student can choose not to contribute their

texts during the compilation process. Thus, pupils do not receive particular benefits or disadvantages from (not) participating, nor are they put in a position in which they might feel exposed or pressured into participating. The way in which the data is compiled does not have any negative effect on the external environment either.

In addition to the ethical standards just discussed, Sterling and De Costa (2018) also remind scholars of the need to be ethical in presenting their research. First, the researcher must pay attention to reporting and representing the data in a true way and provide a reliable independent review. Second, it is important to define a language community appropriately. Moreover, it is essential to consider the data chosen carefully and avoid statements that are of too general a nature (e.g. Dörnyei, 2007). In this thesis, I paid the greatest possible care to these aspects.

## 5.6. Discussion of research quality criteria and limitations

In this section, the quality of the analytic approaches is discussed in terms of (i) *credibility*, (ii) *transferability* and (iii) *confirmability* due to the qualitative design.

(i) *Credibility* means that the findings are credible to the research population (Mackey & Gass, 2005, pp. 179–181). Yilmaz (2013, p. 321) lists various techniques that secure credibility and trustworthiness, such as multiple data sources, systematic data collection procedures and triangulation. The most central strategy stressed by Yilmaz (2013) is *thick description*, meaning that the data needs to be "sufficiently descriptive and include a great deal of pure description of people, activities, interactions, and settings so that the reader or reviewer can understand what occurred and how it occurred" (p. 321). In all three research articles, the descriptions of the learners' use of lexicogrammatical resources can be considered as thick. The studies contain various text examples to enable readers to understand what meanings are created and how. Yet aiming for thick descriptions is difficult when corpus data is used in a qualitative research design, as corpora often lack important contextual information (see section 1.1. for an overview of the information provided by the TRAWL Corpus). Thus, much information on the participants and the classroom environment (the teachers' expectations, content taught, etc.) are lacking in the data used in the three research articles. Due to its anonymised nature, the data does not enable techniques such as triangulation with learner interviews either, which would have likely made an important contribution to the credibility of claims about language choices and complexity.

(ii) Regarding *transferability*, Mackey and Gass (2005, pp. 179–181) point again to the crucial role of *thick description*, as they allow other researchers to assess if findings may be appropriately transferable to another context. By drawing on naturalistic data in the three research designs, I consider the chances that the findings are transferable to similar research contexts even greater than if I had used elicited data based on specific writing prompts. Yet the variety of the data might, at the same time, also be a hindrance to the transferability of the findings.

(iii) The quality criteria of *confirmability* centres on making available all details of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2005, pp. 179–181). In the three research articles, such details have only been made available to certain degrees. While in Article I, all learners' responses are presented in the appendix, Articles II and III only provide text excerpts in the findings. This is because some texts could be considered rather personal. Also, information on the learners' TRAWL metadata (see section 1.1.) is absent for all studies, as this information seemed less relevant to the research aim.

In addition to what has already been outlined, Holliday (2010) also stresses the need for making methods transparent and making appropriate and careful claims to manage the inevitability of subjectivity. Accordingly, the descriptions in this thesis are based on widely established SFL frameworks. It has also been made transparent in what ways this thesis has used these frameworks selectively (see sections 3.3.2. and 5.4.). Furthermore, the claims made in the current study can be considered as careful: On the one hand, the findings do not expand beyond being descriptions. On the other hand, no claim has been made to provide a full picture.

Overall, it may be claimed that there are certain threats to the quality criteria of the current research project. In particular, the question may arise of whether discourse analysis as the only method is sufficient in qualitative research. Given the significant lack of research in L3 writing, this sole focus, however, allows us to gain a broader understanding of how different kinds of pre-tertiary L3 texts can be approached and described in terms of meaning-making. Moreover, the careful claims made in this thesis are still in line with what Holliday (2010) states as the purpose of qualitative research, namely "to generate ideas which are sufficient to make us think again about what is going on in the world" (pp. 101–102). In general, I am convinced that we first need an increased understanding of meaning-making in secondary school L3 learners' texts before we can set out to investigate L3 writing from different perspectives.

# 6. Summary and discussion of the articles

This chapter is twofold. In the first section of this chapter, I present a summary of each of the three research articles included in this thesis. In the second section, I discuss the (1) empirical, (2) theoretical and (3) methodological contributions of these studies to research. In the last part of this chapter, I elaborate on the strengths and limitations of the findings of this thesis.

## 6.1. Summary of the articles

This section sums up the three research articles that sought to increase the understanding of how secondary school GFL writers use lexicogrammatical resources to create meanings in their texts.

### 6.1.1. Article I

**Writing in German as a foreign language in Norwegian upper secondary school: An investigation of patterns of language choices for meaning-making**

The main objective of this article was to identify and describe characteristic patterns of language choices in texts by Norwegian upper secondary school GFL writers (aged 17–18, in school year 12 and their 5th year of FL learning) from a meaning-making perspective. As described in section 5.3., the data considered were 12 learner responses to a writing prompt about interpreting the meaning of a film title. The short texts were mapped in terms of expository writing and suggested a focus on how the learners created ideational meaning. The research question of Article I was: *Which patterns of language choices can be identified in learners' responses to tasks to make ideational meaning to an interpretation in the genre of film analysis in the secondary school GFL context in Norway?* As described in section 5.4.1., the learners' responses were analysed in terms of ideational meaning-making resources belonging to the systems of Transitivity and Logico-semantic relations and to the set of taxonomic relations.

The analysis found that the use of relational processes of identifying type are most central to arriving at the interpretation, including participants that comprise noun complexes, embedded phrases, defining relative clauses and idea clauses. Other patterns characteristic of making ideational meaning in response to the distinct

writing prompt are taxonomic relations of co-class/co-part, synonymity, and particularly opposition, which is central to establishing causality. The findings showed that these relations can be established by a limited number of lexical resources, as the outer context presents a coherent experience with clearly definable opposing groups. Characteristic patterns of lexico-semantical relations comprise enhancement with the conjunction "weil", and projection construing the interpretative statement as an idea of the author/learner.

In general, the findings presented similar patterns of phases and lexicogrammatical choices across all learner responses for realising an interpretation. These patterns were found to be influenced by the genre clues, the "co-text" (Halliday, 1999), the wording of the writing prompt and the learning context. To that end, the findings indicated that certain configurations are likely to have been supportive for the learners in their linguistic problem-solving process, one example being the coherent "co-text" to which the learners could refer to even with limited lexical resources. At the same time, the findings also exposed patterns that appeared considerably demanding for the learners, such as the realisation of complex participants in relational processes. That learners employed characteristic meaning-making patterns despite varying degrees of errors revealed the learners' language use from a competence-based perspective (Council of Europe, 2020).

### 6.1.2. Article II

**Task representation in German as a foreign language: A systemic functional analysis of Norwegian students' written responses**

The main objective of this article was to understand in detail how different learners respond to writing tasks, and what linguistic problem-solving demands on the one hand and opportunities for language learning on the other hand these individual choices entail. As mentioned in section 5.3., the data comprised seven learner responses in total: five texts in response to a task coded as NAKR-A and two texts in response to a task coded as NAKR-B in the study. The current study drew on the analysis of two different task settings to obtain an even deeper understanding of variations involved in meaning-making processes across L3 learner texts. In the study, these differences were conceptualised in terms of task representation. The research questions of Article II were: *(1) What do the responses of Norwegian upper secondary school learners of German as an FL to two tasks within a mock*

*exam context reveal about their task representation? (2) What differences can we observe across the task responses in terms of language choices and what do they reveal about the demands and opportunities for language use?* As described in section 5.4.2., the analysis sought to identify the learners' meaning-making choices in terms of the ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions with a specific focus on the lexicogrammatical systems of Transitivity and Theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007).

The analyses found that the writers responded to each writing prompt in similar ways, meaning that similar processes and organisational schemes were employed. The resources matched closely what the task cues indicated. Task A elicited expository writing and task B elicited largely argumentative writing, and central to both communicative purposes were, for example, relational and material processes, and an organisational scheme that can be described as following: 'Topic' – meaning/argument 1 – … – meaning/argument X. Looking closely at the responses, however, substantial differences in the learners' lexicogrammatical choices also became evident. Regarding the ideational dimension, much variation could, for example, be observed as to how the writers realised participants and material processes at the group rank across the responses to NAKR-A and in the parts of the NAKR-B texts in which the writers chose to elaborate on a particular fact. Substantial differences between the responses were also obvious concerning the textual and interpersonal dimensions, especially in the way in which the topic was taken up in the beginning of each paragraph in response to NAKR-A or in the way in which contact and dialogicity was established in the NAKR-B texts.

Overall, the findings are in line with previous research indicating that factors like the task, its genre and topic, or the learners needs and desires influence meaning-making in various ways (e.g. Flower, 1990; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022). The analysis revealed in detail how individual learners use ideational, interpersonal and textual resources, which again has implications for the learners' linguistic problem-solving process. The study concludes that these individual choices might, on the one hand, provide the learners with opportunities for presenting and practising language that can be considered particularly complex (e.g. Byrnes, 2014), while at the same time they might also imply potential risk-taking. Thus, the article advocates applying task clues and topics carefully and being aware of all three meaning dimensions and the linguistic problem-solving activities associated with potential responses (e.g. Ruiz-Funes, 2001; Zarei et al., 2017).

### 6.1.3. Article III

**One topic, different perspectives – Modal assessment in Norwegian learners' texts in German as a foreign language**

The main objective of this article was to obtain a better understanding of Norwegian upper secondary school GFL writers' interpersonal meaning-making in responses of short text length. This aim was addressed by investigating the writers' use of modal assessment strategies in responses to four different writing prompts. The research questions of Article III were: *(1) What modal assessment strategies are used in Norwegian GFL students' written responses of short text length? (2) What differences in the use of modal assessment strategies can we observe, and how do they contribute to shaping distinct enactments of social relationships and expressions of students' own attitudes and assessments?* As explained in section 5.4.3., the study inquired into the learners' strategy use by identifying and categorising instances of modal verbs, modal Adjuncts and corresponding paraphrases across the 52 learner responses.

The analyses found various modal assessment strategies employed in response to the four different writing prompts, such as the assessments of possibility, allowance, significance or personal engagement. Even though each prompt elicited various strategies in the texts, every task also appeared to be linked to one major strategy. To that end, it became evident that these major strategies are not always directly or indirectly linked to the wording and experience construed in the writing prompt. Rather, they may also result from the learners' individual perspectives on a topic. These findings support conclusions from previous studies on modal assessment (e.g. Aijmer 2002, 2014). Moreover, the findings showed in detail how the configuration of strategies leads to distinct enactments of social relationships and expressions of attitudes. In the same way, it became obvious that also the absence of modal assessment may shape the communicative goal of a text in significant ways. Regarding the use of modal assessment resources, the findings also indicate that the learners' linguistic repertoire enables them to express central modal meanings, which aligns with previous research from both GFL and EFL settings (e.g. Aijmer, 2002; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022; Lindemann, 1996).

Overall, the findings stress the central role of (absent) modal assessment, both in interacting with readers and in shaping the communicative purpose of a text, independent of its length. To that end, the findings enable detailed insights into

secondary school GFL writers' interpersonal meaning-making and argue for raising awareness of the role of interpersonal features such as modal assessment resources (see also Haukås et al., 2016; Maden-Weinberger, 2008).

## 6.2. Discussion of the articles' contributions to research

Analysing secondary school GFL learners' texts based on SFL has allowed me to uncover characteristic and individual lexicogrammatical patterns in the creation of meanings in response to different tasks. Given that little is known about how secondary school L3 learners create meaning in natural settings, this study contributes to the existing body of SFL-based research on L2 writing by presenting insights from this specific context. The empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions which are made by this thesis are outlined in the following chapters.

### 6.2.1. Empirical contributions

One of the main empirical contributions of this thesis is increased knowledge about how Norwegian GFL learners use lexicogrammatical resources to create meaning in response to different tasks in the secondary school L3 classroom. The detailed descriptions are presented in the articles of this dissertation. In general, the studies contribute to a broader understanding of meaning-making in the following ways:

First, the studies give insights into how meaning-making patterns may vary depending on the task setting. While learners may use significantly similar lexicogrammatical patterns in relation to some tasks, other tasks may be associated with considerable differences that result in different meanings being created. These findings corroborate factors that are also outlined as influential to the meaning-making process in previous research studies on differences in learners' compositions (e.g. Devitt, 2004; Flower, 1990; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022; Ruiz-Funes, 2011; Zarei et al., 2017; see also section 2.1.). For example, learners may interpret a rhetorical situation differently, take different positions vis-à-vis a topic or presenting the content, or focus particularly on the ideational dimension of meaning. Learners may also be used to being visible writers who bring their own stance to the task. Article I suggests that these factors might be restricted by certain elements of the task – particularly the "co-text" (Halliday, 1999), i.e. the common knowledge of the film, the limited possibilities to interpret the meaning of the film

title, and the nature of the writing prompt representing an apparent frame – leading to similar ideational patterns. Yet Articles II and III imply that diverse patterns may occur when the topics of a task are connected to diverse stances and values. Article III especially shows how responses to the same prompt and about the same topic may eventually blur into an act of describing, reasoning, expressing opinions or recommending in relation to the learners' meaning-making choices. As writing tasks in the secondary school L3 setting often revolve around topics linked to the learners' personal experience (see The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a, and section 2.2.), this thesis suggests that considerable differences in lexicogrammatical choices are likely to occur in this FL setting.

Second, the findings shed light on the demands of using language for distinct tasks. For example, complex participants could be identified as central to the meaning-making process in Article I, while Article II showed that the learners' individual choices might require them to use resources that appear advanced for learners whose linguistic repertoire is still limited. Examples of this were less frequent material verbs or mental clauses comprising idea clauses. Also in Article III, there are cautious indications that more advanced modal resources may occur in relation to writing prompts that enable the learners to comment on a topic in various ways. In a more generalised way, certain language structures appeared to place higher demands on the learners in creating meaning to those expository and descriptive texts which reflect most of the selected data. Regarding expository writing, this concerns mainly fact clauses in mental or relational clauses, and relational processes of identifying type which may involve complex Values and Tokens. To strengthen these claims, a more detailed analysis of the relational process types (i.e. identifying vs. attributing) in Article II would have been desirable. Concerning descriptive writing, existential clauses were found to be particularly central, while learners seemed to be rather unaware of the existential process 'gibt' in the German language. With respect to both expository and descriptive writing, projections are also commonly found. While they do not seem specifically demanding, they appeared more challenging to navigate in those instances where the clause nexus comprises embeddings or/and various logico-semantic relations. Overall and not surprisingly, the findings also showed that the topic of the writing prompts also has consequences for the type and range of lexis, and the complexity of nominal group structures to be navigated by the L3 learners.

Third, the insights into lexicogrammatical demands also showed that the L3 writers providing the data for the studies represent successful meaning-makers who could draw on a large repertoire of linguistic resources. These resources enabled the learners to realise central processes, participants, logico-semantic relations, modal verbs and realisations of Themes. Especially in Article I, it could further be seen that all learners realised the most central lexicogrammatical patterns despite varying degrees of errors in learner language. This stresses "what *can* be done with language, rather than what *cannot*" (Schleppegrell & Go, 2007, p. 530 [emphasis in original]). In line with previous SFL-based research (see chapter 4), the current thesis could show that the meaning-making perspective makes it possible to make visible the strengths learners bring to a task.

Overall, the findings of this thesis also give important insights into the nature of writing tasks in the Norwegian secondary school GFL context. For example, it could be seen that the writing prompts analysed (in this case mainly expository or descriptive prompts) have no close association with specific macro-level structures (or stages, see e.g. Martin & Rose, 2008). Instead, the communicative goals underlying the tasks often remained implicit and/or tasks consisted of several unspecific instructions or questions. To that end, it can be cautiously argued that it is mainly the topic that determines the structure and wording of the writing prompts, which are then seemingly decisive for the learners' meaning-making.

### 6.2.2. Theoretical contributions to linguistics and education

The main theoretical contribution of this thesis is that the findings present the direct relationship between form and meaning in secondary school L3 learner texts written to diverse writing prompts. Through detailed descriptions, the articles present how communicative purposes on the one hand, and lexicogrammatical choices on the other, interrelate. To that end, the findings contribute to ongoing debates that have been particularly pronounced and polarised with regard to secondary school L3 writing, namely those of grammar vs. creativity and LW vs. WLL (see sections 2.1.4. and 2.2.2.). By conceptualising secondary school L3 writing in terms of meaning-making (see section 3.1.), this study shows how learners' grammar use is meaning-based and contextualised, and that writing – independent of the writing purpose or the nature of the writing prompt – is not incidental and context-free but always systematically patterned. While these

findings corroborate the works and research studies on meaning-making in general and SFL in particular (see chapters 3 and 4), this research project specifically points out that the meaning-making patterns employed by the learners in this particular educational context may be significantly influenced by various factors, such as the specific and multi-layered nature of the writing prompt (see sections 2.1.4., 2.2.2. and 6.2.1.). As the findings of this current study clearly show, however, this variability does not mean that language patterns are not systematic. Instead, they are less predictable, which may make it more difficult for writing theorists, didacticians and teachers to specify secondary school L3 writing.

Accordingly, the descriptions retrieved in this thesis make an important contribution in showing how L3 learners' texts can be approached from a meaning-based perspective even if they do not represent clear-cut genres with specific macro-level structures and obvious lexicogrammatical patterns, as is the case for, for example, a factual text or a story (see e.g. Ørevik, 2019, and section 2.1.1.). As for texts that appear less specific, descriptions like those obtained in the studies may provide information on how competence and meaning-based goal attainment criteria (see Council of Europe, 2001, 2020, and section 2.2.) could still be outlined. For example, they may help to define "common words" or "basic language structures" for distinct communicative goals.

The findings of this thesis also indicate that the integration and application of context descriptions from other L2 settings may also be useful for describing meaning-making by L3 learners: first, for providing indications as to what lexicogrammatical choices to focus on in the analysis, and second for being able to describe more precisely differences in meaning-making between various learner responses. The current thesis has considered context either in terms of genre as defined by Ørevik (2019) or in terms of writing acts as presented by Berge et al. (2016). Ørevik's (2019) genre descriptions have been particularly important for building on results from more general research on genre-specific language features. Nevertheless, drawing on more clear-cut genre descriptions also runs the risk of understanding writing in terms of a genre-analytical approach (Cook, 2011). Also, it has become clear throughout the studies that L3 learners' texts must be treated as diverse, as largely reflected in multiliteracies theory or in 'the Wheel of Writing' model by Berge et al. (2016, see also section 2.1.1.). Consequently, Berge et al.'s (2016) categories of writing acts and purposes have been central for describing meaning-making in more nuanced and situation-based ways.

### 6.2.3. Methodological contributions

The most important methodological contribution of this dissertation corroborates the main idea of the functional grammar approach as being applicable from the start (Halliday, 2003; see also Matthiessen & Teruya, 2023, p. 87). Accordingly, this thesis shows that "[a]ll texts can […] be described in terms of both form and function, that is, how their elements are organised for making meanings and the purposes this serves" (Hyland, 2019, p. 19). In line with more selective or explorative approaches into meaning-making in L2 contexts (e.g. Bunch & Willett, 2013; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007), this thesis also shows how SFL theory can be used flexibly in analysing meaning-making in secondary school L3 learners' texts.

Moreover, this dissertation, with its focus on descriptive findings, has shown that meaning-making in learners' texts can also be uncovered even if the context is less clearly defined by external criteria. Based on an emergent qualitative research design centring on the framework of IFG, this thesis has shown various approaches to uncovering meaning-making in texts of varying length and communicative purpose. By proposing not only inquiries into the most obvious line of meaning, i.e. ideational meaning (Zarei et al., 2017), but also into the interpersonal and textual dimensions, it was possible to show in detail how the learners' meaning-making patterns differ noticeably, which again has implications for the linguistic problem-solving demands and rhetorical effects of the texts. Against the backdrop that most SFL-based inquiries into meaning-making in educational contexts are evaluative and centre on clear-cut genre writing (see chapter 4), I believe that this thesis with its focus on descriptive analysis makes a significant methodological contribution to the existing body of SFL-based L2 research.

On the whole, it needs to be stressed that the approach of the current dissertation is pragmatic in many regards, given that the data base was small and that external criteria, including in terms of teacher feedback, were absent. The limitations that go along with the current approach are discussed in detail in the following section.

### 6.2.4. Limitations of the research findings

The limitations of the current dissertation relate particularly to the emergent and selective nature of the research design and the kind of data chosen for this study.

The approach taken in the current dissertation had to be pragmatic and selective (see section 3.3.2.), which also means that it is not possible for the analysis to go into every level of detail, and that many interesting patterns remain unseen. For instance, an additional analysis of Logico-semantic relations in Article II would have found a specific logico-semantic relation of enhancement to be contributing in particular ways to ideational meaning-making. Focusing only on certain features also means that differences and similarities uncovered across the research studies also depend highly on which meaning dimensions and lexicogrammatical resources were in focus. Thus, the analytical criteria chosen in this thesis (see section 5.4.) are much more prone to criticism than in cases in which criteria are either deduced based on clear-cut genre descriptions or emerge from text examples that relate to a specific target-language community (see chapter 4). As the aim of this study is to gain broader insights into meaning-making in a specific FL context, however, the criteria proposed must clearly be understood as choices.

Another major limitation to this dissertation project is the small number of learner texts considered in the analyses. Especially with respect to Articles II and III, the claims made about the differences in meaning-making patterns are of course limited given that the number of responses to the same writing prompts is very small. A major criticism in that regard could likely be that this dissertation reads a lot into small numbers and short descriptions, and that patterns uncovered could be due to chance rather than to the specific writing prompt and other contextual factors. While this criticism seems partly justified and more nuanced findings would probably have emerged from larger data set, this study conducted research in the context of a general lack of understanding of what authentic writing tasks in Norwegian secondary school GFL classrooms are. While the selected data of course only provides a limited and specific viewpoint, I consider this study as an important starting point for further research.

Ultimately, the methodological approach of this study also seems limited, as it focuses only on text analysis and does not account for contextual factors and the learners' and teachers' perspectives on writing and meaning-making (see also section 5.6.). Thus, claims made about the impact of the learners' individual perspectives on the meaning-making process, the demands of meaning-making and the nature of the writing prompt must be read as careful claims. Given that this Ph.D. project was linked to conducting research on learner texts from the TRAWL Corpus, limitations must also be accepted as inevitable shortcomings.

# 7. Conclusion

This study has investigated lexicogrammatical meaning-making patterns in texts by Norwegian upper secondary school GFL learners. Descriptive analyses of the L3 learners' responses to writing prompts eliciting mainly short expository or descriptive texts uncovered particular patterns of lexicogrammatical choices. Most importantly, the findings of the current study have also presented secondary school L3 writers as successful meaning-makers.

In line with SFL theory, the three research studies found the learners' meaning-making to be systematically patterned, even though these patterns seem in part less predictable and more variable in relation to the instructions given in the writing prompts. Thus, the findings tentatively argue that the learners' meaning-making in this specific learning context is particularly prone to several contextual factors related to the learner, teacher, the writing prompt and learning goals.

Generally, the descriptions have emphasised a perspective on L3 writing that is not only about grammar, vocabulary and overall language acquisition, nor about writing as creative expression or genre writing. Instead, the findings show how secondary school L3 writing can also be analysed from an alternative – i.e. a meaning-based – perspective that consolidates grammar, content, interaction and textual organisation. In this regard, this thesis makes a contribution to stressing the meaning-based perspective on grammar as called for in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020; see also sections 2.1.4. and 2.2.2.). Against the backdrop that research taking a meaning-making perspective on language use in this specific L3 writing context is scarce to begin with and most often is only of an evaluative nature within clear-cut genre writing settings, the descriptions provided in this dissertation also make an important methodological contribution.

## 7.1. Suggestions for future research

There are various ways to take the studies in this dissertation further to raise their impacts: for example, by considering other and more principled data sets, the perspective of learners and teachers, and methodological choices.

The text data analysed in the current study is not only small (see section 6.2.4.), but also restricted to only one L3 context (German), one specific level (Nivå 2), two specific classrooms, specific types of genres/writing acts, and texts that were

written in relation to the old curriculum plan (see sections 2.2. and 5.3.). Accordingly, a major suggestion for future research is to extend the approach of the current study by adding analyses of lexicogrammatical meaning-choices across more varying text types, in different language and classroom settings, and especially with respect to texts written in connection with the new curriculum plan. To this end, it is hoped that the L3 sub-corpora of the TRAWL Corpus will continue to be extended.

Future research could also inquire into larger data sets gathered through a principled collection process to strengthen the claims made in the current study regarding both the differences in lexicogrammatical choices and systematic features in certain communicative situations. The insights gained regarding the nature of writing tasks in this distinct L3 setting could help to identify what kind of characteristic data to elicit.

A structured data collection would also allow for the triangulation of discourse analysis with interviews with learners regarding their composition process, including linguistic problem-solving activities (see section 2.1.). The issue of triangulation seems particularly crucial to future research in this learning context in two regards: First, to be able to make stronger claims regarding the complexity of language demands. Second, to inquire into the learners' beliefs and foci taken towards the distinct meaning dimensions. The latter research focus seems particularly interesting against the backdrop of, for example, Manchón & Roca de Larios's (2011) study which found that attention paid to the multiple dimensions in writing has effects on the LLP and writing performance (see section 2.1.2.).

Another focus suggested for further research is to consider the teachers' understanding of functional meaning-making in general and how they translate it into writing activities and feedback practices. To that end, research that analyses to what degree and in what ways teachers consider multiple dimensions of meaning in feedback would be particularly important.

Regarding the methodological approaches of the current study, future research might also benefit from examining the practicability of the proposed analytical criteria further. To that end, future research could also explore the possible benefits that might stem from moving further beyond the boundaries of the clause in discourse analysis of L3 learners' texts. Article I indicates, for example, that an analysis of taxonomic relations is fruitful, while the exploration of appraisal

resources (e.g. Martin & Rose, 2003/2007) could also have made further contributions to Article II.

Beyond the dimensions outlined in the preceding paragraphs, I argue for a general need for more research that provides a better understanding of writing practices in the Norwegian secondary school L3 classroom, given the important role of writing in the language learning process (see sections 2.1.2. and 2.2.2.). While this study has pointed out the significant value of the TRAWL Corpus data, also other insights into the practices of the L3 writing classroom would be highly beneficial for situating research studies like the current one in more precise ways. This could, for example, include an analysis of writing prompts in classroom textbooks.

## 7.2. Implications for education

In line with what is advocated by the CEFR and core to theories that conceptualise writing as a situated activity (see section 2.1.), the major implication of the current findings is to raise awareness of the form-functional relationship across all kinds of writing activities in the secondary school L3 context. To that end, lexicogrammatical patterns like those identified in the current studies could be used to inform meaning-based and contextualised grammar exercises, feedback practices and metatalk, as well as scaffolding techniques, including writing frames (see Lund & Casado Villanueva, 2020; Vold, 2020, and section 2.2.2.).

Drawing attention to the systematic patterning of language along three lines of meaning may not only change the ways writers write (e.g. Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2011; Zarei et al., 2017), but also strengthen the learner's role as an agent in their own learning process and as a critical thinker (see e.g. Allen, 2018; Berge et al., 2016; Kalantzis et al., 2016; Kern, 2000; see also section 2.1.1.). To that end, Cope & Kalantzis (2009) stress that "[m]eaning makers don't simply use what they have been given; they are fully makers and remakers of signs and transformers of meaning" (p. 175). Thus, by emphasising the meaning perspective in writing activities and feedback practices, curriculum goals and core elements such as language learning, literacy, and learning how to learn may receive greater focus in the L3 classroom.

Yet strengthening the meaning perspective in writing practices also implies a need to make teachers aware of the interrelation of lexicogrammatical patterns and

communicative aims (e.g. Kern, 2000). In the same way, it also means providing teachers with an awareness of the multiple meaning dimensions associated with a communicative task and the rhetorical effects that the learner's individual meaning-making choices might have. In his presentation of central ideas of genre theories (see also section 2.1.1.), Hyland (2011) points out that "a teacher who understands how texts are typically structured and meanings conventionally expressed are in a better position to intervene successfully in the writing of his or her students […] and to approach current instructional paradigms with a more critical aim" (p. 26). The implications of that are that teachers would very likely benefit from an enhanced focus on discourse analysis and the central ideas of systemic functional theory in their teacher training (see Kvam, 2012; Lindemann, 2020). Descriptions like the those retrieved in the current studies could serve as useful examples in that respect.

As the findings of the current study have been derived based on mock exams that have been highly influenced by the national exam structures, the findings also point to a need to strengthen the meaning perspective in the development of textbooks, teaching materials and exams further. Yet as the newly developed national exam for German shows, there seems to be a significant shift towards much more clearly situated tasks, explicit instructions and frames for structuring the different stages of a text (see section 2.2.2.). These shifts might lead to important wash-back effects which should be analysed further in future research (see section 7.1.).

On a more general level, the findings of the current study further prompt us to understand secondary school L3 learners as successful meaning-makers despite their limited linguistic repertoire. Focusing particularly on what learners can do in terms of meaning-making may have the potential to increase their sense of self-efficacy and motivation and to reduce the resistance and fear of failure in the learners (see section 2.2.2.).

Given the potential that lies in strengthening meaning-based writing, the findings of the current study suggest, in line with a major body of L2 research, that writing should be an integral part of the secondary school L3 context. To that end, this thesis implies that L3 learners should be provided with various meaningful writing opportunities in which their skills as meaning-makers can be developed.

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# Appendix 1

## List of errata in the analyses of Articles I and II

| Terms used (partially) incorrectly | Incorrect explanations/ definitions given in the article | Subsequent corrections |
|---|---|---|
| **Article I** | | |
| Embedded clauses | "They can either be formed as *defining relative* clauses and function to postmodify the *head* of the group […] or they can take the form of an *enhancing embedded clause* with a *head/thing* of its own." (Hamann, 2022, p. 163) | An embedded clause can either be formed as a defining relative clause and function to postmodify the Head of the group or it can function itself as the Head. Defining relative clauses extend the Head, while embedded clauses without a Head noun may be linked to either expansion or projection (see section 3.4.5.; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, sections 7.4.5., 7.5.6.). |
| | "[…] [A] high frequency of *that*-clauses might point to a high use of projection." (Hamann, 2022, p. 163). | *That*-clauses may point to the use of projected clauses (see section 3.4.1.) and embedded fact-clauses (see section 3.4.5.). |
| **Article II** | | |
| Aspect | In Table 2 in Hamann (2023, p. 4), I use the term "aspect markings" as an analytical criterion for inquiring into textual meaning-making. | The correct term that should have been used instead is "voice" (on aspect and voice see Table 3 on p. 32, and p. 49) |
| Theme-on-finite | In Hamann (2023, p. 8), the Theme "Es gibt" was defined as "Theme-on-finite". | According to Steiner & Teich (2004, p. 176), this term is only used for constructions like "Es reicht"(see p. 46). |

# Part II

Articles

# Article I

Writing in German as a foreign language in Norwegian upper secondary school: An investigation of patterns of language choices for meaning-making. (2022)

# Writing in German as a foreign language in Norwegian upper secondary school: An investigation of patterns of language choices for meaning-making

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## Abstract

The main objective of this article is to identify and describe characteristic patterns of language choices in texts written by Norwegian upper secondary school students of German as a foreign language (GFL) (age 16/17, school year 12, 5th year of FL learning). The study maps language choices in a set of 12 learner responses to a writing prompt about interpreting a film title. The aim of the study is to describe these choices in terms of how the learners use ideational meaning-making resources to arrive at meaningful content. The study takes a systemic functional linguistics (SFL) approach and analyses the responses in terms of the following lexicogrammatical and discourse semantic systems of resources: Transitivity, taxonomic and logico-semantic relations. The study finds several strategies and language choices that presented themselves as particularly relevant for meaning-making. For example, the learners reach an interpretation through clauses relating two messages to each other, and one of those two messages is typically structured in a complex way. Overall, the study provides insights into relevant patterns for expository writing in general and such that seem important to the particular context in which the response was situated. The article also points to the sophistication of the learners' language use and the linguistic demands regarding the task at hand. In line with existing research, the current study also shows how SFL and genre theory can be successfully applied to the analysis of responses by beginner to intermediate GFL learners.

**Keywords**

German as a foreign language writing, systemic functional linguistic, meaning-making, language choices, expository genre/text type.

## 1. Introduction

Writing development in a foreign language (FL) goes beyond the teaching, learning and assessment of linguistic and syntactic features (e.g., *Council of Europe*, 2001; Hyland, 2019; Lund & Casado Villanueva, 2020). Rather, it needs to "be interpreted as a journey toward meaningful content production and the realization of communicative goals" (Yasuda, 2019, p. 2). Yet, this perspective on learners' written productions has traditionally received little attention in research (e.g., Bunch & Willett, 2013; Troyan & Sembiante, 2020). Also, frameworks such as the *Common European Framework for Languages* (*CEFR*) (*Council of Europe,* 2001) lack detailed descriptions of how learners can and need to use language to respond meaningfully to certain situations (Troyan, 2020). In particular, research is scarce on how non-English FL learners (i.e. learners of a foreign language other than English) make meaning in response to different communicative goals, especially regarding learners of the primary or secondary school classroom (e.g., Reichelt, 2016; Yasuda, 2019). Against this backdrop, the aim of this research study is to analyse written responses to a writing prompt provided by upper secondary school learners of German as a foreign language (GFL) in terms of meaningful content production.

The data used in this study stem from the TRAWL (Tracking Written Learner Language) corpus (Dirdal et al., 2022), which is a compilation of authentic texts written by pupils in second and foreign languages in different parts of Norway. The study takes departure in data comprising 12 GFL learners (age 16/17, school year 12, 5th year of FL learning) responses to a task in the corpus. This task consists of eight individual writing prompts, all eliciting short responses. In line with Ørevik's (2019) genre categories, the learners' eight individual responses are considered as an analysis of a film. In the present study, the focus is on the learners' responses to the first of the eight writing prompts, which are categorized as expository writing and as an interpretation as part of the film analysis (Ørevik, 2019).

In line with, for example, Ørevik (2019), Troyan & Sembiante (2020) and Yasuda (2019), the current research study approaches meaning-making in terms of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). According to this theory, there are always three kinds of meanings simultaneously made when language is used. These meanings or functions are to construe experience (ideational meaning), to enact personal and social relationships

(interpersonal meaning) and to organize discourse (textual meaning) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The way those meanings are realized is by patterns of language choices. Due to the considerable amount of texts to be analysed, the focus is only on how the learners make ideational meaning. In this regard, the following research question is proposed: Which patterns of language choices can be identified in learners' responses to tasks to make ideational meaning to an interpretation in the genre of film analysis in the secondary school GFL context in Norway?

The second section presents the theoretical framework in which genre and meaning-making are conceptualized, and the resources for ideational meaning-making are described. The preceding section illustrates the data and methods used, while the fourth section presents the identified patterns of language choices in the learners' responses. The fifth section discusses the extent to which the learners realized their responses were in line with the genre. It further discusses how the co-text and context in which the task is situated play a role in the journey towards meaningful content. The final section concludes and outlines some pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

According to Troyan (2016), SFL theory "can enable a closer examination of language use in context through a whole-text approach that has not been possible in existing standards-based pedagogies informed by the existing frameworks for writing" (p. 331). In SFL theory, language is considered to function contextually. This implies that language choices "interface with what goes on outside language", while the interfacing part can then be regarded as meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 25). Accordingly, each language choice on the lexicogrammatical level of language and, as Martin and Rose (2007) add, also on the discourse semantics level of language, then make three kinds of meaning simultaneously, namely ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning. To describe and analyse those meanings and language choices in terms of what is going on outside of language, Halliday proposed a layer of register with the three register variables of field, tenor and mode. Those three variables can then be used for describing a communicative situation in the following ways: How does a speaker/writer need to talk/write about the situation (field), enact particular relationships with the listener/reader (tenor) and organize the discourse (mode) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 30–35). Additionally, Martin (1992, 2009) also proposed the layer of genre to describe language use in context (see Figure 1). Martin (2009) further defines genre as a "staged goal-oriented social process" (p. 13) and

claims that goals can only be achieved throughout the entire course of a text, through recurrent stages with particular configurations of field, tenor and mode and through different phases. While stages are considered highly predictable in genres, phases are more variable character connected to the field and the writers' individual choices (Rose & Martin, 2014).
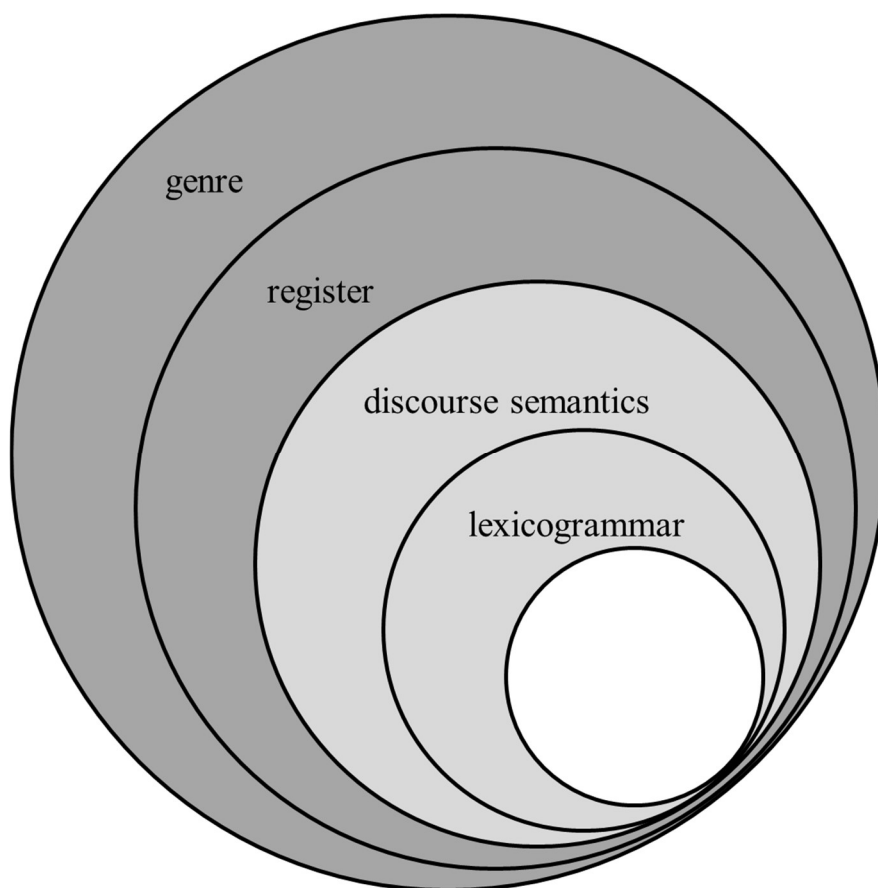
*Figure 1: Meanings at different levels (adapted from Martin, 1992, 2009)*

*2.1 Genre and meaning-making*

In previous SFL-based research, meaning-making has commonly been described in terms of genre. For example, Troyan (2016) describes how a Spanish fourth-grade student makes meaning to a landmark description, while Ryshina-Pankova (2020) describes how meaning can be made to an anecdote on childhood in an introductory German course. Other examples of studies are those of Abdel-Malek (2020) or Schleppegrell & Go (2007), who interrogate how Arabian or middle school English as second language learners make meaning to a recount of an experience. In all those studies, the analysis takes departure from previous knowledge of the genres

and their characteristic meaning-making features, such as described in, for example, Martin and Rose's (2008) genre categories.

In the secondary school FL classroom, however, writing prompts often do not elicit clear-cut genres (Ørevik, 2019). This is because the context and communicative purpose of writing tasks in the FL learning environment generally differ from natural communication contexts (Halliday, 1999). Especially in the non-English FL context, the most dominant purpose of writing is the activity of language learning with a specific focus on overall target-language acquisition and grammatical accuracy (e.g., Kvam, 2012; Reichelt, 2019). In addition, other characteristics of the beginners to intermediate FL learning process make it further challenging to analyse texts as clear-cut genres: Responses are characteristic of short text length, and learners often have limited linguistic repertoires and knowledge of the characteristics of genres in the FL. This is particularly the case for secondary school non-English FL writing (Knospe, 2017).

Against this backdrop, Ørevik (2019) approaches the categorisation of genres differently to, for example, Martin and Rose (2008). In her work, Ørevik (2019) analyses texts for reception, writing acts and samples of main genres situated in a secondary school English as a foreign language (EFL) context in Norway. Overall, she draws on Martin's (2009, p. 13) definition of genre but places it in between text type and genre, with the former understood as texts comprising different communicative tasks, such as *argue* or *describe*, and the latter as recurrent configurations of features that coincide with the text's external criteria of context and communicative purpose, such as a letter to the editor (Ørevik, 2019, p. 8; see also Biber, 1989; Pilegaard & Frandsen, 1996). Thus, Ørevik (2019) takes a complementary perspective on genre in terms of genre and text type. In that regard, she describes individual and main genre categories. The latter are based on predominant text types, such as *expository*, which can also be linked to the macrofunctions of the *CEFR* (*Council of Europe* 2001, p. 126). Against the observation that "writing tasks do not always elicit clear-cut genres or text types" (p. 101), Ørevik (2019) also resorts to the *Wheel of Writing* model (Berge et al., 2016) to assign each kind of text to one main category. Berge et al.'s (2016) model provides an overview of different acts of writing in the monolingual classroom, and each of those acts are connected to one of six main purposes of writing. For example, writing acts such as *interpreting*, *comparing* or *exploring* are linked to the purpose of *knowledge development*, which Ørevik then calls expository writing (see Table 1). By equating purposes and text types, Ørevik can assign the different acts of writing to specific text types (see also Hasund, 2022).

*Table 1: Description of the main genre category expository by Ørevik (2019, p. 105)*

| Main genre category | Typical writing acts | Individual genres included in the main category |
|---|---|---|
| Expository | *Interpret, compare, explore, analyse, discuss* | Expository article/documentary; expository talk/ presentation; essay exploring a topic; analysis of literature and film; news report; feature article |

Along with her genre categories, Ørevik (2019) determines the individual genre of film or literature analysis and describes it as a social process in which films and literature are discussed and reflected on with the overall purpose of knowledge enhancement (p. 107). The tasks which elicit this individual genre can be of different natures, for example, "mere elements of analyses, such as character descriptions and comments to poems" (p. 145). Regarding the main genre categories, she assigns the film analysis to the expository main genre category. A typical writing act for film analyses and, accordingly, for expository writing are interpretations.

Ørevik's (2019) genre categories comprise information on how meaning is made along the following criteria: The social process, communicative goals and rhetorical organisation. As part of her work, she also analysed how the register (field, tenor, mode) and meaning (ideational, interpersonal, textual) variables are configured in some individual genres, like the expository article from the expository main genre category. Her investigations into the configurations of the register and meaning variables are based on interrogations into how the lexicogrammatical choices are configured. This approach is in line with other SFL-based research studies, such as those mentioned before, even though the studies differ in how they approach the register and meaning variables as well as the use of lexicogrammatical resources.

## 2.2 Lexicogrammatical and discourse semantical resources for ideational meaning-making

In SFL theory, there are different systemic works that comprise descriptions of meaning-making resources. A major work that describes lexicogrammatical systems of resources is Halliday's functional grammar (e.g. Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). Regarding the construction of ideational meaning, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe lexicogrammatical resources systematically under the headings transitivity and taxis/logico-semantic relations. Martin and Rose (2007) criticise Halliday for not taking account of lexical relations as a major strategy for ideational meaning-making. From a discourse semantics perspective, they thus describe how

those kinds of relations can be patterned and realize ideational meaning. Inter alia, they propose to look at lexical relations in terms of a system called taxonomic relations.

In line with the research goals of the current study, inquiries are proposed into systems from both a lexicogrammatical or discourse semantic perspective, namely into transitivity, logico-semantic type and taxonomic relations. In the following, these systems are explained and findings regarding their patterns in expository writing are discussed.

### 2.2.1 Transitivity

Transitivity centres on processes and participants. According to functional grammar, each sequence, figure or "going-on" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 213) consists of a specific process that – depending on its type and subtype – construes different domains of experience and involves a range of participants. The three most dominant process types are presented in Table 2, together with participants that are directly involved. The participants are often conceived through nominal groups, which can, for example, be formed through simple common or proper nouns or pronouns such as *David, the garden* or *I*.

*Table 2: Major process types, their meanings and characteristic participants (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 311)*

| Process type | Meaning | Participants | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| material: | 'doing' | Actor, Goal | i.   *David fed his flock [of sheep]*. |
|  |  | Actor, Scope | ii.  *The sisters played football*. |
| mental: | 'sensing' | Senser, Phenomenon | iii. *I recall this story [[he is telling]]*. |
| relational: | 'being' |  |  |
| attribution | 'attributing' | Carrier, Attribute | iv. *The garden seems large* |
| identification | 'identifying' | Identified/Token, Identifier/Value | v.  *The issue is [[that no one is here]]*. |

Regarding processes in expository writing, Ørevik's (2019) analysis of the expository article emphasises *material* and *relational* processes as dominant. In addition to that, two previous studies on expository writing suggest that participants might characteristically be of more complex form. For example, Melissourgou and Frantzi (2018) described syntactic complexity as one feature of English expository articles. Biber et al. (1998) pointed to a high frequency of *that*-clauses in expository writing in English in academic contexts when predicates are complex or when facts or previously stated information are provided (p. 78) – both can likely be the case in interpretations. Rather complex ways of realizing participants include expanding them

through e*mbedded* phrases (see example *i.* in Table 2, marked as *[ ]*) or *embedded* clauses (see examples *iii.* and *v.*, marked as *[[ ]]*). If participants are realized through nominal groups comprising *embedded* clauses, the latter can take two forms (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 492–93): They can either be formed as *defining relative* clauses and function to postmodify the *head* of the group (see example *iii.*), or they can take the form of an *enhancing embedded* clause with a *head/thing* of its own (see example *v.*).

### 2.2.2 Logico-semantic relations

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 428), logico-semantic relation types comprise the resources to link sequences of figures within *clause complexes*. While *expansion* is the main type to link experience of the same order, *projection* is the main type to connect experience of a different order. Both types of logico-semantic relations can be further described along subtypes (see Table 3, which includes the suggested notations for functional grammar analysis). For example, one subtype of *projection* is *idea*. This type can often be found when a *mental* process with the experience of *thinking, believing* or *wanting* of one order is related to a phenomenon or *idea* clause on a higher order (pp. 253–54, 443–44).

*Table 3: Categories of expansion and projection (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 444)*

| Type | | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Expansion | | |
|    elaborating | = | *She is an active child, as many children are.* |
|    extending | + | *She is an active child, while her brother is more listless.* |
|    enhancing | x | *Sitting still is difficult because she is such an active child.* |
| Projection | | |
|    locution | " | *She said that she could do that.* |
|    idea | ' | *She thought that she could do that.* |

Research suggests that both *expansion* and *projection* might be relevant to ideational meaning-making in expository writing. On the one hand, Biber et al. (1998) and Melissourgou and Frantzi (2018) identified syntactic complexity and causality as typical features. This overlaps with Ørevik (2019), who found a dominant use of enhancing logico-semantic relations in expository articles in the cases of explanations and expansion on circumstantial information. On the other hand, Biber et al.'s (1998) findings concerning a high frequency of *that*-clauses might point to a high use of projection.

## 2.2.3 Taxonomic relations

Another important strategy in linking experience and establishing causality is described by Martin and Rose (2007) as the establishment of taxonomic relations. Taxonomic relations are described by them as "the chains of relations between elements as the text unfolds, from one clause to the next. […] [which] progressively construct taxonomies of people, things, places and their qualities" (p. 75). Ways to establish these lexical chains are through the relationships of *repetition*, *synonymity*, *contrast* (*opposition* and *series*), *class* (*class to member* and *co-class*) and *wholes/parts* (pp. 73–90).

## 2.3 Approaching lexicogrammatical and discourse semantical resources in texts

As various studies on meaning-making show, there are different ways of inquiring into the different lexicogrammatical systems and discourse semantical sets of meaning-making resources. The differences found across the studies also stress that each researcher must find a way to deal with the "central challenge to micro-analysis […] [which is] the immense complexity of discourse" (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 266).

For the approach of the current article, two studies are considered particularly relevant, Ørevik's (2019) and Troyan and Sembiante's (2020). Ørevik's (2019) work presents a comprehensive and deductive approach to describing significant aspects of register and meaning configuration in individual genres based on lexicogrammatical analyses of texts at the clause level. Amongst others, she analyses English texts for reception thoroughly for their transitivity structure and logico-semantic relations by drawing on Halliday's functional grammar approach. Troyan and Sembiante's (2020) compiled various questions and units of analysis for interrogating the configuration of the register and meaning variables in any genre. This way of inquiring into texts is similar to, for example, Schleppegrell and Go's (2007) and Troyan's (2016). In all those three approaches, the focus is not on analysing clause by clause like Ørevik (2019) did in her dissertation, but on individual elements of the clause. Thus, Troyan and Sembiante (2020), for example, analyse verbs, noun groups or adjective groups to make statements about the configuration of processes, participants or details surrounding the attribute. Regarding their units of analysis, they draw on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Eggins (2004) as well as on Brisk's (2015) and Derewianka's (2011) grammar descriptions. Another approach which has been partially considered relevant for the current study is Rose and Martin's (2014). For assessment purposes, however, they propose questions and analytical examples that inquire into the configurations of language at the level of context (purpose, staging, phases), register,

discourse and grammar. Inter alia, they inquire into the discourse level in terms of ideation, proposing a focus on the writer's lexical resources to construct the field.

As the theoretical overview shows, meaning-making and language choices can be analysed and described by inquiring into configurations on the level of genre, register, meaning, discourse semantics and lexicogrammar. Nevertheless, research shows that meaning-making can be approached in different ways. Considering the nature of the data, its genre as well as the research aim, researchers must take their own stance towards which and how to analyse meaning-making resources.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Data

As mentioned, the empirical data for this article comprises 12 short authentic learner texts from the TRAWL corpus that constitute an interpretation as part of a film analysis. The choice of the data was motivated by the fact that it should present various responses that appear comparable in terms of the use of meaning-making resources. Also, the responses should be of short text length for comparing and describing patterns in a more comprehensive way. A last criterion for choosing the data was that the responses should appear demanding in terms of meaning-making, so that patterns of texts can be investigated that are yet not fully part of the learners' common meaning-making repertoire.

The data set chosen for the current study was retrieved from a mock exam context of one upper secondary school GFL classroom in which the learners were in year 12 and their fifth year of learning German. In the TRAWL corpus, this data set is coded as DLDA and was collected in the spring of 2018 by a student assistant (see Dirdal et al., 2022). The task of the DLDA set includes eight writing prompts (see Appendix) on a film viewed by the learners, named "Das Leben der Anderen" [*The Lives of Others*]. The film is set in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and is about the figure Gerd Wiesler, who was asked to spy on the artist Georg Dreyman. Once Wiesler discovered that the observation only served his superior's private intentions, namely, to get rid of Dreyman and win over his partner Christa-Maria Siedland, he changed his way of observing the couple. The responses to the eight prompts of the DLDA task are considered distinct stages of the genre film analysis.

The first stage was chosen for the in-depth analysis stage and constituted a response to the following prompt: "Was ist mit dem Titel des Filmes gemeint? Wer sind 'die Anderen'? Kann

der Film mehr als nur eine Meinung haben?"[1]. This did not explicitly indicate a communicative goal. However, it can be concluded from the questions of the writing prompt that the purpose was to write an interpretation with the wider aim of enhancing the understanding of the film. All learners' responses to this task were short, ranging between 32 and 92 words, with an average length of 53 words. The choice of this stage was motivated by the fact that every learner responded to this prompt in similar ways and that it seemed demanding in terms of meaning-making, judging from the fact that the responses were characterised mainly by learner language with a high frequency of grammatical and syntactical errors. Concerning the writing prompt, the following is noteworthy: The word *"Meinung"* is used improperly here as it means "*opinion*" in German, not "*meaning*".

### 3.2 Method

The present study seeks to qualitatively analyse language choices presented as relevant to meaning-making in interpretations as part of a film analysis across 12 learner responses. The approach taken in this study is to inquire into the variable of field and ideational meaning-making, the latter in terms of central patterns of lexicogrammatical and discourse semantical resources. In line with Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the register variable was approached through one question (see Table 4). The study's focus on the units of analysis takes departure in systems or sets of meaning-making as described by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Martin and Rose (2007). The focus on taxonomic relations was added as fewer clear patterns of logico-semantic relations might occur in short texts. The questions for interrogating meaning-making are based on Ørevik (2019), Troyan and Sembiante (2020) and partially Rose and Martin (2014).

*Table 4: Methodological approach*

| Field | What is the topic about? |
|---|---|
| **Focus on** | What are typical …. |
| | … processes? |
| | … participants and what are they like? |
| | … logico-semantic relations? |
| | … taxonomic relations? |

---

[1] "What is meant by the title of the film? Who are 'the others'? Can the film have more than one meaning?"

In line with Ørevik's (2019) deductive approach, language use will be analysed schematically. This also allows comparing language use across all responses. In the following, the analytical approaches and tools used in the current study are presented:

1. *Field:* Based on all learner responses, the configuration of the field variable is identified.

2. *Phase analysis:* Individual phases are identified in the learner responses and labelled according to their function. This enables the detection of patterns across the analyses in a more straightforward manner.

3. *Transitivity analysis*: This analysis identifies characteristic processes and participants, by juxtaposing them on a clause-by-clause basis. This adapted analysis from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, pp. 211–358) allows analysing the transitivity structure of learner language. The analysis also draws on Ørevik's (2019) and Steiner and Teich's (2004) descriptions of text examples.

4. *Analysis of taxonomy*: This analysis is based on Martin and Rose (2007, p. 82). All occurrences of lexical items in the learners' responses are identified, and their relationship with each other is indicated.

5. *Analysis of logico-semantic relations:* Following Ørevik (2019), the learner responses are analysed for the use of clause complexes. In that regard, instances of *expansion* and *projection* together with their subtypes are identified (see Table 3). This analysis is based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 656) and Eggins (2004).

The present study aims to analyse learner language in its original, authentic form. However, learner language characterized by many grammatical and syntactical errors can be variously interpreted by readers. Therefore, two versions of the learners' responses were re-interpreted before the analysis. In the first version, deviances from the norms were outlined (by underlining and marking with "*"). In the second version, corrections were made according to how I, the researcher, interpreted the text. Where learner language was difficult to interpret, no such corrections were made, and the analysis treated those parts with caution. Within the analyses, deviations from the norms were indicated only when they were connected to the system of analysis. For example, verb choices that did not align with the intended process were indicated in the analysis of transitivity.

The following findings section presents summary descriptions of the individual analyses of language choices in all 12 learner responses. These descriptions are provided in terms of field, phase structure, transitivity structure, taxonomic relations and logico-semantic relations . In the

findings section, translations are only provided as glosses in the running texts but not for the sentences in the examples. This is because a decision would have been required for each of these examples regarding how to translate the learner language. For the sake of clarity, the examples do not include indications of ambiguous spelling. For example, the word "[w]elt" in learner P60262's response will be stated as "welt". Instead, the examples will use square brackets to present corrections or explanations (marked with "=") that are necessary to understand the analysis.

## 4. Findings

This section presents relevant patterns of language choices for meaning-making, which were identified in the learners' responses to the writing prompt asking the learners to interpret a message, organized according to the five analytical steps presented above.

### 4.1 Field

All learner texts are about who or what is meant by "die Anderen" [*the others*] or by the title "das Leben der Anderen" [*the life of others*]. Those who or whose lives are meant are one or more of the following: People living in the West/in "Westberlin" or people observed by the state security service of the former GDR ("DDR") or the spy "Gerd Wiesler".

### 4.2 Phases

In all learner responses, meaning is construed through at least two phases – one comprising interpretative statements of who "die Anderen" are and one encompassing explanations of the statements. In this second phase, descriptions are made of what the state security is doing, what "Gerd Wiesler" is doing/experiencing or desires or what "die Anderen" are feeling or thinking.

### 4.3 Transitivity structure: processes and participants

In the first phase containing interpretative statements, *relational* processes can be found as central elements to meaning-making in all learner responses. At least one of those processes is in the *identifying* mode, typically realized by the learners through the verb groups "sein" [*to be*], "bedeuten" [*to mean*] or "ist gemeint" [*is meant*] (see examples *i. - v.*). While also other verbs can be found, they appear defective in clauses being of *identifying* mode structure.

i.   *Die Anderen sind <u>die Menschen im West Deutschland</u>. (P60267)*

ii.  *"Die Anderen" sind <u>alle [[die überwachen werden]]</u>. (P60265)*

iii. *Der Titel kann <u>[[, dass man sieht das Leben der Anderen,]]</u> bedeuten. (P60266)*

iv.  *Mit dem Titel "Das Leben der Anderen", ist es gemeint <u>[[, dass das Leben von Gerd Wiesler handelt von jemand Anderen]]</u>. (P60269)*

v.   *Es [=der Titel] konnte \*über [auf] <u>\*[…]  [diejenigen] [[\*wer Stasi hat überwachten]]</u> \*handeltn [hindeuten]. <u>Oder die Menschen an der Anderen Seite. Also West-Deutsche-ren</u>. (P60260)*

Across the learner responses, three participants occur as *Identified/Tokens* in *relational* clauses: "Der Titel" [*the title*], "Das Leben der Anderen" [*The Lives of Others*], or "die Anderen" [*the others*]. More variation can be seen across those participants, which the learners use to identify or give a value to those three previously mentioned participants. Examples of participants taking the role of *Identifier/Value* can be found in examples *i.-v.* (marked as *underlined*). Regarding their structure, the following becomes clear: They are often of quite complex nature and realized by the learners in one or more of the following ways:

- *Noun complexes* (see example *v.*).
- *Embedded* phrases that further characterize the nouns "Leben" [*life*] or (references to) the noun "Menschen" [*people*] (see examples *i.*, *iii.* and *iv.*)).
- *Embedded* clauses (see examples *ii. - v.*) that occur frequently and may take two forms:
  1. As a *defining relative* clause, used to express that a certain group of people are monitored by the state security or have a certain attitude towards the former GDR (see examples *ii.* and *v.*).
  2. As an *enhancing embedded* clause, denoting that one or more people are dealing in some way with a different life (see examples *iii.* and *vi.*)

In the phase comprising explanations, learners particularly make use of *material* and/or *mental* processes. In part, learners also use these processes in *embedded* clauses of interpretative statements. While some *material* verbs like "arbeiten" [*to work*], "leben" [*to live*] or "überwachen" [*to monitor*] occur across various responses, the learners differ otherwise in their use of *material* and *mental* verb groups, depending on what the learners chose to focus on in their response. The examples in *vi. - viii.* provide some insights into the range of *material* and *mental* verb

groups used (The verb phrase "ist … *gegen (=dagegen)" [*to be against*] in example *vi.* is understood as a *mental*-like verb after Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 273). As can be seen in examples *vii.* and *viii.*, also *relational* processes are sometimes used in the explanations. These are often expressed through the verb phrases "war" / "waren" [was/were] or "hatten" [had]. In example *vii.*, also the verb phrase "wird *geprägt" is understood as a relative verb.

vi.   *… weil sie [=die Anderen] nicht die DDR <u>stützen</u>. Sie <u>Leben</u> i [in] einer welt wo sie nicht ales können sagen or <u>meinen</u>. Sie mussen <u>verstecken</u> der Beweis das Sie <u>gegen</u> Die DDR <u>ist</u>. (P60662)*

vii.   *Die Gesellschaft in der DDR <u>wird *Geprät [=geprägt?]</u> mit der strengen Zensur. Es war ein Überwachengesellschaft. Sie, dass in Stasi <u>arbeitet</u>, <u>überwachen</u> anderes Leben. Sie <u>haben sehen</u> wie ihren geliebt. (P60665)*

viii.   *Sie [=die Menschen in Westdeutschland] hatten viel mehr Freiheit als die Einwohner im Ost. Gerd Wiesler war einen einsam Mann, und hat sein Leben, dürch Christa-Maria und Georg, <u>gelebt</u>. Er <u>wünschte</u> sich ein mehr inhaltsreich Lebe, und <u>sah</u> auf Georg und Christa-Maria, wie ein Beispiel. (P60667)*

While the use of *material* and *mental* verbs shows considerable variation, the participants in those processes appear more uniform: On the one hand, many noun groups can be found that either revolve around the items "DDR" or "Ostdeutschland" or are related overall to this lexical field (e.g. "Stasi" [*state security service of the former GDR*] or "Überwachungsgesellschaft" [*surveillance society*]) (see examples *vi.* and *vii.*). On the other hand, participants often refer to or revolve around people in the film context, as can be seen in example *viii.* Both groups of participants are particular in how they refer to a coherent outer context associated with specific actions and facts. Seemingly, a lot of experiential meaning is thus construed through a limited number of participants. This becomes particularly clear in learner responses that only comprise short additional explanations such as in P60661's: "Weil sie [=das Paar] nicht für das Leben in Ostberlin war". A third commonly found participant is the noun "Leben" (or "Welt" as in example *vi.*). The noun group takes the role of *Scope* and is often further qualified, for example, by the attributes "*schöne" [*beautiful*], "*mehr inhaltsreich" [*meaningful*] and "armes und langweiliges" [*poor and boring*]. This participant is thus often clearly positively or negatively loaded.

*4.4 Taxonomic relations*

As shown, participants are from a limited range of lexical fields and mostly refer to the context of the GDR and the film. Accordingly, coherent experience is construed by lexical items that stand in *co-class* of *co-part* relation to each other. As both contexts comprise stark contrasts of positively or negatively associated ways of living, namely the East vs West, Gerd Wiesler vs the couple (Christa Maria Sieland and Georg Dreyman) and a boring vs an exciting life, the learners characteristically establish the relation of *opposition* by drawing on at least one pair of opposing lexical items in their responses. The construed contrast between the lives of some and that of others is further emphasised in various ways by the learners: By giving lexical items further positive or negative attributions, by certain verb choices like "wünschten" [*desired*] or "ist … *gegen*" or by more lengthy explanation phases. In the latter, a more comprehensive negative or positive picture of the life of a specific group is characteristically construed, which then eventually contrasts clearly with one or more opposing lexical items. As can be seen in the responses P60662, P60665 and P60667, which contain more lengthy explanation phases (see examples *vi.*, *vii.* and *viii.*), various lexical items stand in *co-class*/*co-part* or *synonymous* relationship with each other and thereby construe a clear picture of a life which is or is not desirable, for example,

- *DDR – welt wo sie nicht ales können sagen or meinen (P60662, example vi.)*
- *DDR – strengen Zensur – Überwachengesellschaft (P60665, example vii.)*
- *West Deutschland – Freiheit – Christa-Maria und Georg – inhaltsreich Lebe, (P60667, example viii.)*

Thus, the relations of *co-part* and *co-class*, *synonymity* and also *repetition* appear important for construing coherent experience, while the relation of *opposition* is the core strategy across the learner responses for construing the causal relationship between the lives of some and that of others. As can be seen, the context provided various options for the learners to establish the different taxonomic relations.

*4.5 Logico-semantic relations*

The analysis shows that causal relationships are established by learners also through logico-semantic relations, even if this is not a central strategy across all learner responses. For construing causality between the interpretative statements and explanation, the most common type of relation is expansion of *enhancing* subtype. Here, the interpretative statement is enhanced

through a clause comprising the conjunction "weil" [*because*]. In example *ix*., this type of relation is even used twice by the learner. Another type of expansion used to explain further who "die Anderen" are occurs in two learner responses, and this is *elaboration*. In those cases, the learners expand the interpretative statement through the connector "also" [*thus*] (see example *x*.).

Beyond those types of expansion, projection of the subtype *idea* also appears as a logico-semantic relation that is particularly relevant to meaning-making in various learner responses. The learners use this relation to signify that the interpretative statement is something which the learner, thus "Ich" [*I*], considers as true or possible. Central to this are clauses that are realised through the verb phrases "denken" [*to think*] (see example *xi*.) and "glauben" [*to believe*]. These expressions appear to be a particular choice in that they constitute a rather personal way of using language and further increase syntactic complexity. As example *xi*. shows, the interpretative statement is not only formed as an *embedded* clause, but the latter even becomes part of a larger clause complex headed by the projecting clause.

ix.  *Das Leben der anderen, kann vielleicht illustrieren Dreyman und Christa-Maria's Leben. Weil sie nicht für das Leben in Ostberlin war. Der Titel kann auch das Leben für Gerd Wiesler illustrieren, weil er für Stasi arbeitet. (P60661)*

x.  *Die "Anderen" sind Georg Dreyman und Christa-Maria Sieland, also die Personen, die überwachten war. (P60669)*

xi.  *Ich denke, dass „die Anderen" die Personen sind, die von Stasi überwacht werden. (P60272)*

## 4.6 Summary of the most central language choices for meaning-making

To arrive at an interpretation, the findings show that *relational* processes in the *identifying* mode are most central. However, interpretative statements can hardly be construed by participants taking the form of a single common or proper noun as the *Identifier/Value*. Instead, nominal groups with noun complexes, *embedded* phrases and *defining relative clauses* are found to be common ways of realizing the participant. Especially if the learners choose the *relational* verb groups "gemeint ist" (as suggested in the writing prompt) and "bedeuten", participants were characteristically formed as *enhancing embedded clauses*. As the learners can refer to an outer context that is coherent, presents common knowledge and comprises clearly definable opposing groups, they can, however, resort to a limited number of lexical resources for construing experience through the taxonomic relations of *co-class, co-part, synonymity, repetition* and

particularly *opposition*. To intensify the opposition between the lives of some and that of others, various learners choose to add more sequences to the explanation or attribute a certain quality to the neutral item "Leben". As the analysis shows, the taxonomic relation of *opposition* is central to establishing causality. This relation is construed by various learners also through the logico-semantic relationship of *enhancement* with the conjunction "weil". Another logico-semantic relationship which is further established across various learner responses is the relationship of projection. This relationship is used to construe the interpretative statement as an idea of the author/learner.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of the current article was to identify and describe language choices used by Norwegian GFL learners to make meaning to an interpretation in the genre of literature/film analysis. The study presented a detailed account of how learners used meaning-making resources. In particular, the findings identified the central role that *relational* processes in the *identifying* mode – together with, in part, very complex participants taking the role of *Identifier/Value* – have for arriving at an interpretation. These specific choices corroborate Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) claim that *relational* processes "represent a strategy for expanding the naming resources of language" (p. 277), something which matches the writing act of this interpretation. Other identified patterns, such as the use of *that*-clauses (in this study to realize *embedded* and *idea* clauses), *material* processes and the establishment of *causality,* are also in line with features which Biber et al. (1998), Melissourgou and Frantzi (2018) and Ørevik (2019) found to be specific for expository genres. The current study's findings further pointed out how resources were used specifically for the task at hand. For example, it became clear that the context of the film analysis was decisive to how participants were chosen and how these choices contributed to construing experience. This stresses the role of what Halliday (1999) calls "co-text", in this case the film "Das Leben der Anderen", which is set in the context of East Berlin of the former GDR. Furthermore, the study has shown that the writing prompt and the learning context are decisive for how language choices are patterned. This becomes particularly clear in the learners' decisions to project interpretations as personal ideas. This is in line with Hasund and Hasselgård (2022), who point out that writing in the secondary school EFL context is characterised by personal language choices. Overall, the current study thus presented several relevant patterns of language choices for meaning-making to a specific task and context.

As the findings have shown, the co-text and the context can be helpful to the learners' journey to meaningful content even if the learners' linguistic repertoire is yet limited. Even if learners do not correctly realise lexical choices, they can quite easily be understood as they refer to a coherent outer context. The fact that *relational* processes play a central role in meaning-making to the interpretation of the DLDA task further helps the learners in their meaning-making process. This is because the correct realisation of *relational* verb groups is also less decisive for meaning-making as they can be considered as non-salient in *relational* processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 262). Nevertheless, the findings also presented how the overall context might lead to further demands. The latter was, for example, the case when learners draw on the relational verb group "gemeint ist" from the writing prompt which requires *Identifiers/Values* of more complex syntactic structure. Also, the learners' decision to establish interpretative statements as projected ideas leads to an enhanced syntactic complexity which needs to be navigated with an often limited linguistic repertoire. Detailed descriptions of how learners characteristically make meaning to a particular task at hand thus not only provide important insights into relevant patterns of language choices but also into how the meaning-making process is influenced by the context surrounding a specific task. Furthermore, descriptions such as those of the current study are vital to understanding what learners can already do on their journey towards meaningful content production. The findings showed that each learner's reply could be understood as providing an interpretation through similar patterns of phases and language choices. The learners managed to do so with their current linguistic repertoires despite varying degrees of errors in their responses. In line with studies from other learning contexts (e.g. Bunch & Willett, 2013; Yasuda, 2019), the descriptions obtained in the present study additionally show how learners navigate complex language demands. Particularly, the construction of complex *Identifiers/Values* presents high demands in terms of structuring groups and clauses (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 491). Thus, the findings of this study also showed "what *can* be done with language, rather than what *cannot*" (Schleppegrell & Go, 2007, p. 530 [emphasis in original]). All this stresses the need for more research into how primary or secondary school non-English FL learners use language to make meaning, as writing prompts and the learners' (meta)linguistic repertoires are often of a particular nature in this learning context.

As both general and highly specific patterns of language choices were eventually identified, the present study suggests how to analyse language choices for meaning-making when the study data is of short text length. In that regard, the study advocates that Ørevik's (2019) genre typology serves as a fruitful starting point for the analysis of non-English FL learners' responses. Consistent also with other previous works from the non-English FL learning environment (e.g.

Abdel-Malek, 2020; Ryshina-Pankova, 2020), the findings further suggest that approaches within SFL theory can be flexibly adapted to the non-English FL context, also with regard to secondary school education. Even though meaning-making cannot be described exhaustively and even less so across 12 different learner responses, the study still provides evidence to the claim that "[a]ll texts can […] be described in terms of both form and function, that is, how their elements are organized for making meanings and the purposes this serves" (Hyland, 2019, p. 19).

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigated characteristic patterns of language choices for ideational meaning-making in secondary school GFL learners' responses to a prompt asking for an interpretation as part of a film analysis. The study revealed several strategies and language choices that presented themselves as relevant for meaning-making. While some patterns appear to be rather common for expository writing in general, the study also demonstrated patterns that are specific to the co-text and learning context in which the writing was situated. Beyond that, the study also provided insights into the sophistication of the learners' meaning-making.

Against this backdrop, the findings may have important pedagogical implications. First, descriptions like those of the current study can provide important information on what syntactic and linguistic features need to be particularly focused on in supporting the learners in their journey towards meaningful content production. In the case of the task analysed in the current study, these were *relational* processes with an *Identifier/Value* that is often realized through noun complexes, *embedded* phrases and clauses. Also, logico-semantic relationships were typically used that express projection and thereby increase the level of syntactic complexity even further. Second, the findings stress the need for a stronger focus on function instead of form in the secondary school non-English FL classroom (e.g. Hyland, 2019; Kvam, 2012; Reichelt, 2019). Finally, the findings make a contribution to pointing out that a genre-based analysis can help to approach data from different learning contexts on a whole-text level. In this way, a better understanding of meaning-making to different main functions as, for example, provided by the CEFR (*Council of Europe*, 2001) can be provided.

For arriving at a broader understanding of meaning-making in secondary school FL learning contexts, however, more research is needed that focuses on writing done in other classroom settings or on responses to tasks that elicit other genres or less uniform meaning-making strategies. Research is also desirable that has a stronger focus on the learners' individual strategies

of language use. Looking at the value that research on meaning-making can have and the need for findings from other writing contexts, authentic learner data as provided by the TRAWL corpus are of core value.

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**Appendix A. The DLDA task (Source: TRAWL corpus)**

Prüfung 2. März 2018

**Hilfsmittel: Ordnett +**
Ankunft (Buch)
Arbeitsblatt "Das Leben der Anderen" (Papier)

**Schreiben:**
Die DDR und Das Leben der Anderen – Handlung & Themen
Beantworte die folgenden Fragen so gut und soweit möglich:

**1. Das Leben der Anderen**
Was ist mit dem Titel des Filmes gemeint? Wer sind 'die Anderen'? Kann der Titel mehr als nur eine Meinung haben?

**2. Ort und Zeit**
Wo befinden wir uns in diesem Film? Wie können wir sehen, dass der Film/die Handlung in den siebziger/achtziger Jahren spielt?

**3. Personbeschreibung**
Beschreibe und vergleiche zwei von den Personen in dem Film (nicht Gerd Wiesler)!

**4. Eine dynamische Person**
Warum/wie können wir sagen – und sehen -, dass Gerd Wiesler eine dynamische Person ist, also eine Person, die sich während des Filmes verändert?

**5. Bild und Handlung**
Was wird hier von diesen Männern geplant?
[In the original, a picture is given]

**6. Was für Themen werden in dem Film behandelt?**

**7. Was, findest du, bedeutet es eigentlich, ein guter Mensch zu sein – in dem Film und im Leben?**

**8. Beschreibe das Leben in der DDR nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg:**

## Appendix B. The learners' responses to the first prompt of the DLDA task (Source: TRAWL corpus)

**P60260**

Ich glaube das dem Titel mehr als nur eine Meinung haben. Es konnte über wer Stasi hat über-wachten handeltn. [o]der die Menschen an der Anderen [S]eite. Also West-Deutscheren. Wir kennen und begleitung die Menschen von Ost-Deutschland. Ich glaube das ist die Meinung mit der Film. Und das wir konnten selbst über es denken.

**P60261**

Das Leben der anderen, kann vielleicht illustrieren Dreyman und Christa-Maria's Leben. Weil sie nicht für das Leben in Ostberlin war. Der Titel kann auch das Leben für Gerd Wiesler illust-rieren, weil er für Stasi arbeitet.

**P60262**

Der Titel, das Leben der Anderen Meinung ist das die Anderen hat ein Anderen Leben weil sie nicht die DDR stützen. Sie Leben i einer [w]elt wo sie nicht ales können sagen or meinen. Sie mussen verstecken der Beweis das Sie gegen Die DDR ist. Der Titel mein das Sie haben einer ganzer anderes Leben als die der stützen die DDR.

**P60263**

Der Titel des Filmes handlet von der Verlorenheit der Individuums in Ostberlin. "Die andren" ist der Menschen in Westberlin, dass eine schöne Leben hat. Der Menschen, dass in Ostberlin wohnen, wunsch in Westberlin wohnen, weil es ist sehr schön in Westberlin.
Ich denke, dass der Menschen in Ostberlin wunsch in Westberlin wohnen, weil Ostberlin ist nicht gut.

**P60265**

Der Film heißt "Das Leben der Anderen" und handelt über einen Mann wo heißt Gerd Wiesler. Er war einen Spion. Der Stasi-Hauptmann wird von seinem Freund Grubitz eine Beauftragt. "Operative Vorgang" wird inzeniert. Operative Vorgang war der überwacht bei Georg Drey-mand und seine Freundin Christa-Maria. Bei dem Wiesler das Paar heimlich überwachen soll. Ich glaube, dass "Die Anderen" sind alle die überwachen werden. Die Gesellschaft in der DDR wird Geprät mit der strengen Zensur. Es war ein Überwachengesellschaft. Sie, dass in Stasi arbeitet, überwachen anderes Leben. Sie haben sehen wie ihren geliebt.

**P60266**

Der Titel kann, dass man sieht das Leben der Anderen, bedeuten. In dem Filme, erlebt Gerd Wiesler allez in das Leben der Paar Georg und Christa sind "die Anderen" und haben ihr Leben überwacht. Ich denne, dass Gerd durch die Paar leben. Warum den[k]e ich das? Weil Gerd hat ein armes und langweiliges Leben, lebe er sein leben durch die Paar.

**P60267**

„Die Anderen" sind die Menschen im West Deutschland. Sie hatten viel mehr Freiheit als die Einwohner im Ost. Gerd Wiesler war einen einsam Mann, und hat sein Leben, dürch Christa-Maria und Georg, gelebt. Er wünschte sich ein mehr inhaltsreich Lebe, und sah auf Georg und Christa-Maria, wie ein Beispiel.

**P60268**

Der Titel meint, dass wir ein blick in das leben "der Anderen kriegen und wie das Leben war da. "die Anderen" ist die mennschen i DDR, weil wir sehen wie das Leben i DDR war mit die Stazi-überwachung. Es kann auch dass Gerd Wiesler ein Blick in die norm[al]e Leute in DDR kriegt.

**P60269**

Mit dem Titel "Das Leben der Anderen", ist es gemeint, dass das Leben von Gerd Wiesler handelt von jemand Anderen. Die "Anderen" sind Georg Dreyman und Christa-Maria Sieland, also die Personen, die überwachten war. Der Titel kann auch bedeuten, dass viele Menschen von Anderen Lebens beschäftigt sind.

**P60270**

Mit dem Titel "Das Leben der Anderen" meint der Schriftsteller vielleicht, dass der Film handelt sich um die Stück der Georg Dreyman schreibt über die Welt draußen die DDR. Dreyman versucht die Augen die DDR-einwohnern aufzusperren. Die Anderen kann doch beider die Ost- und Westdeutschen sein und der Titel kann viele bedeutungen haben.

**P60271**

Der Titel "Das Leben der Anderen" kommt von der Spionage auf Georg Dreyman und Christa Marie Sieland.
Der Stasi-Mann Gerd Wiesler hat sich in ihrer Leben gelebt, wenn er sie abgehört hat.

**P60272**

Ich denke, dass „die Anderen" die Personen sind, die von Stasi überwacht werden. Wir bekommen einen Einblick in das Leben für die normalen Menchen im DDR. Der Titel kann selbstverständlich mehr als nur eine Meinung Haben.

# Article II

Task representation in German as a foreign language: A systemic functional analysis of Norwegian students' written responses. (2023)

# Task representation in German as a foreign language: A systemic functional analysis of Norwegian students' written responses

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A B S T R A C T

The main objective of this article is to understand in detail how different learners respond to writing tasks and what consequences their individual choices have on language use. The texts were composed by Norwegian upper secondary school students of German as a foreign language (GFL). In total, seven written responses to two writing prompts were described and juxtaposed based on a meaning-orientated perspective, with a focus on the learners' choices along ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions. Even though the learners responded in similar ways to each of the tasks, the findings also showed considerable variation in how particular meaning dimensions were realised by the different writers. The current study speaks to the importance of taking account of learners' task representations in writing tasks and activities in secondary school FL learning.

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## 1. Introduction

Writing-to-learn and learning-to-write (Manchón, 2011) are commonly stated goals of the lower and upper secondary foreign language (FL) classroom (e.g. Council of Europe, 2001; Lund & Casado Villanueva, 2020). In order to develop writing competence, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the situated nature of FL writing practices (Byrnes et al., 2010; Manchón, 2009). In this regard, it is also important to anticipate how learners will interpret and respond to a task. Here, Flower (1990) used the term 'task representation', defining it as 'an interpretative process that translates the rhetorical situation – as the writer reads it – into the act of composing' (p. 35). Depending on these interpretative processes, the types of compositions that learners produce might deviate significantly from each other. This variation is likely to be particularly prevalent in secondary school non-English FL writing due to the general lack of clarity as to the purposes of FL writing (e.g. Reichelt & Waltner, 2001; Reichelt, 2019). As distinct types of compositions also mean that learners need to employ different language choices, variation also means different linguistic problem-solving activities for the learners. In secondary school non-English FL learning contexts, in which learners often still have a limited linguistic repertoire, it is thus particularly important to obtain a better understanding of how various learners compose textual responses to the same tasks.

Nevertheless, task representation is often taken for granted and little is known about how FL learners, especially those at pre-tertiary level, interpret tasks and what the potential consequences are for their linguistic problem-solving (Byrnes, 2014; Flower, 1990; Manchón, 2014; Norris & Manchón, 2012; Ruiz-Funes, 2001). The current study aims to approach this research gap by proposing the following research questions: (1) What do the responses of Norwegian upper secondary school learners of German as an FL (year 12, 16–17 years of age, fifth year of GFL study) to two tasks within a mock exam context reveal about their task representation? (2) What differences can we observe across the task responses in terms of language choices and what do they reveal about the demands and opportunities for language use?

In line with Zarei et al. (2016) and their work on task representation, the current study is informed by the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (e.g. Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Taking a lexicogrammatical perspective, I describe language choices mainly in terms of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) accounts of meaning-making resources. The data used in this article stem from the German part of a corpus called TRAWL (Tracking Written Learner Language) (Dirdal et al., 2022).

In this study, I compare task representations not only within one task setting but also across two tasks as this has the potential to contribute towards an even deeper understanding of the differences in language choices involved in FL task representations. The findings can also contribute to raising awareness of how different tasks allow for different meaning-making choices. This is impor-

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tant as giving learners a task choice appears to be a rather common practice in non-English FL learning contexts also for raising learner engagement. The latter seems to be central vis-à-vis an often low sense of motivation in this learning context (Reichelt & Waltner, 2001; Reichelt, 2019).

### 1.1. A focus on the learners' acts of composing

The connection between composing written responses and the expansion and consolidation of FL knowledge has been pointed out by Cumming (1990). He found that learners are active in the process of decision- and meaning-making when they compose a response, concluding that this shows a potential for language learning. Despite existing research on the language-learning potential of writing (e.g. Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2011), there is still a need to further investigate learning affordances of writing processes and task-related concerns (Manchón & Leow, 2020). Specifically, researchers stress the need to know more about what learners do when they respond to a task (e.g. Byrnes, 2020; Manchón, 2014; Norris & Manchón, 2012; Reichelt, 2016; Roca de Larios et al., 2016). Norris and Manchón (2012) also emphasised the role of tasks 'in determining what learners learn and what it is that we are able to observe when they write' (pp. 232–233). They argued that teachers' and learners' choices of writing tasks influence writing and learning in several ways in both learning-to-write and writing-to-learn situations. One way of looking into what learners do is by describing their individual task representation, as manifested in their texts, which is the approach taken in this article.

In the following, I will first present previous research on task representation. Subsequently, I will give an overview of SFL theory, which is frequently applied to research concerning how learners respond to a given rhetorical situation.

### 1.2. Previous research on task representation

Research on task representation is scarce (Reichelt, 2016; Ruiz-Funes, 2011) and existing research has focused primarily on university FL learners (for an overview, see Zarei et al., 2016), with reading-to-write tasks receiving considerable attention. Works by Flower (1990) and Ruiz-Funes (2001), for example, have shown that learners' compositions might turn out to be considerably different across learners from the same group. Ruiz-Funes' (2001) study is one of the few works focusing on task representation as manifested in learners' texts. In her study, she categorised the learners' compositions along various genre categories and analysed their texts in terms of syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy. One of her conclusions was that little can be said about learners' development or accomplishment by only stating that they, for example, wrote a summary or synthesis; instead, much can be said by describing the learners' writing in terms sentence style and content. Zarei et al. (2016), who also analysed learners' written products, measured the learner responses along the dimensions of language, content, organisation and appropriacy. They concluded that the task representations held by the learners, as well as their orientation towards writing, played a role in their writing success.

Zarei et al. (2016) and Ruiz-Funes (2001) did not only provide insights into what is important to consider in analysing learner texts. They – like Flower (1990) and Wolfersberger (2013) – also pointed to various factors leading to differences across learner compositions regarding the same task. First, learners might interpret the rhetorical situation of a task differently, which also comprises the conventions of academic discourse, the instructor's expectations, the context of the course and the conditions of the assignment (Flower, 1990, pp. 35, 40). Second, learners might make different choices regarding, for example, which position to take

towards a topic or how to present the content (Flower, 1990, p. 40; see also Wolfersberger, 2013). In addition to learners' understanding of the task cues, their needs and desires, there are additional factors influencing their compositions, such as their contextual, textual, rhetorical and linguistic knowledge as well as the motivation that the task prompts in them (Flower, 1990; Ruiz-Funes, 2011). There are studies on genre writing, also in pre-tertiary EFL and GFL writing (e.g. Hamann, 2022; Ørevik, 2019), which suggest that certain tasks elicit rather uniformly patterned compositions and thereby enable or constrain certain language choices. However, considerable differences across learner responses are still likely. In realising a genre as a particular 'staged goal-orientated social process' (Martin, 2009, p. 13), learners might, for example, take different stances towards a genre, interpret the social process differently or have different experiences relating to academic discourse (e.g. Devitt, 2004; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022; Moore, 2019; Wolfersberger, 2013). Differences in learner compositions are likely even more pronounced in pre-tertiary FL learning contexts in which writing prompts often contain less specific genre cues and in which learner responses are orientated less towards a particular purpose and discourse community (e.g. Ørevik, 2019; Reichelt, 2019). This underlines the importance of research on task representation, as manifested in learners' texts in non-English FL learning contexts.

### 1.3. Approaching the learners' texts from an SFL perspective

SFL is a framework frequently suggested and applied for analysing how writers respond to a particular task in terms of meaning-making (e.g. Byrnes, 2014; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; Troyan, 2016), also with a focus on task representation (see Zarei et al., 2016). According to SFL, every language user always expresses three kinds of meaning simultaneously in speaking or writing (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). The three meaning dimensions, usually called metafunctions, are the ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction concerns the construction of experience; the interpersonal metafunction centres on the enactment of personal and social relationships; and the textual metafunction concerns the organisation of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 30–31). Accordingly, each clause is simultaneously a representation of some content, an exchange and a message (pp. 83–84).

Previous studies of learner texts from a meaning-orientated perspective differ in the ways in which they described and analysed the three dimensions of meaning and the corresponding language choices (see, e.g. Maxim, 2021; Ørevik, 2019; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; Troyan, 2016; Zarei et al., 2016). In this study, I will focus on all three metafunctions and describe language choices based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) lexicogrammatical resource systems that are assigned to the three metafunctions. The specific analytical approach will be laid out in Section 2.2.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Data

The data used in the current study is a subset of the TRAWL corpus (Dirdal et al., 2022). The corpus is still under compilation and comprises texts written by Norwegian secondary school learners of English as a first FL and German, French and Spanish as a second FL. The German material was gathered from years 8 to 13, and approximately half consists of data from mock exams. Data comprising mock exams often contained one subtask in which learners were given a choice of different writing prompts from which to choose one to respond to. This reflected common

**Table 1**
Overview of the data.

| Name | Prompt | Learner code | | Word no. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | TRAWL | Adjust. | |
| NAKR-A | Nach der Wende (1989) haben die Menschen in der DDR ihre Freiheit bekommen. Was bedeutet Freiheit für Sie? [After the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), the people in the former German Democratic Republic received freedom. What does freedom mean to you?] | P60661 P60663 P60665 P60666 P60669 | A-1 A-2 A-3 A-4 A-5 | 182 228 132 240 208 $\overline{X}$ = 198 |
| NAKR-B | Ein Freund von Ihnen will Berlin besuchen. Erzählen Sie was er dort machen kann. «Berlin ist eine Reise wert» [A friend of yours wants to visit Berlin. Tell him what he can do in Berlin. "Berlin is worth a journey"] | P60667 P60670 | B-1 B-2 | 262 244 $\overline{X}$ = 253 |

practice in the Norwegian exam context up to the school year of 2020/21.

From the various data sets of mock exams in the corpus, a set coded as NAKR was selected. The data set stemmed from one GFL classroom in which the learners (age 16–17) were in year 12, that is, their fifth year of learning German. The data set was collected in the winter of 2020/2021 and contained texts and corresponding metadata on the learners' language background and the mock exam sheet. From the NAKR data set, I selected a subset of learner responses to two of the four task choices for analysis. I chose these two prompts, labelled here as NAKR-A and NAKR-B, on two main grounds: First, the prompts appeared typical for the secondary school GFL learning environment in that they seem to centre most prominently on a topic either directly or indirectly associated with classroom content. Second, at least two responses could be found to each prompt. This is important as an imbalance can generally be found across mock exam data sets regarding how many learners picked each of the task choices. The data used for the analysis eventually comprised responses from seven learners – five responses to NAKR-A, and two responses to NAKR-B. Table 1 presents the original writing prompts – together with the English translations – and an overview of the learners who responded to the task. To make the analysis easier to follow, I use an adjusted learner code that is simpler than the original code in the TRAWL corpus. The table also includes the number of words produced by each learner as well as the average number of words.

The prompts also provide cues to genres which the learners might produce. With regard to those genre categorisations established by Ørevik (2019, pp. 105–110) for the upper secondary school EFL classroom, prompt NAKR-A is likely to elicit a form of expository article while the cues of the prompt to NAKR-B are more ambiguous. While the statement "Berlin is worth a visit" points to a persuasive essay, the instruction "tell a friend" provides cues for realising the response in terms of a personal text or a descriptive introductory text.

*2.2. Analytical approach*

This study seeks to describe meaning-making along ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions by seven learners with respect to two writing prompts. The approach is to enquire into each dimension of meaning through a focus on lexicogrammatical choices, particularly along the systems of transitivity and theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Table 2 provides an overview of those systems and the subsystems considered in the analysis, in part adapted from Schleppegrell and Go (2007). In the following, the approach to each meaning dimension is presented in detail.

Concerning the *ideational* dimension, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe processes, participants and circumstances as the main elements in the transitivity system, which

is central for constructing the sequences of an event or 'going-on' (p. 213). They describe five main types of processes which are relevant to this study. These processes are presented in Table 3, along with the different kinds of participants involved in these processes. Which processes and participants are applied by a writer depend largely on the domain of experience. For example, relational and material processes are found to be central means for construing expository genres (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Ørevik, 2019), i.e. such processes that assign an Attribute or Value to another participant (Carrier/Token) or processes that construe an action someone (Actor) undertakes, while mental processes are, for example, particular to the 'flavour' of casual conversations (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 219). Depending on the function of each part of a text, the 'mixture' of typical process types can nevertheless change in the course of a text (p. 219).

In SFL terminology, participants are labelled differently depending on the process they are involved in, the role they take and the eventual experience they construe. In the current study, no further differentiation is made between Goal or Scope, Carrier or Token, or Attribute or Value. Participants can be formed in many ways, for example, through simple proper or common nouns such as 'Jo' or 'soup', or in linguistically more complex ways. The latter forms may be typical for, for example, Carriers/Tokens and Values in relational clauses in expository writing (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 503). More complex structures are, for example, nominal groups in which a noun is either postmodified through an embedded phrase (see Table 3, example i., marked as [ ]) or an embedded clause (typically in form of a defining relative clause, see example vi., marked as [[ ]]), or nominal groups in which an embedded clause functions as the head, such as in example iv. (marked as [[ ]]) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 490–503). In German, embeddings that are finite clauses must always be introduced by either a pronoun or a binder such as 'dass', while the Finite moves to the final clause position.

Regarding the *interpersonal* dimension, the current study describes how the learners construe a relationship with their readers. To map this dimension, the analysis draws largely on Schleppegrell and Go's (2007) ideational approach. The authors point out that writers draw on verbal and mental processes to establish a relationship between them and the reader. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), mental clauses are central to, for example, expressing evaluations and the author's stance, while verbal processes are decisive in establishing both dialogicity and the author's stance (pp. 245–248, 302–303). Consequently, the analysis focuses on how learners use these process types and realise them. Different to what is sketched in Table 3, both verbal and mental processes can also involve projected clauses. These types of clauses either report what is being said or present someone's ideas (thoughts, beliefs, desires) (pp. 508–515), such as in *I think that*

**Table 2**

Analytical approach of the current study (adapted from Schleppegrell & Go, 2007).

| Ideational: Transitivity | Interpersonal: | Textual: Theme/Rheme |
|---|---|---|
| • Main process types, process verbs and participants | • Mental and verbal clauses<br>• Circumstances indicating angle<br>• Modal operators | • Theme/Rheme<br>• Tense/aspect markings |

**Table 3**

Major process types and their meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 311).

| Process | Meaning | Participants | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Material | 'doing' | **Actor**, Goal / Scope | *I.* **Jo** made a large bowl [of soup]./<br>*II.* **The girls** played football. |
| Mental | 'sensing' | **Senser**, (Macro)Phenomenon | *III.* **The little child** wanted ice-cream./<br>*IV.* **He** saw [[the cars driving fast]]. |
| Relational | 'being' | **Carrier / Token**, Attribute / Value | *V.* **The tunnel** seems large. /<br>*VI.* **Jim** is the best friend [[I could ask for]]. |
| Verbal | 'saying' | **Sayer**, Receiver, Verbiage | *VII.* **He** told his friend the truth. |
| Existential | 'presentative' | **Existent** | *VIII.* There were **three old women**. |

*he likes the gift.* As suggested in the criteria by Schleppegrell and Go (2007), the analysis also interrogates the use of circumstances that are central to expressing the author's stance and evaluation, which are circumstances of angle. Examples of these elements are 'in my opinion' or 'to me' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 314). In line with Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the current analysis also focuses on the use of modal operators for interpersonal meaning-making. Operators such as 'can' or 'must' are a resource to express authorial stance as they modify, for example, the desirability of a proposal and likelihood of a proposition (p. 144).

The learners' *textual* representations are mainly described in terms of Theme and Rheme. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the Theme is the first part of the clause preceding the Finite, while the Rheme is the remaining part of the message. By obtaining Theme position, this part of the clause has thematic prominence and is 'the point of departure of the message' (p. 89). Thus, it is vital for locating the clause in its context and orienting the reader (p. 89). The clause can be located through topical (ideational) Themes, interpersonal Themes consisting of, for example, a modal adjunct such as 'maybe', or textual Themes, constituted of conjunctions, conjunctive adjuncts and continuatives (pp. 105–114). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) state that participants realised by a nominal group are the most common type of Theme, even though this is also dependent on the text type. In the current study, the focus is on how the learners realise the introductory sentences in each paragraph in terms of Theme and Rheme and the Subthemes to follow this first sentence.

In the findings section, the analyses of the learner responses are presented along the three dimensions of meaning. The analysis of ideational dimension is presented first, beginning with a presentation of the five responses to NAKR-A and followed by a description of the two responses to NAKR-B. The subsequent analyses of interpersonal and textual meanings are structured the same way.

### 2.3. Methodological limitations

A main limitation of the study is that it only studies students' written texts. Thus, some important aspects that concern internal decision-making processes and mental models remain unseen. Especially the studies by Zarei et al. (2016), Manchón and Roca de Larios (2011) and Maxim (2021) present valuable insights into how learners focus on the different meaning dimensions and how the learners' problem-solving interrelates with distinct factors in the writing process. However, as the data of the current study stems from a corpus study, access to contextual information of the writing situation is not available. The anonymised form of the data does not provide the opportunities for interviews with the learners either. While additional information would have been valuable for saying more about the learners' task representations, the nature of corpus data is still distinct as it presents responses and writing tasks retrieved from an authentic classroom situation. While the findings do not allow us to make statements about the learners' general mental modals nor of the classroom context, they can still provide detailed insights into how the learners' writing and linguistic problem-solving is influenced by the teachers' task choices on the one hand and their individual choices on the other. These insights are particularly relevant in the discussion of writing tasks and writing activities in secondary school non-English FL learning classrooms.

### 3. Findings

This section presents analytical findings on how the GFL writers in the study composed their responses to the writing prompts NAKR-A and NAKR-B, organised according to the tripartite analytical framework. Deviations from the norms are indicated with an *, not including those of an orthographic nature.

### 3.1. Ideational dimension

The ideational dimension will be described with respect to transitivity (cf. 2.2). First, responses to NAKR-A will be analysed, then NAKR-B, before a summary is given.

### 3.1.1. NAKR-A

All responses to the NAKR-A prompt comprise statements elaborating on the meaning of freedom. Here, relational processes were decisive, together with material and mental processes. As Table 4 illustrates, learners draw on the three process types to varying degrees.

Many of the relational processes comprised a message that is related to 'Freiheit', taking the form of 'Freiheit' + 'ist (nicht) / bedeutet' + Value / Attribute. Other characteristic relational processes centre on the verbal group 'haben (nicht)', involving different kinds of Carriers. In Table 5, examples of participants in both kind of relational processes are presented.

When looking at Values or Attributes as well as participants and verbal groups in material processes (see Table 6 for examples),

**Table 4**
Use of process types in each response in % (the total number in brackets).

| Learner | relational | material | mental | total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A-1 | **30** (6) | **35** (7) | **30** (6) | **100** (20) |
| A-2 | **43** (15) | **26** (9) | **20** (7) | **100** (35) |
| A-3 | **72** (13) | **6** (1) | **12** (2) | **100** (18) |
| A-4 | **54** (14) | **31** (8) | **12** (3) | **100** (26) |
| A-5 | **68** (23) | **9** (3) | **24** (8) | **100** (34) |

**Table 5**
Examples of participants in relational processes.

| | | Values / Attributes ('ist'/'bedeuten'/etc.) |
|---|---|---|
| **A-1** | | • viel |
| | | • [[[dass du kannst *mit ‖ wo als am liebsten sind]]] |
| **A-2** | | • *einige [[* alle mögen]] |
| | | • [[*wann ich frei von schule habe]] |
| **A-3** | | • viele verschiedene *Ding. Die Redefreiheit, Freiheit [[*zu machen Ding]] und … |
| | | • [[[, dass ich kann machen *Ding, ‖ *das ich wünschen]]] |
| | | • [[wichtig zu haben]] |
| **A-4** | | • [[[* wenn man kann sprachen ‖, ob was man wolle ‖, Machen ‖ was man wolle, ‖ …]]] |
| | | • sehr wichtig |
| | | • ein Menschenrecht |
| **A-5** | | • ein großes Wort |
| | | • [[frei zu sprechen]] |
| | | • die Möglichkeit [[jeden Tag zur Schule zu gehen]] |
| | | • Pfannkuchen [mitten *die Woche] |

| | Carriers | Attributes ('haben (nicht)') |
|---|---|---|
| **A-1** | man | der Freiheit [[*zu bestimmen Uber sich selv]] |
| **A-2** | alle | eine verschiedene Definition von Freiheit |
| | ich | • [[*wann ich frei von schule]] |
| | | • keinen Stress |
| **A-3** | ich/wir | • viel Freiheit |
| | | • viele/ein paar Regeln |
| **A-4** | alle Menschen /jeder Mensch | • *das Freiheit [[*Sie verdient]]; |
| | | • recht auf Freiheit |
| **A-5** | es (Freiheit) | • viele Bedeutungen |
| | | • mehrere Seiten |
| | wir | • Demokratie |
| | | • Stimmrecht, Redefreiheit und Religionsfreiheit |

**Table 6**
Examples of verbal groups and participants in material processes.

| | Verbal groups | Actors | Goals, Scope |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A-1** | *leben; kann(st) treffen/ machen/ kaufen | man, Du | [[*wer du willst]]; viel *ding [[*du nicht können machen]]; viele neu *Dinger [*als ein Auto, …] |
| **A-2** | möchte chillen; mache; muss leben; regnet; muss/kann tragen; gehe | ich | [[was ich will und nicht was ich muss]]; Regenmantel; einen Spaziergang [*in den Sommer] |
| **A-3** | *[…] *missbraucht; kann machen | ich | meine Freiheit; *Ding [[*, das ich wünschen]] |
| **A-4** | konnte (nicht) machen; hat bestimmt; hat gesetzt; kann besuchen | man; ich; der Corona Virus; die Regierung | [[*was man können sagen und was war erlaubt …]]; seine Großeltern; ein gutes Leben |
| **A-5** | wohnen; darfst nicht machen; *bestimmt | du; Eltern | Alles |

it becomes obvious that the learners focus on different content. For example, the semantic choices of learner A-2 largely centre on daily aspects of their life ('Schule', 'Stress'), those of A-5 on basic aspects within a democracy, of A-4 partly on COVID-19-related measures, and of A-1 on life before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Beyond variation in semantic choices, differences can also be found in the way in which the participants are structured in rela-

tional and material processes. It seems that when Values/Attributes and Goals/Scopes are associated with or constituted through concrete nouns, they are often of simpler structure (e.g. 'zeit mit Freunden', 'ein gutes Leben'). In contrast, more general statements such as '*einige [[*alle mögen]]' or 'viel *ding [[*du nicht können machen]]' often involve rather complex structures, e.g. embedded clauses. The latter structure is also vital when learners associate Values or Goals of 'freedom' with certain activities

**Table 7**

Examples of verbal groups and participants in material / mental / relational / existential processes.

| | Verbal groups | Actors, Sensers | Goals, Scope, (Macro)phenomenons |
|---|---|---|---|
| **B-1** | besuchen; essen; spielen // sehen/hören | wir; Hertha Berlin | die Berliner Mauer; *die Zoologische Garten; [[*die Tiere gefüttert werden]]; sehr *gut Essen |
| **B-2** | baden, spielen; besuchen; *lerne // sehen/ hören | man; wir | Fußball; die sehr interessante Deutsche Historie; *[[die Deutsche Fan rufen zu den Fußballspielern]] |
| | | **Tokens, Carriers** | **Values, Attributes** |
| **B-1** | ist; *hatte; *haben | *die Zoologische Garten; sie | sehr spannend; sehr *viel Tiere [, alles von Löwen bis *Reptile]; sehr leckeres Eis |
| **B-2** | ist; hat; *heizte (=heißt) | Berlin; Stadium; das; *sie | sehr schön; sehr viele historische *Museum; Hertha Berlin |
| | | **Existent** | |
| **B-1** | *ist (=gibt) (nicht) | [[sehr viele Dinge *zu machen]]; die Berliner Mauer [[*wir müssen besuchen]] | |
| **B-2** | *ist (=gibt) (nicht) | eine Fußballmannschaft; viele schöne Restaurants; viele schöne *Hotel [mit Frühstück und anderen *Mahlzeit] | |

**Table 8**

Examples of verbal groups and participants in material / relational processes in elaboration part.

| | Verbal groups | Values/Attributes |
|---|---|---|
| **B-1** | *waren geteilt; *kalt (=nannte); war *besitz | Deutschland; die Staaten; die BDR und die DDR |
| **B-2** | war unterteilt; ist; waren | Berlin; die Mauer; *die im *Ostern; kommunistisch |
| | | **Goals/Scopes** |
| **B-1** | *habt geschehen; *haben gestorben; *klettern; *waren erbaut; *fahren | viele (...) Menschen; die Berliner Mauer; sehr viele tragische *Geschehnis |
| **B-2** | *lebt; *versucht | sie / die (=die Leute); [[*die andere Seite zu kommen]] |

or situations. In part, embedded clauses contained even further embeddings (marked as [[[…‖…]]] in Table 5 after Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

*3.1.2. NAKR-B*

In general, the two responses to the NAKR-B prompt are about the things to do and see in Berlin. In both texts, this experience is construed through similar process types, namely material and mental processes, followed by relational and then existential processes. The verbal groups and participants that realise those processes are of similar structure and content (see Table 7 for examples). In material and mental processes, for example, participants playing the role of Actors and Sensers are commonly realised through the pronoun 'wir', while the other participants were commonly realised either through more general nouns such as 'Eis' or 'Fußballspiel', the proper name 'Berlin' or nominal groups belonging to the lexical field of 'Berlin', such as 'Berliner Mauer'.

Both writers often point to the same things to do and see, like a visit to the Berlin Wall, while also elaborating on the wall's historical background. For construing this elaboration, relational, material and, in B-2's response, also existential process types are central. The verbal groups that realise material and relational processes in this part of the learners' responses contrast with those in the rest of the text, as various and less common verbs were used (see Table 8 for examples). Also, participants differ as they contain especially proper names from a political/historical context or abstract nouns (e.g. 'Geschehnis').

*3.1.3. Summary*

The analysis of the ideational dimension identified relational and material as central process types in the responses to both

NAKR-A and NAKR-B, with the former as most central to NAKR-A and the latter – together with mental and existential processes – as most vital to NAKR-B. Regarding the nature of participants and process verbs, the analysis showed that the responses to NAKR-A comprise participants and material verbal groups that may vary significantly and are often realised through more abstract and less frequent nouns/verbs, in part also construed as complex structures. In the responses to NAKR-B, this is also the case for the choice of participants and material and relational verbal groups in that part of the responses in which the learners added an elaboration on the Berlin Wall to their text.

*3.2. Interpersonal dimension*

In this section, learners' interpersonal strategies for construing a relationship with their readers will be identified. The analysis centres on the use of mental and verbal processes based on Schleppegrell and Go (2007) (cf. 2.2), supported by other interpersonal resources like modality (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

*3.2.1. NAKR-A*

Across the responses to the NAKR-A prompt, most writers indicate to the readers that they present their own thoughts and perspectives on 'freedom'. The following four strategies for expressing individual stance on 'freedom' have been identified, which are applied in the learners' responses to a varying degree.

1. Circumstance of projection/angle 'für mich'.
2. Mental clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'fühle mich'+ Attribute (e.g. 'frei', 'eingesperrt').
3. Mental clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'glaube/wünsche' + idea clause.

**Table 9**
Resources for expressing own stance on 'freedom' across the learners' responses.

|  | 'für mich' (1) | 'ich' + 'fühle mich'(2) | 'ich' + 'glaube/ wünsche' (3) | Verbal process (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A-1** | – | – | – | – |
| **A-2** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **A-3** | ✓ | – | – | ✓ |
| **A-4** | ✓ | – | ✓ | – |
| **A-5** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | – |

4. Verbal processes in the form of 'ich' + 'sagen/erzählen/…' + reported clause.

Table 9 illustrates how those strategies are applied in the learners' responses. It becomes clear that all learners except A-1 present ideas from their own perspective by displaying themselves either as a source, Senser or Sayer. The focus on expressing one's own stance on 'freedom' is further visible in the analysis of the ideational dimension (cf. 3.1), as the learners also indicate their own perspective in relational, material and other kind of mental processes by using the pronoun 'ich' or the possessive article 'meinem'. Yet, the learners also differ in how dominant their own perspective is presented. While, for example, A-2 makes clear throughout the text that the propositions reflect their own view, desires and senses of freedom, A-4 also utters ideas from other people's or society's perspective. As Table 9 also shows, the learners use different language choices to bring in their own voice. Concerning the use of verbal processes, there might be different meanings implied. This shows the contrast between the verbal process used by A-3 to express an opinion (*Ich *will sagen, dass Norwegen ist gut mit Freiheit … .*) and A-2's message addressed to a reader (*In diesen Text soll ich von was Freiheit bedeute für mich erzählen.*).

### *3.2.2. NAKR-B*

The writing prompt assumes that the relationship between the writer and reader is friendship i.e. a close relation. If the writer addressed a friend in a personal way, the expectation is that dialogicity would be established by the writer. This is particularly evident in B-1's response, in which the following four strategies for expressing a close and dialogical relationship with the reader have all been identified:

1. Mental/mental-like clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'weiß/denke/ bin sicher' + idea clause expressing that the writer knows the reader's interests and desires well.
2. Mental/mental-like clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'mag/finde es schön' expressing the writer's own emotions and desires.
3. The modal operator 'müssen' indicating to the reader that the proposed sites were a 'must see' for her/him.
4. The modal operator 'können' suggesting to the reader that she/he also has choices regarding the proposals.

Also in B-2's response a relationship is indicated and established, however in a less evident and coherent manner. Regarding the strategies presented above, B-2 only draws on the modal operator 'können'. Both learners also indicate dialogicity by using the pronoun 'wir' in material and other mental processes, however, B-2 does so in a less consistent way. Another difference between the learners' interpersonal meaning-making concerns the way in which both learners communicate to their 'friend' that they were about to elaborate on the historical context of the wall. B-1 uses a question to enquire into the friend's knowledge of the historical context of the wall, thereby suggesting that the friend was interested in a more detailed response. Conversely, B-2 uses a verbal process in the following form: *Ich will erzählen sie ab die Mauer.* While B-1's elaboration seems to be motivated by the friend's interest, B-2's

elaboration appears to be steered primarily by the writer's interests.

### *3.2.3. Summary*

The analysis of the interpersonal task representations of NAKR-A showed that the learners commonly share their own perspective on freedom with the reader, despite the differences in the extent to which alternative perspectives were considered. Decisive to sharing their own perspective is the use of the phrase 'für mich', of mental clauses centring on the verbs 'glauben' and 'wünschen' as well as the integration of the pronoun 'ich' in various process types. Similar resources were found in the analysis of B-1's response to NAKR-B, in addition to the use of the modal operators 'müssen' and 'können'. Regarding NAKR-B, it is apparent that the learners differ considerably in how they establish contact and dialogicity in their responses.

### *3.3. Textual dimension*

The textual dimension will be described with respect to Theme and Rheme (cf. 2.2). The tables that will provide insights into these structures only present the most characteristic Themes. Not included in those tables are most instances of 'und', 'aber' as well as 'ich' in the mental clauses already covered in 3.2.

### *3.3.1. NAKR-A*

All responses to NAKR-A are organised around the participant 'Freiheit'. As Table 10 illustrates, this nominal group occurs in Theme or Rheme position in most first sentences of each paragraph, and to a varying degree also in Themes (and Rhemes) in the sentences in the corresponding paragraph. The responses differ, however, in how they are organised on the paragraph level. On the one hand, some learners focus on various facets and conditions of freedom, while others only present a limited range of aspects, such as A-1. On the other hand, the responses differ in how the learners present in the introductory sentence to each paragraph what each section is going to elaborate on. In this regard, A-2's text is the response with the clearest structure with different definitions of freedom in each introductory sentence, followed by elaborations on this Theme or Rheme in the corresponding paragraph. In contrast to this, A-4's and A-5's responses present a less clearly defined structure with some initial Themes and Rhemes that are not directly connected to the item 'Freiheit'. Some of the paragraphs further present (Sub)Themes that make it more difficult to identify the main emphasis of the section. This is particularly the case if the Subthemes of one paragraph concern different groups of people like '*Keine Leute' and 'Du' in A-1's response or 'ich', 'du', 'wir' and 'Eltern' in A-5's response.

Apart from some instances of textual ('aber') and interpersonal Themes ('ich', 'für mich'), the most common type is topical Themes realised by nominal groups. The responses by A-1 and A-3 also present expressions of a condition or time as a reference point for the text (e.g. '*Mit Kapitalismen', *Wann es regnet*). These patterns interrelate highly with the aspects and conditions of freedom presented by the learners, and so does in part also the use of tense.

**Table 10**
Organisation of the responses to NAKR-A in terms of Theme and Rheme.

| Part | Theme first sentence | Rheme first sentence | Subthemes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A-1** | | | |
| 1 | Freiheit | viel für Menschen | *Keine (=viele) Leute / Du (2x) *Wenn man nicht hat Freiheit |
| | und es *war (=gab) | Menschen als habe kleine Freiheit in der DDR | *So wenn der Berlinermur fallen … |
| 2 | Was Freiheit bedeutete für der Leute*, ob DDR | dass du kannst mit *wo als am liebsten sind | *Du (3x) *Mit der DDR weg / *Mit Kapitalismen (=Mit dem beginnenden …) (2x) |
| **A-2** | | | |
| 1 | Freiheit für mich | wann ich frei von schule habe, … | *Wann ich nicht schule habe Es *ist (=gibt) (2x) Heimarbeit |
| 2 | Zu leben in ein demokratisches … Land | auch Freiheit für mich | Ich (5x) |
| 3 | Gutes und sonniges Wetter | auch einen Typ Freiheit … | *Wann es regnet (2x) |
| 4 | In diesem Text | ich *von was Freiheit bedeute … | *Wie du kannst sehen |
| 5 | Freiheit | sehr viel … | Freiheit In diesem Text |
| **A-3** | | | |
| 1 | Ich | nicht eigentlich *denkt auf es | Freiheit (2x) Es gilt In Norwegen |
| 2 | *Eine andere Ursache ich habe nicht denkt auf Freiheit | *weil ich zu Hause viel Freiheit habe | Wir Deshalb Freiheit |
| **A-4** | | | |
| 1 | Was | Freiheit für Sie | Ja, das Für mich Ostdeutschland – Hier – … Ein anderes Beispiel … |
| 2 | Der Corona Virus aus China | die ganze Welt gesetzt in 'Lockdown' | Man Zum Beispiel Es ist (2x) |
| 3 | Freiheit | sehr wichtig für einen Menschen zu lebe … | Für viele Menschen …Für mich Freiheit |
| 4 | *Was der Während des Krieges … | sehr entsetzlich | *Weil *jeden Menschen |
| **A-5** | | | |
| 1 | Freiheit | ein großes Wort | Es Was |
| 2 | Freiheit | nicht Krieg, weil … | *Eines (=Einige) Menschen |
| 3 | In Norwegen | wir Demokratie | Kindergarten und Schulgang Das (Rheme: Freiheit) Wir (2x) / Ich / Du / Eltern |
| 4 | Freiheit | für mich mehrere Seiten | Freiheit (6x) |

Two responses in which past tense markings play an additional role in locating text parts in the corresponding time frame are A-1's and A-4's, who refer to the former German Democratic Republic and/or the COVID-19 lockdown.

### 3.3.2. NAKR-B

The analysis shows that both writers organise their texts in rather similar ways. First, the learners establish 'Berlin' as the main participant of the text. Then they provide arguments for why Berlin is worth a journey. As Table 11 shows, particularly the first paragraph is similarly structured across both responses. The learners centre on the participant 'Berliner Mauer' and elaborate on its historical context. In both cases, this elaboration departs from and arrives again at mentioning the sight 'Wall Museum'. In B-1's response, this transition back to the museum even centres on the

participant 'Beschreibung' which summarises the entire elaboration. This elaboration part is also particular in two other regards. On the one hand, it is the part with most topical Themes realised by nominal groups. On the other hand, it is further marked by past tense and passive voice.

In all other parts where learners mention things to see and do in Berlin, most information is established in Rheme position. Accordingly, the most characteristic types of (Sub)Themes are those presenting expressions of time and place (e.g. *Und wenn wir ist dort*, 'Zuerst', 'Hier'), as well as 'Themes-on-finite' (Steiner & Teich, 2004, p. 176), realised by 'es *ist (=gibt)'. Commonly, also textual Themes can be found that comprise conjunctions or conjunctive adjuncts indicating reason (e.g. 'darum').

Regarding the general paragraph structure, also differences between the two responses are visible. B-2 realises the response

**Table 11**

Organisation of the responses to NAKR-B in terms of Theme and Rheme.

| Part | Theme first sentence(s) | Rheme first sentence | Subthemes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **B-1** | | | |
| 1 | ich | finde es schön, … | Zuerst<br>Es<br>sehr viel tragische *Geschehnis<br>Deutschland – Diese Staaten – Die DDR<br>aber (2x) |
| | Es *ist (=gibt) | sehr viel Dinge zu machen hier | |
| 2 | Es *ist (=gibt) | *nicht nur die Berliner Mauer … | *Aber (=sondern)*<br>Und wenn wir ist dort, |
| 3 | Wir | auch die Zoologische Garten besuchen | Darum*<br>Die Zoologische Garten … - sie<br>*so (=also) |
| 4 | Wenn wir das gemacht haben | wir *in den Fernsehturm besuchen auch | Hier<br>man / ich<br>*so (=also) |
| **B-1** | | | |
| 1 | Berlin | eine Reise wert, …. | Man / Es<br>Berlin (3x) / die Mauer (2x)<br>denn / *so (=deshalb)<br>Die im *Ostern / Die Westseite<br>es *war (=gab) |
| 2 | Wir | das Museum zusammen gesehen … | In Berlin (2x)<br>Das (2x)<br>Das Stadium<br>Wenn das Fußballspiel *bist fertig<br><br>Wir (2x)<br>Es *ist (=gibt) |

through only two paragraphs, with the second paragraph centring on various things to see and do in Rheme position. Even though B-1 uses similar participants in Rheme position, the learner elaborates on each of those participants in individual paragraphs, i.e. on 'Fußballspiel' in the second section, 'Zoologischer Garten' in the third and 'Fernsehturm' in the final paragraph.

### 3.3.3. Summary

The analysis of the textual dimensions in both prompts showed that all learner responses are organised through one paramount participant, namely 'Freiheit' or 'Berlin', and have a similar organisational structure that can be described as following: 'Freiheit'/'Berlin' – many meanings/many things to do – meaning/thing 1 – … – meaning/thing X. Nevertheless, it appears that a clearly defined structure in response to NAKR-A is supported by the nominal phrase 'Freiheit' in introductory sentences to paragraphs, while the learners responding to NAKR-B can establish a coherent structure by using various possible points of references to 'Berlin'. While expressions of condition and time are possible Themes in the texts to both prompts, NAKR-A also allows for much more topical Themes. In contrast to this, NAKR-B elicits particularly textual Themes, Themes-on-finite and Themes realised through only simple nominal groups.

## 4. Discussion

The goal of the current article was to describe what Norwegian GFL learners' responses to two tasks within a mock exam reveal about their task representation and to identify likely differences across the responses in terms of language choices, thereby providing insights into different demands and opportunities for FL language use.

Overall, the findings of the study showed that learners responded to each writing prompt in similar ways. The learners drew on similar processes, and general organisational schemes in their compositions. Also, the responses to each prompt matched closely with what the cues of the tasks indicated (Ørevik, 2019, pp. 107, 109). Realising their responses to NAKR-A largely as expository articles, the learners, for example, elaborated on a topic from various angles, and dominantly used relational processes and more complex participant structures (see also Hamann, 2022). Both responses to NAKR-B present important features of the persuasive essay, which is the building of an argument and providing support.

Nevertheless, the findings illustrated that the learners' written responses to each prompt also differed. About NAKR-A, these differences concerned especially the realisation of the ideational dimension and consequently also the textual dimension. As the topic 'Freiheit' of the writing prompt allowed for linking various ideas to it, there is much variation in the aspects on which the learners elaborate. In particular, high variation occurred regarding the content and structure of participants. Variation across the responses to NAKR-B was particularly evident in the realisation of the interpersonal dimension. Especially learner B-1 interpreted the prompt as a personal text with a highly dialogic nature. More discrepancy with respect to the ideational dimension could also be assumed if there were also responses by learners who had not chosen to add an elaboration on the historical context of the Berlin Wall to their response. While the number of responses to NAKR-B was considerably small and thus only allowed limited insights into differences in text compositions, the data was yet particularly fruitful in stressing the different choices and demands associated with the interpersonal metafunction. This is considered important as previous research by Manchón and Roca de Larios (2011) and Zarei et al. (2016) suggest that FL learners are less concerned with the interpersonal meaning dimension in the writing process. As evident in the analysis of the current article, text responses can differ significantly when learners are clearly or less clearly directing their text to a friend.

On the whole, the findings raise awareness of the fact that the task, its genre and topic influence meaning-making in various ways (see e.g. Flower, 1990; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022; Moore, 2019; Wolfersberger, 2013). In particular, the study has presented how individual learners have used ideational, interpersonal and textual resources in different ways, with implications for the learners' linguistic problem-solving process. Some of those resources might have been particularly challenging for GFL learners with a still limited linguistic repertoire, like less frequent participants and verbal groups, Values/Attributes with embeddings, mental/verbal clauses with projected clauses, past tense markings or the Theme/Rheme structure for establishing dialogicity. While these individual choices might, on the one hand, provide the learners with opportunities for presenting and practising language that can be considered particularly sophisticated (see Byrnes, 2014), it might also mean more or less conscious risk-taking for the learners. This was, for example, the case if learners responding to NAKR-A related freedom to various perspectives or general statements, or if an elaboration part was added to the responses to NAKR-B – something that was not explicitly elicited by the task prompt. Consequently, the findings echo Flower's (1990) observation that students – often unconsciously – might make choices that have a higher cost than others.

As individual choices mean risk-taking, especially for pre-tertiary non-English FL learners, the current study suggests that tasks – along with their cues and topic(s) – need to be considered and applied carefully in terms of the potential responses following from them. In connection with that, more awareness needs to be raised on the part of the test makers, teachers and learners towards all higher-level meaning dimensions of a task and the linguistic problem-solving activities associated with them (e.g. Byrnes, 2014; Ruiz-Funes, 2001; Zarei et al., 2016). While this does not mean to discourage learners from risk-taking and selecting tasks they find most engaging, it seems most just if the learners are metacognitively aware of the implications of their choices. This indicates that more research is needed on FL learners' writing in authentic writing situations, as well as in connection with interrogating the learners internal problem-solving processes (see e.g. Maxim, 2021; Zarei et al., 2016). As the findings nonetheless presented considerable contrasts in linguistic choices between the two different writing prompts, it is still questionable if learners should be given task choices in (mock) exam contexts where tasks invite significantly different written responses.

## Conclusion

The findings of the present study confirm that FL writing and learning are significantly influenced by the nature of the tasks and the learners' individual task representation. By presenting differences across learners' written responses, the current study also raises awareness of the implications of the FL learners' individual choices on linguistic problem-solving. Even though the findings of the present study are of qualitative nature and remain specific to a particular task situation and learning environment, they can be used in the discussion of several important issues in the FL learning context, such as the nature of writing tasks and activities in the FL classroom. Overall, the study's detailed descriptions of how language resources were used in responses to two different tasks may contribute to an increased understanding of the connection between FL writing and FL learning (Byrnes, 2020; Manchón & Leow, 2020), particularly in terms of how the compositions of both tasks and responses provide the learners with opportunities as well as demands for presenting and practising certain linguistic choices. The present study has also sought to contribute suggestions regarding how language choices for meaning-making can

be approached and described in secondary school non-English FL writing based on SFL theory.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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## Article III

Looking beyond the content plane – Modal assessment in Norwegian learners' texts in German as a foreign language. (2024)

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# Looking beyond the content plane – Modal assessment in Norwegian learners' texts in German as a foreign language

**Abstract.** This article seeks to obtain a better understanding of interpersonal meaning-making in short written responses by Norwegian learners of German as a foreign language by analysing the modal assessment strategies used in four different task settings. Based on the framework of systemic functional linguistics, the study focuses on how modal verbs, modal adjuncts and corresponding paraphrases are employed, and on the meanings which are realised accordingly. The study identifies several strategies and shows how they contribute to expressing different attitudes and to enacting different social relations. Overall, the study raises awareness of the central role of modal assessment in writing.

**Mehr als nur die Inhaltsebene im Blick – Modale Bewertung in Texten norwegischer DaF-Lerner**

Das Ziel dieses Beitrags ist es, ein besseres Verständnis darüber zu erlangen, wie norwegische DaF-Lerner interpersonelle Bedeutung in kurzen Texten schaffen. Dafür wurden modale Bewertungsstrategien in Lernerantworten zu vier verschiedenen Aufgaben analysiert. Die Studie basiert auf der Theorie der systemisch-funktionalen Linguistik und es wird untersucht, wie Modalverben, Modalwörter und entsprechende Paraphrasierungen verwendet wurden und welche Bedeutungen mit diesen einhergehen. In der Studie konnten zahlreiche Strategien aufgedeckt werden und gleichzeitig gezeigt werden, wie diese unterschiedliche Einstellungen ausdrücken und unterschiedliche soziale Beziehungen zum Rezipienten herstellen. Insgesamt wird durch die Studie die zentrale Rolle der modalen Bewertung in schriftlichen Texten hervorgehoben.

# 1. Introduction

One major aspect of learning a foreign language (FL), such as German, is the development of the knowledge and competence required to communicate adequately (cf. e.g. *Council of Europe* 2001; Utdanningsdirektoratet 2020). Adequate communication means considering what a listener/reader expects from us and thus making our own attitudes more or less visible relative to a rhetorical situation. In line with this, Lindgren and Stevenson (2013: 390) highlight that, within the context of the school environment, "young writers are expected to be able to express attitudes, feelings, and opinions; [and] to gradually develop a sense of 'the other' in their writing in the form of audience awareness".

Yet there is limited research into how and through which language choices FL learners express attitudes and interact with readers (cf. Ryshina-Pankova 2011; Yasuda 2019). This is particularly the case for secondary school classroom contexts in which FLs like German or Spanish are taught, i.e. languages that are commonly called third languages (L3s). To the best of my knowledge, previous studies conducted in primary or secondary school L3 contexts have only looked into how learners interact with readers and express opinions either in terms of more clear-cut genre writing (see e.g. Hamann 2023; Troyan 2016) or with respect to how learners acquire specific interactional language features like modal verbs (see e.g. Lindemann 1996). In light of this research gap, the current study seeks to further explore FL learners' interactional strategies in their written productions. It does so by exploring how secondary school learners of German as a foreign language (GFL) enact personal and social relationships in short task responses through the use of modal verbs, modal adjuncts and paraphrased forms. Modal adjuncts are adverbs that, for example, express degrees of *possibility* (e.g. "maybe") or comment on a proposition (e.g. "unfortunately"), while paraphrased forms can rephrase the meanings of modal verbs and adjuncts in other linguistic forms (e.g. "It is possible that …") (cf. e.g. Halliday/Matthiessen 2014: 186). By exploring modal assessment strategies used in the GFL learners' texts, the aim of this study is thus to better understand how and in what ways learners interact with others, evaluate content and present their own attitudes in short responses to writing prompts.

The theoretical framework chosen to answer the question of how and using which resources learners enact social and personal relationships is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL; cf. e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; Schleppegrell 2012). According to this theory, language has three functions: ideational, textual and interpersonal. Besides creating experience (content; the ideational function) and organising the discursive flow (message; the textual function), the interpersonal function of language is to maintain social relationships and express one's own attitudes and assessments (cf. Halliday/Hasan 1989). The SFL-based functional grammar approach advocated by researchers like Halliday (e.g. 1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (e.g. 2014) proposes distinct lexicogrammatical systems and resources for describing how all functions, including the interpersonal function, can be realised. Consequently, this current study is informed by SFL theory and aims to describe the learners' use of linguistic resources linked to the interpersonal system of modal assessment, i.e. the resources of modal verbs, modal adjuncts and corresponding paraphrases that add a subjective meaning to a proposition (or proposal). The data of the present study stems from the German part of the Tracking Written

Learner Language (TRAWL) Corpus, comprising authentic school texts written by Norwegian learners of English, French, German and Spanish (cf. Dirdal/Hasund/Drange/Vold/Berg 2022). The German part of the corpus is quite small, and will be approached qualitatively with the aim of answering two research questions:

1. What modal assessment strategies are used in Norwegian GFL students' (aged 17–18, in school year 12 and their 5th year of FL learning) written responses of short text length?
2. What differences in the use of modal assessment strategies can we observe, and how do they contribute to shaping distinct enactments of social relationships and expressions of students' own attitudes and assessments?

## 2. Interpersonal meaning-making

Interpersonal meaning-making has been approached through different research frameworks, such as stance (see e.g. Hyland 1999), metadiscourse (see e.g. Hyland 2005) or appraisal (see e.g. Martin/White 2005). Yet most research concerns the context of higher education and English as a foreign language (EFL) (cf. e.g. Lindgren/Stevenson 2013). To some degree, research can also be found on secondary school EFL contexts or L3 writing settings. Two common approaches to researching interpersonal meaning-making in those settings are, on the one hand, the evaluation of interpersonal language use in personal genres such as a recount of habitual events (see e.g. Abdel-Malek, 2020) or a personal letter (see e.g. Lindgren/Stevenson 2013; Yasuda 2019) or, on the other, investigations of the development of certain features such as modal verbs or modal adjuncts in data from large learner corpora (see e.g. Hasund/Hasselgård 2022; Maden-Weinberger 2009). In contrast to this, little is yet known about secondary school L3 writers' interpersonal meaning-making in short text responses.

In the following, I will provide an overview of findings from research studies from EFL and GFL settings that, in line with the research goals of the current study, investigate the use of interpersonal meaning-making features that can overall be assigned to the lexicogrammatical system of modal assessment. Subsequently, I will describe modal assessment strategies based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

### 2.1 Previous research on the use of interpersonal meaning-making features

An investigation examining how Norwegian EFL writers in lower secondary school use interpersonal meaning-making features was conducted by Hasund and Hasselgård (2022). They explore features related to writer/reader visibility (WRV) in argumentative and expository genres and found that young Norwegian EFL learners are visible writers, exhibiting an overuse of WRV features compared both to more advanced Norwegian EFL writers and to native writers. In particular, Hasund and Hasselgård (2022) identified the frequent use of first-person pronouns and modal verbs, and some use of the subjective stance expression "I think" and modal adjuncts like "maybe" and "really". These findings are in line with other studies of Scandinavian EFL learners in tertiary education (cf. e.g. Aijmer 2002; Hasselgård 2009).

Ryshina-Pankova (2011) researched developmental changes in the use of interactional resources as the first part of the clause (i.e. in theme position) by university GFL learners in

FL book reviews. She found that interpersonal themes expressed by modal adjuncts such as "möglicherweise" and "it"-constructions like "es war interessant" were used minimally in comparison to thematising the writer, reader, or book, with the former making the texts appear more subjective. Looking at GFL learners' texts holistically, Maden-Weinberger (2009) identified a global tendency by university GFL learners to overuse modality markers of non-epistemic modal verb type compared to native speakers. Amongst other things, she found a frequent use of the conjunctive II-form of the modal verb "mögen" and explained this with the learners' higher inclination for expressing their own or other people's intentions or volition in their essays (165). Yet Maden-Weinberger (2009) also pointed to the text-type sensitivity of this overuse (169–170). In line with Hasund and Hasselgård (2022), she found, for example, an overuse of modality markers in the case of argumentative texts.

Regarding the question of how GFL learners acquire modal verbs longitudinally, the findings by Maden-Weinberger (2009) were close to those by Lindemann (1996). Among other things, Lindemann (1996) found that Norwegian secondary school GFL learners experience problems in acquiring the German system of modal verbs, despite the similar nature of the systems of Norwegian and German. She also concluded that learners acquire the modal verbs in GFL by drawing on their existing language repertoire in Norwegian and English. This applied to the modal verb systems of "kunne"/ "can", "må"/ "must", "skulle"/ "shall" and "ville"/ "will", with the learners trying to assign the most approximate lexemes of German to those verbs of the basic system (see also Hasund/Hasselgård 2022). Accordingly, the verbs most prevalent in the students' learner language are "können", "müssen", "sollen" and "wollen" – which, according to Lindemann (1996), already allow the learners to express varied meanings at that stage of the learning process. In comparison, the acquisition of, for example, "dürfen" expressing allowance and of the conditional II-form "möchte" ("mögen") for expressing a wish is found to be more complicated for the learners.

Overall, the studies that investigate modal assessment strategies in learners' texts show similar interpersonal patterns. First, learners' texts are often considerably subjective at earlier developmental stages. Second, personal stances are often expressed in comparable ways, for example through the construction "I think". The studies indicate that these features are those which Norwegian learners are most familiar with. In addition, the studies point to various reasons why particular patterns of modal assessment resources occur, namely language development (cf. e.g. Maden-Weinberger 2008), a more speech-like style in writing (cf. e.g. Aijmer 2002), the influence of the mother tongue (cf. Hasselgård 2009; Lindemann 1996) and textbook-/teacher-induced influences, as well as the topic of a text (cf. Aijmer 2002). Regarding the latter, Aijmer (2002) calls for further research to take topic more closely into consideration when studying modality in learner writing. Aijmer (2014) further stresses the need for widening the focus on modal assessment in research and recommends doing so from a functional framework, with the latter accounting for a wide range of interpersonal features and strengthening the relationship between form and function. Moreover, Aijmer (2002) underlines the crucial nature of modal assessment features in the establishment of style and tone in a learners' text – for example, by pointing to the influence which modals expressing certainty have on the rhetorical effect of the text. All this underlines the importance of further

research on patterns of modal assessment and their linguistic representation, including with respect to pre-tertiary GFL contexts and different writing situations.

## 2.2 Modal assessment strategies

The following descriptions of modal assessment strategies are largely based on works by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Andersen and Holsting (2015). The former work, together with the previous editions that were initially authored only by Halliday, constitutes the most central descriptive framework within SFL theory. The work by Andersen and Holsting (2015) presents detailed functional grammar descriptions of another Germanic language, namely Danish. This is significant given the lack of detailed SFL descriptions of German (the work by Steiner and Teich (2004) comprises only concise descriptions). In this section, all examples on the clause level presented in German are created by me.

As mentioned earlier, modal assessment subsumes the ways of assessing a proposition subjectively (cf. Halliday/Matthiessen 2014). To that end, ideas are not only realised as being either positive or negative, such as "Sie hat die Prüfung (nicht) bestanden" but are located along different subjective meaning dimensions as in "Sie kann die Prüfung nicht bestehen", "Sie muss die Prüfung bestehen" or "Hoffentlich besteht sie die Prüfung". In line with Andersen and Holsting (2015; cf. also Halliday/Matthiessen 2014), four assessment dimensions can be identified: (a) modality, (b) temporality, (c) intensity and (d) commenting (see Table 1). In the following paragraphs, the distinct types of assessment strategies are explained in detail.

Table 1. Modal assessment strategies (cf. Andersen/Holsting 2015; Halliday/Matthiessen 2014)

| Type | | | Examples of assessment resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **a. Modality** | 1. | *possibility* | *wahrscheinlich, vielleicht* |
| | 2. | *usuality* | *immer, selten* |
| | 3a. | *allowance* | *können, dürfen* |
| | 3b. | *liability* | *sollen, müssen* |
| | 4a. | *will* | *wollen, Lust haben* |
| | 4b. | *ability* | *können, fähig sein* |
| **b. Temporality** | | | *letztlich, bald, immer noch, schon* |
| **c. Intensity** | | | *kaum, eigentlich* |
| **d. Comment** | | | *leider, ehrlicherweise, persönlich* |

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 176) define (a.) modality as the region of uncertainty in between 'yes' and 'no' in which a proposition is located. With respect to modality, two major subtypes are commonly differentiated, and these are modalisation and modulation. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 176–177), *modalisation* concerns those assessments associated with the idea of modality in a strict sense, i.e. the degree of (1) *possibility* (probably yes, maybe no) and the degree of (2) *usuality* (always yes, sometimes no). In the example "Tom

kann/muss beim Training sein", modalisation expresses that the incident of Tom being at training is likely. In contrast, *modulation* is described by Andersen and Holsting (2015: 216) as concerning the language users' assessment of the potential that an action will be performed. Accordingly, the modulated proposition "Tom kann/darf Fahrrad fahren" expresses that there is some potential that the action of cycling will be performed given that Tom, for example, has the ability or allowance to do so. Whereas the different modal verbs and modal adjuncts express varying degrees of likelihood or usuality with respect to modalisation, they are less of a continuous nature regarding modulation. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) consider modulation in terms of the subcategories of (3) obligation and (4) inclination, which Andersen and Holsting (2015) differentiate further into (3a) *allowance* and (3b) *liability* on the one hand, and (4a) *will* and (4b) *ability* on the other (see Table 1). *Liability* subsumes the categories of self-commitment, commitment, and necessity (216). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 181), a level of detail is important as "in the analysis of discourse (…) all these variants are likely to be met with, and their differences in meaning may have a marked effect on the unfolding and impact of the discourse" (see also Maden-Weinberger 2008).

The interpersonal assessment of (b.) temporality locates propositions in the subjective dimension of time. It expresses how time is perceived by the speaker or what attitude the speaker has towards a course of time (Andersen/Holsting 2015: 223–224, Halliday/Matthiessen 2014: 187–188). Accordingly, Andersen and Holsting (2015) also assign adjuncts such as "plötzlich" to this category, stating the speaker's surprise.

If speakers assess a proposition in terms of (c.) intensity, they express how extensive, serious or natural they consider an action or incident, such as in "Ich habe mir nur/fast/tatsächlich mein Bein beim Unfall gebrochen". Andersen and Holsting (2015) define *intensity* as one category with various meanings, having either the purpose of weakening or reinforcing a proposition (221–222; see also Halliday/Matthiessen 2014: 188–189).

Another kind of modal assessment is (d.) commenting on a proposition (or proposal), for example by expressing how desirable, correct or significant something is. Both Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 187–193) and Andersen and Holsting (2015: 224–226) stress that this strategy comprises various meanings and aims at commenting within or outside of the boundaries of a sentence. The former is, for example, the case in "Klugerweise hörte er auf seinen Vater" and the latter in "Offen gesprochen solltest auf deinen Vater hören".

Modal assessments are realised through different linguistic resources. In the current study, these resources are analysed and described according to the following three categories: (i) modal verbs, (ii.) modal adjuncts and (iii.) paraphrased forms realised through related adjectival and noun groups and verbal constructions (cf. e.g. Halliday/Matthiessen 2014; Maden-Weinberger 2008). It is important to note that this is only one of several ways to categorise modal resources and that the categories do not represent closed groups either.

(i) Modal verbs are resources associated with the modal assessment category of (a.) modality (cf. Andersen/Holsting, 2015; Halliday/Matthiessen 2014). In German, the modal verb system is typically described in terms of six core verbs ("müssen", "können", "dürfen", "sollen",

"wollen", "mögen") (cf. e.g. Duden-Grammatik 2016; Helbig/Buscha 2013). Nevertheless, the definition of modal verbs in the German language is still ambiguous (cf. e.g. Diewald 1999, Helbig/Buscha 2013; Hentschel/Weydt 2003), amongst others because the same verbs may sometimes be used as the only verb in German clauses. Also, there are verb groups such as the modal infinitive with "sein" and "haben" and verbs like "lassen" or "werden" that can express modal meaning comparable to that of the modal verbs. In addition to that, the use and meanings of the six core modal verbs are also difficult to describe in clear and concise ways. This is why, for example, Hentschel and Weydt (2003: 80–82) and Helbig and Buscha (2013: 132) draw on additional criteria such as third instance, intensity, formality, or tense to describe the differences between "dürfen" / "können" (*allowance*), "sollen" / "müssen" (*liability*) and "wollen" / "möchte" (*will*). Commonly, the modal verbs are also differentiated in terms of epistemic use when expressing possibility and non-epistemic use when modulating a proposition (cf. e.g. Duden-Grammatik 2016: 571). For the current study, a brief overview of modal verbs must suffice. In Table 2, an attempt is made to assign the six German modal verbs to the modality categories presented above. The asterisks in Table 2 mark conditional II forms.

Table 2. Overview of modality types and corresponding modal verbs, based on Helbig/Buscha (2013) and Lindemann (1996).

| **Modalisation** | 1. | *possibility* | *können, *dürfte, mögen, *müsste, müssen* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2. | *usuality* | -------- |
| **Modulation** | 3. | *allowance* | *dürfen, können* |
| | 4. | *liability* | *müssen, sollen* |
| | 5. | *will* | *wollen, *möchte* |
| | 6. | *ability* | *können* |

(ii) Modal adjuncts are realised either as adverbial groups or prepositional phrases, comprising items such as "schon", "noch immer", "dem Anschein nach" or "im Großen und Ganzen". They have the function of expressing *intensity*, *temporality* and *comments*, as well as modality of modalisation type (*possibility* and *usuality*) (cf. Andersen/Holsting 2015; Halliday/Matthiessen 2014: 419–423). In traditional German grammar descriptions, the group of modal adjuncts is generally linked to classifications such as "Modalwörter" or "Kommentaradverbien" (cf. e.g. Helbig/Buscha 2013: 430–439; Duden-Grammatik 2016: 598–599).

(iii.) Meanings expressed by modal verbs and modal adjuncts can also be encoded in paraphrased ways by transforming them into a clause including a verb or adjective with modal meaning (see examples i.–iii.). Helbig and Buscha (2013: 438–439) consider these forms as modal paraphrase constructions, while Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 679–685) term them explicit forms and distinguish them further as being either subjective, when formed with "ich" (see example i.), or objective, when encoded in the relative "es ist" clause (see examples ii. and iii.). In addition to explicit forms, some modulation and comment subtypes can also be expressed with predicators of modal meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014: 186) (see

example iv.). Overall, the classification and identification of paraphrased forms is more ambiguous, as they do not take the form of a word but of a group or clause.

(i.)    Ich *glaube*, dass sie heute arbeitet.
(ii.)   Es ist *wahrscheinlich*, dass ….
(iii.)  Es ist *überraschend*, dass ….
(iv.)   Er *hat* das *Recht*, dort zu fahren.

# 3. Methodology

In this section, the data and methodology of the analysis are presented. As this overview will show, the data analysed is small. Against this backdrop and the fact that paraphrases of modal assessment are part of a set of open class items, the analysis is mainly qualitative, including quantitative elements for obtaining a clearer overview of modal assessment strategies used by the learners.

## 3.1 Data

The data of this study stems from the German part of the TRAWL Corpus (cf. Dirdal et al. 2022). This corpus is still under compilation and contains texts retrieved from in-class work (ordinary writing activities, homework, school tests or mock exams) written by Norwegian secondary school learners of English as a first FL (beginning in year 1, aged 5–6), and German, French and Spanish as an L3 (beginning in year 8, aged 13–14).

Four subsets of the German part of TRAWL make up the data, which have the following four-letter codes in the corpus (cf. Dirdal et al. 2022): SCHU, FREU, JUNG, GESE. The responses stem from year 12 mock exam contexts in which the learners were in their fifth year of GFL learning. Here, it was customary practice up to and including the school year of 2020/21 to have a first task that is obligatory for all learners and revolves around a topic closely linked to the learners' everyday life, combined with the instruction to write a short text of three to five sentences. These subsets were chosen because all learner group members responded to the same task, which led to larger data sets. In addition, the subsets present tasks that were of similar structure and elicited responses of comparable text length. In order to obtain broader insights into strategies and resources applied, responses from two different learner groups were considered as data. Similar data from other learner groups was not available in the corpus. Both learner groups, here called group A and B, consisted of 13 GFL learners (aged 17-18) respectively (for further information on the learner codes, see appendix). The data sets were collected in the school years 2020/21 (group A) and 2018/19 (group B).

Table 3 gives an overview of the data. It presents the prompts given to learner group A and B, together with the codes of the parent data sets in the TRAWL Corpus. Regarding those prompts, I added translations and underlined words/groups which are indicators of modal assessment. In the third column of the table, I added information on which strategy is indicated. It needs to be stressed that the strategy of *ability* outlined for the FREU prompt has to be understood as ability due to external circumstances and not to one's own capacity. Here, one could speak of possibility but in a modulating sense (cf. Maden-Weinberger 2009: 158).

Table 3. Overview of writing prompts comprising the data

| Code | Prompt | Strategy | Group |
|------|--------|----------|-------|
| **SCHU** | Was machen Sie <u>persönlich</u>, um die Umwelt zu schützen? [*What do you do personally to save the environment*?] | personal engagement (comment) | A |
| **FREU** | Was <u>kann</u> man mit einem guten Freund/mit einer guten Freundin machen? [*What can you do with a good friend?*] | ability (modulation) | |
| **JUNG** | Was ändert sich, wenn man 18 wird? [*What changes when one turns 18?*] | ------------ | B |
| **GESE** | Wie wichtig sind soziale Medien, zum Beispiel Facebook, <u>in Ihrem Leben</u>? Begründen Sie Ihre Antwort. [*How important is social media, for example Facebook, in your life? Give reasons for your answer*] | personal engagement (comment) | |

Table 4 provides an overview of the number of learners that responded to the prompts and information concerning the number of words they used. Even though the higher number of words observed relating to learner group B appears to be an indication of more advanced skills compared to learner group A, the study does not control for language skills.

Table 4. Overview of the data

| Group | Prompt | No. texts | Words number per response | | |
|-------|--------|-----------|------|--------|---------|
| | | | Mean | Lowest | Highest |
| A | SCHU | 13 | 40.5 | 27 | 67 |
| | FREU | 12 | 42 | 27 | 82 |
| B | JUNG | 13 | 56 | 42 | 105 |
| | GESE | 13 | 48 | 39 | 101 |

## 3.2 Analytical approach

The empirical data is analysed in two steps, first through quantitative overviews of learners' modal assessment strategies, followed by a qualitative close reading of the learners' strategies. In the quantitative part, each learner text was analysed for instances of modal verbs, modal adjuncts and corresponding paraphrases, as well as for which modal assessment (sub)types they express in line with the categorisations by Andersen and Holsting (2015) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) (see also section 2.2). This analysis was conducted manually for two main reasons. First, paraphrases of modal assessment in particular are part of a set of open class items (cf. e.g. Maden-Weinberger 2009: 104), and to allow for automatic retrieval, this class of resources would have had to be narrowed down. Considering the small amount of data available for this study, I assessed this effort as disproportionate. Second, and most importantly, the main aim of the current study was to investigate the meanings that underlie quantitative patterns and not to investigate consistent developmental patterns (cf. e.g.

9

Durrant/Brenchley/Clarkson 2020). Searching for quantitative patterns manually thus allowed me to explore modal assessment resources in all their breadth and to observe the underlying meanings in depth.

In the findings section, first a general overview of the assessment strategies utilised is given. Subsequently, these findings are presented in more detail, with a focus on how the strategies employed affect the interpersonal meaning-making process and what kind of resources were applied. This will be done in a twofold manner: To begin with, modal assessments of modality, *intensity* and *temporality* are described, as assessments of certain aspects of *temporality* and *intensity* were often found to interrelate with indications of modality. Subsequently, I describe how the learners commented on propositions. These findings are presented together with examples from the learner texts in their original, authentic form. In part, examples of modality assessments are also contrasted with statements indicating no modality to present implications for the meaning-making process. Due to the difficulty of translating specific meanings, the examples are given only in their original German version without translations.

### 3.3 Methodological limitations

A main limitation of the study is that it is of restricted generalisability. On the one hand, the data is small and represents short text responses to only four writing prompts of varying character. On the other hand, the data stems from only two different learner groups which were not controlled for their specific language level. Regarding the analytical approach, it also appears difficult to maintain a thoroughly lexicogrammatical perspective. While certain paraphrased forms such as "Es ist wichtig" can clearly be assigned to grammatical descriptions as provided by, for example, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), rephrased expressions such as "Ich finde … wichtig" or "… ist wichtig in meinem Leben" are not clearly outlined by the scholars. Another main limitation of this study is that quantitative patterns are analysed manually and the categorisations made have not been cross-checked by others. Even though the categorisations are based on extensive grammatical descriptions, the possibility of errors cannot be ruled out.

While larger and more homogeneous data sets on the one hand, and a corpus-based statistical analysis on the other, would have been valuable for making reliable statements about the learners' interpersonal strategy use, the study of specific corpus data is still considered highly valuable as it presents texts and prompts retrieved from an authentic classroom situation. Thus, the findings can provide important initial insights into the learners' interpersonal strategy use and their linguistic repertoire regarding modal assessment resources, which again is relevant to future research on interpersonal meaning-making and the discussion of grammar teaching.

## 4. Findings

This section presents patterns of modal assessment strategies and resources identified in the learners' responses to the four writing prompts of SCHU, FREU, GESE, JUNG.

## 4.1 Modal assessment strategies – Overview

Figure 1 shows an overview of the types of assessment strategies found in the learner responses, together with the number of responses in which this strategy was applied at least once. The overview presents several general insights into modal assessment across the responses. First, all major assessment strategies can be found in the data set of 51 responses. Second, modality of the modulation type presents itself as a major assessment strategy across all four writing prompts. Third, the overview shows a high number of comment strategies in the responses to two writing prompts. However, these, as well as indications of *temporality*, appear as highly dependent on the topic or writing prompt. The following sections present in more detail the use of different assessment strategies and resources regarding the four different writing prompts.
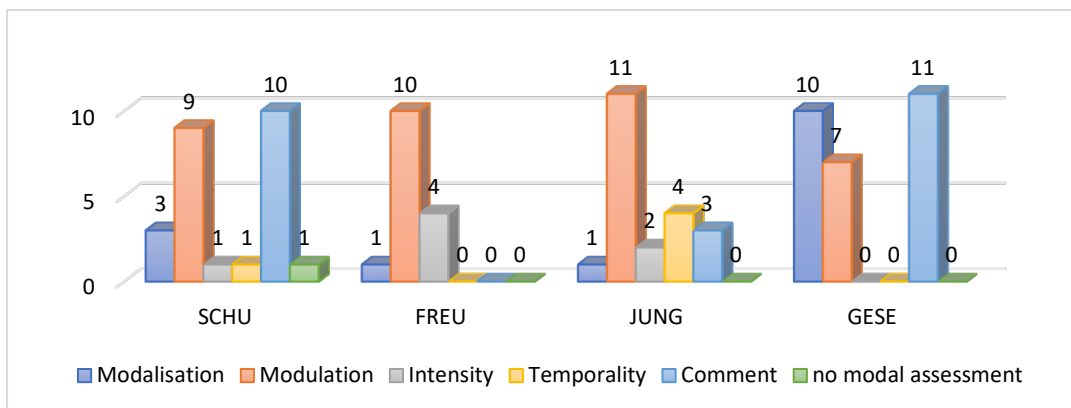


Figure 1. Number of learner responses with modal assessments of the various types

## 4.2 Modal assessment strategies of modality, intensity and temporality type

An overview of the distinct kinds of modality assessment strategies (modalisation and modulation) found in the learner responses is provided in Figure 2, together with the number of responses in which this strategy was applied at least once. The figure shows that the types of modality assessments vary from prompt to prompt. While the responses particular to FREU, but also to JUNG are characterised mostly by assessments of the same type (*ability* or *allowance*), the assessments of modality appear varied in the responses to SCHU and GESE.
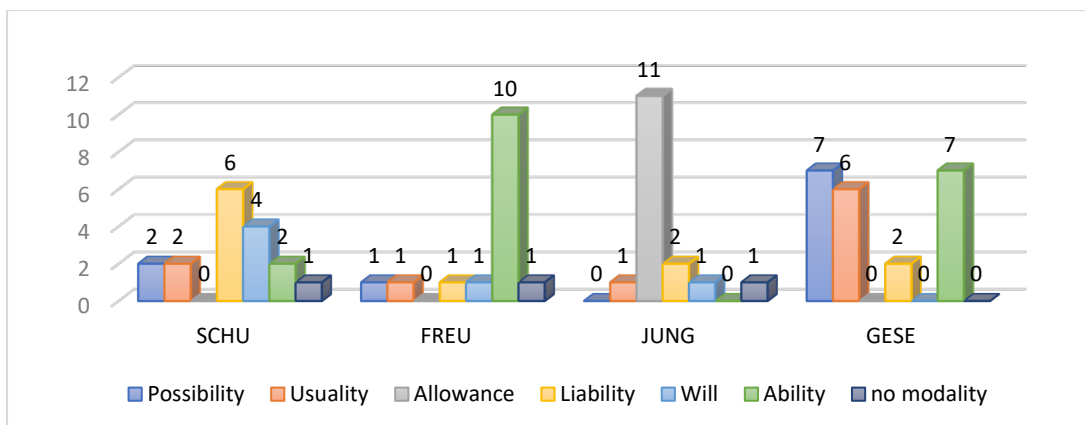


Figure 2. Number of learner responses with assessments of modality of the various types

In the following, the use of the different modality assessments across the individual prompts is described in detail, also with a focus on the resources used. Due to the distributions presented in Figure 2, the descriptions focus first on the strategies applied to (a) FREU and (b) JUNG, followed by those to (c) GESE and (d) SCHU. In all examples provided in this section, assessments of **modality** are marked in bold, those of *temporality* are CAPITALISED and those of *intensity* as underlined.

(a) In ten out of all twelve responses to FREU, the assessment strategy of *ability* can be observed. This reflects the type of assessment indicated in the writing prompt by the modal verb "kann". Across those ten responses where *ability* is indicated, around two thirds of all propositions comprise possible activities that can be done with a good friend (see example i.). The other two learner responses differ in that they contain propositions that are either not assessed in terms of modality or only assessed in terms of *liability* (see examples ii. and iii.). As could be seen in the examples i. and iii., learners also assessed how natural common activities with a friend or requirements of a good friend are in terms of *intensity*.

> i. *Zum Beispiel **kann** man ins Kino gehen, Computerspiele spielen oder (…). Wir **können** auch einfach miteinander reden.  (P60660)*
>
> ii. *Ich bin mit meinem guten Freund zu Oslo gewesen. (…) Wir haben es sehr Spaß hier. (P60666)*
>
> iii. *Ein guter Freund **muss** natürlich werden ganz glaubhaft. … Zu der Letzt **müssen** dich und deinen Freund ganz Spaß haben. (P60667)*

(b) Most often, the responses to JUNG contain propositions unassessed in terms of modality and are about what happens when one turns eighteen. However, almost all responses also present at least one assessment of *allowance* (see examples iv. and v.). The learners characteristically state what they/people turning eighteen are allowed to do, and sometimes also what parents are not allowed to do any longer. In total, this strategy is applied to more than a quarter of all propositions. Another modality assessment strategy applied additionally in two responses is *liability*, used to express impatience regarding becoming independent (see example vi.). These meanings are partly also created through assessments of *temporality* (see examples v., vi.). Additionally, some assessments of *intensity* can be found, where learners express how natural life at the age of eighteen and the associated opportunities are to them (see examples iv. and vi.)

> iv. *Ein achtzehnjähriger ist verantwortlich für seine Wirtschaft. Er ist nicht abhängig von seinen Eltern, und er **kann** eigentlich machen was er selbst wollen. (P60269)*
>
> v. *Man ist ENDLICH selbstständig und man **kann** über sich selbst bestimmen. Die Eltern **haben** auch **nicht so sagen**, wenn man 18 wird. (P60261)*
>
> vi. *Ein Leben als 18, sieht für mich wirklich gut aus. Aber es gibt ein Problem (…). Das heißt, dass das Leben NOCH NICHT so verändert wird (…). Man **muss** also bis 20 warten! (P60264)*

(c) In the responses to GESE, there are various propositions that are assessed only in terms of *usuality* ("jeden Tag", "immer", "oft"). These assessments mostly express how often a certain device or app is used (see examples vii., x. and ix.). In addition to that, seven learners employed assessments of *ability*, most often expressing that various things can be done through social media (i.e. in the sense of options) (see example viii.). In some cases, the assessment of *ability* is also used by learners to express that they are (not) able to live without their mobile phone / social media (see examples ix., x.). In a similar way, two learners also use the assessment of *liability* to indicate that they should reduce their screen time (see example x.). In both instances in which this is presented as a necessity, the learners present this proposition as something they are sure of, indicated by modalisation resources of *possibility*. The assessment of *possibility* is also used in other ways: two learners use modalisation to evaluate their use of social media as (un)likely to be a sign of addiction (see example xi.), while two other learners express certainty concerning the role of social media in their lives (see example ix.).

vii.   *Ich benutze Snapchat (…)* ***jeden Tag*** *weil ich mit meinem Freunde da kommuniziere. (P60269)*

viii.   *(…) weil ich mit Freunde und Familie kommunizieren* ***kann***. *(P60266)*

ix.   ***Ich denke***, *dass soziale Medien ganz wichtig in meinem Leben sind. Es ist ein Teil (…), aber ich* ***kann*** *ohne soziale Medien ein paar Tagen überlebe. (P60272)*

x.   *wenn ich mein Frühstück esse, ist das Handy* ***immer*** *da! Ich* ***kann*** *es nicht wecklegen, obwohl* ***ich weiß***, *dass ich nicht zu viel Zeit mit meinem Handy brauchen* ***soll***. *(P60264)*

xi.   *Meine Mutti fragt mich* ***oft***, *ob ich abhängig bin, doch* ***ich denke nicht*** *so. (P60271)*

(d) In the responses to SCHU, most propositions carry no assessment of modality. Commonly, propositions appear similar to example xii., and sometimes also to example xiii. The most applied assessment of modulation is *liability*, occurring across six learner responses in one or two propositions respectively (see example xiv.). This strategy can be linked to the wider context of environmental protection, with the propositions being realised as demands for commitment. The second most common assessment of modulation is *will*, expressing that there is a strong motivation to protect the environment (see example xv.). Other minor assessment strategies applied are *ability*, expressing that life on earth is only possible in a healthy environment (see example xvi.), and modalisation in terms of *possibility* (see example xv.).

xii.   *Der Klimaschutz ist wichtig, weil Menschheit (…) gut Klima brauchen. (P60661)*

xiii.   *Ich fahre ein Elektroauto und sortiere Müll. (P60670)*

xiv.   *Wir* ***müssen*** *der Mull recyceln und zusammen arbeiten für ein besser Klima. (P60668)*

xv.   *(…) und* ***ich denke***, *dass wir* ***will*** *die Erde behält viel länger. (P60666)*

xvi.   *(…) so dass Menschen und das Tiere* ***können*** *überleben. (P60664)*

Concerning SCHU in particular, the analysis further indicates that modal assessment strategies also interrelate with the subjects chosen in a proposition, which in combination lead to distinct tones. In Table 5, an attempt is made to stress some of those relations (*liability*/no modal assessment and subject choice) and their impact on the meaning-making process.

Table 5. Subject and modal assessment strategy choice and their implication for meaning-making

| Subject | Expression of *liability* | No modal assessment |
|---|---|---|
| **"ich"** | Expression of self-commitment to environmental protection (=EP) | Description of own EP activities |
| **"Wir"** | Call for common EP commitments | Description of how life is without EP |
| **Other** | Expression of necessity to take care of the earth | Explanations of connection between EP and life |

As different modal assessments were expressed within and across the responses to the four writing prompts, the linguistic resources through which modality, *temporality* and *intensity* were expressed also varied. Table 6 presents what kind of modality markers, i.e. modal verbs (first row), modal adjuncts (second row) and paraphrases (third row), the learners employed across the prompts, along with the total number of times a specific resource was used. In Table 6, the negative marker "nicht" (as in "nicht wollen") is abbreviated as "n." and the asterisks (see also Table 7) mark incorrect language learner forms.

Table 6. Modality assessment resources

| | *possibility* | *usuality* | *allowance* | *liability* | *will* | *ability* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **S C H U** | | | | *sollen* (2) *müssen* (6) *n. dürfen* | *wollen* (2) *n. wollen* *möchten* | *können* *n. können* |
| | *wahrscheinlich* | *oft* | | | | |
| | *Ich denke,...* (2) | | | | | |
| **F R E U** | | | | *sollen* *müssen* (3) | | *können* (61) |
| | *vielleicht* | *immer* | | | | |
| **J U N G** | | | *können* (28) *n. können* (2) | *müssen* (2) | *n. wollen* | |
| | | *nie* | | | | |
| | | | *haben ... *so [zu] das Recht haben* | | | |
| **G E S E** | | | | *sollen* *\*können* | | *können (14)* *n. können* (3) |
| | *vielleicht* (2) | *jeden Tag* (4), *immer* (2)*, oft, selten, normalerweise* | | | | |
| | *ich weiß, ...* (2) *ich denke nicht* *ich denke* | | | | | |

In line with the resources commonly associated with modalisation on the one hand and modulation on the other, the overview in Table 6 shows that the learners mostly express the former through modal adjuncts and paraphrases, while modulation is nearly exclusively expressed through modal verbs. Regarding the latter, the modal verb most dominantly used is "können". This results from the meanings associated with the prompts of FREU and GESE but also from the fact that all learners realised the meaning of *allowance* in response to JUNG through "können" as a variant of "dürfen". Other modal verbs which are commonly found are "müssen", "sollen" und "wollen", associated with the meanings of *liability* and *will*. The verbs "dürfen" and the conditional II-form of "mögen" appear only once. In response to JUNG, two instances of paraphrased indications of *allowance* can also be found, realised as the verbal construction "Recht haben" and the modal infinitive "haben zu". The modal adjunct "vielleicht" and the paraphrased forms expressing modalisation can be considered as being of common type.

The modal adjuncts that were used to realise the assessments of *temporality* and *intensity* are presented in Table 7. As Table 7 shows, diverse resources could be found across the responses, including "endlich" as a frequent resource for expressing *temporality* and "nur" for expressing *intensity*.

Table 7. Adjuncts of temporality and intensity

| Prompt | Adjuncts of temporality | Adjuncts of intensity |
|--------|------------------------|----------------------|
| SCHU | *immer noch [noch immer]* | *nur* |
| FREU | | *einfach, natürlich, nur* (2) |
| JUNG | *endlich (3), *nur [noch], noch nicht* | *sogar, wirklich, eigentlich* |

## 4.3 Modal assessment strategies of comment type

As shown in Figure 1 (see section 4.1), comment strategies were particularly common in the responses to SCHU and GESE, and to a smaller degree also to JUNG. Table 8 presents an overview of the types of comment strategies and resources identified in line with Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 191) across the responses.

Table 8. Types of comment strategies and resources identified.

| Prompt | Comment strategy–type | No. of responses | Resources |
|--------|----------------------|------------------|-----------|
| SCHU | significance | 10 | *Es ist wichtig, dass ....* (2) *Ich finde ... wichtig.* (10) |
| JUNG | desirability/undesirable | 1 | *leider* |
| | specific validity | 2 | *in der Theorie, offiziell, gesetzlich* |
| GESE | personal engagement/ individuality | 11 | *für mich* (6) *in meinem Leben* (6) |

As Table 8 shows, the learners generally comment in similar ways on propositions with respect to the different prompts. Dominant in responses to SCHU is the expression of significance (see example i.), while the learners commonly indicated personal engagement/individuality in their responses to GESE (see example ii.). It needs to be noted that the structure "ich finde … wichtig" is considered a paraphrase of the form "es ist wichtig, dass …", and the group "in meinem Leben" as a paraphrase for "für mich" (see Table 8). The strategy employed in response to GESE reflects what has been indicated in the writing prompt. As example ii. shows, indications of personal engagement/individuality can often be found in connection with propositions in which (types of) social media are outlined as significant.

i.  **Ich finde** Umwelt- und Klimaschutz sehr **wichtig**. (SCHU)
ii.  Soziale Medien sind sehr wichtig **in mein Leben**. (GESE)

In response to JUNG, two learners use comments to assess allowances or conditions linked to turning eighteen from an official point of view (see examples iii. and iv., as well as the resources described in Table 7). With this comment strategy, learners express that not every person turning 18 inevitably can or wants to make use of this right.

iii.  **In der Theorie**, kann man alles allein machen. (JUNG, P60264)
iv.  Viele Leute starten auch über Alkohol zu denken, weil sie das **gesetzlich** trinken können. (JUNG, P60266)

## 4.4 Summary of findings

Overall, the analysis of strategies in the learners' responses to SCHU, FREU, JUNG and GESE shows various modal assessment strategies employed. To that end, it became evident that each prompt led to one major strategy employed across the majority of responses, in addition to other further assessment strategies. Table 9 presents an overview of the major and further strategies which could be observed. […]

Table 9. Overview of major and further modal assessment strategies across the data sets

| Code | Prompt | Major modal assessments | Further modal assessments |
|------|--------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| SCHU | Was machen Sie persönlich, um die Umwelt zu schützen? | *significance* | *liability, will, ability* |
| FREU | Was kann man mit einem/r guten Freund/in machen? | *ability* | |
| JUNG | Was ändert sich, wenn man 18 wird? | *allowance* | *specific validity* |
| GESE | Wie wichtig sind soziale Medien (…) in Ihrem Leben? | *personal engagement* | *ability, possibility, usuality* |

In general, the findings show that the various strategies applied – partly also in combination with another – led to distinctive social relationships and attitudes being enacted and expressed by the writers. Amongst other things, the learners made calls to save the environment (SCHU),

expressed impatience with respect to becoming independent (JUNG), or articulated their view on their own social media use in connection with addiction (GESE). The findings further indicate that not only the presence of certain strategies, but also the absence thereof may have important rhetorical effects.

To express assessments of modulation, the learners drew predominantly on the modal verbs "können", "müssen", "sollen" and "wollen". As could further be seen, the encoding of *possibility*, *usuality*, *intensity*, *temporality* and *comments* elicited the use of modal adjuncts or paraphrases, which often were of the same type. Particularly in responses to JUNG, however, it could be seen that the range and type of modal adjuncts in part differed notably from those used in response to the other prompts.

# 5. Discussion

The aim of the current article is to describe modal assessment strategies used by Norwegian GFL learners in responses of short text length and to observe how the different strategies employed contribute to shaping distinct enactments of social relationships and expressions of attitudes and assessments. As stated in the introduction, a major assumption within SFL theory is that we as speakers always enact social and personal relationships when construing experiences. By presenting different modal assessment strategies, including cases in which no modal assessment is applied, the current study points out the various ways in which GFL learners present different perspectives on a topic and add distinct tones in short written responses in terms of modal assessment. To that end, the study has provided further insights into how and through which language choices L3 learners express attitudes and interact with readers also in short text responses. When looked at in more detail, the findings revealed strategies which were directly or indirectly linked to the wording and content construed in the writing prompt, while at the same time they showed that writers also employed less predictable modal assessment strategies. These insights are in line with Aijmer (2002, 2014), who emphasises the influence of the writing prompt and its topic. Thus, the findings of the current study contribute to raising awareness of the fact that modal assessment strategies cannot always be concluded from the surface structures of the writing prompt but also result from the learners' individual perspectives on a topic. This was particularly the case for the responses to SCHU: the prompt does not indicate assessments of modality – neither directly nor indirectly – yet the learners assessed propositions widely in terms of *liability*. This is likely a result of SCHU revolving around a very current topic associated with a diversity of opinions and even calls for action. The fact that learners also present rather individual perspectives on a topic might be linked to a learning context such as the secondary school GFL classroom, which still seems to place little focus on specific writing act conventions, with more room for writer/reader visibility and for expressing assessments reflecting one's own ideas regarding a topic.

The findings further show the impact which the unique ways of employing modal verbs, modal adjuncts and corresponding paraphrases – or their absence – might have on the overall communicative purpose of a response. In the responses to FREU, for example, the analysis showed that the absence of modal assessment resources ultimately gave the propositions a reporting nature. Regarding the responses to SCHU, Table 5 suggests even more specifically

how modal assessment resources – together with the use of specific subjects – shape the communicative purpose of a response in varying ways, from expressing certain realities, to making requests or describing particular facts. These findings thus stress the role of interpersonal resources in the overall meaning-making process.

The analysis of the use of modal assessment resources further shows that the learners have many linguistic means to assess propositions in different ways: Regarding the use of modal verbs, the study could – in line with Lindemann (1996) – point out that the learners appear to have a good command of the four basic modal verbs, allowing them to realise varied meanings of modulation. These findings also reflect the prevalent focus on modal verbs in GFL grammar teaching in Norway (cf. Haukås/Malmqvist/Valfridsson 2016). At the same time the findings also point out modal assessment resources which are likely still under development. In line with Lindemann (1996), it, for example, appears that the modal verb "dürfen" is not yet part of the learners' general linguistic repertoire. While it seems that the learners could still express their ideas through another variant of modal verbs (see Table 2 in section 2.2), "dürfen" would still appear most appropriate for expressing allowance given by an external party in formal language use (cf. Maden-Weinberger 2009: 40–41). Concerning other assessment resources, it could also be seen that the learners commonly made use of modal adjuncts and paraphrastic forms like "vielleicht" and "ich denke, dass …" – that is, resources that were also found more frequently in corpus-based studies on modality resources in less advanced learner language (see also e.g. Hasund/Hasselgård 2022; Maden-Weinberger, 2009). A broader range of modal adjuncts and paraphrastic resources were particularly found in some responses to JUNG for expressing *allowance*, *intensity* and *comments*. Reasons for this broader range might be that the structure and topic of those prompts allowed for more varied ways of positioning oneself as a writer, or that the learners who used those resources have more advanced language skills (cf. Maden-Weinberger 2008). In any case, the specific adjuncts and paraphrases identified in the responses to JUNG show how a growing range of modal assessment resources allows the learners to express certain nuanced interpersonal meanings.

Overall, the findings may have important pedagogical implications with respect to teaching grammar and writing activities. The findings suggest a general need to raise the learners' and teachers' awareness of modal assessment strategies in the entire meaning-making process, possibly also with respect to writing act conventions. To that end, the study also stresses the importance of teaching modal verbs not only from a grammatical perspective (cf. Haukås et al. 2016), and the value of developing a nuanced repertoire of modal adjuncts and corresponding paraphrases also in the secondary school GFL context. This might also imply a need to give secondary school L3 learners different writing opportunities for learning how to express their own perspectives in regard to a topic.

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigated patterns of modal assessment strategies and resources employed in Norwegian GFL learners in responses of short text length to four different writing prompts. It presented in detail what attitudes and assessments the learners expressed and how they did so, with some responses being closely linked to what was indicated in the writing prompt, while

other strategies contributed to expressing rather individual attitudes and enactments of personal and social relationships. To that end, the findings indicate that the strategies are linked in unique ways to the writing prompt, its wording and topic, the learners' own perspective towards a topic, and the informal writing context.

Overall, the findings underlined the impact which modal assessments of the distinct types have on the interpersonal meaning-making process. Considering, for example, the texts written in response to the task coded as FREU, it can be seen how the assessment of *ability* is central to responding in a way expected by the reader, while the responses in which modal assessment is absent rather represent accounts of a common experience. With respect to the prompt SCHU, it became particularly clear how the variable expressions of the students' own attitudes and assessments shape the rhetorical effect on the reader. As an implication, the findings stress the important role of interpersonal meaning-making strategies in written responses.

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# Appendix

## Overview of learner data

Due to standards in TRAWL-based research, this table provides information on the learners that provided the data for this study. The table shows the unique student codes with which each individual learner can be searched in the TRAWL Corpus. As the learners assigned to groups A and B belonged to two different classrooms, their codes form different orders (in this case, the third digit is different).

| Learner codes in TRAWL Corpus | |
| --- | --- |
| **Learner group A** | **Learner group B** |
| P60660 | P60260 |
| P60661 | P60261 |
| P60662 | P60262 |
| P60663 | P60263 |
| P60664 | P60264 |
| P60665 | P60265 |
| P60666 | P60266 |
| P60667 | P60267 |
| P60668 | P60268 |
| P60669 | P60269 |
| P60670 | P60270 |
| P60671 | P60271 |
| P60672 | P60272 |