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PhD revisited: Future teachers of English

A study of competence in the teaching of writing¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports a doctoral study (Drew, 1997) which explored factors linked to student teachers' competence to teach written English in Norwegian compulsory schools. The teaching of writing was perceived from the duality of writing competence, with a focus on form, and the perceived ability to teach writing. The results showed that student teachers' writing only marginally developed during a one-year English teacher training course, while their perceptions of teaching written English in schools changed considerably. Implications for L2 teaching and further research are discussed.

KEYWORDS Teacher competence | writing | ability to teach writing | teacher training

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1. This chapter presents a doctoral study (Drew, 1997) from the University of Bergen. The doctoral thesis in its entirety – with theoretical, methodological and empirical details – can be obtained through university libraries in Norway or by contacting the author at ion.drew@uis.no.

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INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in written English is important for Norwegians both outside of and in school. Written English is important outside of school because of the pervasiveness of the printed word in English in the world and the growing political and commercial links that Norway has with the rest of the world. Being able to write is a necessity in the modern world, and not being able to do so would be a severe handicap. It is important in school because in addition to Norwegian, English is the only compulsory language from primary to upper secondary education, and one of three subjects in which pupils may sit a written exam when they complete their compulsory school education. Furthermore, Norwegians are required to read English in many subjects in higher education, e.g. Sociology and Medicine.

However, writing is probably the most difficult language skill to master and one of the most complicated human activities (Murray, 1987). In fact, Zinsser (1985, p. 12) argues that, “If you find writing hard, it’s because it is hard. It’s one of the hardest things people do.” A study by Drew (1993) revealed that most lower secondary pupils found writing in English much more difficult than speaking English. The same study also considered the role and competence of the teacher as central to the development of pupils’ writing, even though writing was likely to be influenced by other variables. The doctoral study reported here, building on Drew (1993), thus focussed on the proficiency and skills of the student teacher in relation to the teaching of written English and factors that would influence the student teacher’s proficiency and teaching skills.

The main purpose of the doctoral study was therefore to investigate variables that influenced student teachers’ competence to teach written English in compulsory school.

Competence in the teaching of writing was perceived from the duality of writing competence, with a focus on form, and the ability to teach writing. It was thus both a study of the student teachers’ written English and a study of their perceived skills to teach written English. It may be considered a limitation that the study was primarily quantitative, focusing on form, and did not address issues of content/meaning. However, it was conducted at a time when quantitative studies of form in writing were very common, especially outside the USA, as reflected in Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki and Kim’s (1998) metastudy of measures of fluency, accuracy and complexity in L2 development in writing, which was published the year after the completion of this doctoral study. The study was further conducted at a time when some colleges in Norway offered 30 ECTS and 60 ECTS courses in English with didactics and teaching practice, which was the case in the institution concerned. The courses were an optional component of a Bachelor of Education

degree incorporating English and were equivalent to today's "*grunnskolelærerutdanning*" (GLU) with English.

THEORY

Writing is primarily an act of communication and is essentially functional in nature (Halliday, 1989). Its function is to communicate written information to a reader. The functions of writing vary according to genre, level of formality and anticipated readership. For example, there are differences between writing an informal note as a reminder, a business letter to confirm a transaction, and a narrative to entertain readers. While narrative writing at the time of the doctoral study was predominant in primary and lower secondary schools, and was considered to have both educational and motivational value (Price & Takala, 1998), some scholars (e.g. Kress, 1982; Pincas, 1982) argue that school children should be trained to write multiple genres in order to prepare them for the kinds of writing they will need after leaving school.

With the shift from grammar/translation to communicative language teaching in the 1980s (Howatt, 1991), writing needs to be considered as a meaningful act and not simply as a tool to work with grammar (Ernst & Richard, 1994; Raimes, 1985). Its meaningfulness is emphasised in an integrative approach in which the four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) complement each other (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987; Jarausach & Tufts, 1988). The link between reading and writing is especially important and through reading, children can acquire, e.g. story grammar, schemata (background knowledge about the world), scripts (the typical order in which events take place in a given context, e.g. a wedding), and the ability to develop characters (Atwell, 1987; Beard, 1991; Graves, 1991).

Writing is a demanding form of communication. Good writers need to write clearly and unambiguously (Martlew, 1983). Flower (1979) makes the distinction between *writer-based* and *reader-based* prose. In the former, the writer shows little awareness of the needs of the reader and whether ideas are understandable or not. In the latter, the writer deliberately attempts to communicate to the reader and even attempts to anticipate the reader's response.

Skilled writers focus initially on the development of their ideas before turning their attention to language (Krashen, 1984). However, there has traditionally been an overemphasis on language (form) in second language (L2) writing (Zamel, 1983).

REVIEW

Since the teaching of writing is a multifaceted phenomenon, and one that needs to be considered in relation to other language skills, research on several key areas linked to the development of writing were reviewed. Many of these areas had their roots in first language (L1) environments, but were nevertheless considered relevant for L2 literacy development, i.e. development of L2 reading and writing. One key area was emergent literacy, namely the beginnings of reading and writing in children, and the importance of the pre-school years, especially the home, for literacy development (Goodman, 1986; Purves, 1992; Sulzby, 1985; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Because of their emergent literacy during the pre-school years, many children enter school with a good deal of knowledge about the written word (Sulzby, 1985), irrespective of their socio-economic status (Teale, 1986). The research on emergent literacy showed that children in literate cultures can develop oral and written language concurrently and in a natural way at home without formal instruction.

However, pre-school children's literacy development can also be fostered in kindergartens, as shown in Cambourne's (1986) and Cambourne and Turbill's (1987) research on children under the age of six in Australian kindergartens. These children were immersed in environmental print, were given time to practise writing, were expected to write, were given responsibility for what to write, and were given response to their writing. The importance of creating a literacy-promoting educational environment also with older children, namely at the junior high school level in the United States, was emphasised in the research by Atwell (1987). In Atwell's "reading and writing workshops", pupils developed their mother tongue reading and writing considerably and there was a strong link between the two: pupils chose what to read and their reading often inspired their choice of writing. Pupils' development in writing was clearly influenced by their reading.

In L2 contexts, the research on extensive reading (e.g. Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Williams, 1986) also demonstrated the strong link between reading and writing. Pupils in book immersion classes outperformed those taught in a traditional audio-lingual approach in multiple language skills, including writing. Children's written products in "reading classrooms" were far superior to those in "non-reading classrooms" (Turner, 1989).

A final important area connected to writing development was the paradigm shift from *product-oriented writing* to *process-oriented writing* (Drew, 1993). Research had shown that writing could be enhanced when undergoing different stages in a process (Chenoweth, 1987; Hillocks, 1986). Rewriting of content was

considered a key stage. However, research by Drew (1993) revealed that Norwegian lower secondary pupils writing in English focused on editing language errors and not on revising content. The implication was that these pupils had not been taught a range of writing strategies and had not received feedback on content before editing. It was thus considered important to investigate how competent future teachers of English were to teach writing in schools.

METHODOLOGY

This doctoral study was primarily quantitative. It was within the field of both linguistics and English didactics since it was about both writing and the teaching of writing. The linguistic part of the research was a corpus study of Norwegian and native speakers' writing analysing cohesive, lexical and syntactic sophistication, in addition to errors and fluency. Although some of these features of writing had previously been studied separately, e.g. lexical sophistication by Linnarud (1986), there were no known studies of all of these features combined in one corpus. The assumption was that this comprehensive approach would reflect the students' writing from a broad perspective, albeit focussing on indicators of form. The quantifiable items would enable measuring the Norwegian student teachers' written development, with a focus on form, throughout an academic year as part of their teacher training in English and comparing the Norwegian student teachers' writing with a native speaker reference group to establish how "native-like" it was according to these criteria.

The written texts of a random sample of 20 Norwegian student teachers was chosen from a cohort of 67 student teachers following an English teacher training course during one year at a Norwegian higher education institution, in which they were offered instruction in both English and English didactics. Ten of the student teachers studied part-time and ten full-time. Every second text was selected from the part-time and full-time corpora until a total of ten texts had been collected from each.

Each student teacher was asked to write a narrative and a literary appreciation essay at the beginning of the academic year, and the same at the end of the year. The two genres were merged into one corpus for each period. The two corpora of 40 texts each were compared. The second corpus, since it represented the student teachers' level of writing at the end of the course, was then compared with a native speaker corpus consisting of ten narratives and 15 literary appreciation essays written by 15 students at a sixth form college in England (age approximately 18–19). It was not possible to find a native speaker reference group that was identi-

cally comparable to the Norwegian student teachers either in terms of age or study programme. This group was nevertheless considered an appropriate reference group as they wrote similar texts and the advantage gained by being native speakers was counteracted by their younger age and lesser experience as writers.

The didactics part of the study was based on two sets of questionnaires answered by the cohort of 67 Norwegian student teachers. They answered the first questionnaire at the beginning of the academic year. It aimed to elicit data about how they had experienced the influence and value of different levels of the school system on their written English, how important they had perceived their different teachers for their written development in English, and methods of teaching that may have had a direct or indirect influence on their written performance. The second questionnaire aimed to elicit data concerning the influence of the teacher education English course for these student teachers' written proficiency in English, which they were asked to self-assess, and their perceived ability to teach written English. The second questionnaire also aimed to gather data about how compatible they found the teacher education course to be, for example in terms of genre, methods and writing strategies, with the requirements of practical teaching of written English in schools.

TABLE 3.1. Overview of data and analyses used in the study.

Data	Analysis
Norwegian student teachers' writing sample 1 ($n = 20$). Narrative and literary appreciation essays ($n = 40$)	Cohesive, lexical, syntactic sophistication Errors Fluency (qualitative)
Norwegian student teachers' writing sample 2 ($n = 20$). Narrative and literary appreciation essays ($n = 40$)	Cohesive, lexical, syntactic sophistication Errors Fluency (qualitative)
Native speaker reference group writing sample. 10 narrative and 15 literary appreciation essays ($n = 25$)	Cohesive, lexical, syntactic sophistication Errors Fluency (qualitative)
Questionnaire 1 among Norwegian student teachers ($n = 67$)	Experiences/considerations of writing in primary, lower and upper secondary school
Questionnaire 2 among Norwegian student teachers ($n = 67$)	Perceptions of writing competence and competence to teach writing

THE WRITING ANALYSIS

Firstly, four features of cohesion were measured quantitatively: the frequency of the simple coordinating conjunctions *but*, *and*, and *or*, and the number of different viewpoint and intensifying subjuncts (e.g. *politically*, *completely*), conjuncts (e.g. *however*, *nevertheless*), and style and content disjuncts (e.g. *probably*, *fortunately*) (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartevik, 1985). Conjuncts, subjuncts and disjuncts are three of the four categories of adverbials classified in Quirk et al. (1985). The fourth category, adjuncts, was omitted because of its enormous scope.

Secondly, lexical sophistication was studied by the ratio of low frequency to high frequency words in the narrative texts, low frequency words indicating greater lexical sophistication. Low frequency words were defined as any words not appearing among the first 700 most frequent words on the vocabulary list compiled by Engels, van Beckhoven, Leenders and Brasseur (1981). Both types and tokens of low frequency words were counted. Types constituted the percentage of low frequency words in the Norwegian student teachers' narratives and the first 1,000 words of the native speakers' narratives, which were generally longer. Tokens constituted the percentage of low frequency words repeated in the same text. The mean scores for each group were compared.

Thirdly, syntactic sophistication was studied through measuring sentence openers, noun phrase pre- and post-modification, passive forms, nominal “-ing” clauses, and subordinate clauses. Personal pronouns, proper nouns, and adverbial clauses in initial position were counted. Overuse of the first two was considered to detract from the quality of writing, while adverbial clauses in sentence-initial position were considered as an indication of variety and sophistication of language. Different types of pre- and post-modification of noun phrases (e.g. adjectives, participles, prepositional phrases), were measured as percentages of the total number of noun phrases in the texts. Mean scores for each group were compared. The frequency of different forms of the passive voice, considered as indicators of syntactic sophistication, were counted as types and tokens, and the mean scores per student essay in each corpus were compared. Nominal “-ing” clauses, measured in the same way as passives, were included in the analysis on the assumption that they constituted a major difference between English and Norwegian. Finally, subordinate clauses were counted in the same way as passives and nominal “-ing” clauses. These consisted of different categories of adverbial, comparative, relative, and nominal clauses. The ability to use a variety of subordinate clauses was considered a characteristic of syntactic proficiency in English.

Fourthly, two types of errors were measured: concord and incorrect choice of aspect. These were chosen because differences between Norwegian and English were assumed to cause problems for Norwegian learners in these cases.

Finally, fluency in the writing of the Norwegian student teachers was compared with that in the native speaker texts. The aim was to show instances of how the Norwegian student teachers' L1 may have hindered natural, native-like communication in English, e.g. *We came along fine, I can not say she was not nice against me*. This was done qualitatively through examples, with special attention to word order, idiomaticity, the degree of nominalization, use of incorrect lexis, and the degree of clutter (using too many words to say what could more appropriately be said in fewer) in the texts, e.g. *The conditions the family are living beneath are not very good*, as opposed to *The family are living in poor conditions*.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The Norwegian student teachers answered a questionnaire at the beginning of the year and a second one at the end of the year. The first questionnaire was retrospective, aiming to elicit data about their experiences of learning English at school, primarily writing. It contained 67 items grouped as follows: *overall content of teaching* in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school; *motivation* (comparative enjoyment of learning English and the different language skills during the three levels of schooling); *reading*; *learning about writing* (writing conventions, content, genres, strategies); *autonomy* (self-choice of reading and writing topics); *relative importance of the levels* (for future development in English and development of writing skills); *teacher competence* (as a model of English, ability to vary content of teaching, methods of teaching, as a teacher of writing); *self-evaluation* (oral and written skills in English, written skills in Norwegian); *external factors* (living in an English-speaking country, the home environment). Most items were closed. However, open questions were provided to give reasons when the student teachers assessed their own teaching of writing and to specify the greatest influence on their writing development.

The second questionnaire aimed to gather data about the student teachers' perceptions of their writing competence and competence to teach writing at the end of the year, as follows: *genres* (those practised during the course and considered important to teach in primary/lower secondary school), *writing competence* (areas of progress, feedback received about their written competence, which stage of education they considered the most important for writing development), *strategies* (those they had practised, their effect, whether they felt competent to use writing

strategies as teachers); *writing linked to other language skills* (whether they considered such links necessary and had knowledge to put them into practice, especially in the case of the link between writing and reading); *autonomy* (whether they would allow pupils to choose reading materials and writing topics); *general qualities as a teacher* (content of lessons, familiarity of suitable writing topics, ability to evaluate pupils' writing, whether they would demonstrate writing genres); *views on writing development* (the most important level and most important factor for pupils' writing development). Some open-ended questions were provided, e.g. to justify choices concerning pupil autonomy and the development of pupils' writing.

RESULTS

The main aim of the study was to investigate variables that influenced student teachers' competence to teach written English in compulsory school. Competence was perceived from the duality of writing competence, with a focus on form, and the perceived ability to teach writing. The results showed that the student teachers' writing only marginally developed in terms of the selected indicators of form during the one-year English teacher training course. In contrast, their perceptions of teaching written English in schools changed considerably during the year.

WRITING ANALYSIS

The results from the longitudinal study of the Norwegian student teachers' writing from the beginning of the year (hereafter P1) to the end of the year (hereafter P2) generally showed little or no progress in terms of cohesive or lexical sophistication. In terms of syntactic sophistication, there was little variance in the use of the passive voice from P1 to P2, while there was a tendency to use more nonfinite post-modification in noun phrases and more nominal “-ing” clauses and subordinate clauses. There was also a reduction in errors of concord and choice of aspect. Overall, however, since the period of study represented one academic year, the progress may be characterised as minimal.

The study of cohesive sophistication showed that the simple coordinating conjunctions were used frequently and increased from P1 to P2. The assumption was that a greater number and variety of subjuncts, conjuncts and disjuncts would be a sign of cohesive sophistication. Slightly more conjunct types (e.g. *then, for example*) appeared in P2, while the opposite was the case for disjuncts (e.g. *maybe, obviously*) and subjuncts (e.g. *really, just*).

The study of lexical sophistication showed minor variation between P1 and P2. The average percentage of low frequency words in P1 was 7.8% with a slight decrease in P2 to 6.7%. Roughly every fourth low frequency word was repeated as a token in both periods.

The study of syntactic sophistication constituted the most comprehensive part of the writing analysis. Firstly, the ratio of noun phrases per sentence was the same (1.3) in both P1 and P2. There was a higher rate of post-modification than pre-modification in both P1 and P2, with a slight decrease in both from P1 to P2. By far the most common pre-modifier of the head of noun phrases in both P1 and P2 was adjectives, followed by 's genitives, nouns, participles, and adverbs. As for post-modification, prepositional phrases were used in roughly every second noun phrase in P1 and P2, with finite relative clauses used in roughly every fourth noun phrase. Less frequent post-modifiers were non-finite “-ing”, “ed” and infinitive clauses, which all increased marginally from P1 to P2.

Secondly, the student teachers generally seemed to underuse the passive voice both in P1 and P2. The two most used passive forms were the simple present and simple past forms. Thirdly, the most frequently used nominal “-ing” clause form was after prepositions, and the tendency was to use nominal “-ing” clauses slightly more in P2 than P1. Finally, there was also a general tendency to subordinate more in P2 than P1. Almost all of the student teachers used nominal, relative and adverbial clauses of time both in P1 and P2, while adverbial clauses of result and concession were those with the lowest distribution. Clauses of reason, purpose, condition, comparison and place occurred in more than half of the student teachers' writing. Finally, the study of errors showed that the frequency of concord errors was much higher than those of incorrect aspect, but that there was a marked reduction of both from P1 to P2.

COMPARING THE WRITING OF THE NORWEGIAN STUDENT TEACHERS WITH THAT OF THE NATIVE SPEAKER REFERENCE GROUP

Generally speaking, the writing of the L1 students was more sophisticated than that of their L2 peers. However, the difference between the two was less than might have been expected. The main findings concerning differences in the writing of the native-speaker students (L1) compared to the Norwegian student teachers (L2) are shown in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2. Comparison of the writing of native speakers and the Norwegian student teachers.

Category	L1 (native-speakers)	L2 (Norwegian student teachers)
Cohesive sophistication	Significantly fewer simple coordinators (p<0.001)	Twice as many conjunct types, more disjunct types
Lexical sophistication	Mean of 13.7 high frequency words per text. Significant difference (p<0.001)	Mean of 6.7 high frequency words per text
Syntactic sophistication	Significantly more noun phrases (p<0.001) More participle and noun premodifiers Greater prepositional phrase and <i>-ed</i> clause postmodification Consistently higher representation of passive forms Greater distribution of nominal “ <i>-ing</i> ” clauses as subjects, objects, after prepositions Generally higher distribution of subordinate clauses. Significant differences in clauses of concession (p=<0.028) and result (p=<0.025). Generally higher type-token ration	More adverbial clauses in sentence initial position More ‘s genitive premodifiers More finite relative clause, <i>-ing</i> clause, infinitives, adverbs and adjective postmodification Lower type-token ratio of passive forms
Errors	No errors of aspect and few concord errors	Significantly higher number of concord errors (p=<0.003) and some errors of aspect
Fluency		Impeded by Norwegian L1 influencing incorrect word order, lack of idiomaticity, inappropriate lexis, clutter, tendency to over-verbalise

Firstly, the study of cohesive sophistication showed that the L2 student teachers depended more than the L1 group on the simple coordinators *but*, *and*, *or*, while

at the same time employing a wider range of conjuncts and disjuncts. Secondly, the study of syntactic sophistication revealed little difference in the way the two groups opened sentences, with the L2 group using more adverbial clauses in sentence initial position. Noun phrases were almost twice as frequent among the L1 students as among the L2 ones. While different types of noun phrase pre-modification generally had a higher distribution among the L1 writers, the opposite applied to post-modifiers. In general, passive forms, nominal “-ing” clauses and subordinate clauses had a higher ratio of distribution in the L1 than L2 writers. Thirdly, the study of lexical sophistication revealed a significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.001$), with the L1 students using roughly twice as many low frequency words as their L2 counterparts. Fourthly, and as expected, the error rate of concord and choice of aspect errors was much higher in the L2 group. Finally, a lack of fluency in the L2 writers generally appeared to be a result of L1 interference caused by Norwegian features of word order, idiomaticity, lexis, and verbalization (using verb phrases instead of noun phrases). Inappropriate word order and lexis appear in the following example: *These demands Asher does not want to obtain* (as opposed to *Asher does not want to meet these demands*). Oververbalization appears in the following example: *It was late in the summer, just a couple of weeks before the schools starts, when I one day took a call to one of the places where I had applied for a job* (as opposed to *Towards the end of the summer, just a couple of weeks before the start of school, I called one of the places where I had sent a job application.*) In general, the writing of the L1 students was more syntactically and lexically sophisticated, and more fluent, than their L2 counterparts.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The first questionnaire showed that the majority of the student teachers had experienced their primary school education as the least important for their development of English, especially writing. They generally held their primary school teachers in lower esteem than those in the higher levels, especially in terms of ability to vary lessons, teaching methods, and as teachers of writing. Very little writing and reading extensively had taken place at the primary level. While more writing had been experienced at the lower secondary level, 94% of the student teachers claimed that its aim was to practise language/grammar and only 5% described writing as a means of communicating ideas. There was also a general lack of strategies (e.g. process and group writing) to motivate creativity and enhance the quality of written products. Nevertheless, roughly 25% of the student teachers were very satisfied with their lower secondary teachers as models of English, their abil-

ity to vary lessons, and as teachers of writing. At the same time, roughly 25% were dissatisfied with them in the same respects.

A greater number of student teachers held their upper secondary teachers in higher esteem than those at the other levels. However, similar to the lower secondary level, roughly 30% of the student teachers were critical of their teachers' ability to vary lessons, their teaching methods, and as teachers of writing. There were thus considerable differences among the student teachers as to how they perceived their former teachers. At the upper secondary level, roughly 50% of the student teachers reported that they had been given the choice to choose their reading materials and 60% to choose their writing topics. Furthermore, more of the student teachers had been trained to write a greater range of genres at this level, the biggest change being the focus on discursive (discussion/argumentative) essays. As with the lower secondary level, few of the student teachers had experienced process writing in English. What or whom the student teachers considered to have been the most significant influence on their writing development is shown in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3. The most significant influence on writing development in English.

Influence on writing development in English	No of students	%
Upper secondary teacher	22	33
Extensive reading	11	17
Frequent writing practice	9	13
Lower secondary school teacher	8	12
Living in an English-speaking country	5	7
The home environment	5	7
L1 skills	4	6
Other factors	3	5
Total	67	100

Upper secondary teachers (33%) had had the highest influence, while 12% considered their lower secondary teachers to have been most influential on their writing development. Thus, for almost every second student teacher, one of their former teachers had been the greatest influence on their written development in English. Extensive reading and frequent writing practice were also among the highest influences.

The second questionnaire investigated the student teachers' perceptions of their skills at the end of the year in three main areas: genre training, perceptions of teaching writing, and perceptions of writing competence. While they believed it was important to learn a wide range of genres in teacher education, only one in two considered that this had actually been achieved. The genres in which they felt they had received most training were literary appreciation essays and discursive essays, neither of which were traditionally considered typical genres for compulsory school. The student teachers considered themselves most competent to teach descriptions, letters, notes and narratives, whereas instruction in these genres was not provided during their English teacher education courses. In general, there was little accordance between the most emphasised genres during teacher education and those considered the most important to learn in school.

The student teachers' perceptions of the teaching of writing revealed firstly that they favoured a balance between oral and written communication. This contrasted sharply with the focus on reading texts, translation and vocabulary tests that most of them had experienced at school. As for writing strategies, the majority of the student teachers perceived benefits of using both process and group writing strategies in their teaching practice, although few had experienced these strategies during their own schooling. In addition, the majority intended to demonstrate a range of writing genres for their pupils and understood the importance of and considered themselves competent to link writing to the other language skills, especially extensive reading and oral activities. Finally, the student teachers considered themselves least competent to assess both the content and language of a written text. What they felt able or not able to do was probably a consequence of what they had or had not gained from their methodology course.

Finally, as for the relative importance of the different school levels, the lower secondary level was considered the most important by the majority of the student teachers, followed by the primary level, and lastly upper secondary school. This marked a major change from how they had initially perceived school level in relation to writing development. They were divided on whether the period prior to or during teacher education had been the most influential on their writing development. The actual areas of writing in which the majority of student teachers felt they had progressed most during the academic year were the variety of sentence openings, richness of vocabulary, and correct grammar, while they felt the least progress had been made in noun phrase modification, use of appropriate and idiomatic language, advanced grammar, and beginning and ending pieces. Their perceptions of progress in writing did not always correspond with the findings of the writing analysis, for example their belief about lexical growth. Finally, roughly

eight out of ten student teachers believed that the most important factor influencing pupils' development of writing was a combination of the teacher's writing competence and methods of teaching writing. In contrast, none of the student teachers believed this was due to the teacher's writing competence alone and only one in ten believed that it was solely attributed to the teacher's methods of teaching writing.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

This doctoral study aimed to explore variables connected to competence in the teaching of written English in Norwegian schools. By studying student teachers' writing with a focus on form and their perceived ability to teach writing, it addressed a complex set of interrelated variables connected to the teaching of writing, e.g. the link between past practices and present performance and attitudes, the link between performance and teaching methodology, and the link between input and output. Although not the only variable connected to the development of pupil writing, the teacher does have a key role in this respect.

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main finding related to the Norwegian student teachers' writing was that it progressed marginally throughout the year in some areas of syntactic sophistication and error frequency, while no progress was achieved in other areas, e.g. lexical sophistication. In comparison, the writing of the native speakers was more sophisticated in several areas of lexis and syntax, and their writing was generally more fluent. The relatively low rate of progress among the Norwegian student teachers could be explained by them having reached a relative ceiling, or fossilisation, in their language. If this occurs, according to Bley-Vroman (1989), development ceases in spite of conscious efforts to improve language. Reaching a relative ceiling is partly supported by the student teachers' self-evaluation, in which every second student teacher considered the pre-college period as the most decisive for their English writing development. However, the fact that the student teachers did make some progress in certain areas undermines a ceiling theory. Another argument is that the student teachers were unable to realise their potential for development because of the nature of the English courses they had been studying during the academic year. In terms of language, these courses emphasised language theory at the expense of practical usage, for example the grammar course based on formal grammar instruction. The emphasis was on talking about and

writing about language rather than its actual usage. The danger of an over-emphasis on language theory in teacher training courses has been pointed out by scholars such as Lange (1990) and Cullen (1994). Cullen (1994) argued that teacher training courses lack the time and resources to help student teachers enhance their communicative command of language, as opposed to their knowledge of language. At the same time, language proficiency and positive attitudes to language use are extremely important for non-native language teachers (Britten, 1985; Medgyes, 1992; Murdoch, 1994). If language teachers lack language proficiency and confidence in their own language, they may resort to uninspiring methods and “safe” materials, e.g. relying on a textbook (Medgyes, 1992).

The main finding related to the teaching of writing was that the teacher training course, especially the module on English-teaching methodology, led to a number of changes in the student teachers’ attitudes and perceptions about teaching writing. The school level which most of them had considered to be the most influential for their own writing development at the beginning of the year (upper secondary) was considered at the end of the year as the one with the least potential to enhance writing development. At the end of the year, the student teachers showed a desire to replace the routine teaching many of them had been exposed to in school with a “language-rich” environment characterised by language acquisition and natural language use, communication of the language as opposed to learning about it, extensive reading, strategies to improve writing performance, and less time on monotonous textbook-based lessons.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The main contribution to methodology was devising a broad taxonomy that could be used to measure writing development, with a focus on form, in a corpus of L2 writing. Many previous studies of corpora of L2 writing had focused on one specific area of writing. In contrast, this doctoral study incorporated several features of writing, namely cohesion, syntax, lexis, errors, and fluency. It was able to successfully apply the criteria to determine the student teachers’ rate of written development during the academic year and to compare the writing of this L2 group with that of an L1 reference group. Combining this predominantly quantitative doctoral study of the student teachers’ writing with two sets of questionnaires at the extremes of an academic year increased the validity of the study. In addition to analysing development in their writing, one was also able to study their experiences and perceptions of writing in their own school education, and their perceptions of their writing ability and ability to teach writing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

This doctoral study has implications both for the training of teachers of English and for the teaching of English writing in schools. In terms of the former, the study indicates firstly that more focus should be attached to helping student teachers develop the sophistication of their written language, that student teachers of English should practise reading and writing numerous genres, and that they should experience strategies, especially process writing, that are likely to enhance the quality of their writing. In essence, there should be greater correspondence between what student teachers learn and experience in their teacher training and their expected classroom practice.

At the time this study took place, the norm for student teachers of English was to take the same courses in English, with the exception of a methodology course, as those who were studying English for other reasons. However, after the educational reform of 2010, the GLU courses for student teachers of English (grades 1–10) in departments of education in Norway became more tailor made for student teachers' needs and enabled greater harmony between the content of their English studies and the practical teaching of English in schools. A positive development in GLU teacher education of English teachers has thus taken place since the completion of this doctoral study.

Another positive development has taken place with respect to English teaching in schools. Many of the variables considered important for enhancing the development of written English, namely early literacy, a greater emphasis on reading, the link between reading and writing, writing as an interactive process, learning a wide range of genres, and greater pupil autonomy, were emphasised in the former *L97* curriculum, which was introduced in the same year as this doctoral study was completed. These variables have continued to be emphasised in the subsequent *LK06* curriculum and its revised versions. Since 1997, reading and writing have been incorporated into the English subject from the earliest grades and, unlike for many of the student teachers that participated in this doctoral study, writing has become a communicative activity and not simply a tool to promote grammar. This shift is reflected in “written communication” being a main area of the revised *LK06* English subject curriculum.

The study has a number of implications for the teaching of writing in schools, both implicit and explicit. Since pupils are likely to develop their lexical and grammatical sophistication implicitly through reading extensively, teachers at all levels should provide the opportunity for them to choose to read a wide selection of texts that they are interested in and that are at an appropriate level of difficulty (cf. Krashen, 1984). In this way, they will also be widely exposed to correct forms

and structures of English, which in turn will likely reduce the number of errors they make and will help them gain an understanding of how texts are structured and organised. Pupils can also be taught explicitly to improve their writing. One example of explicit teaching is demonstrating and providing practice in sentence combining, i.e. forming a main and subordinate clause from two main clauses, in order to help pupils to increase their use and variety of subordinate clauses. Another example is demonstrating and providing practice in different ways of pre-modifying noun phrases (e.g. with adjectives and nouns) and postmodifying them (e.g. with prepositional phrases and relative clauses). Pupils can further be shown and given practice in how linking words, e.g. conjuncts and disjuncts, can enhance the coherence of a text. Finally, pupils should be given plenty of opportunities at different levels to write different types of text and should be given feedback during the process of writing in order to enhance the quality of their texts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Some of the criteria used in the study of writing in this doctoral thesis have later been successfully applied to other studies of writing produced by English learners at different levels in the Norwegian school system. For example, the author studied noun phrase modification and subordinate clauses to measure the progress made by writers as they developed from the 4th to 6th grade (Drew, 2010). Vigrestad (2006) included an analysis of subordinate clauses in her comparison of the English written complexity of Norwegian 7th and 9th graders with a corresponding corpus of Dutch pupils' writing. Larsen's (2016) study included subordinate clauses and noun phrase modification when comparing written complexity of 7th graders following an extensive reading programme with those in a control group. Vigrestad, Larsen and Drew (2010) also used T-unit length as a measure of complexity and fluency. In his seminal work on the writing development of 4th, 8th and 12th graders in the USA, Hunt (1965, p. 49) defined a T-unit as "one main clause plus the subordinate clauses attached to or embedded within it". Also, T-units featured widely in Wolfe-Quintero et al's (1998) metastudy of measures of fluency, accuracy and complexity in L2 writing development. Although not used in this doctoral study, T-units have functioned as useful units of measurement of L2 writing development in other studies and can be used in future research of writing.

However, there are limitations as to what corpus studies of texts, using quantifiable measures, can reveal about writing and writers. Further studies of writing should also take into consideration the content and organisation of texts, the way

texts are produced, and the process that they go through, including feedback given to the writer. In other words, qualitative studies of writing, focusing on both teachers and learners, will also increase the knowledge base in the field. There have been such studies focusing on specific aspects of the teaching of writing. For example, Maier (2006) used teacher interviews to find out about changing practices in the teaching of writing at the lower secondary level, Vik (2013) was based on teacher focus groups and pupil interviews about formative feedback to writing in upper secondary school, and McIntosh (2017) used individual teacher interviews and pupil focus groups to find out about the teaching of expository and persuasive writing at the upper secondary level. However, more studies of this kind are desirable. Finally, with the growth of mixed methods studies, there is the opportunity to integrate, for example, quantitative studies of written texts with interviews with teachers and/or pupils, which is what Thomson (2016) did in his study of hedging in the writing of lower secondary pupils. More studies of this kind would also be desirable.

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