# Feedback practices in English in Norwegian upper secondary schools

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**Abstract**
*The present study explores current assessment practices in English instruction in Norwegian upper secondary schools, and relates this to a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing. The data in this article comprises teacher interviews and observations of English classes. Current official guidelines and school practices demonstrate a shift towards formative assessment strategies with an emphasis on feed-forward comments to the students. How this is implemented varies, and the present study shows signs of changing assessment practices in English writing instruction. There is a tendency to use a process-oriented approach to feedback in which the students work through a draft several times before handing in a final product, an approach that is similar to what we find in the genre-pedagogy tradition developed in Australia. This article suggests that applying genre-pedagogy as a framework for English writing instruction could ensure formative assessment strategies that comply well with research on what constitutes good feedback, as well as official guidelines in the Norwegian educational system.*

**Keywords:** Feedback, criteria, process-oriented, self-assessment, peer assessment, genre-pedagogy

## Introduction

"Once I have started working like this, I don't see that there is any other way of doing it". This is a quote from a teacher about her writing instruction, in which she used feedback as a means to make the students work to improve their written texts. She did this in her English classes, a second language context (L2), as well as her Norwegian classes, a first language context (L1). That she did so in both goes to show that English can be said to have a status somewhere between a second and a foreign language in Norway (Rindal, 2012, p. 23), as English writing instruction is quite similar to Norwegian writing instruction (Horverak, forthcoming). However, whereas there has been a focus on process writing in the teaching of writing in Norwegian, at least in lower secondary school (Dysthe & Hertzberg, 2009), the same has not been the case in the teaching of writing in English from what the teachers in this study reports. The current study indicates a change to this, at least in upper secondary which is the focus of the current study.

The type of process writing referred to in this study has a somewhat different focus than the process-writing approach used in Norwegian teaching in lower secondary school. Whereas the latter generally focuses on pupils producing texts they feel an ownership towards (Dysthe & Hertzberg, 2009), the process-writing approach in English in upper secondary school to a greater extent focuses on how to use feedback as a means to help the students adjust to genre requirements set by the teacher. This practice complies well with the genre-

pedagogy approach to teaching writing developed in Australia, where there is a focus on using different specific feedback strategies to support students in their writing-process, like self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment strategies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012).

In terms of feedback practices, there has been a shift from summative to formative assessment the last decades (Black & Wiliam, 1998). While the former is primarily concerned with summing up the achievements of students, formative assessment is concerned with how evaluation can be used to improve the students' competence (Sadler, 1989, p. 120). As various formative feedback practices have generally shown positive effects on learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007), this is currently in focus in all subjects in the Norwegian school system. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has implemented reforms and run programmes on "Assessment for Learning "in schools around the country (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2014). When it comes to writing instruction, this implies that assessment should be integrated in the writing instruction process instead of being something that occurs after writing has taken place.

Some elements of formative assessment practices have even been made obligatory for Norwegian teachers, such as introducing self-assessment strategies, providing the students with clear criteria, and systematically relating the feedback to these criteria. With the current regulations, the feedback practices are pushed in the direction of formative assessment, and there is perhaps a need for a framework for the feedback process to ensure that official requirements are met. This article looks into what feedback practices actually exist and relates this to official guidelines and how a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing may provide a useful framework for the feedback process.

The research question of the present study is: *How do English teachers in Norwegian upper secondary school work with feedback to support students in improving their writing skills?* The analysis and discussion will be related to genre-pedagogy, which includes a focus on adjusting writing to genres or text-types. Hence, the concept of "writing skills" refers to two aspects of writing. First, it refers to the ability to write in a second language and managing to produce correct language, both in terms of grammar and style. Secondly, it refers to the ability to write different types of texts or genres, like argumentative and narrative texts. This understanding of writing skills complies well with how writing is understood in the English curriculum for Norwegian upper secondary schools, specifying the aim: "to enable students to write different types of texts with structure and coherence suited to the purpose and situation" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a).

The data in this article comprises 9 interviews with teachers, including one researcher on feedback, a focus group interview with 6 teachers and observation notes from observed lectures. The analysis reveals a change in practice from using feedback to report to the students what level they are on and what they need to improve next time they write, to using feedback to support students in the process of producing texts according to genre requirements. As will be shown, this is in line with the genre-pedagogy developed in Australia, which will be elaborated on in the next section.


**Literature review - Good feedback and formative assessment**
The ongoing change from summative to formative assessment has led to increased focus on what constitutes good feedback. Feedback can be defined as "information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way" (Ramaprasad, 1983, p. 4). This depends on three important factors that have been identified by researchers (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The first factor is "feed up", which answers the question "Where am I going" for the students. This includes a focus on clarifying goals, and it is important that the

goals are challenging, yet reasonable. The second factor is "feed back", which answers the question "How am I going" for the students. This includes a focus on how the students are progressing, often in relation to some type of expected standard or criteria for the assignment. The third is "feed forward", which answers the question "where to next" for the students.

What distinguishes formative assessment from feedback is that the information provided by any type of agent is followed up in the following learning process. Black and Wiliam put this as follows:

> Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited. (Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 9)

In other words, in formative assessment practices, the answers to "where am I going", "how am I going" and "where to next" become an integrated part of the learning process.

The two meta-analyses of feedback, Black and Wiliam (1998) and Hattie and Timperley (2007) support the idea that feedback has a positive effect on learning. Formative assessment is the consistent feature that Black and Wiliam consider central in achieving significant learning gains (1998, p. 17). One of the strategies they highlight is self-assessment that includes a focus on understanding assessment criteria and the opportunity to reflect on their work. Students who were taught to monitor or regulate their own work improved more than students who were not using self-monitoring strategies. This is also emphasized as an important aspect in Hattie and Timperley's (2007) meta-analysis. Pintrich and Zusho give the following definition of self-regulation:

> Self-regulated learning is an active constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and monitor, regulate and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment. (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002, p. 64)

In fact, there is extensive empirical evidence supporting that self-regulated learners are more efficient than others as they generally are more persistent, resourceful, confident and higher achievers (Pintrich, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

In their meta-analysis, Hattie and Timperley divide types of feedback into four categories, arguing that self-regulation strategies are the most powerful. These are 1) Feedback about the task 2) Feedback about the processing of the task 3) Feedback about self-regulation and 4) Feedback about the self as a person (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 90). They claim that feedback about the task could be powerful if it enhances better processing or self-regulation. The categories could be seen to overlap though, as processing a task includes engaging in error correction strategies. This could be seen as a sub-category of self-regulation, as this generally deals with how students "monitor, direct and regulate actions toward the learning goal" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 93). In order to self-monitor writing, students also need to know whether they are on the right track in relation to the task they are working with, so feedback about the task could also be seen as feedback providing opportunities for self-regulation. This emphasis on the student's participation in the assessment process shows that formative assessment is a social and collaborative activity. There is also emphasis on enhancing students' learning through a type of partnership between teacher and students (Black, McCormick, James, & Pedder, 2006; Gardner, 2006; Hawe, Dixon, & Watson, 2008).

For the first language (L1), there seems to be a general agreement that feedback of good quality that supports self-regulation is efficient for the learning process, while this differs when it comes to peer feedback. There is some evidence that peer feedback has a positive effect on learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Graham & Perin, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-dick, 2006; Toppings, 2003). However, in the context of second language learning, the evidence is not as clear (F. Hyland, 2000; K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Peer feedback has been shown to have little effect on students' second language writing, while feedback from the teacher is considered more efficient and preferred by the students. One of the issues specific to the second language situation may be that the language competence of the students is not good enough to address underlying problems, so any correction will be of random surface errors. The students may as a consequence receive inaccurate or misleading advice (Horowitz, 1986). Affective factors are also important in terms of peer feedback, as students might either appreciate getting some support from their peers, or they may mistrust them and react negatively to critical comments (Amores, 1997). Whether peer feedback has a direct positive effect on learning or not, it can be argued that peer response supports the student in developing an awareness of their own learning, and contributes to establishing a socio-cultural learning environment (Rijlaarsdam et al., 2008). According to this, one could claim that it is a stage in developing self-regulated learners.

There is little research in the Norwegian context about the type of feedback practices that actually exist, though there have been some case-studies of what happens with regard to feedback on writing in both Norwegian (L1) and English (L2) classes. One case-study that goes in depth into the dialogical aspect of feedback is a study from an L1 context in lower secondary school (Igland, 2008). This study shows that comments given in the margins of the text are better followed up than comments placed at the end, and that the students changed their texts more efficiently when they had teacher support than when working independently. Another case-study from an L1 context that also confirms this has been part of a research project on basic skills in Norwegian schools. It examines the transition from lower to upper secondary school, where the focus of the feedback shifts from making the individuals produce their own personal texts to making the students adjust to genre requirements given by teachers (Smidt, 2009). The studies mentioned here are concerned with writing in Norwegian as first language, but the issues dealt with here are also relevant in the context of this article.

A recent case-study on feedback-practices in English in two Norwegian upper secondary schools shows that also in English, teachers give feedback during the writing process (Vik, 2013). One of the participating schools in this study had implemented formative assessment strategies more systematically than the other and focused among others on setting learning objectives and visualised taxonomies rather than giving grades in the process of learning to write. Another case-study of a different Norwegian upper secondary school (Nyvoll Bø, 2014) has shown contradictory findings to Vik's study, as the conclusion is that teachers mostly give post-product feedback, and do not give feedback during the writing process. The students in this school confirm this through a questionnaire revealing that they mostly write texts without writing drafts and getting feedback in the process.

These two case-studies, both carried out in the western region of Norway, show that practices may vary quite much in Norwegian upper secondary schools concerning feedback practices in the context of English writing. However, the teachers in both studies express a positive attitude towards using a type of process writing with multiple drafts. Another study on feedback practices in English is currently being carried out in 10 upper secondary schools in the eastern region of Norway (Saliu-Abdulahi, forthcoming). According to Saliu-Abdulahi's study, teachers follow up feedback comments by making the students revise the language in their texts, with no revision on textual level. This is, however, not seen as part of

the writing process before a final product is handed in, as the students do not get any new assessments.

A small-scale study carried out in English classes in yet another upper secondary school in Norway confirms that using a process writing approach with focus on both language and text structure has a positive influence on students' ability to write texts (Askland, 2010). The feedback strategies used in Askland's experimental study is much in line with the genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing developed in Australia. This is the kind of approach that will be investigated in the current study. Different teaching-learning cycles have been developed within this tradition, one of the most straightforward being presented in Hyland's *Genre and second language writing* (2004) with the following five stages: 1) Developing the context, revealing purpose and setting, 2) Modelling and deconstructing the text, revealing the key features of the genre 3) Joint construction of the text 4) Independent construction of the text, including support through feedback and 5) Linking related texts, reflecting on similarities and differences (K. Hyland, 2004, p. 129).

A central concern in the genre-pedagogy approach is the need to adjust the writing to purpose and situation, both when it comes to language and text structure, and keeping this in focus in all stages of the teaching-learning cycle. Another central concern is using formative assessment strategies such as self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment. This is applied in stage four of the teaching-learning cycle to support students in improving their texts before handing in a final product. The strategies mentioned here are some of the elements that will be focused on in the analysis of the current study, revealing that there are changing tendencies towards a process-writing approach that complies well with a genre-pedagogy to teaching writing.


**Method**
*Research design*
To investigate feedback practices in English in Norwegian upper secondary schools, this study uses a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews (Silverman, 2011) and observations. I interviewed 9 individual teachers, one of them also being a researcher on feedback, and I observed 13 lectures, of which 3 are included in the analysis of this article. In addition, I conducted a focus-group interview with 6 teachers. During the interviews and observations, some assessment forms were collected, and these are also part of the data material[1]. The project has been approved by the Data Protection Official for Research (NSD).

*Research tools and procedure*
Both the individual interviews and the focus group interview were based on the same interview-guide that included questions about feedback practices. Some of the questions dealt with what was commented on in assessments in terms of language, structure and content. These are the three categories presented in the assessment guidelines for the exam of the obligatory English course in Norwegian upper secondary schools (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b). Questions about improvement were also linked to these three categories. Other questions were concerned with process-oriented feedback practices, self-assessment and peer assessment. The teachers were asked about what they typically had to comment on in student texts, and whether they followed up the feedback in any way. If they answered that the students worked with revising their texts, the teachers were also asked whether they gave the students a grade on the final product. Concerning self- and peer assessment, the teachers were asked how they felt about including such practices, and also

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[1] This study is part of another study on English writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school, and is based on much of the same material (Horverak, forthcoming).

how they integrated such types of assessment in their classroom work with written texts. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, recorded and transcribed. I have translated the quotes included in this article. The goal of the observations was to gather information illuminating the issue of writing instruction, and notes were taken during the observations. In addition, two different forms for evaluation were collected, one used for peer assessment, the other for teacher assessment and self-assessment.

*Sample*
The material is collected from 7 upper secondary schools in the southern region of Norway, most of them with both vocational and general studies. I did so by contacting former colleagues and acquaintances, which means that the sample is limited to Aust- and Vest-Agder counties in the southern region of Norway. Though the informants were recruited through a type of convenience sampling, the selection process was strategic to a certain degree (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, pp. 229-230). The purpose of the selection was to get a varied sample from the population of English teachers. The focus-group interview was carried out in an already established network of teachers meeting on a regular basis a couple of times during each semester, which comprises an English teacher from each school in the county.

The informants in this study come from different types of schools in terms of size and proportion of vocational and general studies[2]. There were 15 informants in total. Table 1 below presents the distribution of the informants in terms of gender, age, first language, higher education in English, work experience and school affiliation. The last category merely gives information about which informants work at the same school. The individual informants are numbered from I 1 to I 9. Informant number 9 is the teacher who is also a researcher on feedback. The focus group informants are numbered from GI 1 to GI 6.

Table 1
*Distribution of the 15 informants on different variables*

| *Variable* | | *Number of informants* | *Enumeration of informants* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 2 | I 7, GI 5 |
| | Female | 13 | I 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 GI 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 |
| | | | |
| Age | <30 | 1 | GI 3 |
| | 30-39 | 4 | I 3, 4, 8, GI 6 |
| | 40-49 | 4 | I 1, 5, 9, GI 5 |
| | 50-59 | 4 | I 2, 6, GI 1, 4 |
| | >59 | 2 | I 7, GI 2 |
| | | | |
| First language | Norwegian | 14 | I 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 GI 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |
| | Other | 1 | I 6 |
| | | | |
| Higher Education – credits of English | Minimum 60 | 2 | I 4, GI 1 |
| | Minimum 90 | 6 | I 1, 2, 7, 8, GI 4, 6 |
| | Minimum 150 | 7 | I 3, 4, 8, 9, GI 3 |
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[2] At the end of lower secondary school, pupils have to choose either vocational or general studies. Though both these types of studies are often located in the same schools, some upper secondary schools have more vocational studies, and some have primarily general studies.

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|---|---|---|---|
| Work experience | 1-5 years | 4 | I 3, 4, 8, GI 3 |
| | 6-10 years | 2 | GI 5, 6 |
| | 11-15 years | 2 | I 5, 6 |
| | >15 years | 7 | I 1, 2, 7, 9, GI 1, 2, 4 |
| | | | |
| School affiliation | School 1 | 3 | I 1, 2, GI 6 |
| | School 2 | 2 | I 3, 4 |
| | School 3 | 3 | I 5, 6, GI 1 |
| | School 4 | 4 | I 7, 8, 9, GI 5 |
| | School 5 | 1 | GI 2 |
| | School 6 | 1 | GI 3 |
| | School 7 | 1 | GI 4 |

*Note.* I = Informant, individual interview

GI = Group Informant, focus group interview

With regard to gender, the table shows that there is a majority of female informants. The informants' ages range from below 30 to above 59 and are quite evenly distributed. Most informants have Norwegian as their first language, and most of them have more than 60 credits of English, which equals one year of English studies. While some are recently educated, most have quite long experience. There may be unofficial connections between the informants as all the participating schools are in the southern region of Norway, and the informants may also have studied English at the same university in this region.

*Analysis*
On the basis of relevant literature on feedback, central themes within feedback practices were identified in the data material. This means that the analysis was driven by theoretical or analytic interests, defined as a deductive or theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 82-84). The themes were adjusted through a coding process carried out in Nvivo, a software for qualitative analyses. A definition of theme is given by Braun and Clarke in their article about using thematic analysis: "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set" (2006, p. 82, underscored by the authors). The thematic categories of feedback developed in the analysis of this study include 1) General ideas, 2) Typical issues of evaluation, 3) Typical areas of improvement, 4) Process-oriented practices, 5) Self-assessment and 6) Peer assessment. At the outset, category two was split between evaluation criteria and typical issues of evaluation. As these seemed to overlap, the two categories were collapsed into one. This was confirmed by a second rater who performed thematic analysis on parts of the material to ensure inter-rater reliability.

*Validity*
In this study, it is necessary to address the issue of validity as the conclusions are based on a rather small sample within a limited geographical area and therefore difficult to generalise to larger populations. However, one can argue that the findings are transferrable to other similar contexts, in this case, to the two Agder counties (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One reason is because many of the informants are in a way related through a network, though they come from different schools. The fact that so many of the individual informants include a type of process-oriented feedback practice may be influenced by the fact that one of the informants has done research on this, and her work may have influenced others through various types of networks. Though this might be a problem for the validity of the findings in this article, it is generally positive if research leads to changed practices. Based on this, it could be argued that qualitative studies may be important for those they concern, even though they may not

provide generalizable conclusions based on statistically significant results. While the findings in this study may not be transferrable to all similar contexts, the study still provides useful information about changing practices in some upper secondary schools in the southern region of Norway.

**Results and analysis**
The first part of the analysis deals with what is typically commented on in the feedback. Following this, there is a short presentation of what type of improvement the informants see in the students' texts during a year of teaching. The third part of the analysis describes the changing practices some teachers report on working more process-oriented with feedback, and some challenges with this type of practice. The two final parts of the analysis deal with assessment practices in which the students are engaged in evaluating texts, self-assessment and peer assessment. Some reflections about these types of assessment strategies are included along with examples of how they are implemented in the classroom. The feedback practices reported by the informants will be related to the framework of genre-pedagogy, which again complies well with the "Assessment for learning"-programme run in Norwegian schools and the English subject curriculum for upper secondary school.

*Typical evaluation issues*
The issues of feedback commented on by the informants in this study are relevant aspects of writing and text-production in genre-pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012). Some of these are structure, correct use of sources, which is related to content, and the level of formality of language. In the following, I will address what the informants typically comment on in all of the three main evaluation categories: structure, language and content.

All the individual informants report that the students have some problems with organising content to meet the requirements of how to structure argumentative texts, and to properly answer the task. One of the elements that re-occur in the feedback is the need to include an introduction, a main part and a conclusion (I 1, 5, 6, 7), another is the need to divide the text into paragraphs (I 3, 4, 6, 8). One of the challenges pointed out is that students have problems with structuring their ideas over several paragraphs. Instead, they include several topics in the same paragraph: "Often I see that they write an introduction, then there is the next paragraph, and in that paragraph there is often a lot of information that goes in different directions" (I 8). The issue of structure is also something that all informants consider important in English writing instruction (Horverak, forthcoming, in progress). Another issue with regard to structure is that the students have some problems providing arguments to support their claims (I 2, 3, 8). Some of the informants also mention a need to give feedback on how to use connectors to create coherence, which is also mentioned in the focus group (I 6, 7, 8, 9, GI 2).

Another serious challenge mentioned by several informants is the use of sources when writing (I 3, 4, 5, 7, 9). There are several problems here, some related to learning how to use sources and others related to cheating and plagiarism. Some of the informants mention that the students do not use their sources well enough to build coherent arguments. Informant 9, who has done research on feedback, stresses the fact that the students are not used to giving sources in running text, only at the end. When the students use sources, it may also be a challenge to use them correctly. As pointed out by informant 7, it is understandable that learners of English might have some problems with rewriting content from sources: 'if they start to change single words, then it either becomes the wrong level of style or they pick a totally wrong word, and then they have suddenly written a paragraph which is meaningless' (R 7). The same informant also mentions the challenge of writing a proper literature list, and

comments on how students may write "sources, Wikipedia" or "my own head" when listing the sources.

Choosing the appropriate level of formality is one of the linguistic issues that reappears in feedback of the individual informants as well as the focus group (I 2, 3, 6, 9, GI 2). This includes the challenge involved in making the language precise enough. Students are perhaps not conscious about what level of formality and involvement is appropriate when writing argumentative texts. As informant 2 points out, they may include "weakly founded opinions and a lot of emotions", and include expressions like "shame on you", "all the stupid…" and "poor guy". Another informant comments on how students may use inappropriate language when writing in a foreign language and refers to a situation where a student had used many swearwords in a formal text. She translated this to the students and read it out loud in Norwegian. Then she asked if they would have said it this way, and the student who had written the text reacted by saying "oh no, I cannot hand that in to my teacher, no, I cannot do that", which the teacher confirmed (GI 2).

The focus of feedback might easily be on mistakes the students make, as pointed out by group informant 5, "I have been a professional mistake-finder to now". Some of the linguistic issues mentioned both by individual informants and the focus group are verbal categories like –ing-forms, tense and concord (I 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 GI 5, 2) and relative pronouns (I 8, GI 5). Although the teachers in this study comment on language mistakes, the focus of feedback seems to have shifted from correcting language mistakes to issues concerning structure, content and adjusting the language to context, central elements in a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing and also in the English subject curriculum.

*Typical areas of improvement*
When asked about what is typically improved in students' texts during a year, the informants focus on many of the same elements that they report commenting on in the feedback. One of the issues that recur is level of reflection, meaning the students' ability to elaborate on an issue, which is related to the content (I 2, 4, 7, 8). Other elements are structure (I 3, 4, 9), coherence (I 1, 8) and grammatical issues (I 4, 8, 9). Informant 3 mentions that the students become "more focused on formalising the language". From what the informants here report, it seems like the students become better at writing texts suited to purpose and situation, central in both the English curriculum and in genre-pedagogy.

Whether students improve also depends on the individual students as pointed out by informant 6:

> I advise them to keep the criteria in front of them when they write tests, and read the assessment criteria and look at what is emphasised on this and this test. I feel that those students who do that improve in everything we ask them to consider, while those who don't care…that is just the way it is.

Another factor mentioned here is that the students improve according to evaluation criteria given by the teacher.

*Process-oriented practices*
Both the individual informants and the focus group informants report that they give time for the students to work on the texts they have written after having received feedback comments. This indicates that there is a focus on "feed forward" in the comments from the teachers. They give the students some advice on what to do to improve the texts. However, there seems to be two different practices as to when the final assessment of the product is given. Whereas some of the informants report giving feedback as part of the writing process, others report giving

feedback after the final product is handed in. In the individual interviews, most informants report that they give the assessment after the students have worked out a final product through a process (I 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9). This complies well with the genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing, as working through several drafts is important in stage four of the teaching-learning cycle presented by Hyland. One of the informants has even given the students the offer to work at home with an assignment they can get feedback on and revise before handing in (I 7). None of the students followed up on this offer, though. Another informant talks about a plan to use a process-oriented approach for the next hand-in:

> It seems like there is little of what we used to call rough draft, and things like mind-maps and ideas, so I thought that next time I'm going to have a 'forced plan', I'm going to have at least 20 words about this, about the topic and things that concern it, possibly synonyms, factual words, whatever, and then I want a rough draft, how do you plan to proceed. (I2)

According to this description, the students were going to be asked to write down a list of 20 keywords and make a draft. They get feedback on this, and then write the final product as a test at school based on their previous notes and feedback comments. This is one example of how formative assessment strategies with "feed forward" comments may be applied.

An issue that is mentioned as challenging with this type of process-oriented approach to writing is grading because the informants feel that the students might get grades that are better than they actually deserve (I 5, 8). If given the opportunity to work at home, they may also cheat in some way or another as pointed out by informant 5: "If they come with a text others have written, which is not on the internet so I cannot find out by using Ephorus, then they haven't really learnt anything". Another issue is raised in the following comment: "but I cannot plan my teaching according to students who don't want to learn and just cheat". Even though there are some problematic issues concerning assessment, most of the informants were positive to process-oriented approaches to writing and feedback.

On the other hand, the focus group interview revealed a more reluctant attitude towards such a process-oriented feedback practice. Most of the informants there report that this is too time-consuming, and they do not have the capacity to work that way (GI 1, 2, 3, 4, 6), as expressed most clearly by informant 2:

> Well, it is clear that ideally, it would be great if one could do that, but it is a question of time, because that would mean that you go through a pile and correct it twice, right, and I have to say that I don't have capacity to do that really.

Some of the group informants give time for the students to work with revising their texts in class, though they do not give a new assessment (GI 2, 4). This also demonstrates a focus on "feed forward", or how the students can improve. However, it does not comply with the genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing, in which a central concern is that the students hand in a final product after revising drafts. Group informant 3 reports having tried out giving assessment after revision and found it very useful, but mentions that she does not have the capacity to do this on a regular basis. The others also report that they wish they had time to use more process-oriented approaches. Group informant 5 confirms that it is some extra work to assess the texts a second time, but suggests prioritising that rather than giving an extra test. What there is general agreement about in the focus group is that ideally, one should work more process-oriented with writing exercises in school, which complies well with both a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing and the programme "Assessment for Learning" run in Norwegian schools.

When discussing the use of a process-writing approach, the issue of weaker versus stronger students comes up, and two of the informants state that working with revision of texts functions better with stronger students (GI 3, 4), which in this instance means students on general studies. Informant 9, the researcher on feedback, also expresses a firm belief in the usefulness of giving the students an opportunity to revise their texts before a final assessment is given. She contrasts this with the more traditional approach to feedback where students only get one assessment:

> Students become very motivated by receiving help in a process where it is still possible to get better results rather than just to get one grade on an assessment of a final product that you cannot do anything with anyway, that is kind of pointless. (I 9)

She also refers to her research project carried out some years ago where she documented that the students improved their writing through a process-oriented feedback-practice. Even though the teacher has to go through the students' texts several times, she claims that this way of working could be considered labour-saving, as less time is spent on every round of assessment. She argues that when writing in real life, a type of process-orientated approach is used. Informant 5 concurs, arguing, that in other contexts in society, one has the possibility to take breaks, get inspiration, discuss with others and get feedback. It may not always be the case that this is how it is, but this is true in some situations. Hence, using a process-oriented approach to feedback in line with genre-pedagogy could be seen as a sensible way of preparing students for writing in different future contexts.

However, a challenge reported by informant 9 is to manage the follow up of the revision work in the classroom context. When 30 students have questions about the teacher's comments at the same time, it can be very stressful running around trying to answer all of them. One of the observations of informant 8 confirms that this might be a challenge. During a double lecture of revision work, the total number of questions asked and answered was around 70. During the first 30 minutes, the teacher answered about 30 questions. The frequency of questions decreased during the second lecture as some students finished revising. This observation definitely shows that it might be a challenge to follow up revision work, but it also demonstrates how important it is that time is provided to following up feedback. Without such a follow-up session, it might be difficult to ensure that the students actually understand the comments they get, or even bother to try to understand them.

Another challenging issue informant 9, the researcher on feedback, brings up is that developing good writing skills takes time and much practice is needed. She sees it as important to use a process-oriented approach to feedback for several years and in several subjects. Some of the informants report that they also use such a process-oriented approach in Norwegian as well as in English, often with the same students (I 5, 8), and informant 9 has tried out the same approach in Spanish. The focus is more on linguistic issues then, as the students are on a lower level there compared to English. In this study, the focus in English seems rather to be on how to structure the text and the different paragraphs, and how to use sources to build a sensible argument. This is related to the requirements set for the specific types of texts that are written in English, or the goals of the writing exercises, which again answer the question "where am I going" for the students. This focus on text-structure also complies well with the English subject curriculum and genre-pedagogy, where students are supported through assessment strategies focused on writing texts with a similar structure to model texts.

*Self-assessment*

Self-assessment seems to be part of most of the informants' feedback practices, though how much effort has been put into developing self-assessment strategies differs. Self-assessment is another strategy in genre-pedagogy, included in stage 4 in Hyland's teaching-learning cycle. It is also an important strategy to apply to support the students in becoming self-regulated learners (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002). In the focus group interview, it is stated explicitly that the work they do on self-assessment is not very systematic or well worked out (GI 4, 2). Informant 9, the researcher on feedback, also expresses the importance of improving the practices in this respect. Some of the informants refer to working with feedback given from the teacher, like correcting the language in their own texts as a type of self-assessment (I 3, 5, 7, 9, GI 3). Some informants mention that they tell the students to reflect on how they would have graded their own texts (I 7, GI 2, 3). Quite a few of the informants include some questions that the students are to reflect on after a writing session. These questions concern how they have managed the writing task, what they have to work more with and how they should go about this (I 1, 4, 6, 8, GI 2). The teachers report that they include self-assessment practices only because they have been told to do so, but still, there seems to be a positive attitude towards developing better practices.

Other approaches to self-assessment reported seem to be more thoroughly worked out. Informant 8 mentions a quite detailed approach to self-assessment. She tells about a checklist that the students go through before handing in written work. She reports this as quite useful, referring to a situation where a girl came to her afterwards and said that she went back to her text after having evaluated it and thought "oh yes, maybe I could have included more there". Another informant uses a teacher assessment form that is quite detailed concerning structure, content and language for self-assessment purposes (I 3). From what the other informants report, the challenge with self-assessment seems to be to find time to develop good tools and systems for this.

*Peer assessment*
There is no systematic use of peer assessment of writing reported in the interviews, which is one of the central strategies in stage 4 in Hyland's teaching-learning cycle developed in the genre-pedagogy tradition. There are also different attitudes about including peer assessment strategies in the classroom expressed in the interviews. Many of the informants are a bit sceptical since they think it may be uncomfortable for some students to show their writing to others (I 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, GI 4). Informant 4 puts this as follows: "I think there are many students who find it very difficult to show what they have done for others. It's embarrassing to be wrong…".

Some precautions that can be taken are mentioned, like making sure that the students feel confident about each other and controlling who works together in groups (I 4, 9, GI 3). A strategy used by informant 7 who I observed, was that the students handed in anonymous texts with four-digit numbers on, so the only ones identifying their texts were themselves. The following lecture, the students circulated the texts, corrected language mistakes that were yellowed out and discussed the questions for discussion presented in the texts. The students responded positively to this approach. Using anonymous texts may be a solution if students are afraid of showing their work to their peers.

An observation in informant 1's group provided another good example of how peer assessment may be performed. The students were to write short texts, first with "expressive language", then with "objective language". They then exchanged texts with a partner, and were to comment on how the other managed to write in an expressive or objective way. The students reported that they found this useful. Like in the previous example, this context included work with texts that were not high-stake texts in terms of evaluation. This may also be a factor to consider when working with peer assessment. If the texts used in such situations

are merely for practice purposes, it may be easier for students to accept that their peers get to read their texts.

Another important issue is that it is important that the students know what to look for when assessing their peers' texts. Learning what to look for in others' texts may also help the students know what to look for in their own texts, and consequently support them in becoming self-regulated learners. During the focus-group interview, a quite elaborate checklist for peer assessment was presented and distributed by one of the teachers in the group. This form covered the main elements evaluated in written texts: global structure, paragraph structure, linguistic issues, content and use of sources. First, the students answer questions about whether their peer's text has an introduction with clear focus, whether the conclusion is linked to it and how many paragraphs there are. Secondly, they answer questions about what the topic sentences are, how the sentences are linked and how long the paragraphs are. Thirdly, they answer questions about whether there are too many repetitions and informal words, and whether there are grammar and spelling mistakes. Fourthly, they answer questions about whether they understand the message of the text, and whether the paragraphs are well developed. Finally, they consider whether the sources are quoted in a correct way. The group informants seemed to be interested in implementing this form in their practices. This shows that in spite of a sceptical attitude to peer assessment, at least some teachers are positive to trying this out. Using peer assessment may be a strategy that can contribute in the process of giving students information about "how I am going" and "where to next".

**Discussion**

This study set out to explore current feedback practices in English in some upper secondary schools in Norway. The typical issues of feedback reported are related to requirements of genres; for example in the context of argumentative writing, the informants typically comment on the structure of the text, how arguments are built, whether sources are used appropriately and whether the language is adjusted to the situation. The collected material also shows that there are emerging practices where these elements are included in assessment forms used for peer and self-assessment, though these strategies could be more systematically developed. The informants were generally positive towards applying self-assessment strategies, though they expressed a somewhat more sceptical attitude towards peer assessment. They also considered it useful to integrate feedback in the writing process before a final product is handed in. Whether they actually applied such a process-oriented feedback strategy depended on whether they had the capacity to do so, as pointed out in the focus group interview. Still, there was a clear trend towards including more formative assessment strategies that focused on genre-requirements, which is in line with the genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing.

The analysis of this study reveals that the informants keep a focus on textual features like structure, use of sources and adjusting to the right formality level throughout the assessment process. The students receive "feed forward" comments about these issues, and this is followed up and improved in the revision work. In contrast, Saliu-Abdulahi's study (forthcoming) reports that when teachers let the students revise their texts, the focus is on correcting language mistakes, even though the focus of the feedback is on textual features. Another issue is that in Saliu-Abdulahi's study, some of the teachers expressed a rather negative attitude towards using multiple drafts, and only a few teachers reported doing so.

That practice differs in various schools is also revealed in the two studies from the western region of Norway, Vik (2013) and Nyvoll Bø's (2014) studies, one reporting that formative assessment strategies, like multiple drafting, are used, and one reporting the

opposite. Even though there are different practices revealed in the current study as well, most of the informants reported having used feedback to support their students in the writing process, which complies well with what Hyland presents as stage 4 in his teaching-learning cycle, as well as current official guidelines for the Norwegian educational system.

Research has shown that merely adding a revision phase without giving the opportunity to improve is not very efficient (Hillocks, 1986). This supports the idea that it is motivating for the students to receive feedback in the process of writing. However, the students might get tired of working with the same text repeatedly, particularly weaker students. Also the teacher might find such an approach exhausting and time-consuming as pointed out by some of the informants. How the students respond to a process-oriented approach to writing may vary, and it is perhaps something that needs consideration in the individual cases. Still, the informants who report that they have tried this approach report only positive responses from the students.

From the analysis in this study, peer assessment seems to be an assessment strategy that is not fully exploited, something that is confirmed by Saliu-Abdulahi's study (forthcoming). Many of the teachers reported that they are sceptical to peer assessment; one reason being that they think the students will not feel comfortable showing others their work. Indeed, research on peer assessment has shown that for peer assessment to be of value, it is crucial that the students take a positive stance to peer review activities (Nelson & Carson, 2006, p. 43). However, in those cases reported in this study where peer assessment activities have been included, it does not seem like social issues have been a problem. Another important aspect of peer assessment is the value such practices have in developing self-assessment strategies. Evaluating texts written by others may help the students in becoming better at looking critically at their own texts. Consequently, though there is not clear evidence that peer assessment is useful in an L2 context (K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006), it could be useful in the process of developing self-regulated learners.

Several of the teachers report that they have not fully developed systematic strategies for self-assessment, and that this is an area where they can improve. This study reveals that there are different types of practices developing, as does Saliu-Abdulahi's study (forthcoming). There are, however, no clear ideas about how to apply self-assessment in a best possible way in order to develop self-regulated learners. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), self-assessment is one of the major aspects of self-regulated learning. Developing efficient self-assessment strategies is something that needs more attention in school, as self-regulated learners generally are more efficient than others (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Pintrich & Zusho, 2002; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). It seems like the teachers in this study have clear ideas about what they expect from students when writing different genres. The challenge seems to be to transfer the practice of assessing texts against certain criteria from teacher to students, both through peer and self-assessment activities. Some of the checklists referred to in this study demonstrate a starting practice of doing so, but this is an area that needs to be prioritised in future work with assessment.

From this analysis of feedback practices, it is evident that providing feedback is a complex issue. As pointed out in Parr and Timperley (2010), teachers need considerable pedagogical content knowledge to provide the feedback needed for a best possible effect on learning. That assessment for learning has been an area of commitment in Norwegian schools in later years confirms the recognition of a need to improve feedback practices. It is clearly stated by Black and Wiliam that "the provision of challenging assignments and extensive feedback lead to greater student engagement and higher achievement" (1998, p. 23). Using formative assessment strategies is a central means to support students in improving their writing skills (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This is also a central strategy in genre-pedagogy approaches to teaching writing. To combine process-oriented

feedback practices with a focus on genre requirements results in genre-based feedback. In the following, some of the advantages of genre-based feedback will be elaborated on, and it will be argued that applying genre-pedagogy as a framework for writing instruction would ensure good formative assessment practices in line with official guidelines for English teaching in the Norwegian educational system.

*Advantages of genre-based feedback and genre-pedagogy*
As pointed out by Hyland, "process and genre are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they can usefully be seen as supplementing" (2004, p. 20). To combine process-writing with a focus on genre requirements results in the use of genre-based feedback. Using this type of feedback as a formative assessment strategy is central in genre-pedagogy, but it also complies well with the English subject curriculum and the programme "Assessment for Learning" run in Norwegian schools. Applying a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing implies that there will be several rounds with genre-based feedback before a final assessment of a text is given, and that all sources of feedback are exploited.

One advantage of using process-oriented feedback pointed out by the interviewed researcher is that the students get feedback when they are prepared to do something about it (I 9). This is also one of the advantages of using genre-based feedback reported by Hyland (2004). As pointed out by informant 9, getting advice when it is still possible to influence the outcome is motivating for the students. In addition, combining feedback and writing instruction has the advantage of being integrative (Hyland, 2004) as there is a link between the assessments and the teaching.

Applying a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing includes attention to the context of writing, and study of model texts before the stage of actual writing (K. Hyland, 2004). This includes a focus on the goal of the writing, and what the genre requirements or criteria for evaluation are. These are central aspects in the English curriculum, stating that the students should learn "to write different types of texts with structure and coherence suited to the purpose and situation" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). Using a type of process-writing approach where students write several drafts before handing in a final product is important in stage 4 of Hyland's teaching-learning cycle, and this complies well with the "Assessment for Learning"-programme run in Norwegian schools.


**Conclusion**
The findings of the present study reveal that some teachers are changing their feedback practices in English in certain Norwegian upper secondary schools, changes that are to a large extent in line with a genre-pedagogy approach to teaching writing. Traditionally, students have been given assessments after handing in final products, but many of the informants in this study report that they also give assessments before this. Some of the issues focused on in the feedback are formality level of language, structure and use of sources, which are all genre-specific requirements. This is what Hyland calls genre-based feedback, and combining this with a process-oriented approach to feedback, as many of the informants in this study do, is central in genre-pedagogy. This is a positive development seen from the perspective of what constitutes good feedback , as relating the feedback to expectations of different types of texts may help the students know the answers to the questions "where am I going", "how am I going" and "where to next". I would therefore contend that it deserves further attention, in teacher education and in-service courses as well as in writing research.

This article advocates implementing a genre-pedagogy to teaching writing as a framework for writing instruction in teacher training programmes and in schools. This is one approach to ensure good feedback practices in line with requirements in the English subject

curriculum and the "Assessment for Learning" programme run in Norwegian schools. The teachers in the current study, who report using genre-based feedback combined with process-writing, find this to be an efficient strategy for supporting students in improving their writing skills. However, those who report not using such strategies regularly also express that ideally they would have done so if they had the capacity. This reveals that there is a challenge with having sufficient resources in the schools for the teachers to prioritise applying formative assessment strategies. Another challenge is that potential sources of feedback are not fully exploited. There is a need to work out more systematic strategies for developing self-regulated learners. However, the focus of this study has been on how teachers work with feedback in English writing instruction. How students actually perceive and use this feedback practices is another interesting aspect not dealt with. This is something that has not been investigated much in the Norwegian teaching-context, and needs further research.

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