

A review of Scandinavian writing research between 2010 and 2020

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Abstract

Scandinavian writing research forms a relatively new field, with an increased number of studies conducted in the last two decades. In this qualitative synthesis review of 87 peer reviewed journal articles from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden published between 2010 and 2020, the aim was to outline the landscape of current educational writing research from the region. The sample included research articles published in both Scandinavian and international journals. Our analysis focused on the articles' research approaches and main themes regarding the object of investigation. The main themes identified were Writing Instruction, Writing Assessment, and Students' Text. We found a predominance of studies conducted in the context of language arts/first language (L1) education, concerning either disciplinary or general aspects of writing. We also found a predominance of approaches based on either sociocultural or social semiotic theory. Furthermore, a majority of the reviewed studies were explorative and small-scale, and, for the Writing Assessment studies in particular, directed at the secondary stages of school. The results suggest a call for future studies focusing on writing interventions and studies deploying a wide range of methodological approaches, as well as studies based on inter-Scandinavian collaborations across Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

KEYWORDS: WRITING RESEARCH, QUALITATIVE SYNTHESIS REVIEW, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, SCANDINAVIA

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Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium, Scandinavian¹ studies on writing have increased and furthered the emergence of a dynamic, regional research field and cross-national conferences and networks. Due to neighbouring languages and similarities in educational systems, communication across the region is easy, resulting in cross-national studies of language arts/first language (L1) education in particular (e.g., Elf et al., 2015; Gourvenec et al., 2020; Krogh & Penne, 2015). However, the current landscape of Scandinavian writing research has not yet been mapped, and much research is still disseminated in Scandinavian languages, despite increased internationalisation. This challenges accessibility to researchers outside the region. The aim of this article is to contribute insights about the characteristics of Scandinavian writing research in terms of research approaches, main interests, and knowledge contributions, by reviewing writing studies from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, conducted within the last decade. Hereby, we also wish to introduce Scandinavian writing research to an international audience. Our main focus is on writing research 'oriented towards the educational system' (Berge, 2019, p. 30), that is, on writing research conducted in the context of primary and secondary education (K–12).

In 2002, two special issues of *Written Communication* investigated and introduced Norwegian writing research, thus emphasising Norway as leading the early foundation of Scandinavian writing research since 1980 (Ongstad, 2002; see also Smidt, 2012). An overview of methodological tendencies was provided in the introduction to the special issues (Iglund & Ongstad, 2002, p. 340), highlighting influences from English-speaking countries; from rhetoric approaches ('North American composition studies'), to sociocultural approaches ('British orientations toward creative writing and writing, and talking, to learn'), to functional linguistic approaches ('the Australian genre-oriented approach'). Since then, there has been no synthesis of Scandinavian writing research. A recent study (Holmberg et al., 2019) on L1 PhD dissertations from the Nordic countries (conducted and defended between 2000–2017) supported a picture of growth in writing research in the region in the last two decades (see also Krogh & Penne, 2015). It showed that one fourth of the dissertations address writing. For

Norway, it was almost one third of the dissertations, making writing the most investigated L1 topic in comparison with, among others, reading, literature, multimodality and orality (in Scandinavian curricula, writing is an integrated part of other subject areas, like L1 or mathematics; it is not a subject area in itself). However, this cross-national study focused solely on dissertations and L1 education, which calls for an extended scope that includes other forms of research contributions and writing research conducted within the entire range of subject areas.

Internationally, the importance of writing both within and beyond schooling has been emphasised within the two last decades (e.g., Brandt, 2015; Bazerman et al., 2017). Likewise, a growing number of reviews synthesised aspects of the diverse field of educational writing research. One group of reviews was conducted as meta-analysis providing an overview of and insights into, among other things, the effect of writing instruction on students' writing performance (e.g., Graham & Perin, 2007) and of writing instruction and writing in connection to reading (Graham & Hebert, 2011). Another group of reviews explored writing studies with specific approaches, for example, social practices approaches (e.g., Schulz & Fecho, 2000), whereas a third group of reviews synthesised writing research relevant for one stage of school such as primary school (Harmey & Wilkinson, 2019). In the present study, we extend these three types of reviews by conducting a qualitative synthesis review (Suri & Clarke, 2009) of Scandinavian writing research published between 2010 and 2020. We focus our attention on research approaches and the most prominent themes represented in the included studies. Through this examination of outlining characteristics, we wish to develop a mapping overview of current educational writing research conducted in the context of primary and secondary school from the region. The research question that guides this study is: What characterises the current landscape of Scandinavian K–12 writing research in terms of research approach and thematic focus?

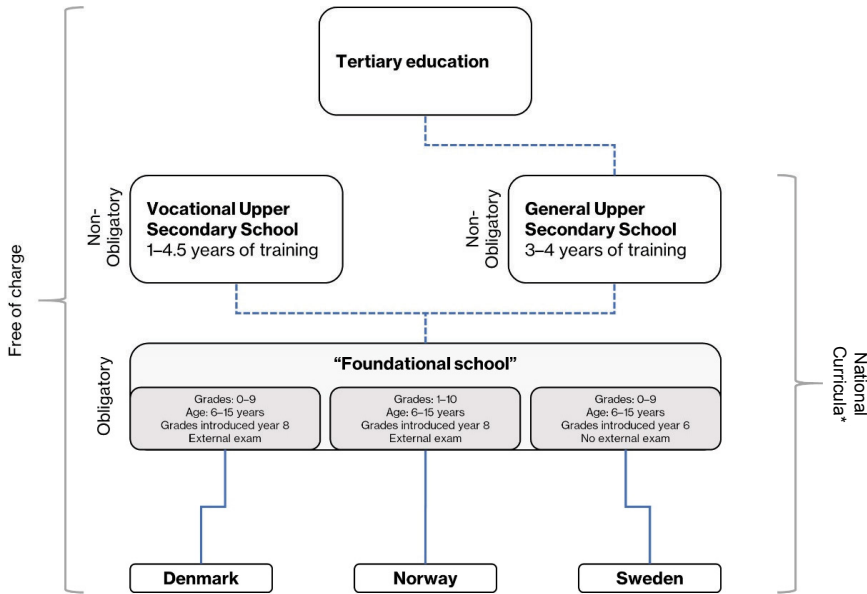
In the next section, we describe the local educational contexts in Scandinavia and then provide a brief account of the history of writing research in the three Scandinavian countries. Hereafter, we describe our chosen methodology, before we answer the research question, followed by a discussion of the findings.

Background

Scandinavian educational contexts

By and large, the school systems in Scandinavia are very similar. The first ten years are obligatory for all children. These obligatory years are called

grundskola/grundskole/grunnskole, literally translated to ‘foundational school’, and basically this compulsory school serves as a preparation for upper secondary school, where students choose an academic or vocational track (see Figure 1). Although upper secondary school is non-mandatory, a vast majority of students in all three countries follow this educational path after compulsory school. For example, in Norway, about 98% of all adolescents enroll in upper secondary school (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2021).



Note. Dotted line indicate that student are eligible only after passing certain assessments.

*The curricula are national, which means they are implemented after being passed as law. Schools – and ultimately teachers – are responsible for implementing the curricula by operationalize objectives into instruction. As long as one can argue that an implementation is in accordance with the curriculum, a teacher is free to implement the curriculum as s/he see fit.

Figure 1: Scandinavian School Systems

In all three countries, schools are steered by national curricula, passed as law by the respective parliament. Teachers can be said to be granted relatively extensive autonomy, as it is mostly teachers’ prerogative to operationalise the curricula as they see fit. This autonomy is also reflected in the grading system. Formal grades are introduced in year 6 in Sweden (age 12), and in year 8 in Denmark (age 14) and Norway (age 13). These grades are, with very few exceptions, teacher-determined (i.e., based only on teachers’ assessments). Both Danish and Norwegian schools have external exams that students need to pass to be eligible for the next educational level

(upper secondary school), but external grades constitute a small proportion of the total number of grades. In contrast, the Swedish educational system has no external assessment system; students are assessed only by their own teachers.

Writing is taught in the L1 subject, called ‘Danish’, ‘Norwegian’, and ‘Swedish’, respectively. Common for all three countries are curricular goals that focus on writing as a way of communicating through text. At the end of lower secondary school, students across Scandinavia are supposed to have developed skills to write in different genres, although the various national curricula use somewhat different ways of describing this:

- Denmark: ‘The student can produce coherent texts in different genres and discourse styles.’ [*Eleven kan fremstille sammenhængende tekster i forskellige genrer og stilarter.*] (Ministry of Children and Education, 2019)
- Norway: ‘[The student is able to] inform, recount, argue, and reflect in different oral and written genres, and for different purposes adapted to audience and medium.’ [*Informere, fortelle, argumentere og reflektere i ulike muntlige og skriftlige sjangre og for ulike formål tilpasset mottaker og medium.*] (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2021).
- Sweden: ‘The student is able to write different kinds of texts with a clear content, and a fitting text structure as well as appropriate linguistic variation.’ [*Eleven kan skriva olika slags texter med tydligt innehåll och väl fungerande struktur samt god språklig variation.*] (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2021)

A number of publications have presented more detailed accounts of Scandinavian writing instruction seen from a national curricular perspective. For example, writing instruction in Denmark and Norway was recently thematised in a volume comparing writing instruction in various national contexts (Jeffery & Parr, 2021).

There are, of course, differences among the school systems, such as exactly how schools are financed. While Scandinavian education is financed through taxes, the collection and distribution of taxes differs somewhat. The same types of differences can be noted in terms of whether the responsibility for hiring personnel and managing schools are at the state or municipality level. The authors of this article represent all three Scandinavian countries, and we would summarize by pointing out that, based on our knowledge, the school systems are more similar than dissimilar.

Brief Account of History of Scandinavian Writing Research

In this section, we describe the history of writing research within each of the three Scandinavian countries. In Denmark, educational writing research was almost non-existent until the 2000s (Juil Jensen et al., 1998). It emerged together with the first attempts to establish curriculum research around the turn of the millennium at two universities (University of Southern Denmark and Aarhus University), and was also furthered by the establishment of research units at university colleges in 2013. In Denmark, university colleges are responsible for educating ‘foundational school’ teachers; it requires a four-year bachelor’s degree. One early major writing research project in Denmark was *Learning to write: Writing to learn* (2010–2014). Through a longitudinal ethnographic design, it followed student writers and their transition from the last year of compulsory school (age 15) to general upper secondary (age 16–18). The study resulted in new empirical knowledge on student writing in the subjects in a Danish educational context and contributions to theory on writing development (Krogh & Jakobsen, 2019). Additionally, one research and development project, *Writing instruction in middle school* (2012–2015), focused on L1 writing instruction in year 5 (age 11), employing ethnographic classroom observations (Brok et al., 2015). Currently, an ongoing project (*Teaching Platform for Developing and Automatically Tracking Early Stage Literacy Skills*, 2018–2023) examines writing development across the primary school years. Taken together, the still sparse number of projects point to the more recent establishment of writing research in Denmark within the last two decades.

There have been several writing research projects in Norway over the last four decades. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Evensen et al. (1991) led a research project on, among other things, writing process pedagogy that resulted in empirical knowledge, as well as major theoretical contributions, for example a theory of texts and writing summarized in The Writing Wheel model (see Matre et al., 2021). This project evolved into the seminar *Skrive-PUFF* – still ongoing – which has had several of the most influential Norwegian writing researchers as its participants. In the late 1990s members from the *Skrive-PUFF* seminar in joint ventures with other writing researchers investigated writing and assessment of writing related to the final L1 exam by the end of compulsory school (e.g., Berge et al., 2005). Later, Smidt et al. (2010) investigated writing in school by observing writing instruction in several schools and across a number of subject matters. Also more recently, there have been a number of large-scale writing projects. In the *NORMs* project (2012–2016), Matre et al. (2021) investigated the effects of intervening in writing instruction in years 3–7 (age 8–12). This

was also done in the *FUS* project (2019–2023; Skar, Aasen, et al., 2020), but with students in years 1–2. In *Digihand* (2018–2021), Gamlem et al. (2020) used an experimental design to investigate writing development related to mode of writing (handwriting vs. writing on keyboard).

Swedish research on students' writing of texts has quite a long tradition. An early study is Björnsson's (1960) investigation of the assessment of writing in school. In the 1970s this research area became more extensive and has grown even more during the 2000s due to new governmental and university internal investments in educational sciences. This has led to funding of research schools in the subject area of L1 and several research projects on students' writing. One example of such externally funded research projects is Liberg et al.'s (2002) study on students' encounters with texts and text assignments in three different school subjects: Swedish, Social Science, and Natural Science. Another example is a project by Ledin et al. (2013) in which a writing pedagogical model was developed in close collaboration with teachers. This model makes multifaceted text competence visible. A third example is the now ongoing *FEAST* project investigating the short-term and long-term effects of a two-year intervention on students' writing proficiency development and teachers' knowledge and practice.² This is a partner project to the Norwegian *FUS* project.

Method

The purpose of this study is to map the outlining characteristics of the newly established Scandinavian writing research field. We did not intend to evaluate the quality of studies, but rather to provide an overview of research interests in Scandinavian writing research for the past decade. To that aim, we analysed a data set of 87 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2020.

Data Collection

Articles were collected by means of a systematised search strategy. A first step was to define the type of studies that were to be included: we decided to include peer reviewed journal articles and both qualitative and quantitative studies (Suri & Clarke, 2009). There was a twofold rationale for this. First, a recent review (Holmberg et al., 2019) already investigated all doctoral dissertations in the field of L1 research, and a not-so-recent review investigated all papers included in volumes for a Nordic L1 conference (Skar & Tengberg, 2014). Second, we did not have personnel resources to conduct an exhaustive search, which would have included books, book

chapters, conference papers, and so on. A second step in the data collection process was to identify journals that would be searched. Only a handful of the Scandinavian journals are indexed in any of the major databases (e.g., ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science), which led us to define a set list of journals that would be included. The list was generated through a session where we nominated and provided a rationale for why a certain journal would be included. No nomination was turned down by the other authors. The selection of journals thus reflects the knowledge of the research team regarding common outlets for writing research in Scandinavia. Additionally, we posted messages on social media (e.g., Facebook) and on email lists encouraging Scandinavian colleagues to report any peer reviewed contributions published in the time span of 2010 and 2020. These open requests resulted in five articles included in this review, and the addition of two research outlets.

The resulting list of journals included in the search was: *Acta Didactica Norden*, *Assessing Writing*, *Assessment in Education*, *Classroom Discourse*, *Education Inquiry*, *ForskUUL*, *Journal of Writing Research*, *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, *Language & Education*, *Linguistics and education*, *Nordic Journal of Literacy Research*, *Nordic Studies in Education*, *Norsklæreren*, *Reading & Writing*, *Sakprosa*, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *Utbildning och Demokrati*, *Writing & Pedagogy*, and *Written Communication*.

For the Scandinavian journals, we used truncation entering the root 'skriv*' (i.e., 'writ*'). This was a manageable strategy because of the scope of publications in those journals. The search in *Nordic Journal of Literacy Research* can serve as an example. The search resulted in a list of 62 hits related to writing. After applying inclusion criteria (see paragraph below), 28 publications were retained. For the international journals, we used the following search terms: 'Denmark', 'Norway', and 'Sweden'. The strategy was based on the assumption that a Scandinavian author presumably would mention the country as part of the description of the context. This strategy too was manageable as it resulted in a limited list of publications. For example, searching for 'Sweden' in *Assessment in Education* resulted in a list of 102 articles. After applying inclusion criteria, three publications were retained. The search was conducted in March 2021, and we decided to include studies published in 2021 in the search, which resulted in two 2021 studies on the finalised list of journal articles.

The following criteria were used for inclusion in the net list of Scandinavian writing research: (1) the article must relate to writing in primary and secondary education, (2) the research question must relate to writing in school (as opposed to e.g., extramural writing), and (3) the

writing researched must be related to the composition of texts (i.e., not limited to, for example, studies of spelling, handwriting legibility and so on). By this procedure, we ended up with a list of 87 peer reviewed journal articles on Scandinavian educational writing research. This list can be consulted in tables 3–5 below.

Data analysis

The guiding research question for this study was: What characterises the current landscape of Scandinavian K–12 writing research in terms of research approach and thematic focus? To describe the Scandinavian writing research, the data was coded on a number of categories. The following list describes the categories:

- Theme and sub-theme, which concerned the main object of analysis (e.g., instruction, assessment).
- Size of study, which concerned the number of teachers, students, texts, or other material that was included in the investigation.
- Grade-level, which concerned the associated grade-level (e.g., instruction in year 3 or teachers' assessment of texts from year 12).
- Context, which concerned if writing was studied within the context of a specific subject area, or as writing across the curriculum.
- Theoretical framework as stated by the authors.
- Main data type, which concerned what kind of data that was the main focus of an investigation (e.g., texts, observations).
- Analytical approach, which concerned ways of analysing the main material. The analytical approach was coded as “thematic” if the author had categorised utterances, or texts inductively or deductively, as “statistical” if the author had used descriptive or inferential statistics to describe, build models or test psychometric properties, and as ‘linguistic’ if the author used linguistic frameworks. In some cases, we described the particular analytical approach used.
- Country of origin.

The generation of specific codes for each category was based on an inductive and iterative process. First, each author categorised a sub-sample of articles independently, employing tentative codes, to thereafter establish final codes after deliberation. One example as illustration of this process is the categories ‘theme’ (i.e., main object of analysis) and ‘sub-theme’ (i.e., main object of analysis within theme). The authors first coded the major themes of studies using several tentative and empirically derived categories

(e.g., ‘writing process studies’) in a focused coding process (Charmaz, 2006; Thornberg, 2012), which in later author group discussions were reduced to three major themes: Writing Instruction, Writing Assessment, and Students’ Texts.

It should be noted that because of the nature of the research question, our analytical strategy somewhat confounded ‘data analysis’ and ‘results’. While the categories were a premise for coding, the specific codes were derived empirically. As such, specific codes (e.g., themes, sub-themes) were not only instruments for generating results, but effectively results in themselves.

Findings

We identified 3 main themes and 14 sub-themes. As mentioned in the section above, the major themes are Writing Instruction, Writing Assessment, and Students’ Texts. Table 1 below shows the number of articles within each of the three major themes, the national distribution, and the dissemination language.

Table 1: Distribution of Articles within Major Themes

Country	Language	Theme			Total
		Assessment	Instruction	Students’ Texts	
Denmark	Danish	2	3	0	5
	English	1	2	3	6
Norway	English	7	8	7	22
	Norwegian	8	7	5	20
Sweden	English	0	13	6	19
	Swedish	4	6	4	14
DK & NO	English	0	1	0	1
Total		22	40	25	87

Note. DK & NO = Denmark and Norway. This article also had contributors from the Netherlands and the US.

In the next subsections, we outline the writing research within each of these three major themes and their sub-themes. We provide a brief overview of each of the sub-themes highlighting one or two key studies for each theme. The key studies are either representative for the sub-theme, exemplify the variation within the sub-theme, or are important due to scope and significance. Supplementing the information provided in Table 1, Table 2

below shows the distribution of the articles in the sample according to the year of publication. Worth noticing is the absence of articles published in 2010 and 2011, and the increasing trend in published articles in the years hereafter. This applies, in particular, to studies identified as belonging to the theme Writing Instruction. We will return to this in the Discussion section.

Table 2: Distribution of Articles from 2010 to 2020

Year	Theme			Total
	Assessment	Instruction	Student Texts	
2010	0	0	0	0
2011	0	0	0	0
2012	0	2	1	3
2013	0	2	0	2
2014	2	1	0	3
2015	3	3	2	8
2016	3	3	1	7
2017	3	3	6	12
2018	4	7	4	15
2019	3	10	4	17
2020	4	7	6	17
2021	0	2	1	3
Total	22	40	25	87

Note. Three articles are listed for year 2021. Two of them were published in 2021, and included because of the decision to include research published until end of search date (March, 2021; see section 'Data collection'). The other 2021 article was published as an online first article in 2020, and later dated as 2021.

Writing Instruction

We identified 40 studies on instruction (Table 3). These studies concerned five sub-themes, with the number written in brackets: writing instruction in the classroom (16 articles), teacher role in the classroom (4 articles), student writing in the classroom (4 articles), teacher perspectives on writing instruction (11 articles), textbooks, learning resources and national curricula (5 articles).

Table 3: Characteristics of Writing Instruction Studies

Sub Theme	Author(s)	Year	N	Grade	Context	Theoretical framework	Main data type	Analytical approach	Country
Writing instruction in the classroom	Laursen et al	2020	1 (S)	5	General aspects	Investment theory	Observations (video)	–	Denmark
	Wallén	2020	40 (S)	6	Disciplinary – History	Disciplinary literacy	Multiple	Linguistic	Sweden
	Berge et al.*	2019	265 (S)	3 and 6	General	–	Texts	Psychometrics	Norway
	Thorsten	2019	197 (TX)	3–4	Disciplinary – L1	Variation theory	Multiple	Thematic	Norway
	Blikstad-Balas et al.	2018	46 (C) / 178 (L)	8	Disciplinary – L1	New Literacy studies	Observations (video)	Thematic	Norway
	Blikstad-Balas	2018	46 (C) / 178 (L)	8	Disciplinary – L1	New Literacy studies – Ivancic (2004)	Observations (video)	Thematic	Norway
	Kristoffersen*	2018	101 (S) 404 (TX) 8 (T)	3–4	General aspects	Text linguistic Socio cultural theory of learning	Texts Interviews	Statistical Thematic (mixed methods)	Norway
	Larsen et al.*	2018	1 (C)	3	General aspects	Genre-pedagogy (SFL)	Multiple	Thematic	Norway
	Elvebak & Jøsolk*	2017	4 (C) – 100 (S) + 15 (T)	11–13	General aspects	–	Survey	Thematic	Norway
	Jakobson & Axelsson	2017	1 (C) / 1 (L)	5	Disciplinary – Science	SFL, Dewey	Multiple	Thematic	Sweden
Øgreid*	2016	1 (C)	8	Disciplinary – Social science	Scaffolding theory + disciplinary literacy	Texts, Observations	Thematic	Norway	

Matthiesen*	2015	2 (C)	10–12	Disciplinary – L1	Rhetoric	–	Thematic	Denmark
Varga & Carlsson	2015	4 (C)	10–12	Disciplinary – L1	Bernstein's sociology of Education	Multiple	Thematic	Sweden
Lundgren	2013	1 (C)	6	Disciplinary – L1	New Literacy Studies	Multiple	Thematic	Sweden
Jakobsen	2013	1 (C)	11	Disciplinary – German (L3) and History	New Literacy Studies	Multiple	Thematic	Denmark
Aamotsbakken & Askeland	2012	2 (C)	5 & 12	Disciplinary – Science and Physics	Disciplinary literacy	Observations, interviews	Thematic	Norway
Svanes & Øgred	2020	2 (T)	3	General aspects	Theory of scaffolding	Observations (video)	Thematic	Norway
Alatalo & Johansson	2019	2 (T)	Preschool	Disciplinary – Technology	Luke and Freebody's 4 resources model	Observations	Thematic	Sweden
Svanes & Klette	2018	6 (T)	3	General aspects	Theory of scaffolding	Observations (video)	Thematic	Norway
Horverak	2015	14 (T)	11–13	Disciplinary – English (L2)	Genre-pedagogy (SFL)	Interviews	Thematic	Norway
Norén et al.	2021	2 (C)	3–4	General aspect		Observations (video)	Conversation Analysis	Sweden
Erixon	2018	9 (SC)	9	Disciplinary L1	Media ecology (McLuhan), Literacy practices	Interviews, observations	Thematic	Sweden

Teacher's role in the writing classroom

Student writing in the classroom

Jakobsen	2017	1 (S)	10–12	General aspects	New Literacy Studies, Identity (Ivanić, 1998)	Multiple	Thematic	Denmark
Björkqvall	2014	5 (S)	1–2	General aspects	Social semiotic (Kress, Jewitt)	Multiple	Thematic	Sweden
Graham et al.	2020	1049 (T)	1–3	General aspects	–	Survey	Statistical	Norway
Sturk et al.	2020	104 (TX)	1–9	Disciplinary – L1	New Literacy Studies, Discourses (Ivanić)	Texts (Facebook threads)	Thematic	Sweden
Tjernberg et al.	2020	20–24 (T)	0–3	General aspects	Design theory, multimodality (Jewitt, Kress)	Interview	Thematic	Sweden
Andersson et al.	2019	12 (T)	0	General aspects	Vygotsky, Scaffolding Theory	Interview	Thematic	Sweden
Liberg & Nordlund	2019	14 (T)	1–3	General aspects	Social semiotic (Halliday), Critical literacy (Luke, Cope & Kalantzis)	Group talk	Linguistic	Sweden
Folkeryd & af Gejerstam	2019	14 (T)	2–3	General aspects	Systemic functional linguistics	Group talk	Linguistic	Sweden
Sturk & Lindgren	2019	60 (T)	1–9	Disciplinary – L1	Discourses (Ivanić)	Questionnaire	Thematic	Sweden
Sandberg & Norling	2018	17 (T)	0–1	Disciplinary – L1	Multi-approach (Vygotsky, decoding, cognitive, Luke & Freebody)	Interview	Thematic	Sweden

Teacher perspectives on writing instruction

Author(s)	Year	Participants (N)	General aspects	Questionnaire	Statistical	Country
Reichenberg	2016	313 (T)	0–12	General aspects	Statistical	Sweden
Hertzberg & Roe	2015	16 (SC)	8–13	Disciplinary	Thematic	Norway
				Writing in the content areas (Bazerman, 2005), Genre pedagogy (SFL)	Interview, survey	
Krogh	2012	26 (T)	9–10 (DK, SE) 10–11 (NO)	Disciplinary – L1	Thematic	Denmark, Norway, Sweden
				“Wheel of writing” (e.g. Evensen), Discourses (Berge, Ivanic)	Texts, Interviews	
Lorentzen et al.	2020	19 (TX)	8–10	Disciplinary – Science	Thematic	Norway
				Disciplinary literacy, New Literacy Studies	Texts (digital resources)	
Hasund et al.	2019	9 (TX)	11–13	Disciplinary – English (L2)	Linguistic	Norway
				Hylland & Jiang (2017), Biber’s register variation	Texts	
Jeffery et al.	2019	3 (TX)	K–12	Disciplinary – L1	Thematic	Denmark, Norway, US
				Writing development (Applebee)	Texts (writing standards)	
Magnusson	2019	19 (TX)	1–3	Disciplinary – L1	Thematic	Sweden
				Sociocultural perspective, Text activities (Ledin, Berge)	Texts (textbooks)	
Magnusson	2018	19 (TX)	1–3	Disciplinary – L1	Thematic	Sweden
				Sociocultural perspective, Discourses (Ivanic)	Texts (textbooks)	

Note. ‘N’ denotes number of participants, students/teachers, classes, schools or lessons, or texts (indicated by the abbreviations S = students, T = teachers, C = (classes), SC = (schools), L = Lessons, TX = texts); * = intervention study; interview denotes both face-to-face interview and interview through survey. ‘Multiple’ in the category ‘Main data type’ indicate a compilation of different data types (e.g. field notes, audio, video, photos, documents).

Almost all of the sixteen studies that had the writing classroom as their main object of study shared a common interest in investigating the relationships and dynamics that play out between the components and participants that constitute the writing classroom. Theoretically, the studies all explicitly profess to a sociocultural view of writing and literacy – in a single case combined with a cognitive approach (Thorsten, 2019). In terms of methodology, they are, with one exception (a large scale intervention study by Berge et al. 2019, see more below), explorative ethnographic studies applying various combinations of ethnographic methods. A key study within this group is, due to its scope and the significance of its findings, the study by Blikstad-Balas et al. (2018) on students' writing opportunities in language arts/language one (L1) teaching in lower secondary classrooms (year 8) in Norway. Based on video-recordings of 178 L1 lessons in 46 different classrooms (four consecutive lessons in each class) in combination with the collection of writing assignments and student texts, the researchers studied how writing is taught and framed in the classroom settings. The study found that despite a high proportion of teaching units that did not offer the students opportunities for sustained writing (70%), more than half of the observed classes had at least one opportunity to engage in a sustained writing activity during the four lessons that were recorded, and that the sustained writing was generally framed by high quality instruction in line with evidence-based best practice.

Most of the remaining studies in this subtheme are small scale studies, and like Blikstad-Balas et al. (2018), several of these studies also examined students' opportunities to write. Some of them, focused on writing in L1 but directed their attention to the students' writing of specific genres and the instructional framing in this regard (Lundgren, 2013; Matthiesen, 2015; Thorsten, 2019), while other studies adopted a disciplinary perspective on the question of writing opportunities, such as writing in history or science teaching (Aamotsbakken & Askeland, 2012; Jakobson & Axelsson, 2017; Walldén, 2020; Øgreid, 2016). A couple of studies examined writing instruction in the classroom from a comparative perspective. A Swedish study compared for example writing instruction in academic and vocational programmes in upper secondary school (Varga & Carlsson, 2015), and a Danish study compared writing in German and history teaching also in upper secondary school (Jakobsen, 2013).

Within the subtheme of writing instruction in the classroom, six studies were categorized as writing instruction interventions. A key study in this group is Berge and colleagues' investigation of how teachers' use of new functional norms of expectation for students' writing affected students' writing proficiency (Berge et al., 2019). The study was based on data from the *NORMs* project (2012 – 2016) mentioned in the Background section,

a large-scale intervention project carried out in 20 schools across Norway in year 3 (age 8) to year 7 (age 12) and across all school subjects (a total of 3,088 students and 500 teachers). In their study, Berge et al. used a selected subgroup of the participating students from year 3 and 6 from both project and control schools (N=265). These students were administered pre- and post-tests, and the students' scripts were rated and subsequently analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that the year 3 students from the project group significantly improved their writing proficiency as compared to the students in the control group, whereas for the year 6 students there was no significant difference between the two groups of students. The remaining five studies in this particular group were of a smaller scale. Three of these studies were ethnographic case studies examining different types of writing interventions, including the introduction of genre pedagogy in the teaching of argumentative writing in a primary grade class in Norway (Larsen et al., 2018), the implementation of explicit writing frames in a social studies class in lower secondary school in Norway (Øgreid, 2016), and introducing the rhetoric concept of imitation as instructional principle in a L1 class in Danish upper secondary school (Matthiessen, 2015). Applying a quasi-experimental design, Kristoffersen (2018) examined how supporting and developing teachers' shared meta-linguistic terminology affected word choice and sentence fluency in the writing of year 3 and 4 students (N=101). The last study in the interventionist group used a survey-design to inquire into students' (N=125) and teachers' (N=15) perceptions of the value and impacts of a year-long writing intervention in five upper secondary classes in Norway (Elvebakk & Jøsok, 2017).

Four studies focused in particular on the teacher's role and actions in writing instruction. These are all small scale, classroom studies. The study by Svanes and Øgreid's (2020) is an example of this subtheme. Based on multiple ethnographic data from two L1 primary grade classes in Norway (year 3) the authors examined how two L1 teachers scaffolded the students' generation of ideas in the early phases of writing stories. The study showed that the two teachers used modelling and questioning (and very little feedback or explanation) as scaffolding strategies. Applying similar approaches, the remaining studies in this group examined other aspects of a teacher's role in the writing classroom such as teachers' instructional practices during year 3 students' individual work in class (Svanes and Klette, 2018) or teachers' writing instruction practices in different subjects, e.g., English as L2 in upper secondary school (Hoverak, 2015).

Four studies concerned student writing in the classroom. They focused on practices surrounding the use of digital technologies (Björkvall, 2014; Erixon, 2018; Norén et al., 2021) or students' development as writers

(Jakobsen, 2017). The latter study was part of the larger Danish research project *Writing to learn: Learning to write* (2010–2014) described in the Background section. All four studies employed an ethnographic approach; more specifically and with reference to among others Kress (2011), Björkvall (2014) described his overall approach as social semiotic ethnography. In his study, Björkvall explored five primary students' (age 7–8) semiotic use of digital images and the intertwined practices in the classroom and at home. Data consisted of images and texts on the children's laptops, video-recordings of them interacting around computers, extensive field notes including photos from home and school as also interviews with teachers and parents, and ongoing dialogues with the children. The study identified a number of social semiotic practices: from collecting (e.g., searching Google for 'rabbit') over interacting (e.g., talking about the images with peers) to creating and designing (e.g., combining images with writing and colours to new multimodal texts). The study suggested that not only the structures and meaning potentials of verbal resources, but also of visual resources, should be subject for discussion in primary school classrooms. As such, Björkvall (2014) explored writing in an extended form in line with the social semiotic and New Literacy Studies informed framework and furthered by the embracing of new technologies in schools, a development that began in the late 2000s. Complementing this study, Erixon (2018) explored how the computer as compared to pen and paper circumscribed different writing processes and discussed the need for using different technologies in order to secure both slow and fast processes in the lower secondary L1 writing classroom.

Eleven studies concerned teacher perspectives on writing instruction. They deployed different methodologies and collected different types of data; from quantitative surveys to questionnaires, teacher diaries, interviews, group talk or Facebook threads about writing and writing instruction. The studies fall into three subgroups: one group investigated teacher perspectives on instruction in general (Graham et al., 2021; Hertzberg & Roe, 2016), with a specific focus on multimodal aspects of instruction (Tjernberg et al., 2017) or on ways of promoting early writing development (Anderson et al., 2019; Sandberg & Norling, 2020). Another group explored discourses about writing (Krogh, 2012; Sturk & Lindgren, 2019; Sturk et al., 2021), whereas the third group focused on teacher competences and practices; that is, teachers' metalanguage in talks about students' written texts (Folkeryd & Geijerstam, 2019; Liberg & Nordlund, 2019) and their documentation practices of students' reading and writing difficulties (Reichenberg 2016). Due to its scale, Graham et al. (2021) is regarded as a key study within this group. The aim of this study was to survey how Norwegian teachers taught writing in years 1–3 (age 6–8) as

well as their preparation and efficacy to do so. Through an exploratory analysis of a sample of 1,049 surveys, the study showed that the teachers provided a multifaceted writing program; however, that processes of planning, revising and motivation were less attended to than supporting the writing of different types of texts. Moreover, it showed that young students wrote for approximately 20 minutes a day. A majority (60%) of participating teachers found that they received insufficient pre-service preparation to teach writing, whereas they found their in-service preparation adequate and evaluated their current efficacy to teach writing positively. In contrast to this large-scale survey study depicting a picture of early writing education in Norway, Krogh (2012) explored secondary L1 teachers' writing discourses through an ethnographic approach. Data were from *Nordfag.net*, an early example of an inter-Scandinavian research project, and consisted of 26 Danish, Swedish and Norwegian teachers' diaries from six lessons and subsequent interviews. The study identified a *strategically and ritually* motivated teacher profile, a *ritually* motivated teacher profile and a *communicatively* motivated teacher profile (Berge, 1988; Ivanič, 2004). Following Krogh (2012), only the communicative discourse meets Bildung aims by layering and integrating strategic and ritual aims within an overall intent to establish communicative meaning for students. The two other studies on discourses (Sturk & Lindgren, 2019; Sturk et al., 2021) also took inspiration in Ivanič (2004), whereas the studies on teachers' meta-language about student texts were grounded in functional linguistics and emphasised the benefits of developing a metalanguage in order to support students' writing (Folkeryd & Geijerstam, 2019; Liberg & Nordlund, 2019).

Five studies concerned textbooks (Hasund, 2019; Magnusson, 2018, 2019), science internet-based learning resources (Lorentzen et al., 2020) or the framing of writing development in national L1 curricula from Denmark, Norway, and the United States (Jeffery et al., 2019). Turning to the textbook studies by Magnusson, they both analysed 19 L1 writing textbooks for year 1–3 (age 7–9) in Sweden. One study explored writing discourses expressed in the assignments (Magnusson, 2018), the other (Magnusson, 2019) explored genres and acts of writing represented in the textbooks, and the mediational means offered through the textbooks. The latter study drew on Australian genre pedagogy (e.g. Martin & Rose, 2008) and found that a descriptive act of writing dominated (i.e. the informational text genre, 'faktatext', dominated), whereas a persuasive act of writing was almost non-existent in the textbooks. Furthermore, the study showed that although the textbooks supported young students' planning and structuring of their early writing, they did not offer them specific genre-relevant written language resources to use in their writing.

To sum up, the characteristics of writing instruction as a main theme in Scandinavian writing research can be described as follows. The distribution of the totality of the forty studies indicates that there are two main areas of research in this field, writing instruction in the classroom (16 articles) and teacher perspective on writing instruction (11 articles), supplemented by three research areas that attract less attention. In addition, with reference to the categories in Table 3, it can be noted that all the main educational stages are substantially represented among the studies, however with a slight majority of studies directed towards lower primary school (21 articles) and an almost equal distribution between the other main stages with 12 studies on upper primary school (age 10–12), 11 studies on lower secondary (age 13–15) and 10 studies on upper secondary (age 16–18) (the sum total exceeds 40 since several studies included more than one main stage). Besides, there is an equal distribution of studies concerning more general aspects of writing (16 articles) and studies concerning writing instruction in L1 (15 articles), whereas the proportion of studies directed towards other subject areas is smaller but not unimportant (8 articles). With few exceptions, practically all the studies in this field profess to some variant of a sociocultural or a social semiotic view of writing and literacy, and accordingly, the use of multiple sources of data is most common (12 articles) with observations, interviews and texts sharing the second place (9 articles). The large majority of studies applied thematic analysis as analytical approach (31 articles), and only a few studies applied linguistic (3 articles) or statistical approaches (4 articles). Finally, there was a shared dominance between Swedish (18 articles) and Norwegian (16 articles) studies in this field, whereas the number of Danish studies only amounted to 4 (see Table 1). Besides, two studies were collaborative and transnational.

Writing Assessment

We identified 22 studies on writing assessment (Table 4). These studies concerned five sub-themes: assessment criteria (1 article), feedback to writing (7 articles), teachers-as-raters (8 articles), student texts as indicators of assessment situations (2 articles) and writing tasks (4 articles).

One study from the *FUS* project briefly mentioned in the Background section reported on assessment criteria, and specifically the development and validation of such criteria (Skar et al., 2020). Seven studies revolved around feedback to writing. Two of them (Eriksen, 2017; Otnes & Solheim, 2019) investigated features of teacher comments, while one (Bueie, 2019) tested the hypothesis that students who learnt revision strategies would reveal those strategies in revised texts.

Table 4: Characteristics of Writing Assessment Studies

Sub-Theme	Author(s)	Year	N	Grade	Context	Theoretical framework	Main data type	Analytical approach	Country
Assessment criteria	Skar et al.	2020	1001TX 10,000+R	1–3	General aspects	Socio cultural; Psychometrics	Ratings	Statistical	Norway
Feedback to writing	Bueie	2016	159S	10	L1	Formative assessment	Interview	Statistical	Norway
	Bueie	2019	2T 9S	9, 10	L1	Writing process	Texts	Thematic	Norway
	Eriksen	2017	6T 171TX	12, 13	L1	Formative assessment	Texts	Thematic	Norway
	Eriksen	2017	213S	11, 12, 13	L1	Formative assessment	Interviews	Statistical	Norway
	Jahnsen & Bakken	2020	50TX ^a	12	L1	Formative assessment	Texts	Statistical	Norway
	Otnes & Solheim	2019	19TX	7	General aspects	Formative assessment	Texts	Thematic	Norway
	Salju-Abdulahi & Hellekjær	2020	329S	11	L2	Formative assessment	Interviews	Statistical	Norway
Teachers-as-raters	Aldrin	2015	135	7, 8, 9	L1	Writing Assessment	Interview	Statistical	Sweden
	Blomqvist	2018	16T 3TX	10	L1	Writing Assessment	Observations	Thematic	Norway
	Blomqvist et al.	2016	17	10	L1	Writing Assessment	Observations	Thematic	Sweden
	Jølle	2014	5T	8	General aspects	Writing Assessment	Observations	Thematic	Norway

Jølle	2018	33T	8	General aspects	Writing Assessment	Observations	Thematic	Norway
Lindhardtsen	2018	15S 20T	12	L2	Writing Assessment	Observations	Statistical	Denmark
Matre & Solheim	2016	~20 ^b	3–4, 6–7	General aspects	Writing Assessment	Observations	Thematic	Norway
Skar & Jølle	2017	400TX 8T 2,000R	8	General aspects	Psychometrics	Ratings	Statistical	Norway
Texts as indicators...	2016	1TX	8	General aspects	Writing Assessment	Texts	Thematic	Norway
Troelsen	2020	57TX	9	L1	Writing Assessment	Texts	Thematic	Denmark
Writing tasks	2014	52WT	12	L1	Writing Assessment	Texts	Thematic	Sweden
Løvland	2018	50WT	10	L1	Writing Assessment	Texts	Thematic	Norway
Troelsen	2018	57WT	9	L1	Writing Assessment	Texts	Thematic	Denmark
Kvistad & Otnes	2019	460WT	3–4, 6–7	General aspects	Writing Assessment	Texts	Statistical	Norway

Note. Areas are listed alphabetically. 'N' denotes number of participants being observed, texts being analyzed, or teachers/students being interviewed (indicated by the abbreviations S = students, T = teachers, C = (classes), TX = texts, L = Lessons, R = Ratings, WT = Writing tasks); interview denotes both face-to-face interview and interview through survey. ^aThere were 59 drafts, 59 final texts and teacher comments to those texts. ^bExact number not specified in article.

Two studies (Bueie, 2016; Eriksen, 2017) surveyed students on their preferences regarding feedback. Another study involving a large survey among upper secondary students concerning their perceptions of and engagement in getting feedback on their writing in English as a foreign language (EFL) was reported by Saliu-Abdulahi and Hellekjær (2020). Among other things, the authors showed that the students received varied feedback. However, many students did not follow up the feedback, and those who did tended to focus on language error correction and less on global errors. Furthermore, this feedback was mainly presented to graded, and—as it were—finished texts.

Studies within the teachers-as-raters theme (8 articles) reported findings on reliability of teacher assessment, teachers' rating strategies, and teachers' development as raters. An example of the latter was Jølle (2014) who investigated teachers' rater behaviour in a longitudinal design and concluded that teachers indicated a minimal development. In contrast, Matre and Solheim (2016) found teachers, under similar circumstances as the ones included in Jølle (2014), showed significant development, from an instrumental use of criteria to a more 'flexible' use.

Two studies focused on texts as indicators of raters' assessment work. Skar and Aasen (2016) analysed one student text and discussed how elements of the text could explain why the text had received mixed appraisal by raters. Troelsen (2020) investigated textual features associated with different marks on a national exam and found no obvious patterns.

Four studies concerned writing tasks, with three focusing on writing tasks within national exams in Denmark (Troelsen, 2018), Norway (Løvland, 2018), and Sweden (Borgström, 2014). The main objective of these studies was to investigate writing tasks from a (socio) linguistic perspective, identifying for example how the writing task 'positioned' students as a kind of writer (e.g., 'the enlightener [den självutnämnda folkbildaren]'; and 'the concerned citizen [Den engagerade medborgaren]') (Borgström, 2014).

To sum up, writing assessment can – judging by the quantities of studies – be characterised as a field that seems to have been mainly occupied with feedback to writing and teachers as raters. These two sub-themes encompassed 15 of 22 studies. Moreover, with reference to the categories in Table 4, most studies concerned older students or teachers of older students; five studies concerned the upper secondary school, 14 concerned lower secondary school, three primary school. One can also note that studies from L1 (12 articles) dominated, with 'general aspects' studies as a runner-up (8 articles). Two studies concerned writing assessment from a second language acquisition perspective, more specifically English as a Foreign Language. In terms of theoretical framework, most investigations used concepts from the fields of formative assessment (e.g., concepts of 'response', 'visible learning', 'feedback'; see e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007) and writing assessment

(e.g., writing assessment from classical and modern test theory perspectives and/or from perspectives of theories of writing; see e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Behizadeh & Engelhard, 2011; McNamara, 1996). The dominant data types were texts (10 articles) and observations (6 articles), and most studies made use of a thematic analytical approach (e.g., categorizing teacher talk into data-driven or theory-driven categories), and the remaining nine studies employed statistical techniques (e.g., basic descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics) as their main approach. Most studies (see Table 1) were Norwegian (16 articles), and there were almost equal quantities of Danish (3 articles) and Swedish studies (4 articles).

Students' Texts

In 25 of the identified articles, different aspects of texts written by students were the main focus, with the exception of when they are assessed. Four sub-themes were found: semiotic resources in students' texts (10 articles), writer positions in students' texts (10 articles), revision of students' text (1 article), and students' texts in context (4 articles) (Table 5).

Ten of the identified studies concerned the use of semiotic resources in students' texts. In four of these studies, the semiotic resources as such were in focus (Borgfelt et al., 2017; Kristoffersen, 2019; Nordlund, 2016; Thorsten, 2019). An example in the early school years is Borgfeldt's and Lyngfelt's (2017) study of young students' multimodal text production, and their reflections concerning their texts. These students emphasised that images and colour are the most important resources for them. Writing was considered to be a complement. In two studies, the development of the use of semiotic resources was investigated (Apelgren et al., 2020; Piekut, 2018). In a longitudinal study covering all three years in upper secondary school, Apelgren and Holmberg (2020) explored a central dimension of discursive essay writing that is the logical text structure, in argumentative and expository texts in the subject areas Swedish and English. During these three years, no clear progression concerning text structure was identified. It was also pointed out that neither the choice of language, nor different text types (argumentative and expository texts) affected students' ability to structure their text. Another type of study within this area was investigation of what resources students use in order to create content in different subject areas in- and out-of-school (Björk et al., 2021; Michelsen, 2020; Halleson et al., 2018; Rongen Breivega et al., 2020). In their study of students in early grades Björk and Folkeryd (2021) explored what linguistic resources were used to construe narrative content. The results suggested that among these young students some used a broader repertoire of resources and explored a diverse textual world, while other students were more restricted in their use and created a more uniform textual world.

Table 5: Characteristics of Students' Texts Studies

Main theme	Author(s)	Year	N	Grade	Context	Theoretical framework	Main data type	Analytical approach	Country
Semiotic resources in students' texts	Borgfeldt et al.	2017	15 S	3	Disciplinary – History	Sociocultural perspective	Interviews	Thematic	Sweden
	Kristoffersen	2019	30 TX / 6S	2–4	Disciplinary – L1	Sociocultural perspective	Texts	Linguistic	Norway
	Nordlund	2016	78 TX / 23 S	1–3	Disciplinary – L1	Narratological theory	Texts	Narratology	Sweden
	Thorsten	2019	40+40 TX	3 and 4	General aspects	Narratological theory + Variation Theory	Texts	Narratology	Sweden
	Apelgren et al.	2020	40 S 320 TX	10–12	Disciplinary – L1+ EFL	Social semiotic perspective	Texts	Linguistic + Statistical	Sweden
	Piekut	2018	1 S	10–12	Disciplinary – L1	Narratological theory	Texts (Interviews)	Narratology	Denmark
	Björk et al.	2021	38 TX	2–3	Disciplinary – L1	Social semiotic perspective	Texts	Linguistic	Sweden
	Michelsen	2020	67 TX	9–15 years old	Out of school	New Literacy studies	Snap chats	Multimodal	Norway
	Hallsson et al.	2018	37 TX / 19 S	5	Disciplinary – Social Sciences	Dialogism, Social semiotic perspective	Texts	Linguistic	Sweden
	Breivaga et al.	2020	60 TX	9	Disciplinary – Christian and other religious and ethical education” (CREE)	Text theory	Texts	Thematic + Linguistic	Norway

Writer positions in students' texts	Dagsland	2019	3 TX	7	Disciplinary – Mathematics	Relief theory	Texts, Interviews	Linguistic	Norway
	Hanghøj et al.	2020	22 TX / 35 S	7–9	Disciplinary – L1	Scenario-based domain theory, Writing as identity construction	Texts, Interviews	Thematic	Denmark
	Hultin	2020	4 S / 1 T; 5 S	3	General aspects	Pragmatism, Social-semiotic perspective	Observation, Video, Texts	Linguistic	Sweden
	Lyngfelt	2019	4 S	2 (7–8 years old)	General aspects	Dialogism (heteroglossia)	Linguistic ethnography, texts	Multimodal	Sweden
	Myklebust	2017	17 S	11	Disciplinary – Social Science Class	Theories about positioning and appraisal	Texts in a debate forum on internet	Linguistic	Norway
	Nygaard	2017	12 S	13	Disciplinary – Print & Photo	Social semiotic perspective	Observations, Blogs, Interviews	Linguistic	Norway
	Ulland et al.	2018	28 TX	7 and 11	Disciplinary – Mathematics	Dialogism, Social semiotic perspective	Texts	Linguistic	Norway
	Hermansson	2017	54 S / 4 TX	0	General aspects	Nomadic perspective	Video, Audio, Texts,	Nomadic relations	Sweden
	Krogh et al.	2015	1 S; 2 TX(S)	9–12; 12	Disciplinary – L1	Dialogism (voice)	Interviews, texts	Thematic	Denmark
	Nordmark	2017	4 S	10–12	Disciplinary – (SS, NS, TS)	Writing Role model	Video, interviews	Thematic	Sweden

Revision of students' texts in context	von Koss Torkildsen et al.	2015	42 S	3	General aspects	Process perspective	Key stroke logging, Texts, Oral language skills	Linguistic	Norway
Students' texts in context	Myklebust et al.	2018	34 TX / 17 S	Upper Sec. School	Disciplinary – Social Science	New rhetoric and argumentation theory	Texts	Linguistic	Norway
	Nygaard et al.	2017	12 S	13	Disciplinary – Print and Photo	Sociocultural perspective	Blogs	Linguistic	Norway
	Rødnes	2012	3 TX / 3 S	12	Disciplinary – L1	Sociocultural: dialogical perspective	Group discussion, Texts	Linguistic	Norway
	Skaar	2020	3 S + 14 S / 1 TX	5	In and out of school	Sociocultural perspective: affordances	Interviews	Thematic	Norway

Note. "N" denotes number of participants being observed, texts being analysed, or teachers/students being interviewed (indicated by the abbreviations S = students, T = teachers, C = (classes), TX = texts); interview denotes both face-to-face interview and interview through survey. Regarding the analytical approach category, we applied a more specific coding for some of the studies where we deemed that the general codes (thematic, linguistic, statistic) would be too imprecise.

Within the sub-theme writer positions in students' text, ten studies were identified. These studies explored how students position themselves in the text (Dagsland, 2019; Hanghøj et al., 2020; Hultin, 2020; Lyngfelt, 2019; Myklebust, 2017; Nygard, 2017; Ulland et al., 2018), and how they experience themselves and/or behave as writers (Hermansson, 2017; Krogh et al., 2015; Nordmark, 2017). For example, Hanghøj et al. (2020) investigated how students in years 7–9 (age 13–15) positioned themselves in relation to their everyday experiences with and attitudes towards games when writing a journalistic text within the context of the subject Danish L1. They found that students positioned themselves through either a personal discourse or a professional journalistic discourse. Their conclusion was that games and game culture represent a topic well-suited for transforming students' everyday experiences and attitudes toward journalistic texts. Another study on how students position themselves was Ulland's et al.'s (2018) investigation of how students in year 7 (age 12) and 10 (age 15) solved a mathematical task and wrote about how they think and how they proceed in order to solve it. Through an analysis of students' use of language and how they explained, calculated, and used different representations, the authors showed how students positioned themselves as mathematical writers. As part of the aforementioned project *Learning to write: Writing to learn*, Krogh and Piekut (2015) investigated how students experienced themselves as writers in year 9 (age 15) and through upper secondary (age 16–18). The focus in this sub-study was on the value of voice and narrative as resources in L1 writing, and more specifically, the value students ascribed to narrative and other language resources that carry expressive and personal meaning. These values ascribed by the students were discussed in relation to the potentials for Bildung in L1 writing.

One study concerned revision of students' texts. It was von Koss Torkildsen's et al.'s (2016) investigation of young students' revision online in creative writing. Here the relation between writing process measures recorded with key-stroke logging and the quality of the final written text was examined. The results showed that young writers' ability to make online revisions was associated with both the quality of the final version of the text and students' individual literacy skills.

In four studies, contextual aspects influencing the students' writing of their texts were investigated (Myklebust & Høisæter, 2018; Nygard et al., 2017; Rødnes, 2012; Skaar, 2020). Myklebust and Høisæter (2018) investigated how two different communicative situations influenced the argumentative texts upper secondary students wrote in the subject area Social Studies. They found that when the teacher was the recipient of the text, the students tended to argue with intellectual appeal and used data from reliable sources. However, when the recipient was a general public online, the

students instead tended to argue with emotional appeal based on their own values, and no other sources.

To sum up, Students' Texts has the following characteristics as a thematic focus of research. As indicated by the distribution of the 25 studies in this theme, this field is primarily preoccupied with the semiotic resources (10 articles) and the writer positions in students' texts (10 articles), whereas we found noticeably few studies on the revision of students' texts (1 article). The distribution between the main educational stages ranges from 5 to 10 studies: 9 studies on lower primary school, 5 studies on upper primary school, 6 studies on lower secondary school and 10 studies on upper secondary school (Table 4). Moreover, it is interesting to note that a majority of studies were directed towards subject areas other than L1 (11 articles), though they were closely followed by studies on L1 (8 articles) and generic studies (5 articles). Also worth noting, the preponderance of the studies is founded within some kind of sociocultural or social semiotic perspective (18 articles) while most of the remaining studies are based on literary or text theory (e.g., narratology). Considering the research focus, it is not surprising that texts were the dominant data source (22 articles) within this theme, however in a number of studies texts were used in combination with other data sources such as interviews (6 articles) and/or observations (3 articles). Besides, the analytical approaches applied in most of the studies are different types of linguistic (14 articles) or thematic (6 articles) analysis of text, with narratological (3 articles) and multimodal (2 articles) approaches as the most frequent exceptions. Finally, as shown also in Table 1, the theme was equally dominated by Norwegian (12 articles) and Swedish (10 articles) studies, with a low proportion of Danish studies (3 articles).

Discussion

The question we have investigated in this article is: What characterises the current landscape of Scandinavian K–12 writing research in terms of research approach and thematic focus?

As described in the preceding section, our review has shown that three main themes can be distinguished within current Scandinavian writing research in the context of primary and secondary education: Writing Instruction, Writing Assessment, and Students' Texts. Furthermore, based on the categories in the review, our study has allowed us to identify the research interests that characterise each of these three main themes. Moving the perspective from the individual themes to an overall and comparative view on the review and its thematic findings reveals patterns

that contribute further to drawing the outline of the landscape of current Scandinavian writing research.

A first aspect of this pattern of Scandinavian writing research, concerns the date of publication. A small proportion (8%) of the 87 studies in the review were published before 2015 (2010–2014), with studies from all three main themes represented in this timeframe. Actually, no studies at all were published between 2010 and 2011 (see Table 2). One interpretation of this pattern is to regard it as a consequence of the increased internationalisation of the Scandinavian universities in the last decade, which brought to Scandinavia the practice of evaluating and rewarding scholars, both individually and as a research collective, according to measures of international publications, and which, it should be noted, is part of a broader global trend affecting many other parts of the world (Holmberg et al., 2019). As part of the same current of internationalisation, we also see a trend, in all of the Scandinavian countries, towards PhD dissertations being prepared as collections of articles. One or more of these articles are quite often written in English and published in international journals. Monographs, which used to be the predominant format in the humanities and the social sciences, are on the other hand very often written in the author's first language, that is Danish, Norwegian or Swedish. As indicated in Table 1, slightly fewer studies were published in international journals (41%) as compared to studies published in journals based in the Nordic region (59%).

Another aspect of this Scandinavian pattern involves the subject-related context for the research. Here it is interesting to note that 73% of the studies across the three main themes concern either L1 or more general aspects of writing. It is not surprising that an important aspect of the research studies relates to writing in general and in L1 since writing, like reading and literature, is a basic component of L1 as a school subject in the Scandinavian countries, both as a general skill and as a specific skill related to various genres particular to the L1 subject. On the other hand, it is quite rare to relate to writing in subject areas/disciplines other than L1 (within the main theme Students' Texts, disciplinary studies are actually the majority). We suggest that this tendency reflects a growing influence in the Scandinavian countries of the disciplinary literacy approaches propagated by scholars such as Timothy and Cynthia Shanahan (2008, 2012) and Elizabeth Moje (2007, 2015). Such an influence is also recognisable in the national curricula for the foundational school (see Figure 1) in Norway and Sweden where writing is a key competence area in all subject areas (Gourvenec et al., 2020). Likewise, in Denmark, it has been a key competence area in upper secondary school since 2005.

In this light, it is also worth noting the differences between the main themes, in particular that disciplinary studies are rare in Scandinavian

assessment research on writing with just two disciplinary studies (Table 4). This calls for more attention to the disciplinary aspects of writing in Scandinavian assessment research.

In terms of theoretical framing, a third aspect of the Scandinavian pattern is noticeable. This consists of a clear disparity between, on the one side, the assessment studies and, on the other, the studies on writing instruction and students' texts. The vast majority of assessment studies are very specifically based on different types of assessment theory (e.g., formative assessment and psychometrically oriented writing assessment), while studies on writing instruction and students' texts are based predominantly on social semiotics or a very general sociocultural perspective. In our view, particularly the latter is interesting and deserves further comment. Several writing scholars have suggested that, epistemologically and methodologically, three main approaches can be distinguished in writing research: cognitive, linguistic and sociocultural approaches (Wray & Medwell, 2006; Schultz & Fecho, 2000). Within these broad categories, it can be argued that in particular social semiotic and sociocultural approaches – despite differences – together represent contextual approaches to writing as opposed to cognitive (Graham et al., 2013). In relation to these general approaches, it is intriguing to note that Scandinavian research on writing instruction and students' texts apparently is a stronghold for primarily linguistic (and hence, primarily social semiotic) and secondly sociocultural approaches to writing, whereas cognitive approaches are almost non-existent (only one study in the review was identified as cognitive). One way of interpreting this preference in Scandinavian writing research is to point out that given the fact that research environments for writing research in the Scandinavian countries are relatively small, they influence each other theoretically and methodologically in order to focus and specialise, and to assure strong research communities and high-quality research within the region. It is worth noticing that particular scholars seemed inspirational, as for example Roz Ivanič (see the section on Writing Instruction). A contrasting interpretation would be that there is a need for Scandinavian writing research to widen its perspective and to embrace cognitive approaches to a larger degree in order to broaden our knowledge of our students' writing.

Finally, the predominance of research founded in context-oriented perspectives might partly explain why the sample of studies included in this review is comprised of a majority of exploratory and small-scale studies. Due to its epistemological and methodological foundations, sociocultural based research is often implemented in this way, whereas intervention or experimental and/or large-scale studies are less compatible with a sociocultural approach to research and knowledge. It should also be noted though that the latter kind of studies are often more demanding to conduct in terms

of funding and research teams. Nonetheless, it is striking that among 40 studies in the theme Writing Instruction, we only identified 6 intervention studies. To complement this argument, it might also be observed that L1 research is the dominant academic site for writing research in Scandinavia, and that Scandinavian L1 research is characterised by qualitative, explorative methodologies (Holmberg et al., 2019). Hence, this tendency may also partly explain the picture in this review.

From an inter-Scandinavian perspective, it is immediately notable, that the contribution to writing research from the three Scandinavian countries is uneven (see Table 1). Across the three main themes, both Norwegian and Swedish researchers have contributed considerably to Scandinavian writing research in the past decade with 52% of the studies being conducted by Norwegian researchers and 38% by Swedish researchers, whereas 14% of the studies have been done by Danish researchers. These numbers reflect and confirm the depiction of the writing research field in the three Scandinavian countries in the background section of the article. Thus, the distribution reflects that writing research has a long tradition in both Norway and Sweden, while it has only been established quite recently and is still relatively small in Denmark. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of studies are Norwegian could be interpreted as an updated affirmation of what the two special issues of *Written Communication* in 2002 suggested about Norway's leading role in Scandinavian writing research since the 1980s, even though Sweden does not trail far behind, judged by the number of peer reviewed articles. Furthermore, and given the many similarities in culture and school systems touched upon earlier, it is striking that we have only been able to identify one study in the review that are actually collaborative Scandinavian writing research written by researchers from more than one country (Jeffery et al., 2019), and one study that builds on data from an early inter-Scandinavian collaboration (Krogh, 2012). There is a long and well established tradition for collaboration between the Scandinavian and Nordic countries that also extends to academia (e.g. the Nordplus program, www.nordplusonline.org/), so we do not have a good explanation to offer for the limited collaboration on writing research, except for the fact the writing research environments in Scandinavia are still in the process of establishing themselves, and maybe for that reason, they have not really, as of yet, oriented themselves towards cross-national research projects. Across the three main themes, the review has also revealed a number of areas in the landscape of Scandinavian writing research that have attracted relatively little attention. In the Writing Assessment theme, we found a predominance of studies directed at the secondary stages of school (age 13–18) which suggests the need for more assessment studies focusing on the writing of students in the primary stages of school (age 6–12).

Considering the strong influence learning materials have been proven to have on teaching practices (Bjuland et al., 2015; Warren, 2000), the scarcity of studies that examine this issue in relation to writing instruction is remarkable (4 studies). This too, is an area that needs more attention from Scandinavian writing research in the future. Following the above argument, there is also a need for more intervention studies in Scandinavian research. Arguably, such studies could be relevant to the improvement of instructional practice. They would not only explore the actual state of affairs in Scandinavian writing classrooms, but, presumably, they would build on knowledge from small-scale qualitative studies in order to examine the possibilities for improving writing instruction and students' writing in a more large-scale format. As this article is being written, this bid for more intervention research is actually already underway. Thus, the Norwegian and Swedish research projects mentioned in background section of this article (*FUS*, *FEAST*, and *Digihand*) are all large-scale writing intervention projects.

Finally, a few remarks on the limitations of this study. The study was based on systematic searches but was also non-exhaustive in the sense that we did not collect all studies that could have been included. The review of Scandinavian writing research was restricted to peer reviewed articles in selected research journals. For example, none of the journals focus specifically on special needs education. As a consequence, we cannot guarantee that the review includes all relevant and published Scandinavian research articles on writing, just as it does not include books, book chapters, scientific reports or dissertations by Scandinavian writing researchers. Inclusion of a wider sample would likely have refined, strengthened and complemented the findings in the review and thereby added to the precision and the detail of the depicted landscape of Scandinavian writing research.

Concluding remarks

In the introduction and background sections, we pointed out how there are many similarities and crossovers between the three Scandinavian countries culturally, linguistically, socially and in terms of educational systems, just as there is a long tradition for trans-national collaboration both in academia and in other societal areas. In this perspective, we find it striking that there are only two studies in the review that are actually building on collaborative Scandinavian writing research. Therefore, we want to conclude this article with expressing a hope and a call for more inter-Scandinavian writing research in the decade to come.

Notes

- 1 Scandinavia consists of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, whereas the Nordic countries consist, in addition to the three Scandinavian countries, also of Iceland and Finland. In this review, we focus only on Scandinavian studies.
- 2 A Swedish description of the FEAST project is available through Swedish Institute for Educational Research, which has funded the project: <https://www.skolfi.se/forskningsfinansiering/finansierade-forskningsprojekt-2019/funktionellt-skrivande-i-tidiga-skolar-feast-undervisning-bedomning-och-professionell-utveckling/>

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