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# VOICE AND NARRATIVE IN L1 WRITING

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## *Abstract*

This paper investigates issues of voice and narrative in L1 writing. Three branches of research are initially discussed: research on narratives as resources for identity work, research on writer identity and voice as an essential aspect of identity, and research on Bildung in L1 writing. Subsequently, two empirical investigations of L1 writing in a Danish upper secondary school are presented. The first study is based on longitudinal interview data and analyses one student's experience as an L1 writer in the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary school. A high-achieving student in lower secondary L1, she found that her previous writing strategies were not rewarded in upper secondary school. In the second empirical study, two upper-secondary exam papers are investigated, with a focus on their approaches to exam genres and their use of narrative resources to address issues of voice and identity. In the first paper, the student writer is provoked by the text material to attempt a private narrative. In the second paper, the student provides a personal narrative framework for his argumentation. In conclusion, this paper argues that empirical cases document a need for explicit training of voice and narratives as a resource for academic writing, and that the Bildung potential of L1 writing may be tied to this issue.

Keywords: voice, narrative, Bildung, writer identity, transition from lower secondary to upper secondary school

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present study investigates the value of voice and narrative as resources in L1 writing, and more specifically, the value students ascribe to narrative and other language resources that carry expressive and personal meaning. The investigation is framed by issues of writing and identity and associated discussions of the potentials for Bildung in L1 writing.

The background of the study is a general educational focus on literacy and writing skills in the context of a global knowledge competition, as instantiated in PISA and PIRLS. All Scandinavian countries have embraced this challenge at the policy level and introduced curricular measures to strengthen literacy and writing across school subjects (Dysthe, Hertzberg, Krogh, Norberg Brorsson, in press). In the context of Scandinavian L1, the new focus on literacy across subjects has raised questions about the specific task of L1 in the teaching of writing (Krogh, 2012 a, b). L1 can be seen as a foundation for writing as a functional skill across disciplines, but writing in L1 subjects may also actualise Bildung aims tied to L1 didactics and content (cp. Krogh, 2012a). A critical issue in this regard concerns the value of personal narratives in L1 writing. In a large Norwegian study of L1 exam writing at the end of secondary school (Berge, Evensen, Hertzberg, Vagle, 2005), it was found that students had a preference for personal narratives. Students' narratives were typically inspired by literary writing and drew mainly on personal experience, whereas few students chose argumentative assignments. These findings were supported by Swedish research (e.g. Brorsson, 2007). This research has given rise to a push for developing argumentative writing and writing drawing on content outside the personal domain in L1 subjects (cp. Igland, 2007; Flyum & Hertzberg, 2011; Nestlog, 2011).

As part of the Norwegian study, Andersen and Hertzberg examined so-called "challengers" among exam writers and found that narrative was used by some writers as a "risk strategy", challenging genre expectations (Andersen & Hertzberg, 2005). This observation was confirmed and further developed by Piekut (2012, 2015). In her study of Danish upper secondary exam writers, she found that personal narratives or narrativisations of the topic were the most frequent genre transgressions, in some cases used by student writers as a risk strategy, but in other cases as a compensatory device. These transgressions are relevant because, since 2005, genre has gained increasingly important status in Danish upper secondary L1 curricula. Indeed, genre has become a key notion in the curricula, but with regard to the field of writing the notion carries some ambivalence. On the one hand, the genres assigned for written exam position student writers as contributors to a public dialogue, inviting argumentative reasoning, while on the other hand they restrict the scope of the imitated public genres by marking out fairly formalistic textual genre frames for students' writing, underscoring the fact that no genuine communication is taking place. This double genre expectation makes assignment

writing considerably more complicated than out-of-school communicative writing (Togeby, 2015; Krogh & Hobel, 2012).

Concerning voice and narrative in L1 writing, the Danish case is further interesting as the transition from secondary to upper secondary school is marked by a change in attitude regarding narrative approaches in writing (Krogh, forthcoming). In secondary school, narrative fiction is taught and treasured along with journalistic and essayistic assignment genres, and personal experience and personal stances are acknowledged as standard references in student writing. In upper secondary school, however, narrative reasoning is not part of the L1 register. Journalistic and essayistic writing is still encouraged, but it must be tied to argumentative reasoning, and textual analysis and disciplinary knowledge are required as sources for writing. As documented in Krogh (forthcoming) and Christensen (2015), the transition from secondary to upper secondary L1 writing may entail a fairly dramatic experience for students, primarily because a narrative approach is no longer considered creditable.

The present study investigates processes of 'voicing' viewed as agentive endeavours in writing, through which students struggle to manifest discursive authority and ownership. We argue that this research is particularly important with regard to L1 writing, as the metaphor of 'voice' or 'voicing' may capture fundamental Bildung aims of L1 subjects (Krogh, 2003, 2012a, 2012b; Smidt, 2011).

The study contributes in-depth empirical research on the meaning and function of narrative and personal voice in L1 student writing, combining a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. The empirical investigation will be framed by an opening analysis of exam genres and curricular regulations in regard to writing in Danish lower and upper secondary schools. The ethnographic study will be presented in two strands. Firstly, one student writer's trajectory as an L1 writer will be analysed, primarily based on interview data and focusing on changes in positioning and identification tied to issues of personal narrative and voice. Secondly, through analyses of two selected student exam assignments, the multivocal (Bakhtin, 1984) presence of identities expressed in narratives and inappropriate genre positionings are subjected to scrutiny.

The ethnographic data in this study are derived from a large, Danish research project on writing in upper secondary school<sup>i</sup>. The paper draws on two sub studies. The first is an ethnographic, longitudinal study of student writing from grade 9 through grade 12 in which a small number of students were tracked as writers in all subjects. The study aimed to create new knowledge about students' ways of learning subjects through writing as well as how they learn to write through subjects (Krogh & Hobel, 2012; Christensen, Elf & Krogh, 2014; Krogh, Christensen & Jakobsen, 2015). The second sub study is an investigation of students' exam writing in upper secondary L1, in which 183 student texts were collected and analysed in the context of genre. Taking its point of departure in an examination of the concept of 'genre competence', the study aimed at investigating the realization of genre expectations in students' papers. The study documented a large variation in genre

realizations and, more specifically, a range of genre transgressions in which narratives were used as interpersonal resources in students' writing (Piekut, 2012). Through this two-pronged approach we aim at mutually validating analyses and findings. The two data sets serve to provide a deeper understanding of the complex issues at stake for adolescent writers who are struggling to assert agency while they are in the process of appropriating an academic voice. The longitudinal study, drawing mainly on interview data, captures one adolescent student's reflections and shifting identifications in her L1 writing during a sensitive period of transition and enculturation into the discourse of upper secondary education. The study of exam papers, on the other hand, offers an in-depth view into the textual processes in which this struggle is enacted.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for the present study is derived from three branches of research: research on voice and identity in personal narratives, research on writing and identity and research on voice as a metaphor for *Bildung* in L1 writing. Bakhtin's theory of language as dialogic and heterogeneous is a recurrent point of departure, as all three branches of research draw on Bakhtin's notion of voice. According to Bakhtin, the utterance as the basic unit of communication is dialogic in two ways. Firstly, Bakhtin views the utterance as a link in a chain of utterances (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69) and essentially responsive and addressive since it responds to former utterances and anticipates responses (op.cit., p. 76). Utterances are also unique as they are tied to concrete situations. Their communicative potential, however, can only be realised if they can be interpreted through a culturally established "speech genre". Secondly, language resonates with other voices, embodying discourses or ideologies, which are most often realised in literary, scientific, professional, or philosophical literature (Bakhtin, 1981). Thus, voice in Bakhtin's sense of the term is always double-voiced or multi-voiced, as the speaking consciousness (Bakhtin, [1935] 1981, p. 434) interweaves with and carries positions on discourses and ideologies as well as on former and anticipated voices in the dialogue:

To be means to communicate. Absolute death (nonbeing) is the state of being unheard, unrecognised... To "be" means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 287)

Leaning on Bakhtin's theory of language and voice, the three theoretical approaches contribute different but mutually supplementary ways of understanding voice as a resource for writers' development of identity in written communication.

### 2.1 *Voice and identity in research on personal narratives*

Issues of voice and identity have a strong presence in research on personal narratives or narrativisations. In psychological literature, narrative is viewed as fundamental for human perception and experience. In his work on narrative psychology (1986, 1990), Bruner construes narrative as the basic epistemological tool available to us for negotiating meaning when something unusual and inexplicable takes place. Humans make sense of intentional action by assimilating it into narrative structures (Bruner, 1991). According to Crites (1971, p. 291), the way we organise our experience - personal as well as professional - is fundamentally narrative in its form: "I want to argue that the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative."

In linguistic anthropology, the telling of life stories is viewed as an unavoidable means of documenting coherence in our lives and is used to assert or negotiate group membership. Highlighting the meaning-making process and the interpersonal relationship at stake in writing narratives or personal stories, Cohler (1982) emphasises that coherence does not lie in the events of the story itself, but is imposed by the teller/writer in the way the experience is shaped into a story. According to Linde, coherence is an ongoing negotiation between speaker/writer and addressee, and is not a property of the text: "Coherence must also be understood as a cooperative achievement of the speaker and the addressee" (1993, p. 12). Linde further stresses that life stories express our sense of self, and are "very important means by which we communicate our sense of self to others and negotiate with others" (op.cit., p. 219); as such they always feature a knowledge of or presuppositions about the norms for establishing coherence. Thus, Bakhtin's notion of dialogism is reflected in Linde's understanding of the process of creating coherence in life stories while negotiating values and attitudes.

Narrative is a privileged locus for the negotiation of identities (De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006, p. 16). Rosenwald & Ochsberg claim that "[p]ersonal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned" (1992, p. 1). Although stories are construed and told by individuals, the understanding of life stories as vital means for fashioning identity is not solely confined to an interest in individual subjectivity. Embedded in this notion is the assumption that lives are shaped by the prevailing norms and discourses that surround a range of personal stories. Institutions in particular seem to have an enormous power to shape individuals' self-understanding (op.cit., p. 3). Accentuating the formative effects of narratives, Rosenwald & Ochsberg state that "[s]tories give direction to lives" (op.cit., p. 6). Discussing counter stories, Lindeman Nelson (2001) argues that "identities are narratively constructed, and that, within limits, narrative constructions can be narratively reshaped." (op.cit., p. 69). Thus, identity is formatively, and sometimes deformatively, interconnected with narratives: "They [narratives] make intelligible what we do and who we are; they teach us our responsibilities; they motivate, guide, and justi-

fy our actions; through them, we redefine ourselves.” (Lindemann Nelson, 2001, p. 70). According to Lindemann Nelson, narratives play a crucial role in both personal and social change; she stresses that repertoires of narrative means depend on the teller/writer’s social position and agency - and on the agent’s narrative and normative competence.

As discussed by Wortham (2001) and Bamberg (2005, 2006, 2011), studies of narrative constructions of identity are most often based on life story interviews, focusing on the *representational* quality of these stories and on their capacity to contribute to the development of participants’ current identities. Particularly interesting for the present study is, however, Bamberg’s (2011) expansion of narrative research interest of “small stories” as enactments of identity construction, as well as Wortham’s (2001) contribution of a theory on *interactional positioning* as an analytic tool for identifying voices and positioning in narratives. Research in small stories provides insight into the rather insignificant identity work that occurs in everyday conversations:

[W]e are interested in the social actions/functions that narratives perform in the lives of people; in how people actually use stories in every-day, mundane situations in order to create (and perpetuate) a sense of who they are. (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 2)

‘Small stories’ are small in the literal sense (brief), but also metaphorically (as fleeting aspects of narrative orientation). An emphasis on small stories allows for “the study of how people as agentive actors position themselves — and in doing so become positioned” (Bamberg, 2010, p. 13). In small stories neither speaker identity nor speaker positions are understandable in fixed terms: they change, and they either contradict or support each other, as do small stories about recent experiences or long ago events that are reworked for a special occasion.

To Bamberg, the importance of small stories lies in their function with regard to identity work and positioning opportunities (Bamberg 2008, p. 380). To analyse positioning in small stories, we need to analyse the teller’s construction of an imagined world as a model of how s/he wants to be understood and what sense of self s/he indexes. This, in turn, enables us to approach identity construction in the following two ways: Through analysis of the way the referential world is constructed and by investigating how the referential world is constructed as a function of interactive engagement (Bamberg, 2008).

Although the notion of small stories is developed with regard to oral interaction, we also find it useful for the study of narratives in student writing. Specifically, focusing on small stories allows for the opportunity to point out different and often competing or contradictory positions a student narrator may take.

In Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), the relation between the storytelling event and the narrated event has been analytically operationalised. Drawing on their analytical frame and on the linguistic cues suggested by Wortham, we shall investigate the following three aspects of positioning in the small story data of the present study of exam papers: How are the characters positioned within the story?

How is the writer positioned and how does s/he position him/herself within the interactive situation, i.e. as an author of an academic essay? Finally, how does the writer position a sense of self/identity with regard to genre expectations and academic discourse?

## 2.2 *Voice and identity in writing*

A seminal theory on voice and identity in writing was developed by Roz Ivanič (1998) in her study of writing and identity. While acknowledging that 'finding one's own voice', an idea developed by process-oriented writing researchers and educators in the 1970s, may carry a simplistic and romantic image of the creative individual, she also problematises that current social constructionist writing researchers, reacting against a cognitive view of writing, deny the existence of a writer's 'voice' (op.cit., p. 94ff.). Ivanič finds that such a stance overlooks aspects of the writer that are also important to a 'social' view of writing, and that the idea of writers conveying, intentionally and unintentionally, an impression of themselves through their writing complements a social constructionist view of writing (op.cit., p. 97). She further argues that when researching academic writing in institutional settings, there is a need for conceptual resources that capture writers' struggles with issues of identity and expressivity. She summarises current writing research that, drawing on Bakhtin, offers a new way of conceiving 'voice':

'Voice' in this new way of thinking is multiply ambiguous, meaning a socially shaped discourse which a speaker can draw upon, and/or an actual voice in the speaker's individual history, and/or the current speaker's unique combination of these resources [...] (op.cit., p. 97)

Ivanič contributes to this research with her own theory of discursively constructed writers' voices. The following presentation of this theory draws on Ivanič 1998 (p. 23 ff.), Burgess & Ivanič 2010 (p. 236 ff.), and Ivanič 2012 (p. 27 ff.).

According to Ivanič, in the act of writing, writers will draw on two sets of resources and constraints. The *socially available possibilities of selfhood* are the prototypical identity-related resources available to writers and readers; these practices, genres and discourses circulate in the sociocultural and institutional contexts in which writers participate. Whereas possibilities of selfhood are 'subject positions' or social identities that do not solely belong to particular individuals, the *autobiographical self* is a unique aspect of self, concerning the sense of who they are, that writers bring with them to the act of writing. This identity draws on personal repertoires of voices or possibilities of selfhood, shaped by writers' prior social and discursive histories. The autobiographical self is constantly changing as a consequence of new life experiences and associated interests, values, beliefs and shifting social positions.

Voices are actualised in the selves that are inscribed in the text. Ivanič distinguishes between the discursive self and the authorial self, generating two realizations of the writer's 'voice'. These interact, but Ivanič finds it useful for analytical

purposes to distinguish them from each other. *The discorsal self* is the impression that writers convey of themselves, the representation of their selves, their views of the world and the values and beliefs that they construct through their writing practices. The discorsal self is constructed through the discourse characteristics of a text: "It is concerned with the writer's 'voice' in the sense of the way they want to sound, rather than in the sense of the stance they are taking" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 25). The discorsal self that is inscribed in a text may be not so much an expression of the writer's real values and commitments as an indication of what they think is expected of them in the social context. In connection with school writing, representing voice in this sense may actualise issues of conflict and uncertainty in the face of assessing readers:

The discorsal self has both an "autobiographical" and a "relational" dimension: being constructed at the interface between the identity the writer brings to the writing, and the writer's anticipation of how she will be read. The discorsal self may be contradictory, as the writer may perceive a disjuncture between the way she would like to be read and the way she thinks a reader or readers will in fact read her. (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 240)

*The authorial self* is the presence the writer constructs for herself as author of the text. Whereas the discorsal self is concerned with form, this aspect of self is concerned with content. The authorial self "concerns the writer's 'voice' in the sense of the writer's position, opinions and beliefs: a different sense of 'voice' from the one associated with the discorsal self" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 26). Whereas in her 1998 book, *Writing and Identity*, Ivanič highlights these differences, in later works she describes the authorial self as a component of the discorsal self (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 240; Ivanič, 2012, p. 29) which is, however, particularly relevant when dealing with academic and school writing. The authorial self will be visible in indications of assertiveness and authoritativeness in relation to readers as well as in representations of other voices and sources of knowledge in texts.

Ivanič rejects the idea of a writer having his or her 'own' voice or language that preexists any instance of writing (Ivanič, 1998, p. 215). Still, she finds that writers have a sense of self, the 'real me' that they would like to convey in their writing (op.cit., p. 216). She suggests exercising this sense of self-representation in terms of verbal forms of ownership: "owning" and "disowning" discourses:

Those which they see, at least temporarily, as representing the identities with which they feel comfortable, and those from which they would prefer to distance themselves. This focuses on the fluid processes of identifying, sensitive to the influence of social groups and patterns of privileging, rather than treating identity as a predetermined state of affairs.

### 2.3 *Voice as a metaphor for Bildung aims in L1 writing*

While the presented theories of narrative constructions of identity are generic, Ivanič's theory of voice in writing was developed as a conceptualisation of struggles

with academic writing experienced by adult students. With the theory of Bildung as a goal of L1 writing, we turn to the field of general education and the specific issues of writing in L1, arguing that narrative theory and identity theory can be put to work as part of this theoretical perspective.

Bildung is fundamental to the Northwestern European '*Didaktik*' tradition as the overriding obligation of education and teaching, building on strong ideas of teachers' professional authority and autonomy as representatives and guides of Bildung. The concept carries a tradition in educational thinking that extends from Kant, Herder and Humboldt, emphasizing the ability to use one's senses independently and critically in public spaces (cp. Smidt, 2011). The term is untranslatable to English. By way of explaining the term, Westbury (2000) says:

Bildung is a noun meaning something like "being educated, educatedness". It also carries the connotations of the word *bilden*, "to form, to shape". Bildung is thus best translated as "formation", implying both the forming of the personality into a unity as well as the product of this formation and the particular "formedness" that is represented by the person. The "formation" in the idea of "spiritual formation" perfectly captures the German sense.

In Scandinavian countries, the *Didaktik* tradition is under pressure by educational policies addressing global comparison and competition, and in recent years, much more emphasis has been given to the notion of 'competence'. Also, the understanding and meaning of Bildung has been subject to historical transformations as well as scholarly controversy. One line of current Bildung philosophy emphasises that, in present times, as the state-mandated school system has lost its previous Bildung authority, current conditions call for the didactic framing of students' *self Bildung* (Schmidt, 1999). Bildung in more traditional terms of general knowledge and democratic values of citizenship is, however, still a key notion in Danish preambles of upper secondary curricula and syllabi. Democratic values and freedom of spirit are also highlighted in the preamble of the mandatory *folkeskole* (ages 6–15), although Bildung as a term is not used.

In an interview-based study of Scandinavian L1 teachers (Norwegian, Swedish and Danish), Aase and Hägerfelth (2012) showed that Bildung is still a key notion in Danish and Norwegian curricula. Among the L1 teacher informants they found a variety of views on the meaning and relevance of Bildung as an educational idea. However, strong ideas of Bildung aims did emerge, and were interwoven with a belief in the importance of citizenship, democracy and associated cultural and social values. Writing skills were viewed as integral to an understanding of language as a vehicle for both thinking and power, for participating in and contributing to one's community and as crucially connected with the personal development of students and their capacity to listen to others and take an interest in other perspectives (cp. Krogh, 2012a).

In Krogh's historical study of Danish as an upper secondary school subject (2003, 2012 a, 2012b), current conceptualisations of Bildung as an aim of Danish were connected with the metaphor of 'voice'. Similarly, Smidt (2004, 2011) devel-

oped ‘voice’ and ‘voices’ as a metaphor for Bildung aims in Norwegian as an L1 subject.

Krogh locates the disciplinary didactic Bildung potential of Danish in the integration of text consumption and text production. She finds that the didactic focus of Danish lies in its understanding of *perspective* as a disciplinary approach to both the consumption and production of texts. Thus, the form of knowledge of Danish as a humanistic subject is viewed as the integral project of sign interpretation and meaning making.

Inherent in this didactic focus is the understanding that interpreting texts as well as writing texts always imply taking a perspective, and that this is an essential disciplinary requirement of any hermeneutic activity and a core aspect of L1 as a humanistic endeavour. Thus, the teaching of L1 writing should offer students opportunities to experience and reflect on the fact that writers always position themselves in relation to what they write about, as well as in relation to addressees and to the discourses that they actualise in their writing. An implication of this is that perspective, viewed as positioning and the constructions of ‘voices’ in texts, should be a didactic focus of the teaching of writing in L1.

Thus, according to this theory, *voice* is coined as a metaphor for students’ personal disciplinary Bildung projects and a way of concretising the hermeneutic concept of perspective.

The voice is the recognizable personal voice giving sound and linguistic form to its communicative project in a specific social and referential context that conditions the statement, but not its personal form. A voice can be trained, it can be turned inwards and outwards, it is always carried by an intention whether an intention of communicating or just an intention of expressing oneself, and it always speaks into a social and textual world. (Krogh, 2003, p. 177, transl. by the authors)

As to ‘voice’ as an action turned *outwards*, ‘voice’ in the Danish language is associated with political Bildung aims of active citizenship (the Danish term for ‘voting’ is ‘*stemme*’, i.e. voicing). Further, voice is concerned with intentionality and dialogue. Drawing on Bakhtin’s theory of voice (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986), it is argued that the metaphor captures disciplinary didactic Bildung aims connecting practices of reading and interpreting texts with classroom practices of talking, listening and writing.

While discussing the aims of Norwegian in the 2006 curriculum, Smidt (2004, 2011) develops this point further, exploring the L1 subject as a “productive curriculum” based on reception of and production of texts and on critical reflectiveness. Smidt describes this idea of a productive curriculum through four metaphors which, while overlapping, capture the Bildung aspects of an L1 classroom. The idea of L1 as a *public space* focuses on “voices in interaction, positioning, responsibility” and aims at students’ need to learn how to be heard in society, trying out positions and taking responsibility for personal positions. The idea of L1 as a *stage* focuses on “trying out voices and identities”, addressing the need to experiment with other positions and identities in the process of developing voices of one’s own. L1 viewed as a *resonance room* focuses on “the historical voices and stories”, addressing stu-

dents' need to meet with and experience potentials and constraints of voicing in the cultural past. Eventually, L1 as a *cultural workshop* focuses on "developing voices, new utterances and restaging" as part of the Bildung aim of creative and critical reflectiveness.

As to 'voice' as an action turned *inwards*, Krogh builds on Foucault's studies of the Greek stoics' use of reading and writing as technologies of the self (Foucault, 1983). Foucault describes how the stoics used writing in personal notebooks to reflect on their reading of others' texts, and how they used letter writing as a tool for reflecting on their own conduct. Stene-Johansen (1995) discusses Foucault's study of the stoics' ways of training a "voice" by writing about their readings. He emphasises that this sense of voice does not refer to an idealistic notion of identity and truth, but should rather be viewed as an instrument that must be built (Stene-Johansen, 1995, p. 207, cp. Krogh, 2003, p. 298). Indeed, Stene-Johansen, elaborating on Foucault, states that notebooks are

like lozenges which both build up and cleanse the spiritual voice, confessions which make the individual express himself more clearly about himself, but of course framed by a process which does not just turn something else into *one's own*, but which turns it into *oneself*. (Ibid. Translated from Norwegian by the authors)

In some ways this quotation resonates with Ivanič as she says:

I suggest that the set of mediational means to which an individual writer has access, along with their socially constrained patterns of choice within that array, is what makes each writer's writing unique: the individual stamp, which is often simplistically called the writer's 'own voice'. I prefer to refer to this as the writer's 'owned voice': the writer's choices, from among many competing socially available discourses, of ones s/he is willing to be identified with. (Ivanič, 1998, p. 54f.)

In discarding the idea of "one's own voice", Stene-Johansen (Foucault) and Ivanič both reject a Cartesian psychological notion about authorship as well as the idea of finding a singular personal voice, which was promoted by the American writing process movement (cp. Ivanič, 1998, p. 94ff.; Kamberelis & Scott, 2004, p. 211). They suggest, however, two different aspects of 'voicing'. While Stene-Johansen points at existential aspects of becoming a self through appropriating other voices and texts, Ivanič points at agentive processes of discursive choice as the writer chooses among available discourses with which s/he wants to be identified. Still, we find that Foucault's philosophical and Ivanič's linguistic approach add to a common project of elucidating the processes and aims of writers as they struggle with voice, along with a project of 'being' a writer and 'doing' the work of a writer.

In this way, Foucault and Ivanič may be said to contribute to a discussion of contemporary Bildung ideas. Foucault's investigation of the stoics' technologies of the self are part of his larger project of finding ways of doing and being a subject, in both talk and writing, when there is no way out of subjects being positioned in discourses (cp. Krogh, 2003). This is an example of the same ambiguity that was found in Ivanič's theories of writer identity. Thus, a Bildung aim for the teaching of writing in an L1 subject, drawing on Foucault's notions of subjectivity and on Ivanič's theo-

ry of writer identity, must actualise a double approach. It would have to take as its point of departure the realization that there is no singular, authentic voice to be found or developed through writing, and that this is a condition that should not be deplored but rather cherished, as it problematises ideas of “using your own words” and relieves students and teachers of ambitions of literary originality in writing. On the other hand, it would need to take into account the fact that school writing is performed by children and adolescents whose writing should contribute to their developing repertoires of selves and voices, and who therefore need to learn how to develop agency and voice in discursal modes. Experiences with actualising a sense of voice as “oneself” and as an “owned voice” (Stene-Johansen and Ivanič above) in writing is paramount in students’ development as writers and learners and should constitute a core part of any educational writing project (cp. Jeffery & Wilcox, 2013). As argued in Krogh (2003, 2012b), the hermeneutic and meaning-making form of knowledge of an L1 subject constitutes fruitful conditions for framing students’ access to this kind of experience and should, thus, be viewed as an essential Bildung aim for the subject. Thus, Krogh suggests that in order to meet this challenge, L1 teachers should promote the use of textual resources for perspective, positioning and ‘voice’ in writing, as addressing these aspects of writing is part of a reflective and critical didactic project.

Whereas in the preceding argument, *voice* and *perspective* were developed as a key metaphor for L1 Bildung aims, *agency* is developed by Jeffery and Wilcox (2013) as a pivotal notion for literacy development that holds similar aspects. In their empirical study of American middle and high school students’ attitudes to writing in a range of school subjects, agency is conceptualised as “capacity to act” and further “the extent to which students perceive disciplinary tasks as opportunities to transform knowledge” (op.cit., p. 1097). Jeffery and Wilcox found that students expressed significantly more positive attitudes towards writing in English language arts as compared to writing in content-area disciplines, and that predominant arguments for this indicated that writing in ELA allowed for subjective engagement, building individual arguments and expressing individual ideas. Students tended to find options for agentive stance taking in narratives and open-ended tasks, which in turn allowed for subjective interaction with knowledge. In conclusion, Jeffery and Wilcox argue that highly competent writing is distinguished by its knowledge-transforming and knowledge-crafting functions:

[S]tudents need to be encouraged, when engaging with disciplinary writing tasks, to go beyond the transmission of content knowledge, or as one student expressed as “what is already known,” to what they have to say about it. It is in this space, where the constraints to developing an agentive authorial stance might be lifted. (op.cit., p. 1113).

Although the American study takes a different approach, the study arguably adds an important dimension to the issue of Bildung in L1 writing. Whereas *perspective* as a Bildung concept emphasises the writer’s epistemic approach to the object of study, *agency* as an aim for literacy education emphasises the writer’s subjective and transformative engagement with knowledge. Both, however, entail an overall

educational aim of linking personal experience with societal reality. These issues offer a framework for the following data analyses and will be discussed further in the final section of this paper.

### 3. EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

#### 3.1 *Genre expectations in secondary and upper secondary Danish*

As previously indicated, there is a fairly deep divide between the Danish 'Folkeskole' (lower secondary school, grades 0–9) and the "gymnasium" (upper secondary school, grades 10–12), particularly with respect to the recognition of voice and narrative as resources in L1 writing. While narrative and personal experience are recognised as relevant cognitive and communicative resources for lower secondary L1 writing, in upper secondary school, these resources are not part of the L1 curriculum. In 2005, the teaching of Danish in upper secondary schools was reformed and the aims of writing instruction in the subject were changed to embrace a functional genre approach, imitating authentic public genres, but also recontextualising genres (cp. Bernstein, 1990) so that all assignment genres for the final written examination are now fairly elaborately defined by their formal genre characteristics. There are no narrative genres and there are limited options for moving toward a creative or more personalised writing mode.

Figure 1 summarises the structure of written exam assignments in lower and upper secondary Danish<sup>ii</sup>. The figure indicates distinctive differences in the exam genres of lower and upper secondary Danish. The *prototypical possibility of selfhood* offered to a student writer in the lower secondary written exam is that of the imaginative and personally reflective writer. Narratives, personal experience and personal stances are highly appreciated resources, as students select assignments from five or six options of literary fiction, journalistic genres and reflective essays. Textual and visual materials provide models and inspiration for the student's writing.

In contrast, the prototypical possibility of selfhood offered to a student at the upper secondary written exam is that of the rational academic writer. Narrative and personal experience and stances are no longer relevant resources for writing, as students select assignments from four or five options, namely literary analysis, communicative analysis, journalistic debate and reflective essay. Texts must always be addressed explicitly and analytically. Specific knowledge sources are provided in the text material, but students are also expected to draw on disciplinary knowledge and to apply disciplinary concepts in their writing. However, a strong focus on genre and the dominant status of text analysis are common features in both lower and upper secondary Danish writing cultures.

	Lower secondary school-leaving exam. Written exam in Danish (4 hours)	Upper secondary school-leaving exam Written exam in Danish (5 hours)
Assignment genres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Literary fiction</i> (fairy-tale, short story, crime, thriller, poem, diary...)</li> <li>• <i>Journalistic genres</i> (portrait, personal column, debate, fictive reporting...)</li> <li>• <i>Essay</i> (personal reflection on stated issue)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Literary analysis</i> (“literary article”, analysis and interpretation, analytical presentation)</li> <li>• <i>Linguistic and communicative analysis of non-fiction texts</i> (hvx)</li> <li>• <i>Commentary</i> (“feature” (in Danish “kronik”), argumentative article dressed in an authentic media genre: give an account/review and discuss)</li> <li>• <i>Essay</i> (“essay”, a reflective piece, addressing an issue in the text material)</li> </ul>
Requirements concerning text material	Text material is always part of assignments, but in short verbal formats, embedded in visuals, or as visual texts. Texts are presented as <i>inspiration</i> for student writing, only rarely to be addressed explicitly.	A relatively comprehensive text is part of assignments. Visual texts may occur. Text <i>analysis</i> is required in all assignments (in the shape of analysis, exposition, representation of argument or issue, etc.).
Requirements and expectations as to resources of knowledge	Students are mainly expected to draw on everyday knowledge resources of personal experience and personal stances.	Specific knowledge resources are provided by the text corpora. Students are further expected to draw on specialised disciplinary knowledge and concepts.

Figure 1. Written exam assignments and requirements in the lower and upper secondary subject of Danish.

*Genre awareness* and *genre command* are prioritised disciplinary aims at both educational levels. With respect to writing, the genre focus does often hold issues of unwanted complications. As mentioned above, this is related to the fact that assignment genres in both lower and upper secondary school often imitate authentic genres within journalistic and literary domains. The didactic aim of having students write in authentic genres is, of course, training their genre awareness by mimicking recognisable communicative situations. In the case of the lower secondary school assignment genres, this didactic strategy may be helpful as student writers have a high degree of freedom to develop both content and textual form (Christensen, Elf & Krogh, 2014). Yet with regard to the upper secondary assignment genres, authentic genres, like the feature and the essay, have typically been narrowed and fixed by fairly rigid formal requirements (Piekut, 2012). In this case, students’ possible experience with authentic genres may not be particularly helpful and may even complicate their understanding of the assignment. This issue is captured in the notion of the double genre expectation (Togeby, 2015).

*Literary analysis* is taught in both lower and upper secondary Danish, albeit in different ways. As we have seen, in upper secondary Danish, text analysis in traditional disciplinary forms is a central aspect of student writing. However, in lower secondary Danish, we could refer to a 'productive analysis' that takes place when students are instructed to write a journalistic commentary about events depicted in a historical painting or to re-narrate a short story from the point of view of a minor character. In addition, students in lower secondary school write book reports, mostly about youth literature, as part of the oral program. This is further documented in the following analysis of the featured student Sofia's trajectory as a writer in lower and upper secondary Danish.

### 3.2 A diachronic perspective: Sofia's experience with voice, narrative and writer identities

The study of Sofia's writing experiences in Danish is concerned with changes in positioning and identification, which are tied to issues of personal narrative and voice and framed by ideas of *Bildung*. Sofia's reflections provide the primary data used in the study, as they were elicited in a range of interviews from grade 9 through grade 12.

Sofia was recruited for the longitudinal research project in February 2010. She allowed full access to her assignment papers and notes across subjects from grade 9 to grade 12, as well as granting access to her writings in Danish from grades 7 and 8. She further participated in ongoing interviews about her writing. Sofia's two Danish teachers in secondary and upper secondary school allowed access to their lessons, teaching documents, writing instructions and comments on Sofia's papers. Ethical precautions have been taken to protect participants' anonymity.

Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with Sofia between March 2010 and April/May 2013, creating a total of 11 hours and 42 minutes. As secondary data, the study further draws on the collection (57) of Sofia's papers in Danish (including teacher responses) from grade 7 to grade 12. In particular, the study focuses on two papers that capture main features of Sofia's transition experience. Classroom observations of Danish lessons<sup>iii</sup> constitute background data.

Initial readings of interview transcripts indexed two general themes pertaining to writing in Danish: *the transition from secondary school to upper secondary school* and *Sofia's trajectory of writing in Danish*. More detailed readings revealed a discursive pattern that turned out to provide categories for further coding and subsequent interpretation of the interviews. The analysis of this pattern drew on the theoretical concepts developed by Ivanič (cp above).

In the following section, this discursive pattern is presented, as it was initially detected in the lower secondary interviews. In two subsequent sections, Sofia's respective transition and trajectory experiences are analysed, applying these 'grounded' categories. The purpose of the analysis is to capture Sofia's elicited telling and retelling of her experiences, as she is repeatedly asked to reflect on her

writing, on herself as a writer and on what may be termed her adolescent Bildung project. In the final section, we return to identity theory in a more general analysis of Sofia's writer and writing development and link this development to the theoretical discussion of narrative, voice and Bildung.

### 3.2.1 *Discourses on writing established in lower secondary school*

In two interviews conducted in grade 9 (March 2010, May 2010), Sofia repeatedly used two notions: things being 'boring' and 'facts' as a reference to school knowledge. Through these notions, she positioned herself in two discourses that afford different ways of understanding what is considered boring and what are considered school facts. These discourses index two sides of Sofia's autobiographical self (Ivanic, 1998, cp. above).

On the one hand, Sofia positioned herself in a *strategic performance discourse*, which actualises the authorial self and the possibilities of authoritative selfhood that are made available in the disciplinary discourses provided at school. Within this discourse, she emphasised being ambitious and being in control of facts in writing. She found that lower secondary school was becoming boring, since the pace was too slow and the opportunities to perform were too few. She, therefore, looked forward to progressing to upper secondary school, which she expected to be "a bit more of a challenge". She wanted to participate in the ritual learning of school genres and she wanted to show the teachers that she mastered subject knowledge and the appropriate voices.

On the other hand, Sofia also positioned herself in a *personal expression discourse*, which indexes the realisation of a discursive self and possibilities of selfhood that are often unavailable in disciplinary writing. Within this discourse, written assignments were considered boring if "you are only to find facts" and if they failed to create the opportunity to express stances and personal experience. Indeed, Sofia preferred to be allowed to "say what you yourself think, or to make up something where a person thinks a lot about all kinds of things."

Lower secondary school offered Sofia possibilities of selfhood that enabled her to mediate between these two discourses on herself as a writer. L1 writing assignments opened for both documenting mastery of genre requirements and investment of personal experience and stance. As further elaborated below, one specific paper was a particularly successful instance of mediation between discourses. To Sofia, this paper turned out to be a Bildung experience, as acknowledged explicitly when she recalled the text in an interview a couple of years later.

The strategic performance and personal expression discourses have explanatory force as analytical categories for the study of Sofia's upper secondary writing experiences as well, as both the balance between these two areas and their content change in significant and interesting ways.

### 3.2.2 *Sofia's transition experience*

Sofia had extensive experience writing in Danish during lower and upper secondary school, submitting a large number of extended papers. In grades 7–9, she submitted 36 papers, comprising a total of 62 computer programmed pages; 13 papers were literary fiction, 7 were journalistic texts, 3 were essays and 2 were comments that addressed non-literary prose. In addition, she submitted 10 book reports as part of the oral programme.

In upper secondary school, Sofia submitted 22 papers that comprised a total of 73 computer programmed pages; 8 papers were journalistic 'features'/commentaries, 6 were literary articles, 5 were short experiments with literary fiction, 2 were book reports and 1 was an essay. Book reports and literary fiction were viewed as part of the oral study programme.

In lower secondary school, Sofia was a proficient writer and, consequently, she was awarded top marks. She preferred personal and psychological approaches to her writing. When, for the very first interview, she was asked to bring a paper that she was particularly pleased with, she drew special attention to a paper imitating a *klumme*, one of the journalistic genres applied in exam assignments in lower secondary school.<sup>iv</sup> A *klumme* is a humorous personal column that sheds new light on an everyday event. In this paper, Sofia was required to reflect on a personal experience with being "robbed of one's worst prejudices".

Sofia's paper recounts a personal narrative about her prejudices against people from Jutland, the western peninsula of Denmark, and about overcoming these prejudices through actually meeting a group of young Jutlanders, and in particular, one boy. Three voices come through in her text: the earnest young voice of the protagonist, the voice of the humorous *klumme* writer who is devising a sophisticated argument throughout the paper and the student's voice who, through discreet signs of academic usage, indicates that Sofia also commands the more academic school discourse.

Through this design of voicing in the paper, Sofia meets the double genre expectation (cp above), but she also rises above this construction in an act of self-communication (Berge & Hertzberg, 2005) as the *klumme* appears to process a sincere new understanding for which the personal narrative is pivotal. This interpretation was substantiated by the fact that, in an interview two years later (February 2012), Sofia reported that, in contrast to the majority of her writing at lower secondary school, the *klumme* paper was still vivid in her memory. For Sofia, this piece of writing represented a crucial experience of overcoming prejudices and understanding how such beliefs work: "Even though we realise that they are prejudices, we still hold them up like a shield".

Sofia was awarded a top mark for the *klumme* as well as for most of her writing in lower secondary school. Actually, her teacher twice indicated that it was difficult to find new things to teach Sofia. It was, therefore, a shock for Sofia that she received an average mark for her first assignment in upper secondary school. This

assignment turned out to constitute a fairly dramatic experience of transition, highlighting the differences in prototypical possibilities of selfhood in lower and upper secondary Danish writing, as documented above.

The transitional assignment required an analysis of a press photo depicting a wounded Danish soldier in Afghanistan. The prompt was, however, somewhat open, inviting students to express more personal thoughts and stances. Sofia decoded the assignment according to her writing experience from lower secondary school, construing the photo as inspiration for an idiosyncratic, humorous description of the picture, which in turn led to a fabricated fictive action narrative of an agent on a failed mission. In subsequent passages, however, she turns to the reality depicted in the photo and adopts a more serious tone of voice in analyses and commentary. According to her interpretation of the possibilities of selfhood made available in the instruction, she construes a sophisticated balance between positioning herself as a student, delivering analysis and argument, although somewhat idiosyncratic in the opening passages, as well as positioning herself as a playful young person, drawing on everyday youthful language and cultural references.

Although the teacher's response was extensive, she failed to communicate to Sofia what is at stake in her paper. Instead, she gives an elaborate description of the range of technical tools available for picture analysis, suggesting that what is missing is a systematic analysis along these lines. Obviously, she interprets Sofia's composition as a sign of lack of writing competence instead of a sign of shaky genre expectations. Contrary to the lower secondary teacher, she clearly indicates that Sofia has much to learn in upper secondary school.

In an interview conducted in October 2010, shortly after Sofia received the teacher's response to the paper, she reports that there was no instruction in picture analysis in class ahead of the assignment, and that she was apprehensive about the prospect of writing the expected two to three pages about a picture. She speculates that her average mark reflected the lack of information about Afghanistan in her essay (she believes that those students who discussed Afghanistan in greater detail seemed to achieve higher marks).

Sofia: That is because she [the teacher] wants us to explain more about the war. Actually, I don't know, I just don't think that it is so much Danish to recount about the war. I thought that was more like social science, and that Danish was more creative, but obviously she didn't think so.

[...]

Interviewer: Try to read aloud what she says.

Sofia: *You structure your essay with logic links between the paragraphs. It is ok that you 'fabricate a little story', but it must not get out of control compared to the proper work with the picture. - Well, okay - Indeed, you could elaborate much more on the description of the picture: lines, colours, perspectives. These picture technical things contribute to our conception of the picture and its message, you know. - So, she wants, like, more facts instead of what I think. (Interview with Sofia 14.10.2010)*

It is not until Sofia is asked to read the teacher's comment aloud that she realises what the "facts" refer to: the teacher does not request facts or knowledge about Afghanistan but facts about the photo. However, since Sofia views Danish as "more creative", she assumes that she can disregard facts in favour of a narrative voice and a personal interpretation. In her text, she attempts the same strategy that was successful in lower secondary school, and the same one that made it possible for her to mediate between the strategic performance discourse and the personal expression discourse. In the interview, she realises that, in upper secondary school, her performance is not valued if facts are disregarded at the expense of personal expression.

After this initial setback, Sofia gradually appropriated the new upper secondary genre demands, once again receiving top marks on her papers. In an interview conducted in her final upper secondary year, Sofia recalls the press photo experience and describes it as an eye-opener:

I got a 7, and I remember that I was like, no, did I really get a 7 for this? I realised that upper secondary school was difficult. That was the only essay in Danish I had ever got a 7 for. But it was like an eye-opener, so I got, like, more respect for the subject because it was more difficult than I believed. Since then I have made more of an effort, and now I have somehow found the style so I can stick to that. (Interview with Sofia 21.02.13)

Looking back, Sofia vividly recalls the shocking experience of receiving a mediocre mark in Danish. However, this also reveals how it is possible to identify a change of position. Whereas previously she viewed herself as the victim of an unforeseen cultural change (from a more creative subject to a subject that focused on facts), in the interview from grade 12, Sofia positions herself as an agentive and responsible student. The eye-opening experience made her realise that she hadn't invested the necessary amount of effort into writing in Danish and she states that making more of an effort has proved a successful strategy. Drawing on Bamberg (2008, p. 199), Sofia can be said to "retell" her transition experience, setting out on a quest for a coherent life story. In this case, she makes use of herself as protagonist in the transition story in order to find out who she is here and now. In the grade 12 interview, Sofia describes how she is once again in control of the genres when writing in Danish:

It is simply so easy. You don't have to think about everything. You just write what you think yourself. And of course you have to think about it, but you need to include all the points, and then when you have written them all down and found some quotations, you just piece it together – and I like that. (Interview with Sofia 21.02.13)

In this interview, the strategic performance discourse, which emphasises the authorial self and the command of 'facts', has become the dominant discourse. The call for new challenges that Sofia voiced in the grade 9 interviews has been elaborated with the contrasting terms 'difficult' and 'easy'. In upper secondary school, the issue with 'facts' is no longer that they have the potential to be boring, but rather that they have the potential to be too difficult. Sofia enjoys the experience of

performing well without difficulty in Danish. She no longer calls for more challenges, and neither does she take any risks of experimenting with genre expectations.

In grade 12, the personal expression discourse can evidently only be activated in retrospect. Sofia misses opportunities for free and narrative writing; however, with some resignation, she rejects it as irrelevant and “not much use”.

Sometimes I miss the writing-along kind of writing in lower secondary school. You got a topic, but it was more like ... and now you somehow have to stick to the texts. We were allowed just to write. I think that's a bit sad some times, but I realise that it is not much use just writing anything. (Interview with Sofia 21.02.13)

Even though Sofia has succeeded in gaining control of the upper secondary argumentative and analytical assignment genres, this has clearly been at the expense of another side of her previous writer identity.

In a more general comment on the transition from lower to upper secondary school, taken from an interview from June 2011 in which Sofia looks back on her first upper secondary year, she describes the general turn towards the ‘paradigmatic’ mode of thought (Bruner, 1986) that she has experienced in upper secondary school. This comment could be said to open for more overriding reflections of the *Bildung* aims of Danish upper secondary school and particularly on the status of the narrative mode of thought.

I think one learns to view things more critically. Often, when reading things, you shouldn't just believe what you read. For instance, in history with criticism of the sources and that kind of things. We never did that in lower secondary school, but it is very important that what is in the history books reflects the people who wrote it, so you are not just to believe it even though it may be half the truth if you know what I mean. And I think it is more generally like that in other subjects as well. (Interview June 2011)

### 3.2.3 *Sofia's writer trajectory in upper secondary Danish*

The writing instruction offered in Sofia's upper secondary Danish class was organised as a progressive training of the three exam genres of the program attended by Sofia. Sofia and her class were first introduced to the ‘feature’/commentary, then to the essay and finally the literary article. In subsequent assignments, students were most often offered the option of choosing between the three genres presented as three approaches to the same text material. Until the third and final year, Sofia preferred the ‘feature’, in which she discovered ways to actualise personal experience in a more universal and academic way than in lower secondary school. In her final school year, she would typically select the literary article, whereas she never warmed to the essay. In literary analyses, her narrative and psychological interests could be said to be re-invented. Thus, Sofia's development as a writer in Danish can be described as a trajectory from identifying with the possibilities of selfhood offered in ‘feature’/commentary writing to her identifying more strongly with those offered by the literary article.

In spite of the experience with the press photo assignment, a few months later, Sofia declares that she greatly prefers writing in Danish to writing experimental reports in subjects in which writing is “either correct or else it is wrong [...] it is not what you yourself think, you know” (Interview February 2011). At this point, the first part of the ‘feature’ genre has been taught and Sofia has learned to present issues in text material. She is looking forward to writing full ‘features’, which she expects will allow her to include personal experience:

You know, I don’t find presenting so difficult because that is just finding the issues [...] that is nothing, really, and then in the feature, I think that can be quite fun because then it is a bit more what you yourself think, and then you can bring a story of your own experience. I like that. You could say it is like in lower secondary, except that you get a bit lower marks. (Interview February 2011)

What Sofia highlights, concerning ‘feature’ writing in Danish, is the freedom of expression and the personal touch which allows for an artful and unique voice in contrast to the standardised and formulaic writing of science subjects:

[Comparing three papers in, respectively, Danish, chemistry and biology] there [in the Danish paper] you are allowed to express yourself in funny ways whereas the other papers, that is more raw facts and anyone can make these reports, I think. (Interview April 2011)

Sofia particularly appreciates assignments on personally relevant topics. One such example is a feature assignment on copying and plagiarising in upper secondary school. She emphasises the fact that this topic allows her to draw on personal experience as a knowledge source as opposed to the larger political issues dealt with in the subject of English:

I think the topic is good because it is relevant and we can take a position on it. In a way, we are to pretend being a politician, taking a position on this. We are actually capable of that. And I think, in English, it is often on politics, and that is simply very far away from our everyday life. This is really something we know about. (Interview April 2011)

Commenting on the top mark that she was awarded, Sofia compares her positive attitude on feature writing with her experiences with klumme writing in lower secondary school:

As a matter of fact, writing a feature in a way recalls writing a klumme, and I liked that as well. (Interview April 2011)

This is further elaborated in a later interview on writing a feature (October 2011). Still, a new aspect can be detected here. Sofia appreciates the dialogue on and with the text.

What I like best is being allowed to argue for and against and then draw in some of their viewpoints and say, ‘I like this really much because something or other, but this, on the other hand, I don’t like because it doesn’t hold or something’. I like being able to use the texts and somehow build up one’s own opinion, that’s cool. (Interview October 2011)

In this interview, which takes place in grade 11, Sofia is asked how she views her development as a writer in Danish since grade 9. Except for the first crucial learning experience, she doesn't think that she has developed very much as a writer. She feels the most demanding dimension is the need to substantiate claims and knowledge, since it is no longer possible to rely on personal experience and unsubstantiated ideas in upper secondary school.

Sofia: When entering upper secondary school, one simply needs to learn what an assignment in Danish is. Actually, when the first feature had been made, I think that you have more or less learned how to do it. I don't think that I have developed much. It is a big step from lower to upper secondary school. In lower secondary assignments something quite different is required.

Interviewer: What would you say is the crucial difference?

Sofia: Lower secondary was quite ... one didn't need to write so much. There need not be so many facts either. It could be like 'I just made this up', I think it sounds fairly good, I'll just jot it down'. You need to be more certain here.

Interviewer: Yes?

Sofia: I think that is what is most demanding. (Interview October 2011)

The literary article was not initially welcomed as a purely positive challenge by Sofia. Still, she appreciates the new possibility of selfhood available in the more disciplinary discourse expected in this assignment genre. In November 2011, she submitted a paper on narrator positions in a particular short story as compared with an extract of a novel, both by Danish authors. When interviewed about this paper, Sofia said that it had been a boring assignment as it was purely "schoolish" and couldn't be related to her personal life. On the other hand, she highlighted an analytical argument with which she was particularly satisfied because it showcased her skills to her teacher and because "it gives a feeling of having understood this really well". Apart from that, she was also proud that her language was "cool":

I think it is important to use cool words, that is, phrases which one doesn't use in everyday conversation. That makes it more interesting instead of reading kindergarten language. Presenting some cool phrases. You get time to think that kind of things over when writing a Danish paper. (Interview December 2011)

Similar reflections are repeated in several interviews. Sofia enjoys experimenting with language within the disciplinary framing of literary assignments and she feels that this opportunity is only given when writing in Danish. She also acknowledges that she has developed analytical skills relevant for participating in disciplinary discourse. Generally, however, she finds writing in Danish to be schoolish and without relevance. "In lower secondary school it was more fun" (Interview January 2012). As Sofia enters her final upper secondary year, however, new experiences are highlighted in interviews. Discussing her intermediary exam assignment from June 2012, she describes an epistemic experience when writing about a literary text:

It was a really good text. The first time I read it through I didn't think so much about it, but on starting to write, it made more sense, and in the end I got to the core of the

whole thing. As a matter of fact there was really something to get out of writing the paper because otherwise I just thought that this was a weird text, but then, suddenly, it made sense. (Interview September 2012)

In an interview in February 2013, Sofia once again repeats that Danish is her best subject. Retelling yet another dimension of the transition story, she acknowledges that being able to write an elaborate close analysis of a literary text constitutes the main disciplinary advancement in upper secondary Danish.

When starting in upper secondary school, one didn't have the training in, for instance, quoting. We didn't work in depth with the texts. Now we can write a whole paper on just one short story. We couldn't do that then. We could analyse the short story, but couldn't compose a paper on the analysis. (Interview February 2013)

At this point, Sofia no longer views disciplinary writing in Danish as boring and purely schoolish. The content of her writing, the textual worlds and their construction, have become a fascination. Sofia identifies with the socially available possibilities of selfhood, not only from a strategic performance perspective, but also from a personal expression perspective:

It is exciting that there is actually a message – as compared with math, in which there is only an answer. Writing about an answer is not as fun as writing about their feelings and how they go about these, the authors I mean. (Interview February 2013)

#### 3.2.4 *The diachronic perspective, a summary of findings*

In conclusion, when reviewing the diachronic study of Sofia's trajectory from lower secondary grade 9 to upper secondary grade 12, some important findings can be summarised. The study has shown that the *possibilities of selfhood* available to Sofia in lower and upper secondary school differed drastically, particularly concerning the specific research interest of this article: the status of narrative and personal voice as resources for writing. At the curricular level, in lower secondary L1 writing, narrative and personal voice are highly appreciated resources and the prioritised knowledge resources are personal experience and stances. At the upper secondary level, these resources no longer suffice, as more academic and paradigmatic modes of thought are advanced, and prioritised knowledge resources are located in the text material as well as in disciplinary knowledge and concepts. The study of Sofia's trajectory as a writer in Danish, however, documents that these are crude distinctions. When Sofia developed the necessary analytical capacity and associated skills in writing, she detected new possibilities of selfhood tied to the content of her writing, the textual worlds of narrative fiction. Yet, as will be documented in the synchronic study of students' exam writing, these possibilities of selfhood are seemingly primarily available for fairly advanced student writers like Sofia.

Concerning Sofia's *positionings as to discursive voices*, these are not directly accessible in the interview data, but they are reported on in the description of Sofia's two papers in lower and upper secondary school, and on several occasions, Sofia discusses voicing issues in the interviews. The humorous voice of the fictive young

author, construed successfully in the klumme paper and tried out again with much less success in the press photo paper, represents a part of Sofia's repertoire of writing resources that was only sporadically actualised in upper secondary school and never explicitly addressed and honed as part of L1 writing instruction. Upper-secondary Sofia certainly regrets this loss of opportunity. On the other hand, from the point of view of strategic interest and curricular necessity, which are always part of Sofia's identification as a student and as a writer, this playful writing eventually appears childishly futile. It could be argued, however, that when Sofia talks about "being allowed to express yourself in funny ways" (April 2011), "build up one's own opinion, that's cool" (October 2011) and "presenting some cool phrases" (December 2011), she has found new and satisfactory ways of voicing discursal selves that are a continuation of the sense of style and textual design that she brings with her from her lower secondary writing experiences. As already indicated above, in her final year of upper secondary school, Sofia finds a new disciplinary voice in writing and she is able to mediate the discursal self of textual designing (it is fun writing about a message) and the authorial self of knowledge crafting (the epistemic experience of textual analysis).

Finally, as to developing her *autobiographical self*, during Sofia's upper secondary trajectory there is a change in the two distinct discourses expressed in the interviews from grade 9, the strategic performance discourse and the personal expression discourse. The strategic performance discourse grows stronger in upper secondary school, although a shift can be detected. While in lower secondary, Sofia complained that it was boring when "facts" didn't offer satisfactory challenges, in upper secondary school the issue is rather that facts may be too demanding. Sofia enjoys writing in Danish when she has regained control of the assignment genre, and the reason she gives is that it is easy to perform well in Danish. As to the personal expression discourse, during the two first upper secondary years, Sofia keeps complaining that writing in Danish is boring and schoolish, and that it has no personal relevance to her. As shown above, in her final year, the personal expression discourse could be said to be transformed into a disciplinary expression discourse tied to the textual worlds of literary narratives. The shifts in the personal expression discourse are tied to the status of facts and what may be termed the sense of writing. Whereas in lower secondary school Sofia found fact-finding assignments boring, in her third year of upper secondary, facts in the context of literary analysis were no longer boring, as her more developed academic writing repertoire allowed her to have experiences of knowledge transformation, which in turn satisfied her wish for personal expression and agency in writing. On the other hand, Sofia clearly deplores that certain aspects of the personal expression discourse are no longer part of the L1 writing repertoire. She misses the feeling of lightness and playfulness that she experienced when flinging herself into a writing task in lower secondary school. Hidden in this description of a writing process is the narrative exploration in writing, which constituted an essential aspect of Sofia's writer identity in lower secondary school. This writer identity is brought to the fore when Sofia recalls the

transformative Bildung experience of understanding the essence of prejudices through the klumme paper. Yet, in the later interview, she rejects the lower secondary writing tasks and describes them as childish and useless. Thus, she has clearly adopted a strategic and academic position on personal and narrative writing that facilitates a coherent story of her trajectory as a writer.

### 3.3 A synchronic perspective: Unwanted voices

Whereas the diachronic study gave access to one student's trajectory as a writer in Danish, the following study is based on students' exam texts and, as such, is purely synchronic. The analytical approach, therefore, is also different. The present study is based on in-depth text analysis of selected sections of two student texts, written in the same exam term in 2010. The two texts are selected among a corpus of 183 student texts, collected as part of a larger study of genre competencies and genre transgressions in upper secondary exam writing. Since students' handling of genre-specific resources were paramount to their success as writers, their approaches to genre standards were the focus of the study. Whereas some students accommodated to genre standards, others challenged or even violated them—on purpose or as a compensatory device (Piekut, 2012). A main finding was that many students included personal narratives and small stories in their papers, even though these resources are not invited in the official curricular documents and are typically regarded as inappropriate genre transgressions.

The present study focuses on genre transgressions through personal narratives. The narrative mode appeared to allow student writers the opportunity to express a distinct voice and to align the given topic and the text with their own experience. This is also the case in the two student texts selected for analysis in the present study. These texts are selected according to an analytical distinction between 'narratives' and 'narrativity', which turned out to elicit a pattern in the material. Thus, three main categories of genre transgressions with and through narratives were found in student texts: a. The personal narrative or small story, b. the narrativisation of the topic, and c. construing the assignment as a narrative. In some cases, students' texts actualised more than one of these transgression strategies. One of the selected texts features a *narrative*, a small personal story exposing a private, non-academic experience and reflection on a topic. The second text documents the pattern of *narrativisation*, as the topic is narrativised as a meaning-making frame for the paper.<sup>v</sup> The 'construing the assignment as a narrative' is concurrently at play in this text.

In the following analysis, the multivocal (Bakhtin, 1984) presence of identities expressed in narratives as genre transgressions are subjected to scrutiny and the meaning potential of these narratives is also analysed.

### 3.3.1 *Analytical framework*

The analytical approach draws on Wortham's (2001) theory on interactional positioning as an analytic tool for identifying voices and positioning in students' texts. While acknowledging the representational power of autobiographical narrative, Wortham claims that this approach oversimplifies the process of narrative self-construction. He argues that the narrator's "enacting the self" through interactional positioning while telling a narrative is a strong aspect of the power of these narratives to construct identities:

Autobiographical narratives do more than represent events and characters; they also presuppose a certain version of the social world and position the narrator and audience with respect to that social world and with respect to each other. (Wortham, 2001, p. 9)

This point is particularly relevant for the present study, as student writers are required to represent the social world in accordance with the academic genre conventions of their assignments. By adding narrativisation of personal experiences, enacting different and inventive writer roles, students develop different versions of the social world or different cultural models of assignment writing.

Wortham draws a distinction between the storytelling event, specifically concerning the interactional context of the utterance, and the narrated event described in the utterance. In the utterance, acts of interactional positioning are accomplished by linguistic and non-linguistic cues which index certain features of the context. Voice or voicing means using certain words that index social positions or discourses. It is important to note that, while voices do speak from some position, they do so in the midst of an ongoing process of self-definition:

The social position represented by a voice changes as it enters dialogue with other voices. So a voice represents not just a static social role, but a "whole person" or an "integral point of view" who speaks from some position but is not fully defined by that position. (Op.cit., p. 39f.)

### 3.3.2 *The commentary: Food, health – and ethnicity*

The commentary<sup>vi</sup>, or the "account for and discuss"-genre, as it was categorised in the current exam booklet, requires students to present and discuss a certain issue that is represented in the text material. They are expected to provide pro and con arguments, drawing on pertinent aspects of the texts. This genre stresses text comprehension, structuring and reasoning skills and text coherence.

The prompt of the commentary on Food and health states:

*Account for and discuss the main points in "What do we eat – and why?" (Text 1). In the discussion, you are to bring up the importance of food and health in modern society. You are to include at least two more texts from the booklet in your discussion.*  
Headline: *What do we eat - and why?*

The student submitted a four-page paper structured in ten paragraphs. Two paragraphs are selected for close analysis since they document crucial aspects of the student's writing competence. In the introductory paragraph (paragraph one) the writer sends her first regards to the reader, introducing herself as well as the topic. The introduction provides a small narrativisation of the topic, positioning this in a more general discussion that involves different textual voices from the booklet texts. Further, the narrativisation positions the writer in relation to the academic expectations and the assignment genre.

In paragraph seven of the paper, the writer embeds a personal narrative that will not be acceptable in the genre. This paragraph takes its point of departure from a philosophical statement by Feuerbach on eating and ethnicity/culture, which provokes more private reflections.

Student paper, paragraph one:

We live in a world in which food has become an important thing for most of us. The majority of the population on Earth would agree with me that food has become part of everyday life, a routine like all the other things we need to get through every day. Some people will eat because they need to, others because they want to enjoy the good taste and others eat for comfort. Certainly, comfort eating has become one of the dangerous things we may get close to in our everyday life. Often, when feeling depressed or sad, we will slip to the refrigerator, looking for something that will cheer us up. Eating for comfort is also the reason for overweight for many people today.

The first paragraph provides a small story about the topic, in the sense of Bamberg's above definition of small stories as apparently insignificant mundane everyday conversations. The writer designs a narrative about food and global health issues as part of an imagined world that is both edifying and detrimental to people. But this narrative also models the way the writer wants to be understood: As a reflective student who informs us, the readers, of an important issue and engages with us in a writer-reader interaction, through which she is positioned as an agentive and well-prepared student.

The small story on food and health sets the context for the paper, presenting the topic as a global issue concerning all of us. The writer positions the 'population' or the 'we' as agreeing with her, or as 'people' with health or weight problems, and points to more overarching issues like the correlation between food and the mind. By including the reader through personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'us', the writer emphasises that the issue is of mutual interest. The small narrative about slipping to the refrigerator generates a sense of affinity between the writer, the reader and those who eat out of comfort: It might be us, or at least we recognise the behaviour. The writer positions herself as someone reflecting on the problem, and at the same time as a possible part of the problem. In this paragraph the writer establishes an identity as someone who is able to account for the topic as expected, but who also extends the perspective and establishes an intimacy with the topic through a human angle. The most salient sense-making strategies are the inclusion

of the reader as a 'we', and the extension of the topic to include mental issues concerning all of us and not just obese people.

The *reference* to food and health in this passage is obvious, considering the topic, but the paragraph also references various topics included in the booklet texts, although they are represented through the writer's own voice.

In the paper the student introduces food issues in a global perspective. She presents the issue as complex and contrasting, and evaluate some of the consequences of our attention to food: Comfort eating is "dangerous" and a "reason for [becoming] overweight". The presented thematic contrasts are food as a necessity or as pleasure, and food as a mental comfort or as a cause for the global obesity problems. The student positions herself as a reflective and academic writer who knows that in this genre the first paragraph has to open up for a discussion by pointing at general issues rather than more prosaic knowledge about food. The positioning strategies reflect a writer who wants to be understood as a creditable and knowledgeable student who meets the academic demands and genre expectations, and is in command of both subjective emotional and academic voices

The first paragraph actualises Bakhtin's notion of addressivity as it starts with the deictic reference "We live in a..." which includes the writer. The "we" contextualises the food-and-health issues as global and invites the reader to engage with this issue. In the same phrase, the writer chooses to cushion the authoritative "we" with "most of us", making reservations for people who won't identify with the issue. The final sentences in the paragraph are open for a discussion of issues related to the topic, where the sliding deictics seem appropriate for an overall meaning-making effort.

By using these specific and yet dynamic polyphonic voices, the writer presents issues of importance regarding the food and health topic and positions herself as a knowledgeable student who can tell different small stories about the topic; some edifying, as in the 'routine of food worldwide' and some critical, such as 'comfort eating and overweight'. This opening provides the writer with an academic freedom to realise a diverse range of positionings and voicing in the subsequent paragraphs. In the introduction, the writer is both an outsider who offers the reader a look at major issues, and an insider who as an active agent takes a stance towards the topic, exactly as required by the 'account-for-and-discuss' genre. Thus, the introductory paragraph can be characterised as a genre appropriate opening of the paper.

The subsequent five paragraphs account for the texts in the task issue, viewed both as referential content and as different perspectives on the food and health topic.

In paragraph seven, different and challenging positioning variations are found. In the opening sentence, the writer relies on genre expectations and interacts with the reader in an academically adequate way. After this, however, she inscribes a personal narrative, apparently provoked by a quotation by Feuerbach. This quotation, which in the prescribed text says "Man is what he eats", is transformed into

“People who don’t eat like us aren’t real human beings.” This may be considered an acceptable interpretation of the quote as the student leans on the introduction of the text in the booklet. In the subsequent narrative, the student’s voice and positioning changes as she delves into the topic:

Paragraph seven:

Isn't it quite a generalisation saying that "Those who don't eat like us, aren't human beings"? Well, one thing I have learned through the ages is that people are different, cultures are different, countries are different. The world is not a uniform place to be – fortunately, since it would be fairly boring, to live at a place where people are all the same. I am from a Kurdish/Iraqi culture, I moved here as a child and I almost grew up in the Danish society. But that doesn't mean that I was raised as a Dane. Ever since I was a little child, I have always been reminded where I came from. I most certainly sense that my habits of eating are different from those of my Danish girlfriends. Just as an example, I'll describe the meaning of food in the Kurdish culture: There is a saying that goes: "Are you eating to live or are you living to eat?". If you ask any Kurd, I'd say with a 100 per cent assurance that they will answer: "I am living to eat". In our everyday life, it is not only about dinner parties when it comes to food. When people are invited to our home, just for a movie, or just for a chat, the biggest problem is: What to serve? Food is served out of pure respect, to show that the person is welcome in your home. So, food is an important part of our culture, and I should say that we do serve some really strange dishes which I haven't found in other countries, but does this mean that we are less human just because we don't eat the same as the Danes? No I wouldn't say so. When I invite my Danish girlfriends to my home, they get really shocked that I have prepared so much food, but again, that is just a tradition we have. Rather too much food than being short of it.

Provoked by her interpretation of the Feuerbach quotation, the writer ventures into a personal narrative that is not only a small story, but rather appears to be the essence of a whole life distilled to the writer’s experience of cultural practices of food and eating. In this paragraph, the student’s voice becomes private and almost intimate. Different constructions of identity seem to be at play: The identity as an engaged student critically discussing issues regarding the topic (“Is it quite a generalisation”), the personal identity regarding ethnicity (“I am from a Kurdish...”), and the more intimate family identity (“In our everyday life...”).

The sliding between positionings as part of different voices and writer identities is interesting. In the opening sentence, the writer engages with the topic and the text, but seems to be more personally involved than allowed by the latitude of the position as an ‘academic student writer’. In the middle section, the writer presents cultural differences on food issues in an academically appropriate way and brings a new perspective into the discussion. The reader is addressed in “I’ll describe the meaning of food...” and rhetorical questions force the reader to actively engage in the student’s narrative about being Kurdish and serving Kurdish food in a Danish community. The phrasing “I’ll describe...” further indicates both the intimacy of the story telling event and the confession of a more personal stance on the topic. The last part highlights the importance of the writer’s engagement regarding the topic. The relationship between genre, topic and personal life seems to be intertwined as the writer connects the academic context to her own knowledge and understand-

ing. Although the personal narrative is not an acknowledged resource of the genre, in this case the narrative affords the writer the opportunity to convey a strong personal presence. This voice lends reliability and persuasive force to her argument and qualifies her text as a communicative project that reaches beyond the student project of writing an exam paper. She recalls previous experiences and capitalises on her knowledge both of the topic, as given in the texts, and of her out-of-school life. In this specific paragraph, the writer expands the discussion on food and health and links food issue to issues of identity and culture.

In the first part of the paragraph the writer indexes voice mainly at the referential level (Bakhtin, 1986) as she picks on the cultural aspect of the issue and characterises this. In the middle section, particularly deictics, pointing at time and persons, are prevalent tools for her contextualising the personal narrative; quotation marks are also used in this section, as in "Are you eating to live..." In these quotations the Kurdish people and culture are speaking through the writer, ascribing agency to the Kurdish identity and positioning the writer as part of this identity. The change of 'speech subject' accentuate the dialogic approach. Thus, Bakhtin's (1986) notion of dialogism, referring to the orchestration of different voices in interaction, captures an essential feature of the narrative. The power to let certain voices speak is also present in this paragraph. Indeed, the self-reference in the rhetorical question, "What to serve?" is part of the writer's voicing. In the last part of the paragraph, the writer's evaluative voice is salient. We find information about "really strange dishes" and the voices of the girlfriends are evaluated as "really shocked". The style is intimate and informal rather than academic: "... are less human just because we don't eat the same as the Danes? No, I wouldn't say so". This choice indexes a person with strong evaluative stances and a private interest in the topic.

As the voices shift through the paragraph, the writer's engagement takes charge of the topic, concurrent with a transformation from an academic to a personal meaning-making process. The voice of the interactional and argumentative student is visible in the first part of the paragraph, then changes to a more challenging and less academic voice with distinct cultural insight. The paragraph is wrapped up by voices carrying the writer's personal experience. The writer also speaks for the Kurdish people, voicing shared cultural understandings. She is positioning herself inside, outside and in between cultural differences, shifting voices and points of view.

The personal narrative positions the writer not only as a student, but as a person with a strong identity forging ideas on food, culture and ethnic characteristics. In the remaining paragraphs, she turns back to a more formal student voice, accounting for other texts from the assignment booklet and stating pros and cons about food and health issues. She positions herself as a student, providing acceptable and more strategic arguments, and adding voices from the texts as indirect quotations or extracts.

Viewed in a *Bildung* perspective, the student paper can be said to enact a *Bildung* process as the writer succeeds in establishing a position on the topic, which in turn allows for interacting with knowledge and developing new dimensions of understanding. The driving force in this process is the personal narrative. Even though the student does not succeed in lifting this perspective to the general argumentative level of the paper, transforming the assignment through a narrativising technique, she still succeeds in communicating an independent and critical argument on food as a salient cultural issue in a multiethnic society.

### 3.3.3 *The essay: 'Computer games and the future'—running counter to implicit narratives*

The essay exam genre requires a reflective prose text on a delimited subject, taking as its point of departure a prescribed text in the exam booklet. The exam essay differs from the professional essay by its limited freedom concerning content as well as style. The reference is academic knowledge as opposed to more personal and everyday knowledge, even though personal experience may constitute an angle on academic knowledge. The essay genre requires reflection and consideration, but the student is also expected to apply text analysis tools, using booklet texts as the springboard for new ideas or abstractions. The essay allows the integration of personal experience and invites some degree of interaction with readers, but private reflections or narratives are not considered appropriate.<sup>vii</sup>

The prompt of the present essay assignment is as follows:

#### *Computer games and Bildung*

Write an essay on computer games and *Bildung*. Based on 'Computer games are the blame games of our time' (text 4) you are to consider the importance of the games for children's and adolescents' *Bildung*.

The title of the student paper is "Computer games and the future". The three-page paper is structured in four major paragraphs, consisting of three to four subparagraphs. In the following analysis, the opening and the final paragraph are selected for close investigation, with a particular interest in the student's attempt to narrativise the topic in a multi-voiced manner. The embedment of a (fictional or real) private experience appears pivotal to the writer's engagement in the topic.

In the opening paragraph, the writer introduces his family and their computer conduct, explicitly drawing on his private life and a selection of different computer games. The assignment opens in *medias res*, thereby affording a simultaneity between the narrated event and the narrated time as well as a mimetic convergence between the writer and the reader. In the 'small story', the writer creates a portrait of a family playing different computer games, which is in continuation of the text given in the issue. As readers, we enter the paper as we would enter a game:

### The opening paragraph:

“Come on! Get those bone spikes. Gathering at my place, get going!” a voice is screaming into my earpiece as if it is a matter of life and death, which in principle it is for the 25 fictional characters who are streaking around on the screen in front of me while beating up a 15-metre-tall skeleton.

In the room beside mine my stepfather is shooting terrorists as an SAS soldier trying to save the world. In the living room, his daughter has her nose close to the screen, on an adventure with Pixeline. On my way to the kitchen to get a Coke, I hear her computer game: “One, two, three gold coins. Good job. Can you find the treasure chest with eight gold coins?”

I can’t hide a smile and am reminded of my own playing that kind of games when I was a child. Games with titles like ‘Mathematics Rocket’ and ‘Otto the Otter’. A lot could be said, but there weren’t many other kids at the age of six who could calculate plus, minus and simple multiplying, not to talk about making a sundial and eating with Chinese sticks. The reason, of course, is that computer games were unknown to most people at the time.

Say what you like, computer games have been part of my Bildung since they have accompanied me most of my life, and I am far from saying that I was neglected. So, do computer games really harm children and adolescents?

The student designs a small story of an ordinary everyday situation, personified with characters from a recognisable family structure. Through the opening quotation the writer positions himself as a gamer with an insider position on the topic. The other characters are the stepfather and his daughter, both of whom are also absorbed in computer games. The writer positions himself as a dynamic narrator who is able to switch through times and experiences with computer games in this small story snapshot. While on his way to the kitchen to get a Coke, he is taking a mental trip down memory lane, construing a convergence between the referential space and time and the imaginative memory of early gaming. Even though the characters are presented, there is no interaction between them. Only the sound of the computer reveals an activity—the games are the unifying part of the narrative.

In the academic context, the writer implicitly addresses a grand narrative about computer games as prohibitive with regard to Bildung. He positions himself as a pro-gamer and points to his early knowledge of mathematics as proof of the positive impact of computer games. In this paragraph, he rejects a critical position and refuses to identify with the socially and institutionally shared understanding of gaming as a Bildung threat. He seems to ignore the academic expectation of treating the topic with careful reflection and consideration. He identifies himself as an educated gamer and even stakes a couple of prejudices on gaming: The Coke-drinking gamer, violence in games, isolation behind the screen, and so forth.

The most salient linguistic markers of voicing in this paragraph, such as persons, space and time, connect to the immediate context: in the paragraph there are accurate specifications regarding persons (writer, stepfather, daughter), the space as a home environment and the matter of time in contemporary events. Deictic markers like “Come on”, “the room beside mine”, “my way to the kitchen”, “unknown

for most people” and so on, frame the narrated event and the interaction between the people involved, and engage the reader in taking a position as an alter ego of the writer, following the narrated event in time and place. The writer is clearly the deictic center, and not only points this out to the reader but places the reader beside him as part of the construed context. He is talking through a multiplicity of voices, applying a variety of positioning-strategies and extending the possibilities of selfhood offered by the exam genre (Ivanič, 1998).

There are a lot of quotations in the paragraph, mostly direct quotes from different computer games, like “Come on! Get those bone spikes” and “one, two, three gold coins”, but there are also indirect quotes like “shooting terrorists” and “but there weren’t a lot of other kids”, which are references and filtered messages from a computer game or game manual, respectively, and other voices praising the writer’s mathematical skills. The quotations also serve as a change of ‘speech subject’ (Bakhtin, 1986) and establish the writer’s status as belonging to a ‘gamer group’ and enhance the pros of gaming. Particularly in the opening sentence of the paragraph, the reference to a gamer’s use of expressions and wording is significant. Thus, the game, the gamer and the student are interconnected in this paragraph.

So, what is the academic status of the narrated event and the writer’s position? Turning to the essay genre as the academic context of the topic, the writer is expected to present one or more academically devised ideas and to reflect on these ideas. He or she may also engage the reader in a deliberation on these ideas. The writer obviously doesn’t draw on these genre resources. There is no academic reflection on the topic, and the reader is not engaged in deliberation, but is rather invited into the narrative as an alter ego. The writer offers a small story in which we gain insight into a gamer’s life, and the topic is presented from a personal and non-academic angle, ending with a rhetorical question on Bildung and computer games, which positions the reader in denial of any harmful consequence of computer gaming. The writer positions himself as a gamer with valuable knowledge on the topic and with a resistant moral stance against the expected critical view on computer games.

In the next two paragraphs, the writer engages with the mandatory text and reflects on the topic in a more genre appropriate way, but never leaves his own experience as documentation of the advantages of computer games. He weighs the pros and cons of games and comments on different issues regarding computer games: Games as art or artistic expression (the graphics), games and teamwork building, gamers and fast food culture and the relationship between games and knowledge.

In the final paragraph he returns to the private experience as a positioning strategy and embeds small personal stories as evidence of the benefits of being a gamer. The concept of Bildung is rounded off by personal accounts as follows:

A short while ago I watched an interview with a child psychologist. She found that computer games, and the universes in which they are set, correspond to playing cow-boys and Indians and other games played by the older generation.

Whatever is said, I believe that we will witness a lot more computer games in the future, and particularly more computer games, or educational games as they also are called, for children. As mentioned before, I was lucky to grow up with educational computer games, and no doubt I owe it to them, contributing to my Bildung and to the way I developed.

My life is ruled by computer games, and a lot of people will probably view this as negative and antisocial. To me, that is foolish. Most of all because I have conversations with the people I play with, and I am not talking about game-related conversations, but conversations which might as well have taken place across the dinner table. Besides, computer games have opened me to new things, as they do to other people too, and they have pushed many of my barriers. If this is not to be called Bildung of the ego, I don't know what to call it.

Computer games are for children, adolescents, adults and old people, and whether people want this or not, they are the future. Progress can't be stopped so people need to learn to accept it or distance themselves from it, but in the end it will catch up with you.

In this final paragraph, the writer gathers the threads in the paper. Again, the knowledge presented derives from his personal experience, but other voices intermingle with the writer's. In the opening sentence, the writer indirectly quotes a psychologist. This reference apparently serves as a positioning tool: since the authoritarian voice of the psychologist is a kind of 'moral imagination' that counters a more critical institutional narrative on gaming, the writer uses the psychologist's voice to enter his own moral judgment of the topic, namely that computer games are not unsafe and may even contribute to Bildung. He anticipates the critical voices describing him as "negative and antisocial" and he rejects this criticism, referring to his conversations with gamers on 'Bildung matters'; conversations that are expanding his horizons. So, in this final paragraph, there are at least three small stories at play: an expert story that goes against the common conception of computer games as 'harmful', the personal story of the writer and an imaginative story of the future involving extensive use of computer games. The writer positions himself as a conscious gamer based on his previous experience, contemporary expert statements and the future progress of computer gaming.

Since the assignment prompts a comment on the importance of computer games for the Bildung of children and adolescents, an interesting issue in the paper is the writer's interpretation of Bildung. The writer mentions two modes of 'Bildung': Bildung as a part of a person's personality and development ("and to the way I developed") and Bildung as being able to learn (more) about himself ("pushed many of my barriers"). A more institutional understanding of Bildung as academic and subject-oriented knowledge is not part of his notion of Bildung. So, in his interaction with the topic, with the reader and with the introduced voices, the writer seems to practice and test the identity of a conscientious and deliberate gamer. As an agentic gamer, he is positioning himself outside the critical view. He wants to be understood as an insider who is able to substantiate a new master narrative of gaming as a way to acquire knowledge and social success. However, he doesn't discursively construe a more academic reflection on the topic or transform the

concrete experiences to more abstract and general notions, as is required by the assignment and the genre.

As to the student's interactional positioning, by quoting a psychologist the writer not only speaks through an expert, but uses specific expressions such as "playing cowboys and Indians", thus adopting the position of an experienced 'peer'. Further, expressions like, "Whatever is said, I believe that we will witness..." and "My life is ruled by computer games, and a lot of people will probably view this as negative and antisocial" index a pro-gamer who associates with a group of players rejecting the master narrative of computer games as inappropriate 'Bildung' activity. These indexicals of addressivity not only place the writer as a participant in a gamer community, but also as an outsider who is looking at computer games and their impact on education and personal development. The writer responds to his own narrated event, confirming and generalising this as he points out that computer games constitute not only his own present Bildung 'capital' (cp. Bourdieu, 1986) but the Bildung of future generations.

Although the writer presents knowledge of the topic and both voices his own ideas and the critical voices of other people, the barrier to a more academic approach appears to be derived from his passion for gaming and his persistent positioning of himself as a documentation of the advantages of gaming. He seems to aim at contributing to the academic discourse by adding his own experience, and thereby contesting the institutional discourse on computer games. The essential message of this paper is the writer's construction of identity, claiming authority as an insider and making his resistance appear as virtuous. The mostly reflective small stories create a space for both the writer and the reader and create an opening for a possible prospective story about holding on to gaming.

While highlighting the edifying narrative on computer games and Bildung, the student underplays the implicit academic narrative on the same subject: Computer games as contesting Bildung aims. The student, thus, makes counter claims on the unspoken 'master narrative' (Lindemann Nelson, 2001; Bamberg, 2004). By positioning himself as 'counter', he invokes the master narrative as a backdrop, thereby insisting on an identity that is neither consistent with the expectations of the academic topic nor with the genre.

#### 3.3.4 *The synchronic perspective, a summary of findings*

The analysis of the two student papers documents that writing in the relatively formalised exam genres constitutes a challenge for some student writers. Although these writers do engage with genre relevant resources in their papers, they also challenge or even violate the genre, imposing alternative ways to raise their voices through narratives or narrativisations. The first paper displays a personal narrative approach where the writer narrativises experiences closely related to the topic, and the second paper creates a narrative on a gamer's experience and further narrativises the topic of the assignment.

Through the personal narrative on the assigned food topic, the first writer constructs coherence between a personal experience and the academic discourse in the booklet. The personal narrative further articulates a cultural and moral dimension of food and ethnicity that is missing in the booklet, thereby adding a personal and ethical angle to the discussion at hand. Since this angle is not introduced in the opening and also not further integrated in the academic argumentation of the paper, the narrative remains a textual 'add on' in the paper. For this reason, and because personal narratives are generally not invited in the commentary genre, the narrative will most probably be assessed as a genre inappropriate transgression.

It can be argued, however, that the personal narrative and the student's reflections on this add a *Bildung* value to the paper that is absent in the more academic discussions of the issue. Through the narrative, the student writer links her personal experience to the societal reality, positioning herself as a reflective student who engages personally in the wider cultural and societal issues raised in the assignment. Yet, she does need further textual competence and instruction in qualifying the narrative as a contribution to the academic argumentation in the paper.

In the second paper, the writer operates with two levels of experience: the construction of a narrative gamer self and reflections on computer gaming. He unfolds his own experience but is not willing to undertake the voice of an academically credible and critical student. Thus, the gamer narrative positions him counter to the implicit master narrative on gaming, but the master narrative is not addressed explicitly and his composition supports and accounts only for the pros of gaming. In this case, it is not possible to tell whether the student actively chooses a resistant position, concerning not only content, but also textual strategy. Obviously, if he wanted to convince academic readers of his *Bildung* project beyond the mere assertion of a personal stance, he would need to discuss more explicitly the grand narrative of *Bildung*. Moreover, the narrativisation of the topic and of the paper as a whole would offer a strong argument in an academically qualified discussion as well.

So why do these unwanted narrative voices appear in student papers? As documented, narratives offer options of identity work (Lillis, 2013) for writers, which they may not find in more traditional academic expository and argumentative resources. Narratives shape identities and provide meaning for both the writer and the reader. They may mitigate conflicts between the topic and the writer, and they may represent a lack of—or unwillingness to accept—academic knowledge and genre demands.

Concluding the synchronic analysis we would argue that Danish upper secondary L1 curricula should take into account that narratives provide a resource for writers for identity work with strong *Bildung* potential, and that some students need textual repertoires for integrating narrative approaches in genre appropriate ways. Narratives need to be acknowledged and taught as an academic resource in upper secondary L1 writing rather than construed as a childish textual strategy to be left behind upon entrance to upper secondary school. We do not suggest to

reconceptualize the whole L1 curriculum from the point of view of its narrative possibilities (cp. Rosen, 1985, p. 19). We do, however, find that the L1 subject needs to include narrative writing in its repertoire of resources at all educational levels in order to strengthen its Bildung potentials.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The overall interest in the present study has been the issue of Bildung aims in L1 writing, and the claim that a prerequisite of Bildung processes in writing is the opportunity to bridge or mediate individual experience and societal reality. The categories that have been developed in order to describe and analyse Bildung processes are narrative and voice, which both resonate in issues of writer identity.

In conclusion, the three cases illustrated in this paper provide overwhelming documentation that, although student writing for assessment and exams is basically ruled by strategic interests in getting good marks through responding adequately to genre and content requirements, other issues are always at play. Students write to get wiser, to learn who they are and to communicate messages to themselves and/or to teachers/assessors.

This is certainly true of the adolescent students who are part of the present study. While struggling to appropriate an academic voice, which implies establishing analytical distance and engaging with other voices and texts, they also need to experiment with their own voices in order to develop textual repertoires to add agency to their writing. As shown by Jeffery and Wilcox (2013), this project involves subjective and transformative engagement with knowledge.

The empirical investigations of the present study raise important issues of transition in the Danish educational system, particularly concerning the status of personal narrative and experience. They document that narrative and personal voice provide resources for identity work and Bildung processes, which should be part of any writing instruction, and most certainly should be part of writing instruction in L1 subjects. They further substantiate that subjective and narrative approaches hold knowledge-transforming and knowledge-crafting potentials, and that students strive to realise aims of this kind in writing.

This paper does not suggest that the importance of argumentative writing and analytical work in the L1 subject should be reduced. These are core curricular resources for L1 writing. We do, however, strongly recommend a more equal balancing of paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought (Bruner, 1986). Narratives and personal experience should be included and honed as resources for L1 writing at all levels.

Narrative is not only a primary resource for young writers, but it is also the most advanced resource for imagining and exploring knowledge and understanding in literature and in advanced academic writing. The narratives in the two exam papers could be viewed as childish attempts to reduce academic complexity, but they could also be viewed as adolescent attempts to come to terms with academic de-

mands without losing their own footing, and as contributions to a wider understanding of upper secondary L1 writing. In these cases, the narratives clearly represent advances in understanding and knowledge development that have not been textually released in a traditional academic context.

Sofia's case is different, but adds to the story of lost opportunities. As a proficient and ambitious student and writer, she consistently sets out to explain issues of conflicting experiences through the lens of her own responsibility and agency. She strives, and mostly succeeds, to meet requirements. L1 writing in upper secondary school offers her new Bildung potential tied to the disciplinary content. Still, in Sofia's case potentials get lost as well. Although her lower secondary experience held so much pleasure and learning, she is prepared to dismiss this on the altar of adulthood and strategic ambition.

Both the two anonymous writers and Sofia would have greatly profited from having learned and experimented with integrating narrative approaches and reflecting on issues of voice in academic writing. As emphasized by Bruner (1996), this would need to be a consciousness-raising project. The narrative mode of thinking and consolidating knowledge should be an integral part of education. However, if students' construing of narratives is to exceed their merely naïve account of events, they need to develop consciousness about narrative as a medium for epistemic and textually advanced crafting of knowledge and insights. Thus, if narrative competence is treasured as an academic resource, students may develop the meta-knowledge and competence that will provide them with a strong tool for integrating personal experience in reasoning and composition.

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<sup>ii</sup> For a general introduction to the Danish compulsory "Folkeskole", see [http://eng.uvm.dk/~media/UVM/Filer/English/Fact%20sheets/080101\\_fact\\_sheet\\_the\\_folkeskole.ashx](http://eng.uvm.dk/~media/UVM/Filer/English/Fact%20sheets/080101_fact_sheet_the_folkeskole.ashx). There are four different upper secondary school programs in Denmark, each with a different academic profile. Regarding the L1 subject of Danish, the four programs (hf, stx, hhx and htx) emphasise somewhat different approaches and subject areas. Still, there is a strong common commitment to a genre orientation in the subject in general, and in particular with regard to writing instruction. For a general introduction to the Danish upper secondary school system, see <http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact-Sheets/Upper-secondary-education>.

<sup>iii</sup> Nine Danish lessons were observed in grade 9 and sixteen lessons were observed in grades 10-12.

<sup>iv</sup> A detailed textual analysis of this paper can be found in Krogh & Habel, 2012. An elaborate analysis of Sofia's transition experience, including textual analyses of both this paper and Sofia's first upper secondary paper, is found in Krogh, forthcoming. The case is further the topic of Krogh, 2014.

<sup>v</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) presents a useful distinction between 'being a narrative' and 'possessing narrativity' which offers an explanation of the use of narrative 'frames' in students text. 'Being a narrative' involves a text (spoken, written, multimodal) which intends to create a mental script; 'possessing narrativity' refers to an ability to create a mental script. This approach allows us to analyse narratives not only as textual categories or realizations, but also as a quality in and about a student's text.

<sup>vi</sup> This assignment genre is analogous with what is termed "feature" in Sofia's case (cp. Figure 1). The present student attended a different upper secondary program.

<sup>vii</sup> An official evaluation of the written exam highlights that a student essay should "have personality; the essayist should be visible in his/her essay." But then, a distinction between 'personal' and 'private' is drawn, 'private' being associated with exposing oneself: "The personal approach should not be confused with being private and self-exposing."

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<http://www.uvm.dk/~media/UVM/Filer/Udd/Gym/PDF12/Proever%20og%20eksamen/120828%20Skriftlig%20dansk%202012%20-%20stx.pdf>