

STUDENT WRITERS' METALINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES IN L1 EDUCATION

Writerly choices and metalanguage in text interviews in Years 5 and 8

METTE VEDSGAARD CHRISTENSEN¹, KRISTINE KABEL² & MORTEN
TANNERT³

¹University of Copenhagen, Denmark

²Aarhus University, Denmark

³VIA University College, Denmark

Abstract

This study investigates student writers' metalinguistic repertoires in the context of L1 writing instruction in eight Danish schools. Data consists of text interviews with 48 focus students from Year 5 and Year 8, the students were interviewed about what they liked or found worked well in their own school texts. We investigate both the writerly choices the students chose to talk about and the metalanguage they used to do so. Our findings show that the students talk about the content, the structure and cohesion and about specific lexical choices in their writing, and that they most often use informal metalanguage to talk about content and lexical choices, while they use a formal metalanguage to talk about structure. More formal grammatical metalanguage is used to point to more general writing norms or teacher expectations. Our findings point to linguistic manipulations as a resource for expanding student writers' metalinguistic repertoires. More extended metalinguistic repertoires seem to be related to (teacher perceived) writing competencies, however, we also see that specific instructional contexts seem to have the potential to expand metalinguistic repertoires, pointing to the importance of considering metalinguistic repertoires a key element in writing instruction and development.

Key words: writing instruction, metalanguage, students' repertoires, text interviews, lower secondary

1

Christensen, M.V., Kabel, K., Tannert, M. (2026). Student writers' metalinguistic repertoires in L1 education: Writerly choices and metalanguage in text interviews in Years 5 and 8. L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature, 26, 1-29.
<https://doi.org/10.21248/l1esll.2026.26.1.1040>

Corresponding author: Mette Vedsgaard Christensen, University of Copenhagen, Njalsgade 80, 2300 København S, Denmark, email: mvc@hum.ku.dk

© 2026 International Association for Research in L1-Education.

1. WHY STUDY STUDENTS' METALINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES?

In the last two decades, there has been increased research interest in students' metalanguage and how it can be nurtured in the first language (L1) writing classroom. This interest is fuelled by an underlying understanding that a reflexive relationship exists between students' development of a metalanguage and their writing possibilities (e.g. Jones, 2023; Myhill et al., 2022; Newman, 2024; Watson & Newman, 2017). Hence, a relevant metalanguage can be seen as both a learning goal and a learning tool and also as a missing link for understanding the successful writing classroom (Fontich, 2016). Such an idea places theoretical discussions and empirical explorations of students' metalanguage at the core of educational writing research. The present study contributes to the growing body of research into the nature of students' metalanguage in L1 writing classrooms by investigating what students in Year 5 (ages 10–11) and Year 8 (ages 13–14) chose to talk about, and how they choose to do so, when they are interviewed about writerly choices in their argumentative and fictional narrative compositions.

As an outset for the study, following the definition of Camps et al. (2000), we understand metalanguage as ways of talking and thinking about language, addressing what Jakobson (1960) framed as the metalinguistic function of language. Hence, our object of study is students' language about their own writerly choices. Specifically, we suggest the notion of a *metalinguistic repertoire* as a lens for investigating students' metalanguage. The notion is based on a social semiotic understanding of writing as meaning-making, in which learning *through and about* written language supports the process of students becoming writers and readers (e.g. Halliday, 1993). This notion underscores student writers as agentive and creative at the micro level, while simultaneously interpreting what are considered as important factors in the writing situation (Halliday, 1978; Kress et al., 2005). Students' metalanguage is related to what they have been offered as part of their L1 writing education; to specific writing tasks, text types and text norms; and to what counts in the classroom, including interactional dimensions and interpersonal values (e.g. Smidt, 2009). In the study, we investigate both their use of a more formal metalanguage and more informal expressions and exemplifications.

With the notion of metalinguistic repertoire, we complement existing concepts, such as metalinguistic understanding (e.g. Myhill et al., 2012), metalinguistic activity (e.g. Camps et al., 2000; Camps & Milian, 2000, 2020; Camps & Fontich, 2019), metalinguistic reflection (Watson & Newman, 2017), metatalk (Myhill & Newman, 2016), text movability (e.g. Liberg et al., 2011) and reflective talk (Love & Sandiford, 2016). With the notion of metalinguistic repertoire, we foreground that students' metalanguage shapes their thinking and expands their discursive awareness (e.g. van Lier, 2004). Furthermore, we foreground students' perspectives and engagement as relevant for exploring their metalinguistic repertoires and assume that their explicit repertoire is linked to their writing through a reflexive relationship.

Most current empirical studies on students' metalanguage about writing choices were conducted within interventionist approaches, leaving a gap in our understanding of the nature of students' metalinguistic repertoires in non-interventionist contexts. At the same time, past studies have identified students' rather limited ways of talking and thinking about written language in the classroom, focusing on lexical choices and overall text organisation, rather than, for example, syntactical choices or rhetorical aspects, such as their own intention or impact on readers (e.g. Watson & Newman, 2017). In the context of Scandinavian L1 writing education, there has been a lack of studies exploring students' metalanguage in the writing classroom, apart from a few notable exceptions (e.g. Liberg et al., 2002; Folkeryd et al., 2006). Therefore, in the present study, we aim to provide new empirical insights into students' metalinguistic repertoires. We also aim to inspire further discussions of what a relevant metalanguage in the L1 writing classroom might look like and how it can be conceptualised, with relevance for both research and practice and with comparative possibilities beyond the national context of the study.

The study was conducted in Denmark as part of a larger qualitative text and classroom project involving eight Danish L1 classes (2022–2026), in which the relations between students' metalinguistic repertoires and writing were explored. Inspired by Lillis' (2001, 2009) notion of talk-back interviews and Laursen's (2018) study of bilingual children as sign-makers, the present study interviewed 48 focus students twice and in pairs about what they liked or found worked well in their own school texts. The research questions (RQs) that guide our investigation are as follows:

- RQ1: What kinds of writerly choices do Danish L1 students in Years 5 and 8 talk about when interviewed about their own argumentative and fictional narrative compositions?
- RQ2: What characterises the metalanguage they use to talk about these writerly choices?

To frame the study, the next section will describe approaches to understanding and investigating students' metalanguage in L1 writing classrooms (Years 0–9, ages 6–16) and the findings obtained. Hereafter, we will present the methods used in the present study, followed by analytical sections and a discussion of the study's findings.

2. APPROACHES TO STUDENTS' METALANGUAGE IN L1 WRITING CLASSROOMS

2.1 *Metalinguistic repertoire*

With the notion of metalinguistic repertoire, we draw on social semiotics (Halliday, 1978, 1993; Kress et al., 2005) and dialogical traditions (e.g., van Lier, 2004, Smidt,

2009) when highlighting the reflexive relationship between the development of a metalanguage and growth as a writer. Following this, we underscore that the writer's repertoire of meaning-making resources directed towards language itself become actualized and formed either implicitly through writing or explicitly through utterances on writerly choices in texts.

In this study, we are interested in students' explicit metalinguistic repertoires. More specifically, we investigate the writerly choices they talk about and the metalanguage they use to talk about these choices. We apply an analytic framework that distinguishes between textual, syntactical and lexical choices, in dialogue with sociocognitive-oriented studies (e.g. Watson & Newman, 2017) and studies grounded in systemic functional linguistics (e.g. Love & Sandiford, 2016).

When investigating how students talk about their writerly choices, we include both formal grammatical and informal terminologies and consider these as two poles on a continuum, rather than two sets of terminologies with clear boundaries in school contexts (see e.g. Camps et al., 2000; Liberg et al., 2022; Watson & Newman, 2017).

In the larger project, and in addition to writerly choices and metalanguage, we include students' explanations for their writerly choices in our framework for a metalinguistic repertoire. We conceptualise the notion of explanations broadly to account for the students' perspectives and engagement. However, in the present study, we focus on the writerly choices students talk about and how they do so, whereas we in a forthcoming study explore students' explanations for the writerly choices (Kabel et al., forthcoming).

In the next sections, we turn to other approaches in the literature used to investigate students' metalanguage in L1 writing classrooms and discuss how we draw on and complement these studies.

2.2 A brief overview of other approaches

Myhill et al.'s (2012) influential randomized controlled trial involving 31 UK schools found positive effects on students' writing when embedding meaning-oriented grammar instructions in the L1 writing classroom, thus supporting students' development of a metalanguage through classroom dialogues on writerly choices. The study, inspired by, among others, Halliday's social semiotics and Gombert's sociocognitive notion of *metalinguistic understanding*, hence confirmed the overall link between the nature and quality of metalinguistic discourse in classrooms and student writing: when addressing writerly choices, teachers who attended to meaning and effect rather than form were more successful writing teachers in this context (see also Myhill et al., 2016). This finding is supported by studies suggesting that students' mastery of a broad and deep metalanguage (Concha & Paratore, 2010) can be related to the degree of control they have over linguistic traits and hence, to some extent, predict their ability to apply this knowledge in their own writing.

With the aim of introducing a systemic functional linguistics-informed language and writing pedagogy, Macken-Horarik et al. (2015) and Love and Sandiford (2016) investigated how teachers and students in Australia recontextualised *linguistic subject knowledge* in writing classrooms following an intervention. The metalanguage was introduced and conceptualised in three progressive steps: Teachers and students first identified and named a linguistic feature, then they described its function, and finally explained how the formed linguistic pattern contributed to meaning-making in a particular text. The overall aim of the intervention was to support teachers and students in making relevant connections between form and meaning in the writing classroom. Following the intervention, Love and Sandiford (2016) conducted a qualitative study exploring the participating teachers' curriculum materials and their self-reported classroom practices, concluding that the intervention succeeded in conveying a view of writing as interactive and hence as 'a dialogic interplay between reader and writer' (p. 215).

However, studies on interventions in L1 writing classrooms also uncovered several challenges. Watson et al. (2021) found that teachers' use of formal metalanguage was most often form-oriented, and when formal metalanguage was used by students, they used it to identify, for example, adjectives and nouns, but rarely to talk about the meaning or the effect of the written language features in question. In general, students seemed to use formal metalanguage to focus on lexical choices and other single-word phenomena and less on, for example, the syntactical aspects of texts (Watson et al., 2021; Watson & Newman 2017). Drawing on both Australian data and interview data from Myhill et al. (2012), Chen and Myhill (2016) found that, although students identified and named linguistic features in texts, they were less able to explain how specific written language resources could be used to create meaning in the particular texts.

In a Catalan context, Camps et al. (2000) found that collaborative writing fosters *metalinguistic activity*, as students read, discussed and revised their texts collaboratively during the task (see also Camps & Milian 2020). The high school students in the study discussed different aspects of their writing, most prominently text structure and lexical choices (Fontich, 2016). However, the study also found that the students attended to the rhetorical situation of the texts they had been asked to write, concluding that contextualised and communicative writing tasks are necessary for students to engage in metalinguistic activities and, hence, to use and develop a relevant metalanguage.

In a Swedish context, Folkeryd et al. (2006) and Liberg et al. (2002, 2011) investigated how Swedish students engaged with texts from different school subjects in a larger qualitative project on scientific literacy. They developed the notion of *text movability* to study how Years 5 and 8 students, in text interviews, talked about the meaning, content and structure of texts they read or produced in different school subjects and about the texts' relevance, quality and use for them as recipients. The Swedish studies defined three types of text movability: (1) text-based; the ability to engage in and talk about e.g. structure and content, (2)

interactive; the ability to talk about relevance and quality of texts in a specific context, and (3) associative movability; the ability to relate the text to students' own experiences. The rather complex notion of text movability mirrors what these studies argue are key competences for students: learning to engage with different aspects of the texts that they are supposed to read and write in school subjects. The notion thus entails an understanding of writing as social, rhetorical and contextualised. The studies concluded that it is more challenging for students to talk about complex aspects of texts (interactive and associative mobility), something that lower-achieving students particularly struggled with (Liberg et al., 2002). In general, students seemed to have a more expanded metalanguage for talking about narratives, which in turn might rely on this text type's prominence in Swedish L1 and, therefore, on classroom support in how to talk and think about such texts (Folkeryd et al., 2006).

The more specific relations between metalanguage and student writing remain complex: Even though both Myhill et al. (2012) and Concha and Paratore (2010) find positive relations between metalanguage offered in writing instruction and students' metalinguistic understanding and writing proficiency, Newman (2024) points out that what she, with a partly sociocognitive grounding, describes as declarative knowledge does not predict procedural knowledge. This is because the former can be acquired directly from classroom discourse rather than relate to individual reasoning while writing. At the same time, and as noted in the abovementioned Catalan studies, metalinguistic activity may also be silent and remain implicit (i.e. without explicit reflections), even when students engage in collaborative writing tasks (Camps et al., 2000). At the same time, as underscored by Watson et al. (2021), when interviewing students about their writerly choices, an explicit use of metalanguage can be fostered in the interview situation. As a result, the knowledge that was either tacit or implicit during the actual writing task became explicit, paving the way for students to interweave procedural and declarative knowledge through the interview.

2.3 The knowledge gap addressed in this study

Across the different approaches and theoretical underpinnings, the empirical studies on students' metalanguage in the L1 writing classroom show a relationship between students' (explicit) metalinguistic repertoires and writing. Furthermore, they point to the relationship between a metalinguistic discourse in the classroom and students' metalanguage (e.g. Concha & Paratore, 2010; Folkeryd et al., 2006; Myhill et al., 2012). These findings underscore the relevance of a growing research interest in students' metalanguage in the L1 writing classroom, and the relevance of context-sensitive framework.

Most studies in the field were conducted as part of interventionist approaches. The present study complements the literature by investigating students' metalinguistic repertoires in non-interventionist settings. It also complements the

non-interventionist studies on text movability by centring the text interviews around students' own compositions in the L1 subject. In dialogue with the Swedish studies, we conducted and investigated text interviews with the students about two text types (argumentative and narrative) to account for differences in metalinguistic repertoires relating to potentially distinct discourses surrounding these text types. Both in the L1 classroom and beyond, hence also interwoven with more subjective student engagements in different writing tasks and types of texts.

Hereby, we aim to develop insights into what constitutes a meaningful and relevant metalanguage for students in Years 5 and 8 in the context of L1 writing and to provide a basis for discussing the nature of such metalanguage and the role of teaching in this context.

A few studies (Watson et al., 2021; Watson & Newman, 2017; Chen & Myhill, 2016) have reported that the explicit and strategic use of a metalanguage, even in the context of interventions, can remain form-oriented and that students tend to stick to certain aspects of texts, such as lexical choices and aspects of text organisation. However, some studies have also shown the potential of introducing a metalanguage that can foreground the meaningful and interactional aspects of writing tasks (e.g. Love & Sandiford, 2016).

As pointed out above, Watson et al., (2021) discusses how the interview situation itself might partly shape how students talk and think about their writerly choices, giving them an opportunity to stretch their metalanguage (Laursen, 2018) or even formulate writerly choices during the interview as a result of their participation.

However, by asking students what they liked or found worked well, inspired by the notion of talk-back interviews (Lillis, 2001, 2009), it is also an opportunity to let them—as formulated by Laursen (2018)—stretch their language about writerly choices. Thus, in this study, we aim to gain insights into students' explicit metalinguistic repertoire through interviews. In our approach, this includes insights into what they interpret as important and valuable as student writers. This is in accordance with an overall social semiotic and dialogical approach to students as agentive and creative both when they write and when they talk about their writing.

Hereby, we aim to contribute both empirical insights and an adjustable framework for investigating students' (explicit) metalinguistic repertoires in the context of the L1 writing classroom, and to inspire writing pedagogy.

3. DATA COLLECTION

To investigate the two RQs, the study is designed as a qualitative interview study, using a non-interventionist strategy. In the overarching project of which this study is part, we conducted fieldwork in eight classrooms at five public schools, observing argumentative and narrative writing units in each Danish L1 classroom. As shown in Table 1, the written texts in our study represent a variety of writing tasks.

Table 1. Text types and writing tasks in the study

School	Year	Fictional texts	Argumentative texts
School 1	Year 5	Graphic short story	Letter to the school board
	Year 8	Feature article	Opinion piece
School 2	Year 5	Fantasy story	Letter to the school principal
	Year 8	Fictional letter	Opinion piece
School 3	Year 5	Fairy tale	Opinion piece
School 4	Year 8	Short story	Essay
School 5	Year 5	Short story	Portfolio of three short argumentative pieces
	Year 8	Auto fictional memoir	Job application

The teachers selected six students from each of the eight classes in our study for interviews. Their selection of the 48 focus students was based on their holistic judgement of their writing competencies, so the student represented above average, average and below average writing competencies in the class. The students were interviewed twice, in pairs, about their compositions.

Table 2. Overview of the 48 focus students in the study

Teachers' overall judgment	School 1		School 2		School 3	School 4	School 5	
	Year 5	Year 8	Year 5	Year 8	Year 5	Year 8	Year 5	Year 8
<i>Above</i>	Emmy Morten	Anna Kim	Mette Søren Otto	Amalie Karla	Mathilde Filip Karoline Anton	Melanie Irem	Agnes Morten	Sonja
<i>Middle</i>	Jonas Daniel Stine	Leon Mikkel	Emma Aida	Mie Mads Knud	Aila	Fatima Samir	Ida Anna	Esther Karl Sigurd
<i>Below</i>	Rikke	Sofi Morten	Stella	Abdel	Kasper Rasmus	Jasmin David	Asbjørn Viggo	Frode

We also conducted observations in all classes (107 observed lessons) and obtained the texts submitted by all consenting students (234). Data collection took place in spring 2023 and again in spring 2024. We obtained written consent from the teachers and the participating students' parents. The study adhered to ethical codes of conduct (informed participation, voluntariness and pseudonymity), and it followed European rules governing the storage and destruction of data.

When combined, the participating schools included students from different geographical and sociocultural contexts. Hence, the classes and students came from both more affluent neighbourhoods and more socio-culturally and linguistically diverse neighbourhoods. Although the present study used a qualitative design, the variation strategies between and within classes suggest that our insights into students' metalinguistic repertoires reach beyond the specific contexts in which they were obtained and can thus be recognised across contexts as being prototypical (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The variation strategies also allowed us to include different variables such as Year-level, teacher-reported writing competence and text type.

The students were interviewed shortly after submitting their texts to their teacher but before they had received any feedback. They were asked to bring their texts and to identify parts of their writing that they liked or found worked well. The interviews were carried out by the researchers, following a purposefully developed and piloted interview guide (see Appendix A). The purpose of using the interview guide was to ensure that the interviews were conducted consistently across schools and classes, and that the interviews provided relevant and presumably engaging contexts for the students to talk about their writerly choices. The interviews evolved around the examples the focus students chose to talk about; the interviewers also asked follow-up questions that allowed the students to elaborate their examples or formulate tacit experiences regarding their writing. After talking about the student-initiated examples, the interviewers had the opportunity to ask for more specific examples regarding choices at lexical, syntactical, and textual levels, if the students had not mentioned examples they liked or found worked well on one or more of these main levels of interest in this study. In the interviews, we also explicitly asked students to attempt alternative wordings of their examples (e.g., by asking 'Could you have written it differently?') and to reflect on the effects.

As mentioned above, our interview strategy found inspiration in Lillis' (2001, 2009) and Laursen's (2018) talk-back interviews, although we also acknowledge that the interview situation itself provides students with both context and support for not only using but also forming a metalanguage and experimenting with it (Watson et al., 2021). Hence, several writerly choices mentioned by the students can be said to be elicited within the interview context. This factor is accounted for in the analysis, by distinguishing between prompted and unprompted incidents.

4. ANALYTICAL STRATEGIES

Our analysis of how the students talk about their writerly choices in our text interviews took inspiration from reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019, 2021, Braun et al., 2022) but also from analytical strategies applied by similar studies (Chen & Myhill, 2016; Love & Sandiford, 2016; Watson & Newman, 2017; Watson et al., 2021; Liberg et al., 2022). The latter informed our initial familiarization

with our data and the overarching theoretically informed dimensions of the metalinguistic repertoire that our research interests focus on: *the writerly choices* addressed, *the metalanguage* applied to identify the writerly choices, and *the explanations* given by the students for their writerly choices. Hereafter, we generated codes representing more latent meanings in data (in particular, this was the case for our analysis of students' explanations of their writerly choices; see Kabel et al., forthcoming). In dialogue with previous studies, we decided to distinguish between writerly choices at three levels (lexical, syntactical and textual), used as relevant "lenses" (Braun & Clarke, 2021) through which our initial explorations and coding of data took place (Chen & Myhill, 2016; Love & Sandiford, 2016; Watson & Newman, 2017; Watson et al., 2021). However, we also included independent semantic codes (e.g. 'questions'), as the students in our data addressed this as a particular writerly choice, although acknowledging that it could have been included in the textual and syntactical levels (Kabel et al., 2024). Table 3 below gives an overview of codes for writerly choices and metalanguage.

Table 3. Framework for the two dimensions writerly choices and metalanguage

	Writerly choices	Metalanguage
Codes	<i>Structure and cohesion</i> Writerly choices concerning the level of text, specifically text organization and cohesion	<i>Example</i> The students cite or read an example out loud
	<i>Content choices</i> Writerly choices concerning content in texts, e.g. the choice of a character in a shot story	<i>Example manipulated</i> The students rephrase their example altering the original formulation in different ways
	<i>Syntactical choices</i> Writerly choices concerning parts of speech or e.g. diversity at sentence level	<i>Informal</i> The students talk about their choice using a primarily informal metalanguage
	<i>Lexical choices</i> Writerly choices at the single word level (may concern one or more words)	<i>Formal grammatical</i> The students talk about their choice using words associated with an established and recognizable metalanguage related to language levels (text, sentence, word)
	<i>Questions</i> Writerly choices concerning the use of questions, e.g. open-ended questions	<i>Formal genre</i> The students talk about their choice using an established formal metalanguage associated with a text type or specific genre, e.g. forms of appeal associated with argumentative texts
	<i>Formalia and layout</i> Writerly choices concerning e.g. word count, punctuation and spelling, and text layout	

When analysing the metalanguage, we found the use of established and formal grammatical metalanguage as well as ad hoc formulations in the data, or no explicit

identifications at all. The absence of explicit identifications was observed when students cited or read their writerly choices aloud without explicitly using formal or informal metalanguage. We therefore chose to explore both formal and informal metalanguage and citations of examples of writerly choices. Given that manipulations and reformulations were a recurring phenomenon (some students manipulated some of their own examples spontaneously), we also established this as a code for further analytical interest.

The pilot data were hand-coded in Word, but all data were eventually uploaded and coded using NVivo. The next step in our analysis was to identify themes across the data. First, we analysed the distribution of codes across text types, tasks, classrooms, school years and focus students. The frequency counting helped us focus on key patterns for further qualitative interpretation (Erickson, 1977). Following this, and by conducting continued readings, ordering and interpretation of coded examples, we identified two condensed analytical themes regarding RQ 1, *What kind of writerly choices do Danish L1 students in Years 5 and 8 talk about when interviewed about their own argumentative and fictional narrative compositions?* and two analytical themes regarding RQ2, *What characterises the metalanguage they use to talk about these writerly choices?* Below we report on the distribution of codes and the analytical themes, organised after the two research questions.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 *What writerly choices do the students choose to talk about?*

The analysis of distribution of codes shows that the students are primarily concerned with talking about *content* and *lexical choices* in their texts. The distribution is summarised below in Table 4, with an extended version in Appendix B. This overall finding indicates that the students across school years and text types are primarily concerned with the meaning they want to convey in their writing. The students also talk about the *structure and cohesion* of their texts. Writerly choices regarding *syntactical choices* are rare in our data, as are choices regarding *formalia and layout*.

Writerly choices regarding *structure and cohesion, syntactical choices* and *questions* seem to be linked to specific writing contexts or classes (see Appendix B) thus pointing to the importance of writing experiences and metalinguistic discourses in L1 classrooms.

Table 4. Overview of incidents of writerly choices across years and text types (the number of prompted incidents out of the total number)

Codes	Year	Total number of incidents		Distribution among student groups		
		N	A	Above	Middle	Below
Structure & cohesion	Year 5	31 (12)	27 (12)	30 (12)	19 (5)	9 (7)
	Year 8	24 (9)	32 (11)	20 (8)	24 (6)	12 (6)
Content choices	Year 5	65 (9)	61 (7)	54 (6)	47 (7)	25 (3)
	Year 8	63 (10)	67 (20)	35 (4)	63 (17)	32 (9)
Syntactical choices	Year 5	7 (2)	9 (2)	9 (2)	5 (1)	2 (1)
	Year 8	1 (1)	5 (3)	2	6 (4)	0
Lexical choices	Year 5	42 (14)	46 (17)	50 (14)	26 (6)	12 (11)
	Year 8	43 (20)	42 (23)	24 (15)	41 (18)	17 (10)
Questions	Year 5	0	3	2	1	0
	Year 8	3 (2)	4	4	1	2 (2)
Formalia & layout	Year 5	5 (3)	4 (2)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (3)
	Year 8	8 (4)	6 (2)	3 (1)	9 (4)	2 (1)

No clear pattern emerges when we compare the Year 8 students to the Year 5 students: The older students do not seem to talk about more or more different writerly choices. Instead, there seems to be a pattern in which more extended metalinguistic repertoires are linked to students' writing proficiency, as assessed by their teachers. In particular, students who are perceived by their teacher as above-average or average writers address more unprompted writerly choices than students whom the teachers judge as below-average writers.

Following the overall distribution of the codes, we identified two analytical themes. First, when addressing writerly choices regarding content that the students liked or found worked well in their texts, they highlighted their choices of events or the ways in which they depicted characters in their fictional narratives; they also foregrounded specific arguments and claims in their argumentative texts. We describe this analytical theme as *Involvement in events, characters and arguments*. Second, through our analysis of examples regarding both lexical choices and more formal aspects of their writing, we identified another analytical theme, *Meaning-making through lexicon and punctuation*. We describe these themes in the next two sections.

5.1.1 *Involvement in events, characters and arguments*

When talking about content choices they were pleased with, the students mentioned specific characters or events they had included in their fictional narrative texts or cited specific arguments or claims in their argumentative texts. For example, Mette (an above-average writer in Year 5), describes how she chose to depict a princess in her fantasy story as less 'girly' and more 'action-loving'; hence, this character is someone who gets her dress dirty. To prevent her mother from seeing her dirty dress, Mette lets the girl sneak into the castle and change her clothes. The

content choice she highlights in the interview is the scene in which the girl tries to open a window to her room to sneak in and change without getting caught:

(Excerpt 1)

Mette: [reading] 'I rush back to the castle and to the window to my room. My heart is beating as I try to pick the lock with my hair needle. Yeah, finally [xx] as quiet as possible. It is a rather big window, so I toil a little bit.'

Mette explains that she included this scene to depict the girl's action-loving nature and to illustrate her opposition to her mother, who wants her to be 'a perfect little girl':

Mette: She is actually not really girly and stuff; she actually likes a bit more action and stuff. [...] I think it is cool that I included that again. [...] because if her dress gets dirty, then her mum will hate her, because her mum really wants her to be this perfect little girl, and she does not want to be like that.

Sometimes, the students show a high degree of emotional involvement in the content they have chosen. In the example below, Emma (an average writer in Year 5), highlights how one of her characters reveals a secret in her story:

(Excerpt 2)

Emma: It says [reading] 'I am not a normal elf, I am a siren. They stood completely still, completely in silence under the starry sky, for a few seconds.' [reading ends]

Interviewer: And you can almost see it in the way you read aloud [...].

Emma: Because it is, like, exciting, and I was like OH! [excited voice] when I made it.

In this example, Emma is very excited to have her character reveal her true identity, evidently an important part of the story she wants to tell.

Content choices are also present across the interviews about argumentative texts. In the example below, Knud (an average writer in Year 8), talks about how he chose to include both statistical facts and quotes he found from people who have experienced online sharing of their pictures to make his text more convincing and relatable to readers:

(Excerpt 3)

Knud: [reading] [...] '17% of boys/men and 13% of girls/women from 15 to 25 have experienced that others have sent or posted a picture or a video of them with sexual content' [reading ends] [...] and then I have also put in some quotes from real people.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Knud: For example, there is also one up here where it says [reading] 'You might as well show up naked in school' [reading ends]. This is a quote from a high school student. And then there is also one down here from Year 9, where the person says: [reading] ' [...] If you have shared it with one person, you have shared it with everybody, right?'

Later in the interview, Knud concludes that an argumentative piece with both citations of studies and 'real people' gives the impression of the text being more important than others.

The examples analysed above show that the students are occupied with depicting characters in their fictional narratives and conveying events or supporting their claims and arguments; in some cases, as shown in excerpt 2, they show high degrees of involvement in their writing and choices made (Kabel et al., forthcoming). Thus, our analysis indicates that the students are committed to a key communicative aspect of their writing: conveying specific content through specific and explicated writerly choices.

5.1.2 *Meaning-making through lexicon and punctuation*

The students often talk about lexical choices at the single-word level and highlight a specific choice of words with rather elaborate discussions of meaning. For instance, Søren (an above-average writer in Year 5), argues that his choice of the word ‘trudges’—a verb for how a farmer walks through a field in his fantasy story—conveys a more specific meaning in this context.

When talking about her choice of words in a fictional letter, Amalie (an above-average writer in Year 8), explains that she chose the word ‘exhausted’ over ‘tired’, as she thinks it is more appropriate to describe the feelings of the narrator in her letter:

(Excerpt 4)

Amalie: I wrote here [reading] ‘I’m exhausted, because I can’t really sleep at night. I don’t dare close my eyes when no one else is home.’ [end of reading]. [...] And then the thing about her being exhausted is because she still has to do everything herself. Like, there’s no one to cook for her or, you know, take care of the baby [...] I just felt that saying ‘tired’ didn’t really fit, because you can be tired in so many different ways. [...] And then I landed on ‘exhausted’ because it felt more like () uhm, like she’s having a rough time and at the same time, she’s also tired, but not just tired as in she needs to sleep. [...] But tired as in, she can’t really take it anymore.

Meaning is also a salient trait when the students talk about choices related to the code *formalia and layout*. Even though this result could partly be explained by our interview strategy (‘What do you like or think works well in your text?’), we conclude from these interviews that the students are not particularly oriented towards formality. Excerpt 5 below exemplifies this. Here, Agnes (an above-average writer in Year 5), focuses on the meaning of her use of a full stop rather than a comma in a specific context:

(Excerpt 5)

Agnes: It just sounds like a good sentence.

[...]

Interviewer: Yes. [...] Well, what would [name of teacher] have said if you started a sentence with ‘or’? [...] what do you actually think she would say?

Agnes: I think she would say that it should have been a comma instead.

Interviewer: Yeah, right? But you actually highlight that here, that it works well here, because why?

Agnes: Because there needs to be kind of a pause.

The excerpt exemplifies how a student uses and negotiates rules of punctuation to achieve a specific effect in her text. As shown in Table 4, codes related to *formalia and layout* are not frequent across our data. Meanwhile, the analysis of excerpt 5 supports the overall finding, namely that the students are meaning-oriented and concentrate on content, also when they talk about punctuation.

Summing up RQ1, we conclude that the writerly choices that the students liked or found worked well are related to the meaning they are engaged in expressing. The content they highlight varies with the text type, but the focus is on crafting texts in which the events, characters and arguments convey specific meanings and ideas. Furthermore, the writerly choices related to single-word phenomena or even punctuation that the students were pleased with are also tied to meaning, indicating that while the students address different linguistic levels in their texts, they remain focused on how writerly choices could be used to communicate a specific meaning in a way, that also counts in the classroom and position themselves.

5.2 *Metalinguage used*

To answer RQ2, we investigated the metalinguage students used when they talked about their writerly choices. From our analysis of the distribution of codes, we can see, that the most recurrent codes are *informal metalinguage* and *manipulated examples*, with *informal metalinguage* being the most frequent code across years and text types. Table 5 below summarises the distribution, with an extended version in Appendix C.

The younger students manipulate the examples more frequently than the older students, while the Year 8 students also use a more *formal metalinguage* linked to genre, for example terminology used to talk about text organisation, such as openings and endings, or argumentative structure. The use of a formal metalinguage linked to genre is more frequent when the students talk about their argumentative writing. However, this pattern is not consistent across all classes and schools, again highlighting the importance of the teaching contexts (see Appendix C).

Table 5. Overview of incidents of metalanguage across years, classrooms, and writing tasks

Codes	Year	Total number of incidents		Distribution among student groups		
		N	A	Above	Middle	Below
Example manipulated	Year 5	40	46	44	30	12
	Year 8	25	16	2	11	3
Informal	Year 5	43	51	51	29	14
	Year 8	37	26	16	33	14
Formal grammatical	Year 5	12	5	12	5	0
	Year 8	12	8	9	9	2
Formal genre	Year 5	13	20	21	8	4
	Year 8	19	26	17	21	7

The distribution among student groups in Table 5 resonates with the distribution regarding writerly choices, where students who are perceived to be above average or average writers have a more extended metalinguistic repertoire and hence also a more diverse explicit metalanguage. Notably, below-average writers in Year 5 use no formal grammatical metalanguage in the interviews. As stated above, informal metalanguage remains the most frequent code across writing tasks and school years, and we do not see for example a pattern where the informal metalanguage is gradually replaced with formal grammatical metalanguage from Years 5 to 8.

Analysing the informal-formal metalanguage continuum in our data, we identified an analytic theme regarding the *Different roles of informal and formal metalanguage* in the students' metalinguistic repertoires. This theme concerns an extended use of informal metalanguage when the students talk about content and lexical choices in their writing, and a generic and detached formal grammatical metalanguage at the formal end of the continuum used to talk about writing norms rather than specific writerly choices.

The second theme we developed when answering RQ2 explores *The potential of manipulations*. Reformulations, attempted alternative wordings and manipulations are frequent (and often, but not always, prompted), and our analysis of these manipulations shows their potential for the students' metalinguistic repertoires. Across our data, we see both examples in which manipulations seem to help the students stretch and form their ways of talking and thinking about writerly choices, as well as examples of students who find this particular task challenging.

5.2.1 Different roles of informal and formal metalanguage

An example of informal metalanguage is shown below, where Emma (an average writer in Year 5), talks about how 'advanced words' can make the argumentative text sound more 'formidable' and 'thought out'.

(Excerpt 6)

Emma: I thought a bit more like using more advanced words instead of just like 'and then', and instead of 'that', and then 'this'.

Interviewer: Yes.

Emma: It should sound a bit more formidable and a bit more thought out.

Later, Emma also talks about using 'bigger words' like 'learning environment' instead of 'classrooms' in her argumentative text. She uses informal—yet intelligible— notions to characterise the communicative value she assigns to specific lexical choices. Moving along the formal–informal metalanguage continuum, we see examples of rather generic or even tentative use of formal grammatical metalanguage. In many cases, the students use the generic notions of 'words' or 'sentences'. In Excerpt 7 below, Sigurd (an average writer in Year 8), writing a job application, argues that it is important to write that he is hardworking. He uses the notion 'important sentence' to characterise this specific writerly choice that nevertheless seems to be linked to a lexical choice and is thus used to refer to meaning rather than a specific grammatical unit:

(Excerpt 7)

Interviewer: Yes, yes. Is there something else about that part of the text that you are particularly happy about?

Sigurd: Uhm () well, that I am hardworking. That, I think, is also an important sentence. To show that I am able (), well, that I will do the work. Because that is what you have to do. I do things properly, [xx] says that I need to clean up or something.

In general, the students use the generic notion 'word' rather than, for example, the specific word class or part of speech, with the exception of the notion 'adjectives'. However, this grammatical term is also used in a generic way; in the example below, the student Søren uses it to refer to teacher norms:

(Excerpt 8)

Interviewer: Yes, but why did you write it this way?

Søren: To make people want to read further [...] And because our teacher has said that we need to add adjectives.

In other examples, the students express a generic relation between descriptive language and the use of adjectives; thus, using this notion to refer to broader text norms and detached from the writerly choices in question.

At the formal end of the formal–informal continuum, we also find examples of the use of formal metalanguage linked to genre. Here, the students use established and recognisable notions to address choices regarding text organisation. In particular, the students identify parts of their argumentative texts they like or find work well by using notions like 'solution' (Excerpt 9), 'argument', 'counterargument' or even 'logos'. Aida, a Year 5 student, assessed by her teacher as an average writer in her class, talks about the 'solution' in her argumentative piece, which is a letter to

the school's headmaster about the poor state of her school's toilets. Her text proposes reinstating the rules that were applied during the Covid-19 restrictions at the school, during which each class had its own toilet, and the students were responsible for the toilet's general condition:

(Excerpt 9)

Interviewer: Yes. Good. And what works well here?

Aida: Well, I am coming with a solution, if he thought like 'Okay, what can I do so that you will not pee on the toilet table and stuff like that'. And then I say [write] a solution that might () well, yeah.

Summing up this theme, we find numerous examples of informal and purpose-formulated notions used to identify, evaluate and characterise writerly choices at the informal end of the continuum. Towards the other end of the continuum, the use of formal grammatical metalanguage is used generically, with the exception of the notion 'adjective', which seems to link up to teacher-oriented expectations and writing norms. Instead, the students' use of formal metalanguage, which is relevant for talking about parts of text, links this theme to the findings related to writerly choices: The students are involved in events, characters and arguments, and they use a formal metalanguage linked to genre to talk about these parts of their writing.

5.2.2 *The potential of manipulations*

The second theme captures how the students manipulate or reformulate the wording of their writerly choices and compare and reflect on the meanings of the alternative formulations. In the interviews, we asked the students to consider alternative formulations; however, they also spontaneously manipulated the original formulation to compare their writerly choices to (often rejected) alternative ways of writing. The manipulated examples seem to have the potential to make the students elaborate on their writerly choices. This is evident in Excerpt 10, where Morten (an above-average writer in Year 5) talks about why he likes the lexical choice 'flares up' when describing anger in his short story:

(Excerpt 10)

Morten: I really like that part, 'the anger that flares up in him', and stuff like that. You can really feel how he's feeling. That he slowly gets more and more angry when he sees that boy getting pushed.

[...]

Interviewer: Could you have written it in another way?

Morten: I think I could, yeah. [...] You could've said, like, 'One day Karl suddenly saw something that made him angry.'

Interviewer: Yeah. And what's the difference between that and what you just read?

Morten: That it's a bit more well written and has a bit more detail, kind of.

Interviewer: Yeah. And are there any words you think make it more well written, like you said?

Morten: 'Flares up' () maybe.

Interviewer: Yeah. What does that word do?

Morten: It's like something flares up inside him. Like he gets really angry.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Morten: Whereas the other one is just like, he got angry about something.

In the beginning of the excerpt, Morten paraphrases 'the anger that flares him up' as 'You can really feel how he's feeling. That he slowly gets more and more angry'. However, when the interviewer encourages him to formulate and reflect upon alternative wordings, he ends up identifying both the verb 'flares up' and the meaning of this writerly choice in his text. In other examples, the students used the prompted manipulation to elaborate on, for example, the quality of their arguments. However, manipulating their own writerly choices and reflecting on the effects is also a difficult task. We also see examples in which students are encouraged to reformulate or consider alternative formulations but are unable to do so. This is the case with Mads (an average writer in Year 8) who says: 'Uhm, yeah, I guess I could. I think you always, you can always write it in a different way.'

The examples reported above illustrate the potential of metalinguistic discourse and students' development of a metalinguistic repertoire in the L1 writing classroom. In particular, manipulations can support students in reasoning beyond the redundant paraphrases of what they think works well in their texts, even though some find this particular task difficult. This—and the three analytical themes reported on above—are further discussed below.

6. DISCUSSION

In this study, we investigated two dimensions of students' explicit metalinguistic repertoires, as these were expressed and formed in text interviews with 48 students in pairs from Year 5 and Year 8. In our first RQ, we asked what writerly choices the students talked about, and the second RQ addressed the students' metalanguage.

6.1 Discussion of findings in relation to RQ1: writerly choices

The two analytical themes related to the writerly choices, (1) *Involvement in events, characters and arguments* and (2) *Meaning-making through lexicon and punctuation*, highlight how the students were engaged in depicting characters in their fictional narratives and in conveying arguments and claims in their argumentative texts. The themes also highlight how the students attended to the meaning-making potentials of punctuation choices.

Regarding our framing of the analysis, we conclude that the students addressed their writerly choices at the textual and lexical levels of their texts, with a focus on the meaning-making potentials on these levels, and on content choices. This resonates with previous findings on students' metalanguage in the context of L1 writing, which indicate that students tend to focus on semantic and textual aspects of their writing while they rarely talk about syntax (Watson & Newman, 2017; Watson et al., 2021).

The overall finding regarding the students' involvement in the events, characters and arguments of their writing also highlight a more specific contribution of our framework - which includes content choice - for analysing metalinguistic repertoires: This could be a starting point for further explorations of students' more specific repertoires for talking about content in their writing.

6.2 *Discussions of findings in relation to RQ2: metalanguage*

When analysing the metalanguage used by the students, we developed two themes (1), *The different roles of informal and formal metalanguage* and (2) *The potential of manipulations*. The first theme analyses the use of metalanguage along the formal–informal metalanguage continuum. Here, we saw that the students used an extended informal metalanguage in the form of notions not recognisable as established metalinguistic terms and generic and detached formal grammatical metalanguage.

The informal notions in our examples resemble what Myhill et al. (2012) called 'ad-hoc functional metalanguage'. Myhill and Cheng (2016) consider the use of informal metalanguage a pathway to more established metalanguage. Related to this, Liberg et al. (2022) argue that, in some cases, the use of everyday formulations proves one's lack of ability to use precise and, hence, more informative notions. However, as our analysis has shown, the informal metalanguage used to identify and evaluate the students' writerly choices cannot easily be replaced with established and formal linguistic concepts, as in cases where the students talk about 'advanced words' that make their writing sound more 'thought out'. Furthermore, the informal metalanguage is not replaced by more formal notions among the older students in our study.

Hence, rather than point to metalinguistic repertoires that move or evolve towards the formal end of the formal–informal continuum, we interpret the use of informal metalanguage as a sign that the students need a linguistic repertoire that includes concepts and notions that enable them to talk about content and meaning as they develop as writers. However, this does not mean that an established and precise metalanguage might not be relevant in writing instruction in L1. Our findings underscore the need to also support students in talking about their texts and writing in disciplinarily relevant ways that promote their involvement in the texts they are writing, and in the content they want to convey.

In our analysis of the distribution of both writerly choices and metalanguage, we found a relation between more extended repertoires and students' (perceived) writing competencies. These findings confirm those reported in past investigations on text movability regarding unevenly distributed metalinguistic repertoires (Folkeryd et al., 2006; Liberg et al., 2002, 2011). Our findings also align with other studies that found positive correlations between students' metalinguistic knowledge and their ability to apply this explicit knowledge in writing (Concha & Paratore, 2010). Although our findings do not say anything about the direction of this relation in our data, they underscore the reflexive relationship between developing a language for talking about writing and writing development.

Our analysis of the examples of *the potential of manipulations* showed that prompting students to rephrase their writerly choices and explicitly reflect upon the differences, in some cases, resulted in more detailed and elaborate metalinguistic reflections. The explicit reformulations and manipulations in our data resemble what Camps et al. (2000) called 'attempted textualizations' in their study of cooperative writing tasks among Catalan high school students. In the Catalan study, attempted textualizations in group writing were often accompanied by metalinguistic comments and had the potential for eliciting metalinguistic reflections, as the writers needed to compare and evaluate potential formulations. The potential for linguistic manipulations is also addressed by van Rijt et al. (2019, 2024). Even though their studies address grammar instruction, and their findings stem from distinct experimental contexts (and different age groups), their arguments regarding the potential of linguistic manipulations in pedagogical contexts are interesting in light of our findings. In particular, performing linguistic manipulations (i.e. solving linguistic problems by altering formulations) resembles what linguists do, because according to van Rijt et al. (2019), this requires more sophisticated linguistic and conceptual knowledge. Hence, inviting students to reformulate, reflect on and talk about the effects of the reformulations can support their efforts in elaborating or even forming their metalinguistic repertoires, particularly during text interviews and in teaching contexts. Thus, our findings underscore the potential for expanding and stretching the linguistic repertoire, even among Year 5 writers, if they are offered opportunities to talk about and reflect on the linguistic manipulations of their own texts. This—and further implications for practice—are discussed below.

6.3 *The instructional context: implications for practice*

As stated initially, we regard the students as agentive and creative writers while also able interpreters of the writing situation and the teaching context (e.g. Halliday, 1978, Kress et al., 2005; Smidt, 2009). Hence, we interpret the students' metalinguistic repertoires as their expressions of what they like or found work well in their writing and as their interpretations of what counts in an educational context. Hence, we also looked for ways of talking and thinking about writing that could be linked to the observed instructional contexts of the interviews. This might be the

case for the few instances of syntactical choices in our data, which in that case demonstrate how contextualised writing instruction has the potential to expand students' metalinguistic repertoires. However, the use of the formal term 'adjective' and the explicit link made to descriptive language or teacher expectations also relate these examples to the instructional contexts. As shown in the examples, while the students identify the link between 'adjectives', descriptive language, and teacher expectations as a general principle, it is less clear how they use the notion to identify and characterise the writerly choice in question. For L1 teachers, this finding—and previous findings regarding teachers' metalinguistic repertoires (Myhill et al., 2016)—show the importance of having and offering students metalinguistic repertoires that reach beyond formal aspects of language and writing as well as beyond more generalised discourses about language and writing (i.e. 'adjectives' and 'descriptive language').

6.4 Conclusion

The aim of this study is to contribute new empirical insights into students' metalinguistic repertoires and to inspire further theoretical discussions of what a relevant metalanguage in the L1 writing classroom might look like. The students in our study seemed to be occupied with—and sometimes even highly involved in—the content in their texts, while also engaging in quite elaborate discussions of their thoughts about specific word choices. At the same time, the students primarily used metalanguage regarding content and meaning that they created ad hoc. These key findings underscore the need to expand theoretical understandings and empirical explorations of metalinguistic repertoires in the writing context with notions and approaches that capture students' involvement in the content of their writing. Our findings also point to the pedagogical potentials of offering students contextualised and relevant ways of thinking and talking about writing in the context of L1, in this way writing instruction can support both the continued writing development and the expansion of metalinguistic repertoires in support of this.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is part of the project "Writing Education: The more specific relations between students' writing and metalinguistic repertoires" funded by The Carlsberg Foundation, CF21-0509. We would like to thank our colleagues PhD student Lise Olsen and research assistant Louise Rosendal Bang, Aarhus University, and associate lecturer Sanne Floor Bendixen from VIA University College for contributing to data collection. We would also like to thank the teachers who opened their classrooms for us in the project and the students who let us observe and interview them.

TRANSCRIPTION KEY

- Original style and formulations are kept, but conventional spelling and punctuations are applied for clarity.
- The following are used to indicate different parts of the transcript:
[...] - the specific part of the transcription is omitted in the cited extract;
() - a pause; and
[xx] - an inaudible piece of audio.
- The transcriber's notes are placed in square brackets: [reads aloud].

REFERENCES

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., Davey, L., & Jenkinson, E. (2022). Doing reflexive thematic analysis. In S. Bager-Charleson & A. McBeath (Eds.), *Doing Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (pp. 19–38). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13942-0_2
- Camps, A., & Fontich, X. (2019). Teachers' concepts on the teaching of grammar in relation to the teaching of writing in Spain: A case study. *L1 Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 19, 1–36. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2019.19.02.02>
- Camps, A., Guasch, O., Milian, M., & Ribas, T. (2000). Metalinguistic activity: The link between writing and learning to write. In A. Camps & M. Milian (Eds.), *Metalinguistic activity in learning to write* (pp. 103–124). Amsterdam University Press.
- Camps, A., & Milian, M. (2000). Metalinguistic activity in learning to write – An introduction. In A. Camps & M. Milian (Eds.), *Metalinguistic activity in learning to write*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Camps, A., & Milian, M. (2020). Metalinguistic activity in learning to write – An introduction. In A. Camps & X. Fontich (Eds.), *Research and teaching at the intersection: Navigating the territory of grammar and writing in the context of metalinguistic activity*. Peter Lang.
- Chen, H., & Myhill, D. (2016). Children talking about writing: Investigating metalinguistic understanding. *Linguistics and Education*, 35, 100–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2016.07.004>
- Concha, S., & Paratore, J. R. (2010). Local coherence in persuasive writing: An exploration of Chilean students' metalinguistic knowledge, writing process, and writing products. *Written Communication*, 28(1), 34–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088310383383>
- Erickson, F. (1977). Some approaches to inquiry in school-community ethnography. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 8(2), 58–69.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 219–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>
- Folkeryd, J. W., af Geijerstam, Å., & Edling, A. (2006). Textrörlighet: Hur elever talar om egna och andras texter [Text movability: How students talk about own and other's texts]. In L. Bjar (Ed.), *Det hänger på språket [It depends on the language]*. Studentlitteratur.
- Fontich, X. (2016). L1 grammar instruction and writing: Metalinguistic activity as a teaching and research focus. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 10(5), 238–254. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12184>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. Edward Arnold.

- Halliday, M. A. K. (1993). Towards a language-based theory of learning. *Linguistics and Education*, 5(2), 93–116. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0898-5898\(93\)90026-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0898-5898(93)90026-7)
- Jakobson, R. (1960). Closing statement: Linguistics and poetics. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in language* (pp. 350–377). MIT Press.
- Jones, S. (2023). The value of knowing: Conscious and unconscious writing choices. *Language and Education*, 37(1), 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2022.2109421>
- Kabel, K., Christensen, M. V., Tannert, M., Olsen, L. & Bendixen, S. F. (2024). *Manual for analyse af metasprogligt repertoire* [Manual for analysing metalinguistic repertoire]. Working Paper. DPU, Aarhus Universitet.
[https://projekter.au.dk/fileadmin/projekter/WE-projektet/Ebog -
_Manual_for_analyse_af metasprogligt_repertoire.pdf](https://projekter.au.dk/fileadmin/projekter/WE-projektet/Ebog_-_Manual_for_analyse_af metasprogligt_repertoire.pdf)
- Kabel, K., Christensen, M. V. & Tannert, M. (forthcoming). Explaining writerly choices: Text interviews with students in Year 5 and 8.
- Kress, G., Jewitt, C., Bourne, J., Franks, A., Hardcastle, J., Jones, K., & Reid, E. (2005). *English in urban classrooms: A multimodal perspective on teaching and learning*. Routledge.
- Laursen, H. P. (2018). "Jeg sidder inde i den tekst". Om skriveridentitet, sprogindlæreridentitet og sprogstræk ["I am sitting inside that text" On writer identity, language learner identity and language stretching]. In A. M. V. Danbolt, G. T. Alstad & G. T. Randen (Eds.), *Litterasitet og flerspråkighet – Muligheter og udfordringer for barnehage, skole og lærerutdanning* [Literacy and multilingualism – potentials and challenges for kinder garten, school and teacher education] (pp. 41–56). Fagbokforlaget.
- Liberg, C. Folkeryd, J. W., af Geijerstam, Å., & Edling, A. (2002). Students' encounters with different texts in school. *Working Papers*, 50, 47–61.
- Liberg, C., af Geijerstam, Å., & Folkeryd, J. W. (2011). Scientific literacy and students' movability in science texts. In C. Linder, L. Östman, D. A. Roberts, P-O. Wickman, G. Erickson & A. MacKinnon (Eds.), *Exploring the landscape of scientific literacy*, (pp. 74–89). Routledge.
- Liberg, C., Folkeryd, J., af Geijerstam, Å., & Nordlund, A. (2022). Teachers' talk about young students' writing of narrative and informational texts. *Writing & Pedagogy*, 13(1–3), 181–206.
<https://doi.org/10.1558/wap.21544>
- Lillis, T. (2001). *Student writing: Access, regulation, desire* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203186268>
- Lillis, T. (2009). Bringing writers' voices to writing research: Talk around texts. In A. Carter, T. Lillis, & S. Parkin (Eds.), *Why writing matters: Issues of access and identity in writing research and pedagogy* (pp. 169–187). Benjamins.
- Love, K., & Sandiford, C. (2016). Teachers' and students' meta-reflections on writing choices: An Australian case study. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 80, 204–216.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.06.001>
- Macken-Horarik, M., Sandiford, C., Love, K., & Unsworth, L. (2015). New ways of working 'with grammar in mind' in school English: Insights from systemic functional grammatics. *Linguistics and Education*, 31, 145–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.LINGED.2015.07.004>
- Myhill, D. A., Jones, S. M., Lines, H., & Watson, A. (2012). Re-thinking grammar: The impact of embedded grammar teaching on students' writing and students' metalinguistic understanding. *Research Papers in Education*, 27(2), 139–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2011.637640>
- Myhill, D., Jones, S., & Wilson, A. (2016). Writing conversations: Fostering metalinguistic discussion about writing. *Research Papers in Education*, 31(1), 23–44.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2016.1106694>
- Myhill, D., & Newman, R. (2016). Metatalk: Enabling metalinguistic discussion about writing. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 80, 177–187. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.07.007>
- Myhill, D., Newman, R., Watson, A., & Jones, S. (2022). Writing dialogues: Metalinguistic talk about writing. In R. O. Solheim, H. Otnes, & M. O. Riss-Johansen (Eds.), *Samtale, samskrive, samhandle: Nye perspektiv på muntlighet og skriftlighet i samspill* [Talking, writing and acting together: New perspectives on oracy and writing interplay] (pp. 71–93). Universitetsforlaget.
- Newman, R. (2024). The impact of [meta] talk about writing on metalinguistic understanding and written outcomes: A review. *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 24(1), 1–27.

<https://doi.org/10.21248/l1esll.2024.24.1.707>

- Smidt, J. (2009). Developing discourse roles and positionings – An ecological theory of writing development. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, J. Riley, & M. Nystrand (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of writing development* (pp. 117–125). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021069.n8>
- van Rijt, J. H. M., Banga, A., & Goudbeek, M. (2024). Getting a load of linguistic reasoning: How L1 student teachers process rules of thumb and linguistic manipulations in discussions about grammar. *Applied Linguistics*, 45(1), 163–188. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amad011>
- van Rijt, J. H. M., De Swart, P., & Coppen, P. A. (2019). Linguistic concepts in L1 grammar education: A comparative study of teachers' beliefs and practices across four educational contexts. *L1 Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 19, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2019.19.01.04>
- Watson, A., & Newman, R. (2017). Talking grammatically: L1 adolescent metalinguistic reflection on writing. *Language Awareness*, 26(4), 381–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2017.1410554>
- Watson, A. M., Newman, R. M. C., & Morgan, S. D. (2021). Metatalk and metalinguistic knowledge: The interplay of procedural and declarative knowledge in the classroom discourse of first-language grammar teaching. *Language Awareness*, 30(3), 257–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2021.1905655>

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Warm-up – 10 minutes, own text:

The text is printed out physically (if possible).

Let the students read their own text and ask them to notice and mark the places in the text “*you are happy with or think work well.*”

After they've read: *We'll return to those places in a moment, but first...*

Warm-up questions:

- What is your text about?
- What kinds of emotions or attitudes does the text express? Where do they appear in the text?
- How would you describe (linguistically) the way you express/formulate them?

Specific places in the text – alternating between students (one student one place, then the other, and so on):

(We are not concluding for them, but letting them speak freely – dwell on their examples and ask about form and reasoning)

- Let's look at the places you're happy with or think work well (let the student point them out and read aloud).
- Why are you happy with it / why do you think it works well?
- What is it about this example that works well?
- How would you describe (linguistically) the way you wrote it?
(Encourage them to describe how they expressed/formulated themselves to explore language for form, concretely related to what they highlight as good)
- How else could you have written it?
(Start with an open question—if they don't respond, offer a concrete alternative or change the situation/audience and ask specifically about that)

(Again, to explore their language for form—possibly split into: how could you make the text better/worse there?)

Follow-up after students have described all their selected places:

- When you write like that, where does it come from? What are you drawing on? (Make it more concrete in the situation: personal life experiences, previous writing experience—e.g., having written similar texts before—something you’ve worked on in class, heard in school before, seen in films/books...)

Our overall questions about the text – supplementary, only within the levels (lexical, syntactic, textual) not already addressed earlier (let them exemplify/point out if needed):

- Is there something in your structure that you think works well—and why? What is it about this example that works well? Try to describe how you wrote it. How else could you have written it?
- Are there any sentences you’ve written that you think work well—and why? What is it about this example that works well? Try to describe how you wrote it. How else could you have written it?
- Are there any words you’ve written that you think work well—and why? What is it about this example that works well? Try to describe how you wrote it. How else could you have written it?

Follow-up after the student has described all their selected places:

- When you write like that [mention the specific choice], where does it come from? Where did you get that knowledge from? *(Make it more concrete in the situation: where have you encountered that way of writing? Personal life experiences, previous writing experience—e.g., having written similar texts before—something you’ve worked on in class, heard in school before, seen in films/books...)*

Is there anything you were particularly engaged in writing?

Are there any places you found difficult or spent a long time on?

Genre:

- What makes your text a short story / ...?
- Who reads short stories / ...?
- Why do people write this kind of text (in the world)?
- Who is your text written for / who should be able to read it?

- Why do you write this kind of text in school?

Process (*can be omitted if the interview becomes too long*):

- Where did you get the idea for the content?
- How did you get started writing the text?
- How did you go about writing the text?
- How did you figure out how to write the text?
- What do you think about writing this kind of text?

APPENDIX B. OVERVIEW OF WRITERLY CHOICES

Table B1. Overview of writerly choices across years, classrooms, and (narrative and argumentative) writing tasks (the number of prompted incidents)

Codes	Year	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5		Total number of incidents	
		N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A
Structure & cohesion	Year 5	6 (2)	6 (3)	5(1)	5 (1)	7 (3)	9 (8)	-	-	13 (6)	7	31 (12)	27 (12)
	Year 8	12 (7)	8 (1)	2	8 (2)	-	-	2	1	8 (2)	15 (8)	24 (9)	32 (11)
Content choices	Year 5	13	7 (2)	19 (2)	20 (3)	12 (2)	14	-	-	21 (5)	20 (2)	65 (9)	61 (7)
	Year 8	9 (2)	9 (1)	21 (1)	16 (3)	-	-	14 (1)	12 (1)	19 (6)	30 (15)	63 (10)	67 (20)
Syntactical choices	Year 5	2 (1)	1	0	0	4 (1)	0	-	-	1	6 (2)	7 (2)	9 (2)
	Year 8	0	1(1)	0	2	-	-	0	0	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1)	5 (3)
Lexical choices	Year 5	7 (1)	10 (3)	12 (1)	12 (3)	8 (4)	13 (9)	-	-	15 (8)	11 (2)	42 (14)	46 (17)
	Year 8	9 (4)	11 (6)	8 (4)	5 (1)	-	-	9 (5)	9 (9)	17 (7)	17 (7)	43 (20)	42 (23)
Questions	Year 5	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Year 8	2 (2)	3	1	1	-	-	0	0	0	0	3 (2)	4
Formalia & layout	Year 5	3 (1)	0	1	0	2 (2)	1 (1)	-	-	0	3(1)	5 (3)	4 (2)
	Year 8	3 (1)	0	1(1)	4	0	0	0	0	4 (2)	2 (2)	8 (4)	6 (2)

APPENDIX C. OVERVIEW OF METALANGUAGE

Table C1. Overview of incidents of metalanguage across years, classrooms, and writing tasks (narrative and argumentative)

Codes	Year	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5		Total number of incidents		Distribution among student groups		
		N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	Above	Middle	Below
Example manipulated	Year 5	7	13	11	9	10	11			12	13	40	46	44	30	12
	Year 8	4	0	2	0			7	4	12	12	25	16	2	11	3
Informal	Year 5	8	8	7	9	13	19			15	15	43	51	51	29	14
	Year 8	8	11	10	10			3	1	16	4	37	26	16	33	14
Formal grammatical	Year 5	2	1	5	0	0	0			5	4	12	5	12	5	0
	Year 8	4	2	0	1			1	2	7	3	12	8	9	9	2
Formal genre	Year 5	2	5	5	15	4	0			2	0	13	20	21	8	4
	Year 8	7	13	1	9			7	1	4	3	19	26	17	21	7