SWEDISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: TEACHERS' VIEWS ON WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR ADULT LEARNERS

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Abstract

This article aims to deepen our understanding of second language (L2) writing instruction at the lower secondary level for adults in Sweden by examining experienced teachers' reported views on writing instruction. The applicability of Ivanič's (2004) discourse analytical framework is tested in this context. Two qualitative methods were used: surveys (N=24) and semi-structured interviews (N=5). Findings reveal a narrow and instrumental focus in writing instruction, predominantly characterized by a skills discourse and a genre discourse, with the overarching aim of preparing students for further studies. Teachers report that instruction is influenced by contextual factors such as students' heterogeneity, time constraints, and local teaching agreements, where collective discourses of writing shape how teachers enact writing instruction—sometimes aligning with their individual views and at other times diverging from them. This study raises the question of whether contextual constraints outweigh teachers' individual discourses of writing in the enactment of writing instruction for adult L2 learners, and priority in such a setting is given to language form. Further, the findings highlight the need to pay greater attention to how the skills discourse manifests itself in L2 contexts and suggest a possible development of the framework to include the student as an influence on teachers' views on writing.

Keywords: Second language writing, adult education, literacy, second language teacher, discourse analysis

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1. INTRODUCTION

By law, municipalities in Sweden are responsible for providing language learning education for adults residing in the country who lack the knowledge that such education aims to provide. Notably, Sweden has one of the highest rates of adult education participation worldwide (Fejes & Andersson, 2022). Specifically Swedish as a second language (SSL) is one of the most studied subjects (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024). The present study focuses on teachers of the four lower-secondary-level SSL courses that aim to equip students with the Swedish language proficiency necessary for social integration and to qualify them for further studies, including upper secondary and university admission.

Teaching goals and guidelines are outlined in national steering documents (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2017, 2022), which include a general curriculum and subject-specific guidelines defining the subject's aims, central content, and a two-point grading scale. For example, the SSL curriculum states that "[…] students should develop their Swedish speaking and writing skills to build confidence and express themselves effectively in various contexts, including everyday life, societal participation, further studies, and working life" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022, my translation). Regarding writing, the criteria for a passing grade specify: "The student writes various types of texts with some linguistic variation, using primarily functional structure, content, and adaptation to text type, purpose, audience, and context. The student follows linguistic norms and structures in a primarily functional manner" (Swedish National for Education, 2022, my translation).

SSL teachers have significant autonomy in shaping their curricula, for example, by choosing the content and methods of teaching. Furthermore, teachers assess their own students' progress. However, several challenges have previously been highlighted in the context of Swedish adult education. The structure has been described as "fragmented" due to, among other factors, limited time, heterogeneous student groups and continuous admission (Andersson et al., 2023). The present study recognizes that teachers are part of a specific teaching context for adults, which constitutes specific literacy practices (cf. Street, 1984). The way teachers talk about writing may influence how they teach and assess writing, as the pedagogical practice of writing is commonly underpinned by subconscious and conscious ways of conceptualizing writing and the learning of writing (Ivanič, 2004).

Students in lower secondary SSL courses form a highly heterogeneous group, differing in migration status, language, age, and length of stay in Sweden. While about half have an educational background equivalent to at least upper secondary level, the other half have fewer than six years of schooling (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024). Some students move to Sweden voluntarily for work or studies, while others flee wars and conflicts, seeking asylum. Reasons for studying SSL also vary widely, ranging from university qualification or validation of previous education

to fulfilling language requirements for vocational training, such as childcare or bus driving.

Our knowledge of SSL at this level is limited, but we know that both students and teachers perceive writing as challenging (Sandgaard-Ekdahl & Walldén, 2022). The national curriculum reflects multiple discourses on writing and advocates for comprehensive writing instruction with clear links to social contexts (Palm, 2023). However, classroom practices have been shown to prioritize text-focused aspects, with greater emphasis on language form than on content (Palm et al., in press). The genre discourse has been found to be strong among SSL teachers working with adolescents (Magnusson & Rejman, 2023; Sturk et al., 2020). Internationally, the skills and process discourses have also been found to dominate alongside the genre discourse (Parr, 2021). Ivanič's (2004) framework has been applied in various contexts and to different types of material, but it was originally developed for children's first-language writing and has predominantly been used in such settings (cf. Parr, 2021). The present study, therefore, contributes by testing the framework's applicability in a second language (L2) context for adults, while also aiming to expand our knowledge of L2 teachers' views on writing and writing instruction. The following research question has guided the study:

What views on writing and writing instruction are found among SSL teachers of adult learners?

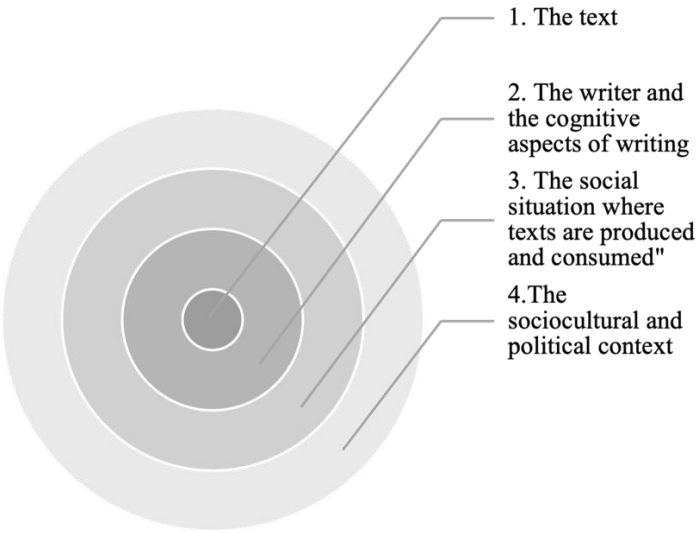
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study is underpinned by a *New Literacy Studies* view on writing, drawing from the seminal works of Heath (1982), Street (1984), and Barton (2007). This viewpoint emphasizes that literacy extends beyond a mere set of skills and is intricately connected with social contexts and power. *New Literacy Studies* contributes to our understanding of how contextual factors shape the teaching of writing. The external social world influences classroom dynamics and the construction of knowledge (Blomme & Ryu, 2017). Here, language policy decisions and sociocultural factors converge with instructional practices, as opposed to reading and writing being an isolated skill, aligning with Street's (1984) distinction between ideological and autonomous models of literacy. Furthermore, by acknowledging that students' prior experiences are not left outside the classroom but instead brought into it, it becomes apparent that the classroom operates as a microcosm of the broader societal and political landscape (cf. Pennycook, 2000). This theoretical framework contributes to an understanding of writing in relation to the specific context of adult education.

Fairclough's comprehensive language perspective, as framed by Ivanič (2004), is useful in understanding how micro-level actions, beliefs, and assumptions interface with the macro-level. In this conceptualization, text becomes inseparable from cognitive and social dimensions, as symbolized by Ivanič's layers metaphor (see Figure 1). These layers, each embedded within the others, encompass the "text" in

the innermost layer, focused on linguistic features. The subsequent layer encompasses cognitive processes involved in writing, followed by the writing event, referring to the immediate social context in which language is being used. The outer layer consists of the sociopolitical and sociocultural context of writing, where a multitude of factors come into play. These comprise broader societal norms, economic conditions, educational policies, and cultural values, all of which significantly influence not only what is written, but also who is given the opportunity to write and be heard (cf. Janks, 2009).

Figure 1. Language model consisting of different layers (after Ivanič, 2004, p. 223)



This comprehensive view of language forms the foundation of the analytical framework of *writing discourses*, as identified by Ivanič (2004), which enables exploration of diverse beliefs about writing and is applied in the present study. A discourse of writing is understood as "constellations of beliefs about writing, beliefs about learning to write, ways of talking about writing" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). The framework of writing discourses presupposes that all writing instruction is rooted in underlying beliefs about writing and learning to write, which in turn influence instructional approaches and assessment (Ivanič, 2004). Originally comprising six discourses, Ivanič (2017) expanded the framework to include a seventh. The seven discourses will be presented briefly below.

In the *skills discourse,* writing is understood as a set of predefined rules needed to compose a text—a prevalent perspective in education where writing is commonly viewed as a set of skills and subskills that build on each other (cf. Barton, 2007). Conversely, the *creativity discourse* perceives writing as a product of the writer's individual creativity. In the *process discourse*, writing is conceptualized as

encompassing cognitive composing processes and their practical execution. The *discourse of thinking and learning* positions writing as a tool for further learning and deepening thought. In the *genre discourse*, the underlying belief is that writing consists of a set of text types that are formed in different social contexts. In the *social practice discourse*, writing is seen as a purpose-driven event in a social context, and learning to write happens by participating in real-life contexts. In the seventh discourse, the *sociopolitical discourse*, writing is perceived as a socio-politically constructed practice, with implications for learners' identities, and is open to contestation and evolution contexts (Ivanič, 2004). The framework will be used to highlight discourses of writing.

Ivanič's (2004) analytical framework has been widely applied across contexts. The skills genre and process discourses have been found to be dominant in educational L1 contexts for younger and adolescent learners internationally, while the social practice and sociopolitical discourses are comparatively less common (Elf & Troelsen, 2021; Müller et al., 2021; Parr, 2023; Peltzer et al., 2022; Peterson et al., 2018Sturk & Lindgren, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2021). Sweden follows the same pattern, with skills and genre discourses being identified in the Swedish context in general. Sturk et al. (2020) found that, in online social media discussions concerning writing, the skills discourse dominated, followed by the genre discourse, which is also strong in SSL textbooks. This aligns with findings from Sturk and Lindgren (2019), who reported that genre and skills discourses are prevalent among Swedish teachers in school years 1–9. The focus on genre was also observed in an interview study involving SSL teachers working with adolescent learners, where teachers understood the genre approach as a way to provide long-term access to further studies and to enable democratic participation (Magnusson & Rejman, 2023).

In SSL education for adults, the same pattern of skills and genre focus recurs. In a case study of three SSL classrooms in lower secondary adult education, a focus on skills was observed—where language form and textual aspects of writing were given priority (Palm et al., in press). The study also showed that contextual preconditions such as teaching time and available resources varied significantly between teachers, and the authors raised the question of what SSL writing instruction should provide to adult learners and how to balance the focus on language form with the social use of text. The focus on form has also been noted in the teaching of beginner SSL classes for adults (Bergsten Provaznik & Wedin, 2023) and in teachers' assessment practices in the same context (Jakobson, 2018). Yet this skill focus among teachers contrasts with the steering documents for adult SSL courses at the lower secondary level, where the skills discourse is toned town. The steering documents emphasize effective communication in both teaching content and assessments, rather than finer details such as punctuation and prepositions (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). In a discourse analysis of steering documents for adult SSL at the lower secondary level, Palm (2023) found that a social practice discourse is apparent in the subject's aims, stressing writing in relation to its social use. Furthermore, an overarching discourse of "usefulness" has been identified in relation to the SSL

subject, wherein other discourses of writing are justified by their practical application—particularly regarding studies and work (cf. Malmström, 2017; Palm, 2023).

The present study contributes to previous research on writing discourses by including SSL teachers in a context where it is known that teachers and students found writing to be challenging (Sandgaard-Ekdahl & Walldén, 2022). Furthermore, a large-scale study on teachers' interpretation and implementation of policy documents describes Swedish municipal adult education as a particularly challenging setting, where instruction often relies on textbooks and learning platforms and where concrete, easily measurable aspects of the steering documents take precedence (Andersson et al., 2023). Similarly, Anundsen (2023) examined teachers' subject constructions in Norwegian as an L2 for adults and highlighted differences in how teachers construct the subject, experiencing a conflict between students' language learning needs and the necessity to prioritize content. Anundsen (2023) argued that teachers' subject constructions need to be understood in relation to the context in which they teach.

3. METHODOLOGY

In the following, the context of the study, the participants, methods and analytical procedure will be presented.

3.1 The context of the study and participants

According to the Swedish Education Act, the primary objective of Swedish municipal adult education is to address labor market demands, prepare students for university studies, and foster their "personal development" (Swedish Education Act, SFS, 2010:800). This education enables adults aged 20 to 64 to complement their studies at the lower and upper secondary level and to study language courses from the beginner level in SSL free of charge. Students can have financial support through loans and are permitted by law to take a leave of absence from work and have their children in childcare during study periods.

Adult education is organized locally by the municipalities, of which there are 290 in Sweden. Thus, the organization of the education varies. For instance, a municipality can organize the education itself or outsource it to an independent organizer. There is no regulated number of teaching hours, and teaching formats vary, including online, classroom, and hybrid models. Regardless of whether an independent school is involved, national steering documents must be followed.

The focus of the present study is on the lower secondary level, an intermediate level that students normally enter after finishing the Swedish for immigrants (SFI) program that corresponds to B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Successful completion of lower secondary SSL courses qualifies students for SSL courses at the upper secondary level. SSL at the lower

secondary level comprises four courses that can be taken either as a coherent unit or separately. Collectively, the lower secondary courses span approximately one year of full-time study, often taken part-time and entailing 20 weeks per course, with continuous admission every ten weeks. Most students study several courses in parallel or combine their studies with work, and to enable adults to study, the steering documents emphasize the importance of flexibility and individualization in adult education. As previously mentioned, the student group is very heterogeneous when it comes to age, language, length of stay in Sweden and the reason for migration. Regarding educational background, about half of students attending lower secondary studies have an education corresponding to at least the upper secondary level, while the other half have an educational background of six years or fewer (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024).

Teachers of SSL at this level are mandated to undergo teacher training with a minimum of 45 ECTS of SSL studies. However, around half of all SSL instructors lack formal qualifications, a circumstance acknowledged as a challenge in relation to equity and pedagogical development (Swedish Government Official Reports, 2020:66). Both survey participants and interview participants in the present study were qualified teachers. The survey participants had 4 to 11 years of teaching experience in SSL. Geographically, the survey participants represented both rural and urban settings across Sweden. The majority worked in larger schools administered by municipalities, with more than 100 students enrolled in SSL. Most survey participants were females aged 41 to 60. Out of the five interviewees, all were females with more than five years of teaching experience in adult SSL. They demonstrated their interest in writing instruction and adult learning through their participation in various in-service trainings. Two worked in rural municipalities where they were the sole SSL teachers at the lower secondary level, while the other three worked in larger cities or suburbs, where they were part of a larger group of SSL teachers at their respective schools. All interviewees worked at schools administered by municipalities; however, the organization of the courses varied between schools. For example, depending on the number of students, some schools offered courses as a single unit or even combined multiple courses in the same classroom, while others provided four separate courses.

3.2 Data collection methods and material

To investigate teachers' views on writing, two qualitative methods were used. Initially, a qualitative survey (N=24) was conducted. In the survey, one question asked participants whether they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Secondly, out of the 24 survey responses, five interviewees were drawn, and semi-structured interviews were employed to follow up, contextualize, and deepen the survey responses. Surveys enabled data collection from a larger number of participants, offering initial insights into teachers' views on writing instruction. Subsequently, interviews were carried out to delve deeper into participants'

perspectives and provide contextual depth (cf. Barton, 2007; Friedman, 2012). The interviews not only enriched understanding but also strengthened the validity of survey findings through method triangulation (cf. Friedman, 2012).

The survey contained two open-ended questions inspired by Ivanič's (2004) discourse analytical framework. The questions were: 1) *What do you consider to be most important to focus on in the writing instruction to support your students´ writing development? Why?* 2) *Have a student text in mind. What do you think characterizes a text of good quality in SSL? Indicate what course.* The questions were posed at the beginning of the survey, and the participants were asked to write down their answers freely. Each answer contained on average about 70 words. The total amount of data from the survey consisted of about 3,500 words.

A second demographic section solicited information on educational background, teaching experience, and workplace. In total, completing the survey required approximately ten minutes.

The criterion for participation was being an SSL teacher at the lower secondary level within adult education. Survey participants were recruited using a snowball sampling approach (cf. Thompson, 2012). Email invitations were sent to individuals at various levels within the educational system, including teachers, administrators, and principals. The email contained information about the study, an invitation to participate or to forward the information to potentially interested teachers, along with a link to access the online survey. Approximately one month later, a reminder was sent to the same recipients. Because the number of teachers who received the email is unknown, the response rate could not be determined.

The interviewees were contacted via email a few months after the survey was conducted. The email outlined the study's objectives, anticipated duration, and procedures. The five semi-structured interviews were conducted over the course of a month, resulting in 3.6 hours of interview data. Each interview lasted an average of 44 minutes (ranging from 35 to 53 minutes). An interview guide with open-ended questions, not provided in advance, was utilized. The guide was designed to contextualize writing and cover three dimensions of writing instruction: individual, local, and societal. These dimensions are considered fundamental to capturing language education (cf. Erickson et al., 2015) and aimed to encompass the various layers within Ivanič's (2004) framework. At the individual level, participants were asked to discuss personal writing experiences, training in writing, and their beliefs about writing. Inquiries concerning the local level focused on colleagues' perceived perspectives on writing and contextual factors, while societal-level inquiries encompassed beliefs about writing, alignment with curriculum directives, and writing requirements in society. Additionally, the interview guide was informed by the study's theoretical framework, prompting participants to discuss the prevalence of certain discourses. Participants were invited to explain the absence of specific discourses and provide insights into the underlying reasons. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to raise relevant dimensions concerning the study's themes (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, physical interviews were not feasible, leading to the adoption of video interviewing as an alternative. Video interviewing is considered valid and trustworthy (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021); it offers time- and cost-effectiveness and facilitates broad geographical participation. However, video interviewing has limitations because it cannot, among other things, capture body language and establish a comfortable ambiance. Participants were free to choose the platform for the interviews, with all teachers reporting familiarity with their chosen platform. Notably, adult education in Sweden was performed in classrooms without pandemic-related restrictions at that time.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the survey process. The participants were given written information about the study, and they gave their voluntary consent by selecting a checkbox. Similarly, interviews followed ethical protocols, beginning with oral information and allowing participants to ask questions before providing consent. All names of individuals and geographical locations have been replaced with pseudonyms. Participants received no monetary compensation.

3.3 Data analysis procedure

The qualitative survey and interview data were analyzed using an approach inspired by reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). This method was chosen for its adaptability, enabling a deductive approach as the analysis is guided by Ivanič's (2004) framework. The framework was applied in an open manner and served to identify discourses of writing among teachers.

All interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews were subsequently transcribed by the author, focusing on content, with pauses, humming, and repetitions excluded from the transcriptions. Excerpts presented in the result section have been modified to adhere to written language standards, aiming to enhance readability. Survey and interview data were categorized according to a specific discourse or as a hybrid in cases where multiple discourses were apparent (cf. Ivanič, 2004). Parts of the material were analyzed jointly with a colleague who was well-versed in the framework. Initially, transcripts were analyzed independently and then discuessed. In a few cases, there were different interpretations. These differences primarily concerned the division of passages and hybrids. Based on these reflexive discussions (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2021), Ivanič's (2004, 2017) framework was applied in relation to the interpreted purpose as guiding the categorization of a discourse. This meant that each survey answers were categorized according to one discourse. For example, a survey response such as "The most important thing is that the student has a large vocabulary" was interpreted as a skills discourse, while a response such as "The most important thing is to learn to write according to different text types" was interpreted as an expression of a genre discourse. The interview material provided, as expected, more depth and nuances. Nevertheless, the framework served to identify dominant discourses in this context (cf. Ivanič, 2004).

4. FINDINGS

In the following section, the findings are presented. The survey and interview responses highlight, above all, two discourses of writing: the genre discourse and the skills discourse (cf. Ivanič, 2004). Although other discourses of writing were mentioned, teachers indicated that they were implemented to a lesser degree in practice.

4.1 The focus on form

Teachers emphasized the significance of language form in writing instruction, thus manifesting a skills discourse (Ivanič, 2004), with responses underscoring explicit teaching of grammar and structure, punctuation, accurate spelling, and an awareness of explicit language norms. One teacher, for instance, highlighted the importance of correct word order and structure at the lower secondary level, as a preparation for further studies, as exemplified in the following:

> Excerpt 1, survey data:
>
> When it comes to the writing itself, I think placement of the verb is one of the most important things. If the verb is placed in the right position, the text is much easier to read and understand. Such a text has content. The structure of the text with the introduction, main text and conclusion is also important. I anticipate that my pupils will go on to further studies, and it's important for them to learn this at the lower secondary level.

A skills discourse extends to the assessment of writing proficiency. Discussions about language accuracy and structure appear repeatedly in both interview and survey responses. According to teachers, it is important that students understand how to effectively structure texts, such as using proper paragraphing, crafting suitable introductions, and organizing content coherently, but also that they are aware of language norms and can write in a more formal register with a higher level of correctness, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> Excerpt 2, survey data:
>
> It's important that they understand the importance of language accuracy and spelling, that "just about right" is not enough. The reason is that otherwise they can never achieve a formal level of writing. For the formal level, it is important that students be shown clearly what formal language looks like and how to write formally.

Having language skills was not brought up as a value per se, but rather as a means, for example, to write more formally, as exemplified above. Or as in the following excerpts, where a skills focus is justified because it helps SSL students meet societal expectations of correctness. This is demonstrated in Excerpt 3, in which "society" is thought to value correctness and accuracy. The following excerpt also exemplifies the embeddedness of broader social dimensions in language teaching (cf. Erickson et al., 2015):

> Excerpt 3, interview data, Ingrid:
>
> Researcher: Why is accuracy important?
>
> Ingrid: I think society has even higher expectations than we teachers do. As an SSL teacher, you become an expert in interpreting students' texts.

The broader context justifies a focus on the text layer (cf. Ivanič, 2004). As one teacher suggested, written communication should be comprehensible not only to insiders, but also "to an outsider." However, the skills discourse was not only referred to in relation to the external context. A view of writing was also presented that simply consists of different sub-skills, where one skill builds on another (cf. Barton, 2007). For example, having a large vocabulary was considered a necessary prerequisite of writing texts, as exemplified in the following:

> Excerpt 4, survey data:
>
> First, it's important that students build up a vocabulary, because if you can't use words in the target language, you can't write in the language at all. Learners must have a bank of active words they already know. They cannot sit and look up all the words in Lexin [a dictionary] or write in their mother tongue in Google translate. Building up a vocabulary takes time, and time is exactly what we lack in adult education.

In Excerpt 4, time was brought up as a constraint. The local context was reported to be important in shaping the structure of writing instruction, and collective discourses of writing could be identified within this context, where language form is a priority. In all the interviews, teachers discussed different arrangements at the local level and variations in how courses and course content were organized and what was given priority in what teachers experienced as a limiting time frame. The following excerpts illustrate how this was implemented at one school, where teachers had documented which aspects of grammar should be included in each course. The teacher, Marta, explained how she used different colors in text assessments to highlight for students the areas they needed to develop, focusing on various aspects of language form. She also explained that this approach had been agreed upon among the staff. Additionally, new teachers were expected to adhere to this agreement:

> Excerpt 5, interview data, Marta:
>
> I work with a color scheme where blue stands for verb forms. Word order, which is also a big problem in writing, is green. Punctation - if you have forgotten a capital letter, a question mark - is orange. And then we have pink and yellow. Yellow stands for adjectives, nouns and pronouns, which are all related. Pink is about lexicality, like lack of vocabulary. We have divided the courses, and which aspects of grammar are included in which course, e.g., in Course 2 we have verbs and word order and then we practice that a lot and use those colors. […] We've written down in a document what each course should contain. We also have evening courses of 20 weeks that should have the same content, so it's important that everyone follows it. If we practice verbs and word order a lot in Course 1 and then if another course hasn't done that, the students don't bring the same baggage with them. So, when a new teacher comes, you say: here you go, this is the content of these courses. It's important.

In contrast, in other schools, teachers experienced a greater degree of autonomy. Cathrine explained how she had chosen to include more literary content into her teaching practices, diverging from her colleagues:

> Excerpt 6, interview data, Cathrine:
>
> I work a lot with fiction. I work with "The Immigrants" and "The Emigrants" [novels by Vilhelm Moberg] and then we also read about 19th century Swedish history. Then they will understand the novel better. And not all my colleagues do that. It's not stated in the central content that they should read history, but I think it's important. It's a good thing too - that I can choose.

The results reveal different local school cultures. Further, there are varying levels of autonomy allowing individual teachers to deviate from collective practices. The local context can be both advantageous and challenging for the individual teacher, with individual discourses of writing sometimes aligning with the local school culture and sometimes deviating from it.

4.2 The focus on genre

Besides the skills discourse, the genre discourse was apparent. Teachers felt that teaching different text types was fundamental to writing instruction. However, genre was not always discussed in relation to its social use, as Ivanič (2004) described it, but was also referred to as a set of text types, as exemplified in the following survey answers:

> Excerpt 7, survey data:
>
> The most important thing is reading text examples and learning about different text types, their structure and language features […].

Writing in accordance with specific text genres was also considered important for assessment. Marta explained that the first thing to look for is whether the student has succeeded in writing in line with the text type:

> Excerpt 8, interview data, Marta:
>
> The first is the focus on whether they've followed the instructions; have they written a comment piece? Have they written an argumentative text? You have to look at that first before you start fiddling with the grammar.

Most teachers are familiar with *genre pedagogy* and a scaffolding model where explicit teaching and peer-work are encouraged (see Gibbons, 2009). Teachers described how they had encountered this approach in their teacher training or in-service courses. One of the teachers explained her intention to work according to genre pedagogy:

> Excerpt 9, survey data:
>
> I believe it's important that my teaching is based on the scaffolding model and genre pedagogy. By modeling various text types together and showing students authentic examples of different text types and genres, as well as assessment of the texts, I see that

> students' own written production develops and improves both in content, structure, and language. I think it's very important to write texts together with the students before the students individually write a specific text. By writing texts together, I can guide students through the writing process with a focus on content (e.g., argumentation), structure (e.g., text-type features or paragraph division), and language (e.g., word choice, grammar, or writing rules). When students reach the final step in the cycle model, writing individually, they have different tools and strategies that allow them to write in Swedish.

The excerpt above shows how the teacher emphasized the importance of providing students with text examples and explicit teaching, thereby making aspects of text quality transparent to students. When asked about what aspect of writing was important according to the steering documents, teachers said it is being able to write in accordance with different text types, as this is a way to be academically prepared. One of the teachers, Ingrid, further elaborated on the aim of preparing students for further studies in relation to genre knowledge, emphasizing that, even at the lower secondary level, they are aiming at the first central assessment at the upper secondary level. In this test, students are typically expected to demonstrate their ability to write in line with a specific text type. However, Ingrid questioned whether knowledge of text types alone is sufficient for success in further studies:

> Excerpt 10, interview data, Ingrid:
>
> They need to pass the national test and there is a lot of focus on that. A lot of focus on preparation. It feels like that's what it's all about. Like a mantra we repeat. But even in further education you benefit from other things.

The focus on study preparation and genre knowledge was also reflected at the local level and in discourses in the staff group and in the local school culture. In the excerpt below, Jill, who worked at a school where the staff group made common agreements, held personal views on writing not in agreement with those of her staff group. This teacher, who was personally engaged in literary writing and manifested a creativity discourse of writing, wished to incorporate more of her own experiences as a writer into the classroom, believing it could motivate students. However, she doubted her colleagues would value this approach, as they had collectively agreed on course content, and priority is typically given to what is perceived to result in academic access or allow students to pass and receive the course certificate. "The students aren't supposed to become writers," as she put it. At the same time, she questioned the priorities of the staff and the perceived focus on text genres in the steering documents, arguing that creative writing encompasses more aspects than just language development:

> Excerpt 11, interview data, Jill:
>
> It is very preparatory for higher education. Also in steering documents. Fiction is included in steering documents, but when you look at what they must write, it is reasoning and argumentative texts. It would be nice if fiction were given more space. It's not just the language, it contains so much more – understanding yourself, understanding the world around you. Yes, it contains so much.

When asked about incorporating other types of writing, teachers often referred to time constraints as a limiting factor. Anna, for example, acknowledged that working with the same text types can feel repetitive, but said she tries to keep it engaging:

> Excerpt 12, interview data, Anna:
>
> Researcher: What about other types of writing? Creative writing or writing for democracy?
>
> Anna: Unfortunately, we don't have time for that in these 10-week courses. Then I would have thought it would be fun to teach creative writing because it can be a bit repetitive with summaries and opinion pieces, but you have to find ways to try to make it fun. You have to try to give them some other writing tasks as well as to find the joy of writing, but it's difficult in such a short period.

Time constraints emerged as a recurring theme in all interviews, as one teacher put it: "You're supposed to cover as much as possible in the short time available. You're constantly chased by time." Another aspect brought up by teachers was the impact of the students, who are characterized by a wide range of schooling experiences and cultural backgrounds. In the following excerpt, the teacher answered the question of what was most important to teach, justifying the instrumental approach with a skills and genre focus as a way to scaffold students:

> Excerpt 13, survey data:
>
> It depends on the students. Some students come with an academic background and/or with a deep understanding of how to construct a text and argument—then I primarily need to teach them and provide feedback on typically Swedish grammatical structures and constructions and focus on vocabulary development. Other students have very little experience in building texts and arguments, and then naturally, more focus must be placed here, alongside grammar and vocabulary. In those cases, sample texts and support regarding content and organization are extra important.

The students' background was also thought to justify the use of sample texts and a defined structure, as exemplified in the following:

> Excerpt 14, survey data:
>
> Given that students come to the course with incredibly different backgrounds, it's important to make clear exactly what is expected of them in terms of writing their own texts. I use sample texts and dictation exercises and start with group writing.

The heterogeneity of students was mentioned by teachers as something that influences their approach to writing instruction. This diversity sometimes necessitates rethinking what writing instruction can entail, as exemplified in the following instance, where the reference point of the theater was not familiar to all students:

> Excerpt 15, interview data, Cathrine
>
> Researcher: How does the heterogeneity affect writing instruction?

> Teacher: Well, for example, we were supposed to read a text and write about the theater, but not everyone had been to the theater and that has a lot of influence. You have to think about these things all the time.

Adaptation of writing instruction to the students could also be interpreted as a sociopolitical discourse, where teachers strove to give students a voice in writing, as exemplified by Anna:

> Excerpt 16, interview data, Anna:
>
> There's a lot of focus on analyzing, reflecting and expressing your opinion in writing, but many come from a school system where you absolutely should not do that. They have to work a lot on that, because it can come as a shock. I think about this a lot. Also, many come from an oral culture, so it's important to make them understand how important the written language is here.

Teachers reported that interacting with students from diverse backgrounds contributed to their professional and personal development. "You learn something about yourself all the time when meeting these students," as one teacher put it. According to Ivanič (2004), certain approaches tend to be associated with specific assumptions about writing and learning to write. In the present case, teaching adult L2 learners might also require paying attention to the students' discourses of writing, which may ultimately differ from those of the teachers.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to enhance our knowledge of the views on writing instruction held by SSL teachers in the context of lower secondary education for adult learners in Sweden. Findings show that teachers hold views on writing that are aligned with a skills discourse and a genre discourse (Ivanič, 2004). Further, the local context tends to reinforce these discourses of writing. Teachers report that, in some cases, they teach in line with their beliefs, while in other cases, they do not. The present study suggests that contextual constraints and collective agreements about teaching can dominate individual discourses of writing. The following sections discuss these results in relation to previous research and possible implications for practice.

5.1 Teachers' compliance with the skills and genre discourses

The present findings show a prevalence of the skills discourse, especially an emphasis on language skills, aligning with previous studies in L2 writing settings (cf. Bergsten Provaznik & Wedin, 2023; Jakobson, 2018; Parr et al., 2021). Similarly, the dominance of the genre discourse corresponds to the emphasis on genre writing in Sweden observed in various educational contexts (cf. Magnusson & Rejman, 2023; Sturk et al., 2020; Sturk & Lindgren, 2019). While the prevalence of the skills discourse contradicts steering documents that emphasize the social use of texts (National Agency of Education, 2022), the dominance of the genre discourse aligns

with these documents. The broader view of writing in the steering documents is not reflected in teachers' talk, where a narrow and more instrumental view of writing is manifested, thus confirming the previously identified overarching discourse of 'usefulness' found in relation to SSL (cf. Malmström, 2017; Palm, 2023).

The skills discourse is rooted in a skills-based view of writing, where writing is perceived as a decontextualized practice (cf. Street, 1984) and basic language skills are considered prerequisites for acquiring more complex writing abilities (cf. Barton, 2007; Ivanič, 2004). However, the present results also highlight the interconnectedness of the broader societal layer, where accurate language usage is seen as central to meeting societal expectations. The present findings show how societal and local influences shape writing instruction. Changing individual mindsets to include a broader array of writing practices must be complemented by reshaping collective narratives, institutional practices, and cultural norms. This aligns with the idea that knowledge construction is influenced by various dimensions of ideologies and cultures (cf. Bloome & Ryu, 2017; Janks, 2009). Notably, the present study indicates a sociopolitical discourse of writing, where teachers strive to give learners a "voice" in writing. This finding contrasts with international studies of writing discourses, where the sociopolitical discourse has been absent (cf. Parr et al., 2021). The sociopolitical discourse, though less emphasized, offers a potential for empowering adult learners. This might be further developed in future studies.

As Ivanič (2004) noted, most teachers demonstrate various discourses over a course or even within a single lesson. However, the prevalence of a certain discourse reflects underlying beliefs about writing, which can affect how writing is taught and assessed. The present findings indicate that context influences writing instruction and assessment, even dominating individual discourses of writing. Because the courses are perceived as preparatory for further studies, and genre writing is thought to provide access to higher education, genre writing takes precedence. This demonstrates how subject constructions should be understood in relation to the context (cf. Anundsen, 2023; Street, 1984). Local teaching agreements indicate the importance of local school cultures, where discourses in the staff group sometimes align with individual beliefs about writing instruction and sometimes do not. To understand writing instruction in this setting, we therefore need further knowledge on how writing instruction is negotiated and decided upon at the school level.

5.2 Implications for practice

It is important to note that the teachers in the present study were all experienced and formally qualified, diverging from the broader practice where over half of teachers lack formal qualifications (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024). Nevertheless, understanding the different local contexts is valuable for the many teachers working under similar or different conditions. The present findings, although situated in Sweden, are relevant to international L2 settings with diverse learners, as the study contributes knowledge about a group of teachers who are

seldom represented in the research, yet who are expected to provide literacy knowledge to adult migrants in today's globalized world. The findings will hopefully spark discussions about what such teaching should include.

5.3 Ivanič's framework in an L2 context for adults

Ivanič's framework has been successfully applied in a new context—SSL at the lower secondary level in Swedish municipal adult education. However, the prevalence of the skills discourse in an L2 context requires nuanced consideration. Language skills are a fundamental aspect of the subject matter and, depending on proficiency level, serve as a prerequisite for engaging with other discourses. Explicit grammar instruction and a focus on writing norms may be both expected and beneficial for adult learners in ways that differ from children learning to write in an L1 setting—the context for which the framework was originally developed. In this context, the focus on skills can also be interpreted as an effort to provide students with transferable skills. While most of the other discourses in Ivanič's framework are tied to context, the skills discourse is decontextualized and might therefore be understood as a response to the expectation that teaching content should be useful, as suggested by the present findings. Further research is needed to understand how the skills discourse manifests in L2 settings, especially for adult learners.

One possible extension of Ivanič's (2004) framework involves considering the influence of students on writing instruction and assessment. The findings show that students themselves impact teachers' views on writing. Teaching is influenced by what students bring to the classroom (cf. Pennycook, 2000), and this may be particularly true for adult learners, most of whom already have literacy experiences (cf. Barton, 2007). Students may hold discourses of writing that differ from those of the teachers, which influences the writing events (cf. Heath, 1982). To better understand teachers' discourses of writing in adult L2 settings, one possible development of Ivanič's framework would be to more explicitly address the learner.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present study shows that, in the context of lower secondary SSL education for adults, teachers' views on writing align predominantly with the skills and genre discourses. The findings suggest that contextual factors—such as time constraints and local teaching agreements—can dominate individual teachers' views on writing. The study also points to the role of adult L2 learners' heterogeneity in shaping teachers' views on writing—the impact of students is an aspect that could potentially be developed further in Ivanič's framework. Furthermore, an emphasis on 'usefulness' and transferable skills in adult education may explain the prioritization of skills and genre-focused approaches. These findings underscore the importance of understanding writing instruction in relation to broader social and institutional contexts, while encouraging further exploration of the skills discourse in L2 settings.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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