

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

**ESTONIAN UPPER SECONDARY EFL TEACHERS
AND TEACHING WRITING**

MA thesis

LAURA KIIK

SUPERVISOR: Liina Tammekänd, PhD

TARTU

2026

ABSTRACT

Writing texts is a useful everyday skill that facilitates thinking and learning and is usually taught in language classes. Considering that foreign language teachers may have considerable influence on students' writing skills, the aim of this thesis is to examine the teaching practices of Estonian EFL on the upper secondary level in regard to writing. The data is collected through a survey, semi-structured interviews, and textbook analysis. The literature highlights the common functions of writing and how to teach writing as a general skill. The results show that teachers' practices partially overlap and are largely motivated by the examination requirements.¹

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing instruction, written production, upper secondary, examination

¹ This work was supported by the 2025 Anni Jürine Scholarship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	4
1. ON WRITING, THE ESTONIAN CONTEXT, TRANSFER, AND TEXTBOOKS.....	8
1.1 Importance of Writing.....	8
1.2 Writing Background of Estonian Students.....	11
1.3 Writing Process and Writing Instruction.....	13
1.4 Writing as a General Skill – Transfer Between L1 and L2.....	19
1.5 Role and Use of Textbooks.....	22
2. WRITING INSTRUCTION AND TEXTBOOK USE BY ESTONIAN UPPER SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS.....	29
2.1 Method.....	29
2.2 Results.....	33
2.2.1 Survey.....	33
2.2.2 Interviews.....	38
2.2.3 Textbook Analysis.....	40
2.3 Discussion.....	45
RQ1a: What are some ways teaching and/or practicing writing can look like in the classroom (the structure of the lesson, use of artificial intelligence, assessment, explaining the purposes of writing)?.....	45
RQ1b: What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward teaching writing?.....	47
RQ1c: What methods and materials do teachers use to teach writing to their students?.....	48
RQ2: What kind of writing instruction can be found in textbooks used in Year 12?.....	49
2.4 Pedagogical Implications.....	50
CONCLUSION.....	52
REFERENCES.....	54
APPENDICES.....	61
Appendix 1. Questions in the Survey.....	61
Appendix 2. Interview Questions.....	64
Appendix 3. The Teachers' Processes of Teaching Writing.....	65
Appendix 4. General Textbook Use by Estonian EFL Teachers by Grade.....	67
RESÜMEE.....	68

INTRODUCTION

The writer and historian David McCullough once said, “Writing is thinking. To write well is to think clearly. That's why it's so hard.” (Cole and McCullough 2002: 53). Besides acknowledging the difficulty of the task, McCullough’s words emphasize the cognitive aspect of writing while highlighting its importance. At the most rudimentary level, being able to express oneself in writing is a necessity in school, at work, and in society in general (Murray 1973: 1235, Harmer 2004: 3, Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 107, Leijen et al 2015: 7768), and thus a vital skill to practice. This thesis draws its understanding of writing from the C1 descriptor for “Overall written production” in the Companion Volume for the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), which is the following:

Can produce clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. Can employ the structure and conventions of a variety of genres, varying the tone, style and register according to addressee, text type and theme. (Council of Europe 2020: 66)

In other words, *writing* is the act or skill of producing clear and well-structured texts with regard to the audience and goal of writing. It is synonymous with *written text production*, but the term *writing* is preferred for the sake of brevity.

The notion of “Writing is hard” stems from the fact that writing a text is a cognitively demanding activity (Ma and Stapa 2025: 123, see also Dąbrowska and Dąbrowska 2022: 136, Li J. and Wang J. 2024). The more “items” in the writer’s working memory that they need to contend with, the higher the cognitive load (Sweller 1988: 265). During foreign language writing, the student must consider multiple elements at the same time, such as the message (content and its organization), the potential audience, word choice and register, and the task requirements. The task requirements themselves, however, vary in their inherent cognitive demands (see Vandermeulen et al 2024: 1-2). To foster an environment for growth, the tasks must be challenging and cognitively demanding (Xie 2024: 3), i.e. go beyond recalling factual information (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001: 71). In short, writing can often be a cognitively

demanding task, requiring the writer to manage and pay attention to several issues at once. On a related note, learning is understood as a relatively lasting change in one's capabilities or actions as a result of experience (Krull 2001: 180).

Teaching writing as a skill is often considered to be the language teachers' responsibility in upper secondary schools (Harmer 2004: 4, Forbes 2019: 102) as universities expect students to have practiced this skill sufficiently (Leijen 2016: 14). However, a considerable part of writing instruction Estonian students receive is related to the essay rewarding up to 60% of the points at the final state examination (*kirjand*). Its prevalence is testified by the research finding that 82% of the upper secondary students mention it when asked to list texts they write (Käpp 2023: 89-90). At the same time, the Estonian education system seems to generally promote the product approach to writing (see Leijen et al 2015), which emphasizes the formal aspects of texts without paying much attention to the process of writing. Furthermore, with the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), it is now easier than ever to produce texts that meet certain formal requirements.

Considering the limited and highly specific writing instruction students are likely to receive in their Estonian classes, foreign language teachers may play a bigger part in developing students' writing skills than it first may seem. Forbes (2019: 105, 113) suggests teaching specific writing strategies in foreign language classrooms since students are generally not as proficient in a foreign language as they are in their native language (henceforth L1) and thus may be able to make productive use of the strategies and transfer them to writing in their L1 as well. Hence, studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' practices of teaching writing would constitute the first step in this process.

To date, writing in English Foreign language classes does not appear to be directly studied. Käpp (2023) has surveyed Estonian upper secondary students' experiences related to writing, but this is a general, not subject-specific overview. At the University of Tartu,

master's theses concerning the upper secondary level and EFL writing have explored the effects of blogging (Sagar 2019), foreign language writing anxiety (Vaheer 2023), and the *Write & Improve* (University of Cambridge) tool (Podburtnaja 2021). Truu (2019) has created materials for teaching essay writing on the upper secondary level. From the perspective of the teachers, Käpp et al (2025) have surveyed Estonian teachers' (of all subjects) writing-related attitudes, preparation, instructions, and perceptions of students' difficulties. EFL Teachers have been the focus in master's theses on the topics of ability grouping (Veresenko 2025), formative assessment (Kubre 2019), information and communication technology (Timmer 2017), and pronunciation (Teder 2023). In other words, writing instruction and practices in general do not seem to be researched in the EFL context specifically.

As foreign language teachers may rely on textbooks due to a lack of time to find other materials or make their own (Tergujeff 2013: 53) and students may form their opinions about the writing process based on what they see presented in the textbook, textbooks are also included in the focus of this thesis. In the Estonian context, previous master's theses have analyzed a specific or several EFL textbooks from the perspectives of ecolinguistics (Kisler 2025), culture (Afanasyeva 2018), how well the textbooks prepare for the speaking part of the state examination (Juhhimenko 2020) and the representation of gender (Eessaar 2023) and gender roles (Tuvi 2020), but there seems to be a lack of focus on specific writing-related instructions (such as Na and Lee 2019) in the Estonian context.

The aim of this thesis is to explore how writing is taught in EFL classes on the upper secondary level in Estonia, with consideration to the possible influence of textbooks on writing instruction, especially during the final year leading up to examinations. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do Estonian EFL teachers teach writing to upper secondary students?

- a. What are some ways teaching and/or practicing writing can look like in the classroom (the structure of the lesson, use of artificial intelligence, assessment, explaining the purposes of writing)?
 - b. What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward teaching writing?
 - c. What methods and materials do teachers use to teach writing to their students?
2. What kind of writing instruction can be found in textbooks used in Year 12?

The results of this study would allow for a better understanding of how students are taught to write outside of the Estonian language class and provide an overview of the current teaching practices regarding EFL writing. The first research question is answered using a survey and interviews, and the second research question is answered through textbook analysis.

The first part of the thesis overviews the importance of writing, the Estonian upper secondary students' disposition toward writing, problems in the writing processes and possible solutions, the transfer of writing skills between languages, and the use of textbooks. The second part of the thesis presents the relevant data and discusses the results according to the research questions, highlighting the pedagogical implications. The thesis concludes with a review of the most important findings.

1. ON WRITING, THE ESTONIAN CONTEXT, TRANSFER, AND TEXTBOOKS

Writing is valuable in many contexts, such as learning, self-expression, and completing everyday tasks. Hence, it is paramount that students practice this skill, ideally with its diverse uses in mind. Thus, EFL teachers play a crucial role in facilitating a more holistic understanding of the skill. However, assuming that the teachers themselves lack the confidence to teach writing, they may rely on textbooks for guidance. This chapter discusses the significance of writing, provides some context on Estonian upper secondary students' writing experience, overviews the strengths and weaknesses of different writing approaches, briefly explores the topic of writing skill transfer between one's native language (L1) and a foreign language (L2), and discusses the selection of and reliance on textbooks.

1.1 Importance of Writing

Scholars agree on the importance of writing, but their primary reasons for this belief highlight the multifaceted nature of writing. Consequently, the definition of writing depends on the perceived main function of writing. For instance, Flower and Hayes (1981: 366) conceptualize writing as thinking, calling it “a goal-directed thinking process.” By contrast, Murray (1973: 1235) views writing as an act of self-discovery by which the writer aims to discover the meaning of their life. However, writing is also a means to an end with the skill often being required to demonstrate subject-specific knowledge (Harmer 2004: 3). Thus, only based on these examples, writing can be taken as something deep and life-changing, or as something more utilitarian. It is important to note that, in general, the literature consists of essays and articles that are not always supported by experiments (see Applebee 1984), making the following overview of the main ideas surrounding the purpose and benefits of writing a primarily philosophical one.

One of the more common ideas is that writing is or facilitates thinking (Murray 1973, Flower and Hayes 1981, Cole and McCullough 2002: 53, Peterson 2018, Jürine 2020). The key idea is that thinking happens through the writer being able to see and edit what they have written to more accurately reflect what they believe (Murray 1973: 1235, Applebee 1984: 577, Jürine 2020: 31). Murray (1973: 1235) goes as far as to call it “the most precise and disciplined form of thinking.” While this claim does not eliminate the possibility of there being other ways to think, writing seems to be the most prominent tool for it. In his essay, Peterson (2018: 2) emphasizes the need to write in order to have better thoughts about important topics. The benefit of thinking through writing is having an overview of several ideas (a much higher number than without writing), which can then be changed or rejected, resulting in carefully considered ideas at one’s disposal (Peterson 2018: 2). In short, the aim of thinking through writing is to achieve a better outcome at some point, not simply write for writing’s sake.

Some researchers (Murray 1969, Murray 1973, Emig 1977, Flower and Hayes 1981, Zamel 1982, Lestari 2008) consider the main goal of writing to be discovery. Murray (1969: 119) promotes this idea of individual self-discovery as he does not believe in limiting writers in any way (by assigning a specific topic, dictating the form or style, identifying an audience). This freedom allows students to write any kind of text because they have been trained to determine and consider the audience, style, etc. at all times, not simply write for an assignment. Similarly, Zamel (1982: 195) views writing as discovery (or meaning-making) because writers do not know what they want to say. Instead of arguing a preconceived idea, their writing shows their thought process (Zamel 1982: 197). When compared, although Murray (1969) and Zamel (1982) both claim to view writing as discovery, the processes differ.

Closely related to the notions of writing as (facilitating) thinking and discovery is writing as (a part of) learning (Emig 1977: 124, Flower and Hayes 1981: 381, Boscolo and Mason 2001: 85, Jürine 2020). Jürine (2020) draws attention to the role written assignments play in (higher) education. Writing allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of a topic, which also allows for a better retention of these ideas (Jürine 2020: 28, 30). However, written assignments are so commonplace that teachers and students do not reflect on the specific objectives of writing assignments and what skills are developed or checked through writing (Jürine 2020: 28). While Jürine (2020: 28) considers writing to be a natural part of the learning process, Boscolo and Mason (2001: 84) claim that writing and improvement in learning are not directly correlated. Instead, writing requires the activation of more advanced thinking processes, which thus develops a better understanding of the topic (Boscolo and Mason 2001: 85). This suggests that writing such as copying facts by hand and describing concepts in writing do not contribute to learning. However, Xie (2024: 9) stresses that building a strong foundation with easier tasks first is crucial for successfully completing more challenging tasks.

Writing is also used for testing (Jürine 2020: 31). Students believe that the goal of writing (an essay) is to demonstrate their knowledge, which Peterson (2018: 2) considers as dangerously misunderstanding the importance of writing (which is thinking). Zamel (1982: 196) observes that writing assignments are designed only to assess the students' mastery of a grammar point. Both Zamel (1982) and Peterson (2018) seem to worry about the focus of writing being misplaced. The focus on a good end-product may cause students and teachers to overlook writing as a process, which Murray (1973) and Flower and Hayes (1981) stress. Furthermore, Harmer (2004: 3) draws attention to the fact that even the demonstration of content-related knowledge is dependent on the student's ability to write. In short, with the focus on language and "ticking boxes," students may lose sight of the benefits of knowing

how to write since it is seen as a teacher's tool for assessment instead of a tool for thinking, learning, or discovery among other uses.

Writing is a useful skill outside education as well (Forbes 2019: 102). Those who can write (and communicate) well often have the upper hand in more competitive situations (Harmer 2004: 3, Peterson 2018: 2). Communication is also a basic human desire, and good communication (i.e. knowing how to organize information and experience) is a necessary skill in modern society (Murray 1973: 1235). Peterson (2018: 2) emphasizes the importance of using writing to become a more competent person who is thereby also good at communication. This point is echoed in Harmer (2004: 3) who also emphasizes the individual gain from literacy. The higher social roles, which are attained by clear thoughts and communication (Peterson 2018: 2), are usually associated with power and status (Harmer 2004: 3). In other words, writing both directly (e.g., writing a convincing cover letter) and indirectly (e.g., using writing to sharpen one's thinking) sets an individual up to be more competitive and successful in life.

None of the previously discussed views are mutually exclusive. For instance, Hogsette (2019: 148) considers writing to be both discovery and learning, and it is probable that some authors consider learning to be a natural part of writing as discovery. At its core, writing is a form that language can take to perform one or several functions (Applebee 1984: 581). However, considering the importance of examinations, it is probable that, for upper secondary students, writing serves the function of displaying one's language skills as it is the main indication of the quality of the text (Leijen et al 2015: 7772).

1.2 Writing Background of Estonian Students

According to a survey answered by 501 Estonian upper secondary (*gümnaasium*) students, *kirjand* (the essay written during the final examination in Estonian) is the most

common text students name when asked to list texts they write: 82% of the students mentioned it, and in 56% of the cases it was the first text named (Käpp 2023: 89-90). This suggests that students' writing experience is largely shaped by their experiences with the final essay (*kirjand*). How students are taught to write the essay depends on the textbooks used, the school curriculum, and the teacher (Lepajõe 2011: 31). Käpp's (2023: 91) survey also reveals that students did not name (and thus likely do not know) the purpose of 47% of the texts. Interestingly, the final essay (*kirjand*) dominates in this category. In other words, the experience may be a negative one, which may influence the students' attitudes toward all writing. The reported most disliked aspect of writing is an uninspiring topic (22%), which is followed by a lack of time (12%) (Käpp 2023: 95), both of which may be true in examination settings as well.

Käpp's (2023: 93) survey also revealed that the requirements for written assignments tend to include expectations for the product (e.g., number of words, formatting) rather than process-related instructions. This prevalence of form-related aspects may enforce the mistaken understanding that the nature of writing is meeting a set of formal requirements, not performing a cognitively demanding task (Käpp 2023: 93). Form dominates over content in upper secondary research paper and university thesis writing guides as well (Komissarov et al 2024: 75). It is possible that the assignments and guides are accompanied by content-related instruction, especially if the teacher feels confident in teaching writing skills, but it is also possible that the students are not taught how to write texts at all. The students may be provided with other materials on writing or adopt the (potentially unhelpful) instructions in their textbook as the norm.

The difficulty of writing and focus on formal requirements may also be a reason a student may decide to use generative artificial intelligence (henceforth GenAI; e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Copilot) to produce their texts. However, the use of artificial intelligence

(henceforth AI) has been shown to negatively affect memory, cognitive processing, and the feeling of ownership of the text (Kosmyna et al 2025: 140); lower critical engagement with the task and weaker independent problem-solving skills have also been reported (Lee et al 2025: 14). At the same time, (Gen)AI tools can also be at the service of supporting writing. Vandermeulen et al (2024: 12) propose using AI tools to shift the focus from grammar and spelling to planning and text production by having AI fix the grammar and spelling mistakes. In addition, Shultz Colby (2025: 3) suggests using AI as a source of feedback to reflect on. Other ways AI is used to assist writing include brainstorming, discussion, editing, explaining concepts, and creating summaries (Novek et al 2026: 97).

In short, in the context of upper secondary education in Estonia, students are very likely to be preparing for writing examination texts, both in English and Estonian, raising questions regarding potential transfer of writing strategies. Overall, it seems safe to assume that as is the case with teaching writing Estonian, the process varies from teacher to teacher and depends on the source of writing instruction (e.g., textbook, other materials) (see Lepajõe 2011: 31). How writing can be taught, potential transfer between languages, and the use of textbooks in Estonia are discussed in the following subchapters.

1.3 Writing Process and Writing Instruction

Writing is a skill used across school subjects and for various everyday tasks (Forbes 2019: 102) and the responsibility of teaching the skill, as Harmer (2004: 4) states, becomes one of the language teacher's tasks (see also Forbes 2019: 102). While there is no right way to write (Murray 1969: 118), the distinction between “good” and “bad” writers is murky, and no writing strategy is inherently “good” or “bad” (Guo and Huang 2020: 731), there are some practices that are generally more effective than others. This subchapter overviews the three

processes of writing, identifies the relevant problems, and offers solutions that emerge from the reviewed literature.

A typical writing task in the EFL classroom may resemble the following: the teacher assigns a topic, the students contend with “the mysterious process of composing”, and then submit their texts for the teacher to grade based on how many grammatical errors there are (Lestari 2008: 43). This method may work well if the task is to imitate a text or if the teacher provides a framework to follow (Kim and Paek 2020: 35). However, this kind of approach to writing, known as the product-based approach, assumes that the texts produced are mere demonstrations of the learner’s language and composition skills (Hyland 2022: 5) and the quality of the text can be determined by the the correctness of language (grammar, style) and choice of vocabulary (Leijen et al 2015: 7772). Another shortcoming of the approach is how it ignores the communicative situation (Martín-Martín 2013: 345, Hyland 2022: 5), overlooking different situations and purposes for writing (Kim and Paek 2020: 32).

The process-based approach, the emergence of which was enabled by word processing software (Hyland 2022: 16), considers writing to be a problem-solving activity (Flower and Hayes 1981: 366, Hyland 2022: 14) with the goal of teaching students what to do when they write, thus focusing on practicing the skills required for composition (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1106). While more thorough, the process-based approach has been criticized due to the dubious data the models are based on, the models themselves (as some cognitive processes may defy verbalization) and universality (as if all writers of all skill levels follow the same process) (Hyland 2022: 16-17). Nevertheless, the process approach to writing is generally considered to be more informative and student-friendly. In addition to the product and process-based approaches, the third main approach to writing is the genre-based approach. The genre approach shifts the focus back to the linguistic means of effective expression,

focusing on “how target texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are” (Hyland 2007: 151), with regard to the context (Hyland 2007: 153).

The most commonly advocated approach to writing in the EFL context appears to be the process-genre approach (Martín-Martín 2013, Na and Lee 2019, Kim and Paek 2020). The approach should help students acquire communicative competence by being exposed to different genres (Kim and Paek 2020: 32), discussing the features and structures of texts (Martín-Martín 2013: 331), and dividing the writing process into steps (Kim and Paek 2020: 33). However, for the sake of simplicity, this thesis assumes a simplified product-process dichotomy where the product approach is concerned with the outcome and correct language use and the process approach draws the learners’ attention to the act of composing and the audience (including the reason and situation for writing).

In Estonia, writing appears to be predominantly understood through the product lens. This claim is supported by recent research (Komissarov et al 2024) regarding upper secondary research paper and university thesis writing guides. It was found that only 22% of the sample discussed some kind of content-related aspects while the remaining 78% was dedicated to concerns of form (Komissarov et al 2024: 75). The focus on formal features (as opposed to content) reaffirms the tendency to view writing as something to be created, not as a process of creating. Furthermore, product-orientation may not be motivating for students as they only receive a mark as feedback (Lestari 2008: 43). As alluded to above, the product approach entails several problems that are solved by adopting a process approach to writing.

One of the main problems regarding the product approach is that it does not reveal how writing is supposed to happen. Only seeing the linear end result may cause the students to believe that the process of creation was also linear and organized, which may potentially cause uncertainties and doubts when their own attempts are not as clean or perfect – if they even dare to begin (Zamel 1982: 206). Although various models (graphs) are used to mitigate

this lack of awareness or understanding of the process, these models may prove to be misleading (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1106) as they stem from the final product and the activities included (e.g., pre-writing, writing, re-writing), which are almost never performed in a linear fashion (Flower and Hayes 1981: 367). Instead, Hayes and Flower (1986: 1107) propose an understanding of *planning* (generating and organizing ideas), *sentence generation* (producing sentences), and *revising* (improving a draft). These processes (as opposed to *activities*) do not take place one after another but rather are activated simultaneously (Flower and Hayes 1981: 375, Hayes and Flower 1986: 1107).

Another characteristic of the process approach is peer feedback, which should be utilized to enable students to share their writing with others (Zamel 1982: 206). The benefits of peer feedback may include the students being able to read others' texts and give advice, a better understanding of the writing process, increased autonomy, an opportunity for more accurate self-expression, and providing meaningful interaction in the language class (Lestari 2008: 47, 49). Moreover, readers with no prior knowledge of the content of the text can discover nearly half as many problems than readers with some prior knowledge of the content (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1110), allowing students to edit and polish their writing more extensively. However, the key skill developed during peer feedback is reading one's text as if it were someone else's. As Zamel (1982: 195) states, "students should learn to view their writing as someone else's reading." While this skill of disengaging oneself from their writing may require some practice, reading and reviewing others' texts can help to enter into the necessary mindset. For instance, practicing predicting reader difficulties helped students make the process more automatic and the skill was found to be transferable to other texts (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1111-1112). Once these problem areas are identified, they need to be revised.

Revision makes up a big chunk of the writing process. It need not be considered as a distinctive part of the writing process but rather a process (see above) that occurs whenever the writer wishes to edit something (Flower and Hayes 1981: 376) with the aim of improving the text (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1110). The desire may be prompted by a discrepancy between the writer's intention and their text, a new plan for writing, comprehension difficulties, or a new message (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1111). The process of revision is indicative of the skill level of the writer. First, more experienced writers spend longer revising their texts (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1110). Second, less experienced writers revise on the surface-level (word choice, grammar, etc.), while experienced writers attend to the whole (structure of the) text (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1110). Third, expert writers change meaning more than novice writers while keeping their audience in mind (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1110). In other words, expert writers have a more general consideration for the text than inexperienced writers, who may get stuck on the surface level. Whether the writer focuses on the surface or a deeper level of the text may be determined by the goals these writers set for themselves.

The goals writers set throughout the writing process to guide their compositions may vary in the level of detail, abstraction, or the level of text they concern (Flower and Hayes 1981: 379). In addition to major goals (e.g., topic, audience), writers also set several sub-goals to achieve these bigger goals (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1107). Experienced writers also frequently revisit these major goals to review them in light of their progress (Flower and Hayes 1981: 382, 379). By contrast, inexperienced writers may have vague major goals, focus too much on lower-level goals, or they may not formulate their own goals in the first place (Flower and Hayes 1981: 379). In general, expert writers have a clear vision of what they need to do while inexperienced writers decide on the meaning sentence-by-sentence (Cumming 1989: 112-113). Additionally, Applebee (in Hayes and Flower 1986: 1107) points to the

danger of teaching writing subskills without the framework of goals. Therefore, it may be useful to draw the students' attention to goals during writing instruction.

Students should also be continuously supported as they learn these new skills, but delaying this feedback may help the student generalize about writing processes (Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 120). Furthermore, since good instruction considers and caters to the learners' needs (Hyland 2007: 152), it is important to be flexible when teaching. For instance, it may be unproductive to force students into creating comprehensive outlines when some rough notes would suffice (Zamel 1982: 205). Similarly, it is counterproductive to use advanced writing techniques without first having developed a solid foundation for writing, which requires some additional attention from writing instructors (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1112). As students are taught different forms of writing, they will become able to write for different purposes (Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 119).

It may be tempting to assume that it is important to master reading and speaking before beginning to write texts, but it is not necessarily so (Lestari 2008: 42). Cumming (1989: 121) found that language proficiency and writing skills are not related. That is, an increased proficiency in a foreign language does not affect the thinking processes used during writing (Cumming 1989: 121). However, improving students' language skills should not be completely disregarded – instead, a good grasp on grammar should be framed as an indispensable tool for more accurate self-expression, which may be the necessary motivator for some students to learn grammar (Zamel 1982: 207). Lestari (2008) describes how learning to write may significantly improve students' language skills by practicing speaking during peer-feedback and discussion. However, these suggestions may be challenging to implement due to the prevailing understanding of writing.

From the perspective of the teacher, it is also important to not overwhelm oneself with work. An alternative to assessing full polished texts is assessing samples (e.g., by letting

students write for a short period of time), provided that students also have opportunities to experience the whole writing process (Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 124). Similarly not all students' works need to be assessed every time or the teacher can only grade a single aspect (e.g., topic sentences) (Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 123). If the students produce more than one text during a period of time, they may be given the opportunity to choose which work to submit for grading (Murray 1969: 122). Murray (1969: 121) also comments on how misleading (and even harmful) grades can be, thus suggesting not grading every paper.

Students are not the only ones struggling with the difficulties regarding writing – many teachers share these challenges themselves (Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 108). Since Estonia has not experienced the effects of a solid writing philosophy like the US (which can be observed in the articles by Murray, Flower and Hayes, for instance) (Leijen et al 2015: 7768-7769), many instructors are ill-equipped to teach writing in addition to their subject (Leijen 2016: 13-14). Universities expect upper secondary schools to teach students about writing, but the importance of writing skills is not emphasized (enough) during secondary education (Leijen 2016: 14). Thus, universities are required to teach students how to write but usually fail to do so effectively due to the large number of students enrolled in classes and a lack of time (Leijen 2016: 13-14). Even if students are taught to write effectively, they are not taught to transfer these skills to other subjects, genres, and purposes, or to maintain their writing skills (Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 108).

1.4 Writing as a General Skill – Transfer Between L1 and L2

According to Alber-Morgan et al (2007), writing is only learned as a general skill if it is taught as such. However, this raises the question whether writing instruction in one's native language (L1) could affect writing in one's foreign language (L2). How L1 writing strategies affect L2 writing strategies (and vice versa) and how L1 can play a role in L2 writing (and

vice versa) are widely researched topics. While some researchers (Kim et al 2022: 1, Delovarova et al 2025: 397) believe that writing skills are generally transferred, others (Berman 1994, Forbes 2019, Guo and Huang 2020: 732) maintain that some conditions need to be met. Another important aspect to consider is the role of L1 in the L2 language classroom and writing assignments. L1 has been considered a hindrance to L2 writing, which ignores the positive role L1 can play in L2 composition (Ma and Stapa 2025: 124). The following is an overview of some of the research conducted on the subject.

The assumption underlying the transferability of skills is that since thoughts are transferable, writing strategies (that also require thinking) should also be so, regardless of the language proficiency level (Berman 1994: 30). Cumming (1989: 122) has noted that students writing in a foreign language simply copy their strategies from their L1. This observation is supported by Guo and Huang (2020: 730) who have found that over 90% of the writing strategies used are the same between L1 and L2. However, students may conceptualize L2 writing differently than writing in L1 due to the increased focus on grammar (Barone and Cargile 2020: 17). Forbes (2019: 109) shares an excerpt from an interview where a student explains how writing in L1 allows them to focus on the content and writing in a foreign language is mainly for the purpose of exhibiting one's grasp on the language. Subsequently, it is likely that if the writer lacks the required linguistic abilities to express their thoughts, they will accommodate by changing their ideas (Lindgren and Sullivan 2006: 187) or rely on their L1 (e.g., Ma and Stapa 2025).

Relying on one's L1 while writing may be a valuable strategy. Considering that writing and the processes activated during writing are cognitively demanding (Ma and Stapa 2025: 123), it seems desirable to alleviate this cognitive strain. This could be achieved by using L1 for planning, brainstorming, and organizing, but also for translating words and sentences (Ma and Stapa 2025: 123-124) and decision-making (Cumming 1989: 128). As the

students' proficiency in L2 improves, the reliance on L1 will decrease (Ma and Stapa 2025: 123) since higher grammar proficiency frees up cognitive resources to focus on text production (Berman 1994: 39-40). However, it is useful to be aware of the disadvantages associated with L1 reliance, such as incorrect language use and awkward wording (Ma and Stapa 2025: 124). Instructors could leverage the advantages of L1 use and draw attention to the possible L1 interference during the revision stage (Ma and Stapa 2025: 125). However, it seems unlikely that an EFL teacher would teach writing in the students' L1 as the instructions themselves contribute toward exposure to the target language, functioning as listening comprehension practice. One way of reducing the strain on the students' working memory without relying on L1 is providing the students with materials (e.g., common phrases) to use during writing (Zhu et al 2024: 13).

A potential challenge may be that students are unable to transfer their writing skills from one language to another. One explanation is that some writers may not have developed the necessary skills in their L1 to transfer into L2 or they do not have the necessary awareness of their process to transfer the strategies they use (Forbes 2019: 105). According to Guo and Huang (2020: 732), transferable skills are those of which the learner is aware, meaning that explicit instruction is necessary. It is still important to consider, however, whether all strategies are beneficial to the learners (Guo and Huang 2020: 732), which is something teachers should consider when teaching. Students may also need help forming connections between the information they have received from different subjects, meaning that it would be best if the language teacher were aware of how writing is taught in other language classes (Forbes 2019: 110). Students may also struggle to generalize their knowledge if the approaches to teaching writing vary between teachers (Forbes 2019: 102).

In short, students would greatly benefit from explicit writing instruction in L2 as it would give them actionable strategies to progress in their writing and potentially improve

writing in other languages as well. While it is unlikely that the EFL teacher uses the students' L1 to teach how to write, teachers could point the students to using L1 for brainstorming and organizing, for example. The cognitive strain can also be alleviated by providing materials to reference during writing, i.e. to free up space in one's working memory. Although language and composition are separate skills, improvements or scaffolding in either domain can reduce unnecessary difficulty during text production.

1.5 Role and Use of Textbooks

Textbooks form the basis for foreign language learning (Cinkara 2018: 42, Guerra 2021: 94). Textbooks have survived the introduction of new technology, such as movies and radio, because they serve the needs of a classroom most effectively (Kovač and Šebart 2019: 282-283). More specifically, the textbook provides the teacher with ready-to-use materials and activities (Ulla and Perales Jr 2021: 462-463, Puksand 2025: para. 5), facilitates lesson planning (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 318), saves the teachers' time (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 318, Vapper 2012: para. 9, Ulla and Perales Jr 2021: 464) and provides methodological support and thus a sense of security (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 318, Ulla and Perales Jr 2021: 462, Puksand 2025: 5, Raudla 2025a: 4, Raag 2025c) among other benefits. For the students, textbooks promote revision, autonomy (Ulla and Perales Jr 2021: 463), and offer the possibility to learn independently, e.g., when absent (Raag 2025c: para. 8) and provide a way to organize their learning (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 318). Textbooks also establish clear and age-appropriate goals for learning (Guerra 2021: 95) and a clear structure, the importance of which for both teachers and students appears to be under-recognized (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 317). Textbooks also enable and instill changes in the curriculum (Li F. and Wang L. 2024: 2, Kim et al 2025), supporting teachers as they teach in a new way (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 322).

The textbook selection is guided by several factors. On the state level, two common approaches dominate: the state approving some textbooks from which the teachers may make their selection and the state not interfering at all (Kovač and Šebart 2019: 278-279). Estonia falls under the latter (Kovač and Šebart 2019: 280). Some factors that may influence a language textbook selection include previous positive experiences, beliefs about what constitutes a good textbook, how well it appears to meet the needs of the students, its alignment with the curriculum, the teacher's previous preparation, and their beliefs about how to best learn a language (Hsiang et al 2023: 1677). The selection of the textbook is significant as it may be the case that the content and methodology of the textbook will dominate over any official curricula (Guerra 2021: 95). Hence, it is important to check whether the textbook is in alignment with the curriculum, especially when considering a non-local textbook (Türk and Zagura 2016: para. 2). However, no textbook is an ideal fit for every situation and every student (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 325-326, Türk and Zagura 2016: para. 8).

In regard to language learning textbooks, three main types of textbooks can be identified. The three types are global, which are created to be used by a specific language level and age regardless of the location, localized, which are adapted global textbooks, and local textbooks, which are created with a specific region and curriculum in mind (López-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat 2014: 38). All cases where a classroom teacher compiles their own materials are also considered as local (Ulla and Perales Jr 2021: 462). While local textbooks have the advantage of not needing to be checked as vigorously as global textbooks (Türk and Zagura 2016: para. 2), global textbooks are believed to model the target language better (Ulla and Perales Jr 2021: 462). Other advantages of global textbooks include being more modern (as the foreign publishers are able to publish more often), more attractive and thus more motivating for students, while local textbooks can leverage the Estonian language and include more practice exercises than global ones (Türk and Zagura

2016: para. 2, 12). Nevertheless, a study (López-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat 2014: 49) found that teachers adapt textbook materials regardless of whether they use global or local textbooks to make the tasks more motivating. In a study concerning Argentinian EFL teachers' use of textbooks (López-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat 2014: 48), it was found that the need to modify the activities did not discourage teachers from using textbooks with 93% of the 30 teachers across educational institutions of all levels reporting the use of textbooks.

Adapting textbooks includes techniques such as omission, addition, substitution and modification, although no consensus regarding the definitions exists (Rathert and Cabaroğlu 2022: 173-174). The process may concern the language, the content, or the activities (Rathert and Cabaroğlu 2022: 173) and it is prompted by an identified deficiency in the materials (Rathert and Cabaroğlu 2022: 180-181). It has been remarked in Estonian media that textbooks become outdated due to the media texts (Peegel 2025: para. 9, Raag 2025c: para. 13) or that the texts are neither interesting nor engaging for the students (Raudla 2025a: para. 16), which can be remedied by adaptation. Global textbooks in particular call for adaptation as the authors could not tailor the textbooks to meet the Estonian conditions, context and learning environment (Türk and Zagura 2016: para. 2, Rathert and Cabaroğlu 2022: 171-172). Teachers often follow their own “scripts,” changing or omitting textbook tasks as they see fit (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 325). This freedom implies that teachers use textbooks very differently than the authors may have intended (López-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat 2014: 39), resulting in a situation where one cannot assume a textbook is used all the time and exactly as the authors have presented the material. Consequently, the more confident the teacher feels, the more likely they are to follow their own vision (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 325) while less experienced teachers are more likely to rely on the textbook (Lee and Bathmaker 2007: 352).

Interestingly, Estonian media seems to promote reliance on textbooks. In light of the number of unqualified teachers in general education (*üldharidus*) demonstrating an upward trend (Haridussilm 2026), it has been noted that textbooks provide a firm foundation for educational equality. Textbooks are seen as valuable support for (beginning) teachers as the materials are methodologically sound (Puksand 2025: 5, Raudla 2025a: 4, Raag 2025c: 9). While experienced teachers are capable of compiling their own materials, this does not apply to teachers who chose the profession as a last resort (Vaino 2025: para. 7). Without textbooks, every teacher must compile their own materials, which may have mistakes (Puksand 2025: para. 6). This points to the importance of every teacher's individual competency, which is no longer equal (Vaino 2025: para. 11). Furthermore, as Raudla (2025a: para. 23) states, the teachers' personal initiative is causing inequality in the quality of education. In essence, textbooks both maintain a homogenous level of education and ensure that students are taught properly even without the most qualified teacher. In addition to less experienced teachers using faulty materials, inequality can stem from excellent teachers going the extra proverbial mile. Nevertheless, capable teachers with the competency to create their own materials recognize the value of a good textbook (Raag 2025a: para. 3) since it allows them to save time (Vapper 2012: para. 9).

In other words, although the use of textbooks is encouraged (possibly to prevent teacher burnout), deviation from the “script” is discouraged as it leads to inequality. This, however, places an undue emphasis on which textbooks are used, which is an issue that is governed by (the often lacking) funds. Further, as no textbook is suitable nor motivating for all students, the modification of textbook materials becomes almost necessary, lest the students are forced to push through exercises that are either too easy, too challenging, or too boring in every lesson. In contrast, the idea of “textbook freedom” (*õpikuvabadus*) has also been discussed in Estonian media. Although it is often viewed as a scheme to save money

under the pretense of giving teachers more freedom (Vaino 2025: para. 10, Raudla 2025a: para. 5), some enjoy the freedom and view it as combining materials from multiple textbooks (Raudla 2025a).

Teachers using supplementary materials (either commercial or self-developed) in addition to textbooks is not uncommon (Lee and Bathmaker 2007: 359, 365). However, by using one's own materials, the teacher must be confident that their materials can help their students reach the national expectations, which many are not (Raudla 2025a: para. 10). However, if the teacher is confident and the students are self-directed learners, foreign language classes may benefit from the teacher creating materials with regard to the students' lives and interests (Raudla 2025a: para. 2-3, see also Ulla and Perales Jr 2021). The biggest concern is that creating one's own study materials is far too time-consuming (Vapper 2012: para. 7, Ulla and Perales Jr 2021: 469, Vaino 2025: para. 6), especially if teachers need to create different versions of the material for special needs children as well (Raudla 2025b). Searching for different pre-made materials is not significantly better as that, too, can take a long time since the quality of the materials varies and may not be adequate (e.g., if they are AI-generated) (Raudla 2025a: para. 14) or if the search for these materials is arduous (Peegel 2025). An important question to consider is whether all teachers can adequately evaluate the quality of these materials (Raudla 2025b). Hutchinson and Torres (1994) maintain that since both teachers and learners benefit from the security of a clearly structured textbook (as opposed to the teacher creating their own materials), the restriction on the freedom of choice is worth it.

One common type of material that is most likely not frowned upon is past examination papers (Lee and Bathmaker 2007: 365). Lee and Bathmaker (2007: 366) found that teachers teaching students with average lower academic performance and English proficiency in Singapore abandoned textbooks and taught English by using examination and assessment

papers. They concluded that English examinations greatly influence teacher beliefs and raised the question of how to teach English for other purposes than passing a language examination (Lee and Bathmaker 2007: 365, 369). While the situation is not as intense in Estonia, the influence of state examinations (especially on the upper secondary level) cannot be ignored.

Local textbooks can better prepare for state-specific examinations. However, publishing local textbooks is not very profitable (López-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat 2014: 39). Since language textbooks cannot be innovative in terms of content (the language), textbook authors must present the content as appropriately and attractively as possible (Kovač and Šebart 2019: 276). In Estonia, writing textbooks is not anyone's main job; rather, it is something that is done alongside the author's main job (Ross 2012: para. 4). Printing textbooks (in general) is costly as the state does not finance the endeavour in any way (Raudla 2025a: para. 18). Due to the lack of money and a smaller number of authors, creating a new textbook takes a long time (Türk and Zagura 2016: para. 8). For instance, the publishing house Avita does not create foreign language textbooks at all due to being unable to compete with foreign publishers (Raudla 2025a: para. 19-20). In short, Estonian foreign language textbooks are relatively scarce and may not be chosen due to the availability of more attractive alternatives.

A related issue is the question of money and consequently copyright. Generally speaking, (digital) textbooks are considered too expensive for most schools (Linkgreim 2013, Puksand 2025: para. 3, Raudla 2025a, Raag 2025b, Raag 2025c). This is because the production includes hidden costs (Kovač and Šebart 2019: 278). For instance, the money for the digital version of or digital materials for a textbook comes from the sales of physical copies (Puumeister 2025: para. 6). Some teachers are already spending part of their salaries on licenses, games, and additional workbooks (Raag 2025c: para. 10). Thus, it is not uncommon that a teacher buys a copy of a book and then distributes it through photocopying (Kovač and

Šebart 2019: 277, Peegel 2025: para. 6, Rammo 2025: para. 8, Raudla 2025a: para. 24). However, this kind of sharing of materials and licenses means that the authors fail to benefit from their hard work (Rammo 2025: para. 8, Peegel 2025: para. 6, Raag 2025a: para. 12).

In conclusion, the materials teachers use are more significant than it may first seem. Textbooks are relatively authoritative, but teachers may adapt or omit content as they please or create their own materials. Teachers must be flexible and adapt to their students' needs both when adapting textbooks and teaching writing. Several authors (e.g., Applebee (in Hayes and Flower 1986: 1107), Xie 2024) point to the importance of not ignoring the basics but building a strong foundation, i.e. considering the students' skill level. Some useful writing practices include goal-setting and peer feedback as they train the students to consider the text (and its importance) as a whole and encourage the students to revise. However, considering the influence examinations may have on teachers (which is supported by Estonian upper secondary students' reporting that they primarily write final essays (*kirjand*) in Estonian classes), teachers may choose to focus on methods that directly prepare students for the examinations, not teach them how to use writing as a tool for thinking, discovery, and learning. Still, if the EFL teacher assumes a more general approach, it is possible that writing instruction in the foreign language classroom can promote a more productive understanding of writing and positively affect writing in L1 as well (Forbes 2019: 105).

2. WRITING INSTRUCTION AND TEXTBOOK USE BY ESTONIAN UPPER SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS

The aim of this thesis is to explore how writing is taught in EFL classes on the upper secondary level in Estonia, with consideration to the possible influence of textbooks on writing instruction. Two main research questions (RQs) were formulated to meet the aim. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do Estonian EFL teachers teach writing to upper secondary students?
 - a. What are some ways teaching and/or practicing writing can look like in the classroom (the structure of the lesson, use of artificial intelligence, assessment, explaining the purposes of writing)?
 - b. What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward teaching writing?
 - c. What methods and materials do teachers use to teach writing to their students?
2. What kind of writing instruction can be found in textbooks used in Year 12?

The data was collected using several methods to gain a more layered understanding of the topic. A survey was conducted to gather both qualitative and quantitative data and guide further inquiry, interviews were conducted to fill in the gaps of understanding left by the survey results, and textbooks were analyzed to add further nuance to the discussion. In other words, the first research question is answered using the interview and survey results, and the second research question is guided by the survey results and answered through textbook analysis. This chapter first describes the methods in detail, then presents and discusses the results, and concludes with pedagogical implications.

2.1 Method

The aim of the survey was to collect data on EFL teachers' attitudes toward and practices regarding (teaching) writing and which textbooks they use. The questionnaire was

created on LimeSurvey and consisted of two parts (see Appendix 1 for the list of questions). Respondents had the opportunity to comment on every question and were asked to share their contact information (email) at the end of the study if they were open to discussing these topics further. The survey was completely anonymous, i.e. it was impossible to identify the teacher, unless the teacher shared their email. However, the confidentiality of the respondents is ensured: the survey responses were not referenced before the interviews, and the interview data was not compared to the survey results; no personal information is disclosed.

In the textbook part of the questionnaire, each respondent was asked to indicate the classes they teach (henceforth referred to as G1, G2, and G3 (Years 10, 11, and 12, respectively)), after which they were prompted to state the textbook they use for each grade, the extent to which they use it, and whether the students have their own copies. These preliminary questions were followed by general questions regarding textbook use and non-use. The statements included were drawn from academic articles, namely Hutchinson and Torres (1994), Ulla and Perales Jr (2021), Nowicka (2023), and a discussion with a student from a school where textbooks are generally not used.

The writing part of the questionnaire gathered information about the teachers' views on the importance of writing, how they teach writing, and what materials they use for preparing students for the written parts of the examinations. The multiple-choice statements were derived from academic articles, namely Martín-Martín (2013), Dąbrowska and Dąbrowska (2022), and Shultz Colby (2025). Some questions regarding AI were not directly from any of the previously mentioned articles.

The sample of this study consists of Estonian upper secondary teachers of English, i.e. all teachers who teach English to at least one group of upper secondary students and work at either a municipal (*munitsipaal*) or a state school (*riigiomandus*). According to Eesti Hariduse Infosüsteem (EHIS; The Estonian Education Information System), as of November 2025 there

were 32 such upper secondary schools and 96 schools that offered both basic and upper secondary education and functioned as a single institution. As reported by Haridussilm (2026), there were 482 EFL teachers working on the upper secondary level during the academic year of 2024/25. While the aim was to share this survey with all working upper secondary EFL teachers, some were excluded if their email was not public and/or it was impossible to ascertain whether they taught upper secondary classes.

The survey was successfully sent out to 372 English teachers from 100 schools. Assuming that the number of EFL teachers (482) remained stable for the academic year of 2025/26, the survey reached roughly 3/4 of upper secondary EFL teachers in Estonia. The survey was fully completed by 100 respondents and nearly completed by 2 (without having completed the final page where it was possible to comment on the survey and share their email), making the total number of responses 102 (27% response rate). The survey was active from December 1, 2025 to February 2, 2026, and no second call to participate was sent.

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to gain insight into how some teachers organize and approach teaching writing (see Appendix 2 for the interview questions). The interviews (in Estonian) were conducted with three teachers (out of six) who provided their emails in the survey. The respondents were selected using convenience sampling, meaning that the teachers most likely to be available in Tartu were contacted. Two interviews were conducted at the teachers' schools and one via Zoom. The interviews were estimated to take approximately 20 minutes, but if the teacher was open to discussing the topic for a longer period of time, the interview was not limited to the set time. The interviews lasted a total of 98 minutes with the shortest interview lasting 21 minutes and the longest 43 minutes.

The aim of the textbook analysis was to further understand how textbooks can guide and support writing. Two textbooks, one local (Estonian) and one global, were subject to document analysis. Document analysis is a research method which involves the collection and

interpretation of texts, and it is usually used to obtain complementary results (Meyen 2008: 1, see also Smulowitz 2017). The local textbook selected was *All the World's a Puzzle* (Saar and Sild 2014, henceforth *Puzzle*) due to its relative prevalence in the survey. In G3, *Puzzle* is used by three teachers, while the only other Estonian textbook mentioned in the survey (*With Flying Colours English 12* by Michael Joseph Haagensen and Anu Tammeleht) is used by only one teacher. The global textbook *Solutions Advanced Student's Book* (Falla and Davies 2013, henceforth *Solutions*) was also chosen based on the survey results: it was one of the five textbooks used by four G3 teachers who marked *the full lesson* when asked about the proportion of how much of their 12th grade language lesson materials come from textbooks. Additionally, *Solutions* is used by four other teachers in G3 while the other textbook candidates are used by fewer teachers.

The current analysis follows the procedure used by Tragel et al (2025) and is qualitative. First, an Excel table was created with components (likely) to be found within these textbooks. These features were initially drawn from the options for the survey question *How do you teach writing to your students?* but this list was supplemented with topics that emerged from the textbooks and organized further. Then, the pages relevant to writing were identified and the content (text) was copied to the Excel sheet under the appropriate topic. For example, under the topic *outlining/planning*, the following task instruction was copied: “Work in pairs. Plan the following essay: /.../” (Falla and Davies 2013: 45). Since *Solutions* includes a variety of texts, only the units related to the texts students may encounter in the English state examination or in the Cambridge C1 Advanced examination (henceforth CAE) were selected based on the assumption that teachers exclusively focus on practicing these texts in G3. In addition, the general structure of the textbook and any other relevant context was also recorded.

However, the methods used pose some limitations. The statements in the survey may have been interpreted slightly differently, and the survey did not ask the teachers to indicate how much they rely on the textbook to teach writing. The interview results are not representative as the interviewees completed the survey, shared their email, and agreed to an interview, indicating that they held a positive attitude toward the topic and were open to sharing their practices. The textbook analysis is also not representative of all textbooks as only two were analyzed and teachers may choose to change or omit writing-related activities according to their own vision. Still, the methods are diverse enough to gain a preliminary overview of the topic and inspire further exploration.

2.2 Results

The results are presented according to the methods used and pertain to the research questions. The diagrams include shortened versions of the multiple-choice options and are referenced as such in the text. The examples from the interviews are edited for repetition and translated for gist. The textbooks analyzed are *All the World's a Puzzle* (Saar and Sild 2014) and *Solutions Advanced* (Falla and Davies 2013) – one local (Estonian) and one global textbook.

2.2.1 Survey

The first writing-related question pertained to the importance of writing. The respondents (n = 102) were asked to finish the statement *Teaching writing is...* by selecting one of the four options. 21 teachers (20.6%) chose the answer *a high priority* while 73 teachers (71.6%) chose *important*. The answer *not a priority (but still important)* was chosen by 8 teachers (7.8%) and *negligible* was not chosen at all (0%), forming three groups of teachers. Out of the eight teachers who chose *not a priority (but still important)* six teach G3.

In total, 16 respondents (15.7%) commented on their choice, all of whom had chosen the *important* (14 respondents, 87.5%) and a *high priority* (2 respondents, 12.5%) options.

The comments (n = 16) were thematically analyzed. The themes that emerged are *examination* (7 comments), *life skill* (7), *difficulty* (3), and *literacy* (1). One comment could contain multiple themes (max 3, min 1; average 1.4). Teachers primarily explained their choices with reference to the role of writing tasks in the examinations (7) and the need for writing skills in higher education or at work (7). Three comments alluded to the difficulty of the task (thus needing to practice writing) and one comment shared a broader observation (*literacy*, “Literacy skills have decreased during the years”). Three comments did not contain any of the identified themes, specifying that the importance depends on the specific aims and relevance of the texts (e.g., knowing how to write an email is more important than knowing how to write a report).

The second writing-related question was *How do you teach writing to your students?* (n = 102). It is likely that the teachers selected the option(s) that best matched their practices, i.e. the same statement may have been interpreted differently by different responders, such as the second most popular answer.² It was possible to select multiple answers. The most popular strategy is assessing students’ writing according to a grading scale/matrix (89 teachers, 87.3%), which is closely followed by using supportive and guiding activities (85 teachers, 83.3%), analyzing examples (84 teachers, 82.4%) and providing model texts (82 teachers, 80.4%). With the exception of *several drafts* (28 teachers, 27.5%), the process-oriented methods of *writing in several parts* (59 teachers, 57.8%) and *peer feedback* (55 teachers, 53.9%) are of moderate popularity. The least used strategy is setting personal writing goals (9

² The option *I use activities that guide and support written text production* was first inspired by Dąbrowska and Dąbrowska (2022: 136) but reformulated to include less field-specific terminology (as it would have been overly specific compared to the other options). While the statement is relatively vague, its inclusion was justified by the assumption that it would partly function as a control item since, in theory, most methods could be described with this option. Consequently, this option is not focused on in the following discussion as the reasons for choosing it may vary.

teachers, 8.8%). See Diagram 1 for all results according to the importance attributed to writing.

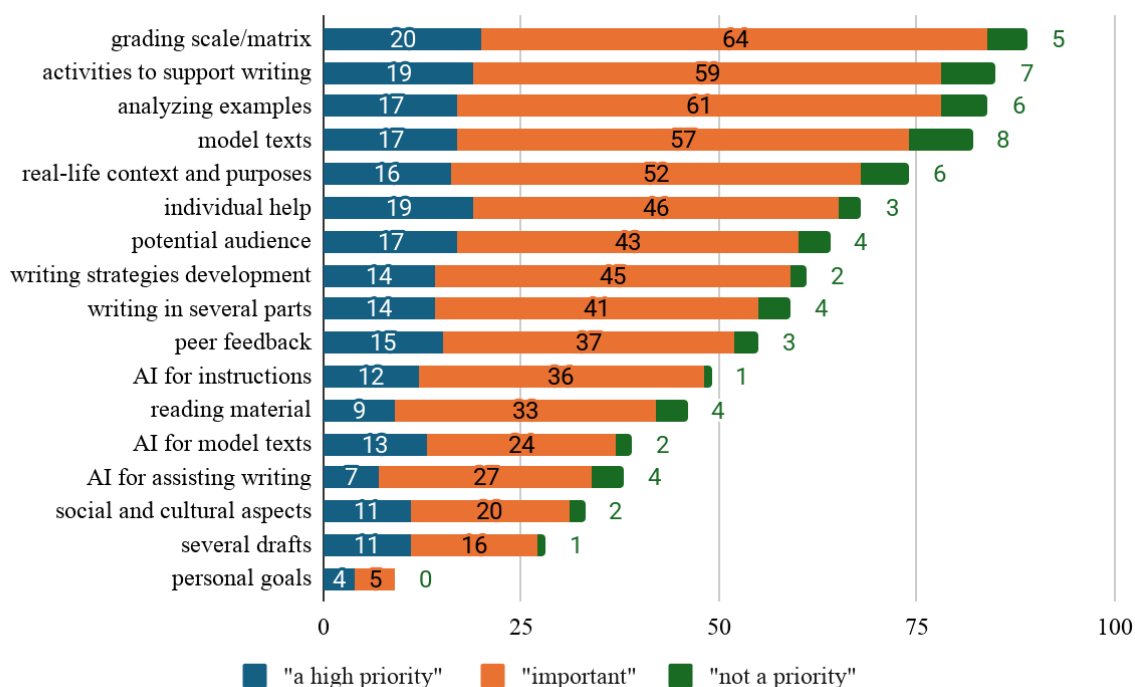


Diagram 1. Teachers' use of methods by the importance of writing ($n = 102$).

The preference for methods seems to vary depending on the importance attributed to writing. Among the *high priority* group, helping some students individually is a method tied for second place (19 teachers). The smaller *not a priority* group prefers providing model texts (8), supporting writing (7), analyzing examples (6), and discussing the real life context (6). Further, the *real life context and purposes* option is the highest ranked (4th place) in the *not a priority* group and lowest ranked (7th place) in the *high priority* group.

Under *Other* and the open-ended question, 15 comments were left in total. Ten of them pertained to the use of AI (namely ChatGPT) and of the five that did not, four teachers elaborated on their choices and one shared that they combine multiple students' texts into one essay to edit and assess. Of the ten AI-related comments, five teachers shared negative experiences, commenting on how they find it important to develop individual thinking skills and how the use of AI has done more harm than good. Five teachers shared positive

experiences with using AI as they have found the feedback to be adequate or the tool helpful as a writing assistant.

The final writing-related question was: *If you are preparing your students for the written assignments of the state examination or any other English proficiency test (e.g. the Cambridge English exam), from where do you get the writing assignments?* ($n = 97$, see Diagram 2). It was possible to select one or multiple statements. Five teachers stated that they are not preparing their students for examinations, which was consistent with their earlier choices (regarding the grades they teach). The most popular choice (89 teachers, 91.8%) was using dedicated materials (e.g., physical textbooks or online resources). Using publicly available or someone else's materials (67 teachers, 69.1%), the regular (course) textbook (64 teachers, 66%), and creating their own materials (63 teachers, 64.9%) clustered in terms of popularity. Using GenAI was the least popular answer (41 teachers, 42.3%).

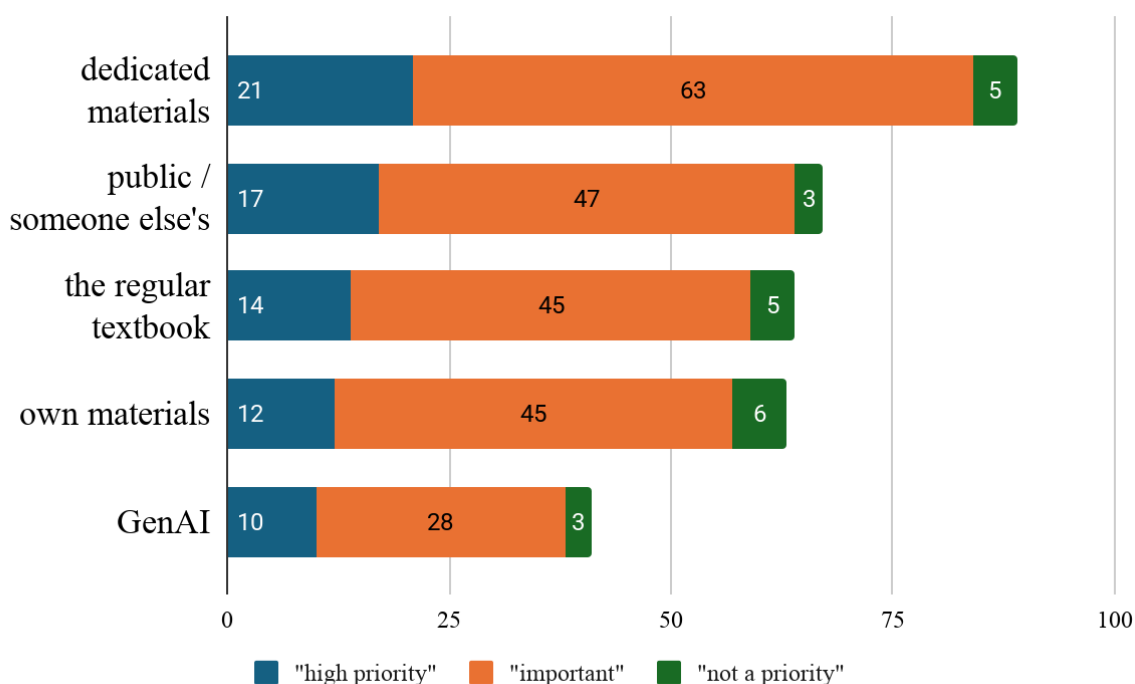


Diagram 2. *Results for If you are preparing your students for the written assignments of the state examination or any other English proficiency test (e.g. the Cambridge English exam), from where do you get the writing assignments? by the importance attributed to writing ($n = 97$)*

The preference regarding the source of exam preparation materials was the same in the *high priority* and *important* groups (as seen in Diagram 2). However, in the *not a priority* group, using one's own materials was the most popular choice (6 teachers). In the two other groups, teachers would rather use someone else's materials or the textbook before their own materials. Four teachers added under *Other* that they use the previous years' examination materials (2 comments) and *Write & Improve by Cambridge* (2).

Teachers were also asked to share which textbooks they use for each grade. Overall, 92.7% of teachers use a textbook to some extent (see Appendix 4 for a more detailed overview of textbook use). On average, the textbook stated (if there was one) was of foreign origin 95.1% and of Estonian origin 4.9% of the cases. The use of textbooks decreases most notably in G3 due to a drop in global textbook use. See Diagram 3 for the number of (global and local) textbooks and non-use by grade.

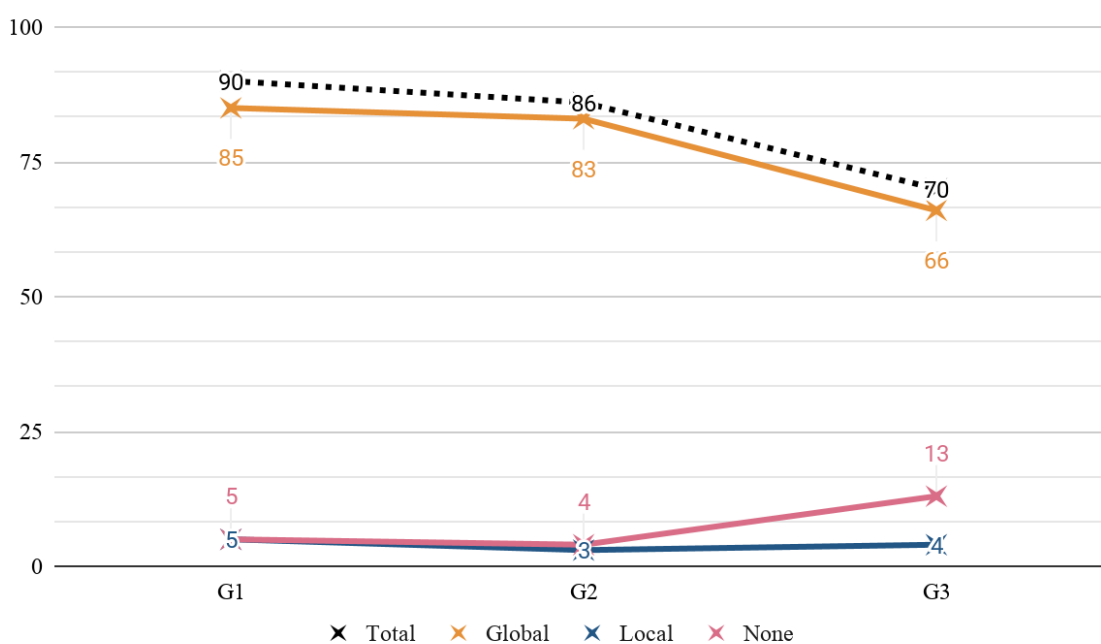


Diagram 3. *The number of global and local textbooks mentioned by grade.*

2.2.2 Interviews

The three teachers interviewed (T1–T3) were asked to describe the process of teaching writing (see Appendix 3 for individual descriptions of the processes). T1 and T2 both teach all three grades and prepare their students for the CAE and the state examination with emphasis on the CAE texts because it is easier to teach to write a more difficult text and then simplify if needed (T1) and because most students attempt the CAE (T2). Both T1 and T2 mentioned that they will only be preparing their students for the state examination in the years ahead due to the lack of future state funding for students to take the CAE (Leas 2025). Both T1 and T2 explained that they practice writing the examination texts in all grades multiple times during the academic year. T3 teaches only G1 and G2 and thus has a less exam-oriented approach to teaching writing (see 1). Instead of examination tasks, T3 creates their own writing tasks with the principles of task-based learning in mind.

(1) Eksamiks kordamine on kindlasti oluline, aga üks probleem seal ongi täpselt see, et nagu lõppude lõpuks on mingid need parameetrid, mis on paika pandud a'la mingi eksami jaoks, ega see ei tegelikult ju noh, okei, nad tahavad, et see peegeldaks, aga tegelikkuses see ei peegelda kunagi seda päriselu, eks ole. /.../ Mina mõtlen, et kui nüüd mul tuleb see 12. klass, et siis /.../ me harjutame eksami jaoks spetsiifiliselt ja ma toon mingid asjad välja. Aga see, mis ma nagu enne seda teen, on ikkagi see, mida nad päriselt võib-olla inglise keeles vajavad, et see on minu jaoks nagu tähtsam. (T3) (Translation: Practicing for the examination is important, but its assessment criteria do not reflect real life. When I teach Year 12, we will prepare for the exam, but before that I will prepare them for real life.)

While T3 chooses more relevant texts to write with their students, T1 and T2 both explain to their students that while knowing how to write these texts is necessary for the examination, students may need to write similar texts at the university or their future job. T1 explains the writing situation through the reader's expectations – if there are elements that do not meet the expectations of the reader, they will not read the text (see 2). None of the teachers require students to set personal goals for writing.

(2) kes seda loeb, tal on teatud nagu ootused sellele kirjutisele. Et kui sa kirjutad esseed mingi teaduse asja kohta, siis see, kes seda loeb, ta on huvitatud sellest konkreetsest asjast. Ja ta ei taha seal näha nagu mingit *yoo whaddup*, mingit sellist sõnavara või ka lühendvorme, sest see ei lähe tema ootustega kokku ja kui need ei lähe tema ootustega kokku, siis ta ei hakka seda ka lugema (T1). (Translation: The reader is interested in something specific and if the vocabulary and style do not match their expectations, they will not read the text.)

All teachers (T1–T3) use example texts to teach writing. T1 and T2 also have their own slides to present theoretical aspects before giving students the writing task. T3 varies their instructions depending on how familiar students are with the text (see 3) and T1 varies their instructions depending on their preference at the time (see 4), e.g., eliciting from students. After introducing the text and task, T2 and T3 let their students write and manage their time on their own. T1 integrates brainstorming and peer feedback into the process, consciously following the principles of process writing that they learned about from their colleague.

(3) /.../ ma vaatasin, et kas on vaja, paistis, et ei ole vaja, õpilased seletasid üksteisele, /.../ ja me vist isegi ei vaadanud lõpuks ühtegi näidet. /.../ Aga kui oleks olnud see olukord, et nad kõik ütlevad, et nad ei tea, mis asi see /.../ on, siis jah, ilmselt me oleks vaadanud mingisuguseid näiteid ka selle kohta ikkagi. (T3) (Translation: It seemed like the students did not require any instructions. But if they had said that they do, we would have looked at some examples.)

(4) sõltub sellest /.../ kuidas mul tuju on, kuidas õpilastel tuju on. (T1) (Translation: It depends on my mood and the students' mood.)

T1 and T3 have their students write their texts by hand, whereas T2 lets their students write on Google Docs to mimic the CAE test-taking environment. The conditions for writing are directly influenced by the teachers' attitudes toward the use of AI to assist writing. T1 and T3 do not condone the use of AI, confiscating the students' phones to prevent any external help, but T2 allows students to use AI to assist writing (e.g., asking questions about the structure of the text) and conduct online searches. T2 hopes to foster meaningful use of AI (see 5).

(5) Et siis me pigem suuname nii, et sa võid [AI-lt] küsida ideid, sa võid küsida, milline see struktuur võiks olla, et see oleks nagu abivahend, mitte see, mis ülesande täielikult ära teeb. Et me kuidagi üritame leida seda keskteed, et nad kasutaksid seda abivahendina, mitte enda aju asemel. Et eksamil on niikuinii ei saa kasutada seda. (T2) (Translation: We hope to promote the use of AI as a tool to assist writing, not as a substitute for their own thinking. They can not use AI during the examination anyway.)

T1 prepares students for the exam writing task by requiring them to create concept maps while brainstorming and planning. T2 and T3 do not seem to require concept maps, but T2 allows students to use AI for gathering ideas. All teachers (T1–T3) allow students to ask questions during writing: T1 helps them with spelling and structure, T2 guides students to search online for the answers themselves but discusses matters of register (see 6), and T3

answers questions, sometimes asks the student's classmates to answer them, or shares information about the etymology of words or examples from corpora. The teachers (T1 and T3) who have eliminated the possibility of students looking for the answers themselves are more inclined to answer all questions while T2, having allowed using the Web and AI, guides the students to help themselves (see 6). For T1, although correct language use is important, the content is even more so, which explains why they do not allow the use of AI (see 7).

(6) Küll aga mõnel korral küll on see, et kui nad leiavad netist näiteks mitu erinevat varianti ja siis küsivad, et mis oleks akadeemilise kirjutamise jaoks kõige parem, et siis me küll arutame selle läbi, aga üldiselt ma suunan neid ikkagi iseseisvalt tegema. Et ei oleks see lihtsama vastupanu teed minnek, et küsivad õpetaja käest ja siis kirjutavad maha lihtsalt. (T2) (Translation: Sometimes they come across different options and then we discuss which option would be the best for academic writing. But in general, I let them work on their own to avoid the situation where they copy the teacher's answers.)

(7) Et ta ei kirjuta lihtsalt sõna, sõna, sõna, sõna, sõna suvaliselt, et tal ongi päriselt selline see mõte olnud. /.../ Ma pigem vaatan mõtteid seal taga. (T1) (Translation: They have had a real thought, not just written words. I try to look at the thoughts behind the words.)

The type and method of giving feedback vary across these teachers. T1 organizes peer feedback in one of the two lessons dedicated to writing and gives feedback on the text written during the second lesson. T2 gives feedback on Google Docs and expects the students to make corrections before submitting the final version for review with the hope that it makes the students value the process in addition to the grade. Both T1 and T2 use a color-coded highlighting system to mark suitable and unsuitable phrases, leaving additional comments or marking forbidden words. T3 allows their students to submit draft-like texts, which they sometimes correct. In most cases, T3 adds a comment to the grade in the study information system, outlining what the student did well and suggesting one aspect to focus on to improve. Both T1 and T2 grade the final texts according to the grading matrix for the specific text, which they have also provided the students with as reminders. T3 devises their own criteria for each text, focusing on language and how closely the instructions were followed.

2.2.3 Textbook Analysis

All the World's a Puzzle (henceforth *Puzzle*) consists of Chapters I–IV where Chapter I–III are topic-based and Chapter IV is exclusively dedicated to exam preparation. Each

chapter consists of three units and begins with Exam Preparation and a Language Focus sections. Each unit includes various sections such as Grammar, Listening, Vocabulary, Writing/Speaking, and Revision. The units end with a revision section and at the very end there is a mock examination for the English state examination. The book has 117 pages of which 18 included some kind of writing-related tasks or instruction.

Solutions is divided into 10 units, each consisting of sections A-G, of which the two sections with G (“Writing analysis” and “Writing task”) were analyzed. Since the textbook aims to provide practice for writing various texts, only units 2, 4, and 7–10 which concern the text types required for either the state examination or the CAE were analyzed. After every unit, the students are presented with a “Get ready for your EXAM” section, which only includes Use of English, Listening, and Reading. After every two units, the students are provided with a “Language Review” for the preceding units and a “Skills Round-up”, the latter of which includes all four subskills and aims to review all the material up to that point. Consequently, the Writing section of the “Skills Round-up” was also included. The textbook has 143 pages of which 16 had content included in the analysis.

The textbooks were qualitatively analyzed in order to attain an overview of the different approaches and instructional styles in textbooks. The categories include the PROCESS of writing (whether writing is taught explicitly, broken into steps, and conducted through multiple drafts), EXAMPLES (both providing an example text and analyzing it), IDEAS (brainstorming, outlining and planning), INPUT-GUIDE (content-related material (e.g., reading material) on the topic and writing goals), CONTEXT (information about the writing situation, consideration for the audience and for the social and cultural context), and CHECKING (grading matrices/checklists and peer feedback). An overview of the results can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. *A comparative table of the approaches in the analyzed textbooks*

	<i>All the World's a Puzzle</i> (Saar and Sild 2014)	<i>Solutions Advanced</i> (Falla and Davies 2013)
PROCESS	one relatively comprehensive guide in the beginning of the book (p. 6-7) about what the different types of texts need to include and how to approach writing them;	The preparation for the writing task consists of multiple exercises, both content-related (usually brainstorming and planning) and language-related (vocabulary, grammar point).
EXAMPLES	a few example texts (to be analyzed and improved), but nothing systematic or formal;	Each section includes a text that can serve as a model, the text is always accompanied by an exercise (concerning the language or requiring to analyze the structure or content).
IDEAS	planning mentioned once in the guide on p. 6;	Most sections have exercises that require taking notes, brainstorming, and briefly planning the writing (fill-in-the-blank style).
INPUT-GUIDE	implicitly guides the student to do their own, additional research; graphs, advertisements included in some writing tasks; specific goals are provided in some task descriptions;	Often the final task of the section is to check the writing against a checklist.
CONTEXT	Providing a specific context (e.g., for an international meeting (p. 13)) is rare, the social and cultural context are not highlighted. Consideration for the audience (e.g., aim, why, what, for who) is highlighted once (p. 6).	The task is rarely provided with some extra context (p. 47, 88), the audience and social and cultural aspects are considered with regard to style (language).
CHECKING	The assessment criteria is introduced in the section about the written paper of the examination (p. 6-7).	The checklists usually include adherence to the plan, number of words, an aspect related to the grammar point or vocabulary, spelling and grammar. A couple of tasks include peer feedback, but pair work is mostly for discussion.

In terms of general writing instructions, *Solutions* has none while *Puzzle* has an in-depth overview of how to write for the writing paper of the Estonian state examination (p.

6-7). However, *Solutions* provides some writing instruction in the form of *Writing tip* info boxes, which usually include information relevant to the writing text at hand. For example, the second writing tip for Unit 10 reads as follows:

In an essay of 200–250 words, your conclusion shouldn't be more than [sic] 40–50 words long. A good strategy is to acknowledge the strength of the opposing argument and then to restate your own opinion. Do not introduce new arguments in the conclusion. (Falla and Davies 2013: 111)

Puzzle offers no such guidance, even when the instructions specifically require writing a specific type of text (e.g., a cause-and-effect essay on p. 76).

The instructions of the writing tasks themselves deserve closer attention. In *Solutions*, the writing section includes exercises that are interconnected and expand on each other, eventually culminating in the writing task (see 8), while *Puzzle* lists questions under “Speaking/Writing” that are designed as either speaking or writing tasks but potentially could be completed in either way. In other words, *Solutions* teaches grammar, vocabulary and style during the preparation for writing, while *Puzzle* does not. Additionally, while the *Solutions* tasks rely on previous information and planning, allowing for more concise and laconic instructions, the tasks in *Puzzle* are more specific (see 9). Occasionally, the instructions in *Puzzle* include guiding questions, require the students to work with statistics or search for information, or provide a title. The instructions in *Solutions* often specify whether the task is to be completed in pairs or individually (since some of the preceding exercises include pair work) and remind the student to use specific vocabulary or consider information from the info boxes (see 8).

(8) Working individually, write an essay of 200–250 words following your plan. Remember to use suitable expressions from the *Learn this!* box and exercise 5. (Falla and Davies 2013: 45)

(9) People work because they need money to live. What are some of the other reasons why people work? Write an essay of 200 words and discuss one or more of these reasons. Use specific examples and details to support your answer. (Saar and Sild 2014: 49)

The procedure of the writing tasks also varies. In *Puzzle*, the student is provided with instructions and any other material (e.g., diagram, guiding questions), but *Solutions* varies its pre-writing exercises, sometimes requiring the students to write the text in parts (Unit 7) or

write an introduction in pairs and then compare it with another pair's (Unit 9). However, the most common exercise types in *Solutions* are checking the text against a checklist or preparing an outline, the latter of which, if provided, is always provided at least in half – the student is only required to add their ideas to the existing structure.

Neither textbook explicitly requires any goal-setting but provides checklists (see Figure 1, 2). The checklist is a much more prominent feature in *Solutions*, being included in several examined units as a separate, tailored checklist. *Puzzle* presents an exam-oriented checklist at the beginning of the book (p. 7) and refers back to it only in Exam Practice exercises at the end of the book (p. 99).

3) Use the following checklist for essays/reports to make sure you have considered all the requirements.

Length 200 words (+/- 10%)	Visible, logical paragraphs
Suitable introduction	One idea per paragraph (topic sentence expanded)
All prompts used and supported	Wide range of grammar structures
Linking words used	Varied and adequate vocabulary
Suitable conclusion	Correct register (no contracted forms, formal)
No irrelevant information	Correct spelling and punctuation

Figure 1. A checklist in *Puzzle* (Saar and Sild 2014: 7)

9 Check your work using the list below.

Check your work

Have you

- ☐ followed the plan?
- ☐ written the correct number of words?
- ☐ included at least one example of periphrasis or euphemism?
- ☐ used words with positive/negative connotations?
- ☐ used correct grammar and vocabulary?

Figure 2. An example of a checklist in *Solutions* (Falla and Davies 2013: 89)

In short, the textbooks approach writing differently. *Solutions* integrates vocabulary and grammar practice into the preparation (which is often limited to brainstorming and basic planning) for the writing task. *Puzzle* includes some general writing instruction, but it is

hardly referenced within the textbook. However, considering how interconnected the tasks in the writing sections are in *Solutions*, it is not unlikely that the teacher decides to skip them or skip the whole writing section altogether.

2.3 Discussion

As a general result, the claim that language teachers rely on textbooks (e.g., Tergujeff 2013: 53, Cinkara 2018: 42) was proven in the Estonian upper secondary EFL context with the nuance that its relevance decreases with each grade (see Appendix 4). On average, 92.7% of teachers use a textbook to some extent across G1–G3, which is in line with the results of another small study (93%) (López-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat 2014: 48). The main findings are discussed according to the research questions and pedagogical implications are highlighted.

RQ1a: What are some ways teaching and/or practicing writing can look like in the classroom (the structure of the lesson, use of artificial intelligence, assessment, explaining the purposes of writing)?

The interviews revealed that teachers share some practices (e.g., analyzing example texts, introducing theoretical aspects). Yet the specific practices (see Appendix 3) are unique to each teacher and stem from the goals of the teachers. For instance, if a goal is to prevent students from using AI (T1, T3), writing is exclusively done during class time. The minimum structure of the lesson is to introduce basic information about the text or look at example texts and then give the students time to write, which is relatively similar to the process described by Lestari (2008: 43). However, the teacher who employed peer feedback (T1) and two of the process writing related activities ranking in the middle range of the survey question prove that some teachers integrate aspects of process writing into one's class. A key difference is that T1 dedicates two lessons to practicing a single text, which may be difficult to achieve with

limited time. One positive aspect reported by all teachers is that students are allowed to ask questions during writing, which promotes discussion and considers the individual students' needs (Hyland 2007: 152).

The use of AI is either completely avoided or integrated to support writing (see Shultz Colby 2025, Novek et al 2026), depending on the teacher's attitude and preferences. Arguably, all teachers are preparing their students for the future: T1 and T3 for one where the student is competent enough not to rely on a tool, T2 for a reality where students use AI actively regardless. Although hoping to promote meaningful use of AI is not unreasonable, aspects such as the sense of ownership of a text (Kosmyna et al 2025: 140) and independent problem-solving skills (Lee et al 2025: 14) are still likely to be negatively affected. Since writing is a tool for thinking (e.g., Peterson 2018) and communication (e.g., Murray 1973) and can be conceptualized as a problem-solving activity (Flower and Hayes 1981: 366), fostering independent thinking and writing skills seems to be more desirable.

The teachers who required a clean version of the text (T1, T2) highlighted good and inappropriate phrases during assessment. This focus on language-related concerns is expected (Leijen et al 2015: 7774), but it may be useful to consider giving more content-oriented and general feedback on language (like T3) or consider not grading every work as suggested by Murray (1969: 121) since only receiving a mark as feedback may be demotivating (Lestari 2008: 43). It does not seem that teachers are using strategies such as assessing a single aspect or writing samples (Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 123-124) to save time. Alternatively, teachers could substitute assessment with peer feedback, provided that thorough instructions are provided and the teacher checks the students' assessment. This would allow students to reap the benefits of peer feedback as described by Lestari (2008: 47, 49) and practice reading their own texts as if they were someone else's (Zamel 1982: 195).

It appears that all teachers (T1–T3) explain why the students need to write certain texts, but this explanation could expand to include more general themes (e.g. writing for thinking or learning), not only the immediately practical and often not motivating reason (e.g., completing a job task). As it is likely that the quality of the writing instruction depends on the teacher's competence (see Alber-Morgan et al 2007: 108), which varies from teacher to teacher (Vaino 2025: para. 11), the teachers' ability to explain the importance of writing may also vary. Additionally, teachers may not reflect on the objectives of and the skills required for completing specific writing assignments (Jürine 2020: 28). As students cannot name any reason for writing a text in nearly half of the cases (Käpp 2023: 91), it is important for teachers to critically consider the planned writing assignment, make the necessary adjustments, and share the objectives with students.

RQ1b: What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward teaching writing?

The survey results reveal that nearly three quarters of the teachers ($n = 73$) consider teaching writing to be important, one fifth ($n = 21$) considers it a high priority, and one tenth ($n = 8$) report not prioritizing teaching writing. The comments reveal that the two main reasons include the examinations and usefulness for the future (both themes were mentioned seven times). The fact that examinations are the one of the main reasons for the choice alludes to the effect examinations have on shaping teacher's perceptions (Lee and Bathmaker 2007: 365). At the same time, six out of the eight teachers who chose *not a priority (but still important)* teach in G3, suggesting that these teachers do not seem to be affected by exam pressure. One possible explanation is that these teachers are confident that their students are prepared, not needing to practice as much. However, this is one potential explanation.

RQ1c: What methods and materials do teachers use to teach writing to their students?

Regarding the methods, the most popular answers (*grading scale/matrix*, *analyzing examples*, *model texts*) are all activities that point to the product-oriented understanding of writing by focusing on the end product, potentially causing students to hesitate while writing (Zamel 1982: 206). The least used strategy is having students set personal goals, which is characteristic of the process approach (see Flower and Hayes 1981). While it is true that setting personal goals introduces an unnecessary factor (the teacher would need to check whether the students worked toward achieving the goals) that is not rewarded at the examinations, expert writers are often good at goal setting (Flower and Hayes 1981, Cumming 1989). Thus, students may greatly benefit from teachers guiding them to set goals for their writing and to revise them regularly. Overall, the most popular source of exam preparation materials is dedicated materials, which is followed by using publicly available materials and the regular (course) textbook. However, the *not a priority* group's preference for creating and using their own materials seems to indicate a certain level of commitment to teaching writing. As with adapting textbooks (Rathert and Cabaroğlu 2022: 180) and revising texts (Hayes and Flower 1986: 1111), the desire to create one's own materials may stem from dissatisfaction with the existing ones.

On a related note, considering that, first, the *not a priority* group prefers providing model texts, analyzing examples, and discussing the real life context over (the most popular option) *grading scale/matrix* and, second, they prefer to use their own materials, the *not a priority* group appears to have the most general approach to teaching writing. In contrast, the *high priority* group prefers *grading scale/matrix* and *individual help*, which seems to point to a more teacher-directed and exam-oriented style. Thus, it is possible that “priority” was interpreted by the teachers with consideration for the examinations. While this distinction would require bigger sample sizes to validate, *grading scale/matrix* being the most popular

method for teaching writing supports the more general observation that teachers are largely guided by examination requirements (see Lee and Bathmaker 2007).

RQ2: What kind of writing instruction can be found in textbooks used in Year 12?

Of the two textbooks analyzed, *Puzzle* seems to represent the product approach (see Hyland 2022). While the task requirements in *Puzzle* are generally much more advanced and specific, the users of *Puzzle* would greatly benefit if it guided them to its writing instructions, explained the features of the specific type of texts (thus promoting genre-awareness), or provided more model texts. The lack of such pointers seems to suggest that the students are expected to already have mastered these skills. *Solutions* appears to be more process-oriented, although not completely. For instance, by requiring students to integrate specific vocabulary or grammar points into their writing, *Solutions* seemingly treats writing as a means of practicing language (Leijen et al 2015: 7774), not the skill of producing clear and well-structured texts (Council of Europe 2020: 66). While practicing language skills through writing is not uncommon by any means, especially since good language skills allow for a more accurate self-expression (Zamel 1982: 207), it may increase the writer's cognitive effort required and complicate text production.

Furthermore, regarding writing-related exercises found in *Solutions*, while having model texts may help students to (sub)consciously set writing goals, these may be overridden by the goals presented in the *Check your work* checklist. One of the characteristics of less advanced writers is accepting pre-made writing goals instead of formulating their own (Flower and Hayes 1981: 379). Additionally, it is not certain that students will embrace the strategies of brainstorming and planning since students may regard these exercises as simply going through the motions. Hence, teachers should introduce these methods more in-depth and introduce multiple variations, not impose the “right” way of using a strategy (Forbes 2019: 114). Through explicit instruction, it is also more likely that these strategies are

transferred to writing tasks in other languages (Guo and Huang 2020: 73). Otherwise, students may reach the conclusion that these strategies are not suitable for them, when, ultimately, brainstorming and planning are strategies for reducing the cognitive strain of the writer.

In general, the textbooks analyzed do not seem to be intended for training good writers, rather for practicing already existing writing skills. Cumming (1989: 125) remarks that the expert writers in his study were already proficient writers in their L1 and had achieved that level of skill outside of educational settings and practice. This points to the possibility that education grounded in textbooks and exam preparation may not help students become proficient writers (see Leijen et al 2015), unless one is lucky enough to encounter a teacher who is dedicated to teaching writing as a general skill and able to compellingly communicate the importance of writing.

2.4 Pedagogical Implications

To be able to explain the importance of developing independent writing skills to students, the teacher should aim to understand and frequently experience the effects of writing themselves (e.g., by journaling, writing summaries of new topics). As a way to teach writing and practice the use of vocabulary, teachers could provide students with reading material on a certain topic and ask them to write a response to the reading. This would practice forming and sharing one's opinion, provide context for writing, encourage meaningful use of vocabulary (from the text provided), and allow students to set their own writing goals. If the teacher has time, they could also employ peer feedback and require multiple drafts to polish the students' thinking. If this is done often enough, it would also create a writing habit.

In conclusion, three groups of teachers emerged that show slightly different patterns regarding methods and materials. While no clear conclusions can be drawn due to the uneven size of the groups, it seems the teachers may have evaluated the importance of writing in light

of the examination, not its real-life usefulness. The teachers' teaching processes share common aspects but are ultimately unique to each teacher according to their preferences and influences. The textbooks analyzed exhibited different approaches to practicing writing, yet neither cannot be exclusively followed and would be significantly enhanced by additional instruction from a teacher. Regarding the limitations, the sample sizes should be bigger for drawing more conclusive results and, alternatively, EFL writing practice lessons could be observed to avoid reporting bias.

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to explore how Estonian upper secondary EFL teachers teach writing to their students. Assuming that teachers may reference their textbooks, the general use and content of textbooks were also investigated. The first chapter provided an overview of the importance of writing, Estonian students' general writing-related experiences, the writing process and useful activities, the transfer of writing skills between languages, and the situation regarding textbook use in Estonia. The second chapter described the methods and presented and discussed the results. The thesis found that teachers' specific processes vary, but the most popular teaching methods include assessing students' writing according to a grading scale/matrix, using activities that guide and support written text production, analyzing examples of similar texts, and providing model texts to imitate. Most teachers consider writing to be important, but there is reason to believe that teaching writing is influenced by the examination requirements. Similarly, dedicated materials are preferred when preparing students for examinations.

The textbooks used in Year 12 approach writing differently, but the instructions and activities in both textbooks require adaptation and additional instructions from the teachers, meaning that exclusively following the textbook instructions would probably not improve the students' writing skills. While the idea expressed in Estonian media that a teacher should rely on a textbook (to save time and equalize the quality of education) is noble, the textbooks may not support the teachers and students enough on their own.

Setting personal goals for writing (e.g., concerning the audience, style, purpose, etc.) is considered one of the main characteristics of expert writers, guiding both text production and revision. However, this skill is not fostered in the textbooks and is least promoted by teachers. Additionally, explicit instruction on writing strategies would raise the students' awareness of the aspects of writing and possibly enable transfer between languages,

potentially resulting in better writing skills overall. Consequently, with heightened awareness, students may be able to form connections between school subjects and transfer some techniques from their preparations for the English state examination or CAE into their Estonian classes, for instance.

Although the findings of this thesis confirm the influential nature of examinations, writing is a general skill that is used outside of education, whether it is in society at large or for personal development. Unfortunately, the students' writing potential may be stifled as Estonian upper secondary students tend to dislike the topics they are writing about and may not know the reasons for writing the texts they are required to write, most likely viewing writing as a tool for assessment. Thus, making writing more personal and framing it as a form of self-expression may be useful to develop more skilled and motivated writers.

Even though this thesis is limited by the relatively small sample sizes and thus is not representative of the whole population, it presents a first exploration of the topic of EFL writing instruction on the upper secondary level and EFL textbook use in Estonia. Future research could draw upon these initial results and examine the practical role of textbooks in writing instruction, focusing on the teachers' reliance on and adaptation of textbooks. Alternatively, students' perceptions and writing practices could be studied in the context of Estonian EFL classrooms. Similar studies could be conducted but with a less broad scope. However, owing to the broad scope of this thesis, it can be said that an initial overview of how Estonian upper secondary EFL teachers teach writing has been gained.

REFERENCES

Primary sources:

- Falla, Tim and Paul A Davies. 2013. *Solutions Advanced Student's Book*. Oxford University Press. (First published in 2009)
- Saar, Merike and Meeri Sild. 2014. *All the World's a Puzzle*. Tallinn: Saar Graafika. (First published in 2010)

Secondary sources;

- Afanasyeva, Valentyna. 2018. The Representation of Estonian Culture In the *I Love English* Textbook Series. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Alber-Morgan, Sheila R., Terri Hessler, and Moira Konrad. 2007. Teaching Writing For Keeps. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 30: 3, 107–128.
- Anderson, Lorin W. and David R. Krathwohl (eds). 2001. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Pearson.
- Applebee, Arthur N. 1984. Writing and Reasoning. *Review of Educational Research*, 54: 4, 577–596.
- Barone, Susan M. and Carrie Cargile. 2020. L1 and L2 Writing Differences: From Understanding to Practice. *English Teaching Forum*, 58: 3, 10–19.
- Berman, Robert. 1994. Learners' Transfer of Writing Skills between Languages. *TESL Canada Journal*, 12: 1, 29–46.
- Boscolo, Pietro and Lucia Mason. 2001. Writing To Learn, Writing To Transfer. In Päivi Tynjälä, Lucia Mason, and Kirsti Lonka (eds). *Writing as a Learning Tool. Studies in Writing*, 83–104. Springer.
- Cinkara, Emrah. 2018. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Use of Digital Components: Evidence from Self-Report and Classroom Observation. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 74, 41–60.
- Cole, Bruce and David McCullough. 2002. The Danger of Historical Amnesia. *Humanities*, 23: 4, 4–7, 50–53.
- Council of Europe. 2020. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Cumming, Alister. 1989. Writing Expertise and Second-Language Proficiency. *Language Learning*, 39: 1, 81–135.
- Dąbrowska, Małgorzata and Izabela Krystyna Dąbrowska. 2022. Teaching and learning writing skills and strategies: Part I. From other-regulation to(wards) self-regulation in second/foreign language learning. *Social Dissertations*, 16, 134–155.
- Delovarova, Kheiriya Gulnara Kassymova and Davronzhon Gaipov. 2025. Multilingual Approach to Writing Pedagogy through Metacognitive Strategy Based Instruction. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 33: 2, 377–389.

- Eessaar, Merlyn. 2023. A Multimodal Analysis of Gender Representation in the *I Love English 7* Textbook. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Emig, Janet. 1977. Writing as a Mode of Learning. *College Composition and Communication*, 28: 2, 122–128.
- Flower, Linda and John R. Hayes. 1981. A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32: 4, 365–387.
- Forbes, Karen. 2019. Teaching for transfer between first and foreign language classroom contexts: Developing a framework for a strategy-based, cross-curricular approach to writing pedagogy. *Writing & Pedagogy*, 11: 1, 101–126.
- Guerra, Joaquim. 2021. Portuguese as a foreign language textbooks: Framing the discourses on the teaching and learning of writing. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 11: 2, 94–100.
- Guo, Xiaoqian and Li-Shih Huang. 2020. Are L1 and L2 strategies transferable? An exploration of the L1 and L2 writing strategies of Chinese graduate students. *The Language Learning Journal*, 48: 6, 715–737.
- Haridussilm. 2026. Õpetajad. Available at <https://haridussilm.ee/ee/tasemeharidus/haridustootajad/opetajad>, accessed March 15, 2026.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2004. *How to Teach Writing*. London: Longman.
- Hayes, John R. and Linda S. Flower. 1986. Writing Research and the Writer. *American Psychologist*, 41: 10, 1106–1113.
- Hogsette, David S. 2019. *Writing That Makes Sense: Critical Thinking in College Composition*. 2nd ed. Resource Publications.
- Hsiang, Tien Ping, Steve Graham, Xinghua Liu, and Ziyu Zhou. 2023. Teachers' beliefs and practices in textbook selection and use when teaching Chinese as a second language. *Reading and Writing*, 36, 1651–1684.
- Hutchinson, Tom and Eunice Torres. 1994. The textbook as agent of change. *ELT Journal*, 48: 4, 315–328.
- Hyland, Ken. 2007. Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16, 148–164.
- Hyland, Ken. 2022. *Teaching and Researching Writing*. 4th ed. New York, Oxon: Routledge.
- Juhhimenko, Natalja. 2020. EFL Textbooks at the Upper-Secondary School Level (Grade 12): Development of Students' Speaking Skills for the National Examination In English. MA thesis. Faculty of Social Studies, Narva College, Narva, Estonia.
- Jürine, Anni. 2020. Kirjutamise väärtus. In Andres Saumets (ed). *EMA Occasional Papers*, 9, 28–32. Available at https://www.kvak.ee/files/2020/01/Occasional_Papers_9_2020.pdf, accessed February 12, 2026.
- Kiik, Laura, Marri-Marriska Tammepõld, and Ilona Tragel (eds). 2025. Eesti keele (emakeelena) õpikute kasutuse küsitluste tulemused 2024-2025. Eesti keele õppe ja keeleteadlikkuse keskus, University of Tartu, Tartu. Available at <https://tekstiloom.ee/ilonatragel.ut.ee/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/opikute-kusitluse-tulemused.pdf>, accessed March 14, 2026.

- Kim, Minkyung, Sanga Kim, Suhyeon Lee, and Jaewoo Jeon. 2025. Changes in writing tasks in 10th-grade English textbooks in South Korea from the 5th to the 2022 Curriculum. *English Teaching*, 80: 4, 63–84.
- Kim, Sun-Young and Jiwon Paek. 2020. Explicit instruction in an EFL writing class: A process-genre perspective. *Linguistic Research*, 37, 31–57.
- Kim, Young-Suk Grace, Alissa Wolters, Janet Mercado, and Jamie Quinn. 2022. Crosslinguistic Transfer of Higher Order Cognitive Skills and Their Roles in Writing for English-Spanish Dual Language Learners. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 114: 1, 1–15.
- Kisler, Kristiina. 2025. An Ecolinguistic Analysis of *I Love English* Textbooks 5-7. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Komissarov, Liisa-Maria, Helena Lemendik, Eleriin Miilman, Nele Novek, Betti Marie Peterson, Reena Roos, Marri-Mariska Tammepõld, Nele Karolin Teiva, and Ilona Tragel. 2024. Akadeemilise teksti kirjutamise juhend: TNR 12, 1,5 ja valmis? *Eesti Rakenduslingvistika Ühingu Aastaraamat*, 20, 63–82.
- Kosmyna, Nataliya, Eugene Hauptmann, Ye Yuan, Jessica Situ, Xian-Hao Liao, Ashly Beresnitsky, Iris Braunstein, and Pattie Maes. 2025. Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task. Available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/2506.08872>, accessed May 1, 2026.
- Kovač, Miha and Mojac Šebart. 2019. Educational publishing: How it works: Primary and secondary education publishing. In Angus Phillips and Michael Bhaskar (eds). *The Oxford handbook of publishing*, 275–288. Oxford University Press.
- Krull, Edgar. 2001. *Pedagoogilise psühholoogia käsiraamat*. Tartu University Press.
- Kubre, Liisa. 2019. English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Understanding of Formative Assessment and Its Application. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Käpp, Kati, Nele Novek, Reena Roos, Marri-Marriska Tammepõld, and Ilona Tragel (eds). 2025. Küsitluse "Õpilased ja koolis kirjutamine: õpetajate küsitlus" vaheraport. Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia. Available at https://tekstiloom.ee/ilonatragel.ut.ee/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/opilased_uus.pdf, accessed March 29, 2026.
- Käpp, Kati. 2023. Mida, miks ja kuidas kirjutab Eesti gümnaasiumiõpilane. *Emakeele Seltsi aastaraamat*, 69, 80–106.
- Leas, Reene. 2025. Riik loobub inglise keele C1 keeletaseme eksami tasuta pakkumisest gümnaasistidele. *ERR*, September 8. Available at <https://www.err.ee/1609793117/riik-loobub-inglise-keele-c1-keeletaseme-eksami-tasuta-a-pakkumisest-gumnaasistidele>, accessed May 1, 2026.
- Lee, Hao-Ping (Hank), Advait Sarkar, Lev Tankelevitch, Ian Drosos, Sean Rintel, Richard Banks, and Nicholas Wilson. 2025. The Impact of Generative AI on Critical Thinking: Self-Reported Reductions in Cognitive Effort and Confidence Effects From a Survey of Knowledge Workers. *CHI '25: Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, art. no 1121, 1–12.

- Lee, Rachel N. F. and Ann-Marie Bathmaker. 2007. The Use of English Textbooks for Teaching English to 'Vocational' Students in Singapore Secondary Schools: A Survey of Teachers' Beliefs. *Regional Language Centre Journal*, 38: 3, 350–374.
- Leijen, Djuddah A. J. 2016. Advancing writing research: an investigation of the effects of web-based peer review on second language writing. Doctoral Dissertation defended at University of Tartu. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Leijen, Djuddah A. J., Anni Jürine, and Ilona Tragel. 2015. University Teachers and Students' Perspectives on Academic Writing: a Case From a University in Estonia. *EDULEARN15*, 7768–7776.
- Lepajõe, Kersti. 2011. Kirjand kui tekstiliik. Riigieksamikirjandite tekstuaalsed, retoorilised ja diskursiivsed omadused. Doctoral Dissertation defended at University of Tartu. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Lestari, Lies Amin. 2008. The Interactional Approach to the Teaching of Writing and Its Implications for Second Language Acquisition. *TEFLIN Journal*, 19: 1, 42–56.
- Li, Fangfang and Lei Wang. 2024. A study on textbook use and its effects on students' academic performance. *Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Science Education Research*, 6: 4, 1–10.
- Li, Jiu and Jianhua Wang. 2024. A measure of EFL argumentative writing cognitive load: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 63, 1–15.
- Lindgren, Eva and Kirk P. H. Sullivan. 2006. Analysing Online Revision. In Gert Rijlaarsdam, Eva Lindgren, and Kirk P. H. Sullivan (eds). *Computer Keystroke Logging: Methods and Applications*, 157–188. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Linkgreim, Inga-Gretel (ed). 2013. Kallid õpikud söövad koolide nappi eelarvet. *ERR*, September 9. Available at <https://www.err.ee/327894/kallid-opikud-soovad-koolide-nappi-eelarvet>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- López-Barrios, Mario and Elba Villanueva de Debat. 2014. Global vs. local: Does it matter? In Sue Garton and Kathleen Graves (eds). *International perspectives on materials in ELT*, 37–52. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ma, Yanqin and Mahani Stapa. 2025. First Language Transfer Among Chinese High School Students in the English Writing Process. *Arab World English Journal*, 16: 3, 113–128.
- Martín-Martín, Pedro. 2013. The teaching of academic writing to English as a second language students: A functional genre-based approach. *Revista de Lenguas para Fines Específicos*, 19, 329–351.
- Meyen, Michael. 2008. Document Analysis. In Wolfgang Donsbach (ed). *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, 1–8. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Murray, Donald M. 1969. Finding Your Own Voice: Teaching Composition in an Age of Dissent. *College Composition and Communication*, 20: 2, 118–123.
- Murray, Donald M. 1973. Why Teach Writing—And How? *The English Journal*, 62: 9, 1234–1237.
- Na, Eon-sung and Hye-won Lee. 2019. The Analysis of Writing Tasks in High School English Textbooks: A Process-Genre Based Approach. *English Teaching*, 74: 4, 105–129.

- Novek, Nele, Laura Kiik, Eleriin Müilman, Reena Roos, Marri-Mariska Tammepõld, Nele Karolin Teiva, and Ilona Tragel. 2026. Eesti üliõpilaste arvamus akadeemilise teksti olevikust ja tulevikust. *Eesti Rakenduslingvistika Ühingu aastaraamat*, 22, 93–110.
- Nowicka, Marzenna. 2023. Effective Use of Textbooks by Early Education Teachers. *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, 42: 4, 131–146.
- Peegel, Mari (ed). 2025. Koolidel on raskusi õpikute ja ilukirjanduse hankimisega. *ERR*, December 10. Available at <https://www.err.ee/1609881448/koolidel-on-raskusi-opikute-ja-ilukirjanduse-hankimise-ega>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Peterson, Jordan B. 2018. Essay Writing Guide. Available at https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUK_EwjQ87nXntSSAxUmFBAIHbNUHwAQEnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fjordanbpeterson.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2018%2F02%2FEssay_Writing_Guide.docx&usq=AOvVaw3KyLd4DMN7itJ47rOkO__z&opi=89978449, accessed February 17, 2026.
- Podburtnaja, Eliza. 2021. Analyzing Cambridge English *Write & Improve* as a Supplementary Resource for Practicing Writing in an English Classroom: A Case Study. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Puksand, Helin. 2025. Helin Puksand: nii et olgu või kehvem, peaasi et raha ei küsita? *ERR*, November 30. Available at <https://www.err.ee/1609871913/helin-puksand-nii-et-olgu-voi-kehvem-peaasi-et-raha-ei-kusita>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Puumeister, Mirjam. 2025. Kolm küsimust Eestis arendatava õppevara kohta. *Õpetajate Leht*, September 3. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2025/09/kolm-kusimust-eestis-arendatava-oppevara-kohta/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Raag, Toomas. 2025a. Kirjastaja Ly Rammo: „Osas koolides valitseb õppevahendite põud“. *Õpetajate Leht*, December 2. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2025/12/kirjastaja-ly-rammo-osas-koolides-valitseb-oppevahendite-poud/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Raag, Toomas. 2025b. Koolide õppevara sõltub liialt postiindeksist. *Õpetajate Leht*, December 2. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2025/12/koolide-oppevara-soltub-liialt-postiindeksist/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Raag, Toomas. 2025c. Õppekirjandus surve all: ebakindel nõudlus, kallinevad materjalid ja külmunud pearaha. *Õpetajate leht*, December 2. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2025/12/oppekirjandus-surve-all-ebakindel-noudlus-kallinevad-materjalid-ja-kulmunud-pearaha/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Rammo, Ly. 2025. Materjalide koostamine on suur vastutus. *Õpetajate Leht*, April 1. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2025/04/materjalide-koostamine-on-suur-vastutus/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Rathert, Stefan and Neşe Cabaroğlu. 2022. Theorising Textbook Adaptation in English Language Teaching. *CEPS Journal*, 12: 2, 169–188.

- Raudla, Heiki. 2025a. Kas õpikuvabadus avardab võimalusi või süvendab hariduslikku ebavõrdsust? *Õpetajate Leht*, April 1. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2025/04/kas-opikuvabadus-avardab-voimalusi-voi-suwendab-hariduslikku-ebavordsust/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Raudla, Heiki. 2025b. Õpik kinni, brauser lahti. Või siis vastupidi ... *Õpetajate Leht*, April 1. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2025/04/opik-kinni-brauser-lahti-voi-siis-vastupidi/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Ross, Margit. 2012. Õpikute kvaliteeti ei taga riik. *Õpetajate Leht*, November 9. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2012/11/opikute-kvaliteeti-ei-taga-riik/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Sagar, Sandra. 2019. Using Blogs to Develop Students' Writing Skills Through British and American Literature. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Shultz Colby, Rebekah. 2025. Playing the digital dialectic game: Writing pedagogy with generative AI. *Computers and Composition*, 75, 1–12.
- Smulowitz, Stacy. 2017. Document Analysis. In Jörg Matthes, Christine S. Davis, and Robert F. Potter (eds). *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, 1–8. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sweller, John. 1988. Cognitive Load During Problem Solving: Effects on Learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12, 257–285.
- Teder, Johanna. 2023. Teaching Pronunciation: Teachers' Perception and Aspects Taught in Estonian EFL Classes. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Tergujeff, Elina. 2013. English Pronunciation Teaching in Finland. Doctoral dissertation, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland.
- Timmi, Marlene. 2017. Estonian English Language Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Use of Information and Communication Technology in Secondary School. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Tragel, Ilona, Laura Kiik, Liisa-Maria Komissarov, Kati Käpp, Markus Laanoja, and Nele Karolin Teiva. 2025. Tekstide kategooriad eesti keele õpikutes – upu või uju? *Eesti ja soome-ugri keeleteaduse ajakiri*, 16: 1, 215–242.
- Truu, Liina. 2019. Creating Materials for Teaching Essay Writing in Upper Secondary School. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Tuvi, Stella. 2020. Soorollide kajastamine kuuenda klassi inglise keele õpikus „I love English IV“. MA thesis. Faculty of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Türk, Ülle and Natalja Zagura. 2016. Tunni peremees on ikka õpetaja, õpik on vaid hea sulane. *Õpetajate Leht*, January 15. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2016/01/tunni-peremees-on-ikka-opetaja-opik-on-vaid-hea-sulane/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Ulla, Mark B. and William F. Perales Jr. 2021. Developing an English Language Teaching Textbook in a Thai University: Classroom Language Teachers as Writers. *English Teaching & Learning*, 45, 461–476.

- Vaher, Anna. 2023. The Relationship Between Self-Reported Foreign Language Writing Anxiety and Text Quality Amongst Secondary School Students in Tartu. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Vaino, Maarja. 2025. Maarja Vaino: õpikuvaba kool ei ole uuendus, vaid olemasoleva lõhkumine. *ERR*, June 2. Available at <https://www.err.ee/1609711473/maarja-vaino-opikuvaba-kool-ei-ole-uuendus-vaid-ole-masoleva-lohkumine>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Vandermeulen, Nina, Eva Lindgren, Christian Waldmann, and Maria Levlin. 2024. Getting a grip on the writing process: (Effective) approaches to write argumentative and narrative texts in L1 and L2. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 65, 1–16.
- Vapper, Tiina. 2012. Hea õpik säästab õpetaja aega. *Õpetajate Leht*, October 29. Available at <https://www.opleht.ee/2012/10/hea-opik-saastab-opetaja-aega/>, accessed December 30, 2025.
- Veresenko, Anna-Liza. 2025. EFL Ability Grouping in Estonian Basic Schools: Teachers' Practices and Perspectives. MA thesis. Department of English Studies, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.
- Xie, Shiyu. 2024. An Analysis of the Cognitive Demands of Senior High School English as a Foreign Language Textbooks in China. *SAGE Open*, 1–12.
- Zamel, Vivian. 1982. Writing: The Process of Discovering Meaning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16: 2, 195–209.
- Zhu, Xinhua, Yuan Yao, Xian Liao, Wandong Xu, Pengfei Zhao, and Yue Jiang. 2024. Exploring relationships between L1 and L2 writing strategy use and integrated writing performance: A cross-linguistic perspective. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 64: 1, 1–26.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questions in the Survey

Question conditions are marked with asterisks (*, **, ***), meaning that the answer to the first question determined which question groups the respondent was shown. Each selection prompted its own separate questions, but as the only difference is the grade, these questions are combined in this list. The type of answer and the options provided are provided in the square brackets. The options that excluded all other options from the selection are marked with “★”. With the exception of the questions asking for further comments, all questions were mandatory.

Which upper secondary classes do you teach? [multiple-choice: *grade 10**, *grade 11***, *grade 12****]

Which textbook(s) do you use to teach grade 10* / grade 11** / grade 12*** (title, author, year)? If you do not use any, please answer “-”. [text box]

Approximately what proportion of your 10th*/11th**/12th*** grade language lesson materials come from textbooks? [one answer: *a quarter*; *a half*; *three quarters*; *the full lesson*; *I don't use a textbook*.]

Do your students have their own copies of the textbook (grade 10*/11**/12***)? [one answer: *Yes, everyone has their personal copy*; *No, I photocopy my textbook and distribute the material as worksheets*; *I don't use a textbook*; *Other*]

Please add any comments on your previous responses. [text box]

Why do you use textbooks to teach English? [multiple-choice: *I don't use any textbooks with upper secondary students*★; *Using a textbook helps me save time*; *Textbooks facilitate lesson planning and organization*; *Textbooks provide structure for my students*; *Textbooks ensure that the curriculum is fulfilled*; *Using a textbook promotes equality in my students' English skills*; *My students prefer to follow a textbook*; *Students learn better when we use a textbook*; *Giving homework is more convenient*; *Textbooks increase predictability (and thus reduce stress)*; *Other*.]

Please add any comments on your previous responses. [text box]

Why do you **not** use textbooks to teach English? [multiple choice: *I mostly rely on a textbook with all my groups*★; *The textbooks do not add value to my lessons*; *The*

tasks/exercises/activities are too easy for my students; The content is not engaging for my students; The content is repetitive; My students do not like to follow a textbook in English language classes; The textbooks do not meet the needs of all my students; I am not satisfied with the English textbooks available at my school; The students would need to pay for the textbooks themselves; My school encourages not using a textbook; I enjoy being creative and the freedom of choice; Not using a textbook keeps me sharp; Other.]

Please add any comments on your previous responses. [text box]

Teaching writing is... [one answer: *a high priority; important; not a priority (but still important); negligible*]

Please add any comments on your previous responses. [text box]

How do you teach writing to your students? [multiple-choice: *I provide model texts as examples to imitate; I use activities that guide and support written text production; I assess students' writing according to a grading scale/matrix; I break the writing process into parts, e.g. planning, drafting, revising, editing; I make my students produce several versions of the same text before submitting the final version; I make my students give feedback to each other's texts; I help my students develop writing strategies or strategies that are useful for writing as well; I make my students set personal writing goals; I make my students think about the real-life context and purposes of writing a certain text; I let my students discuss the social and cultural aspects of the text genre; I make my students analyze examples of similar texts; I make my students think about the potential audience for the text (e.g. the readers' needs and prior knowledge); I provide reading material on the topic; I help (some) students individually; I use generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) to generate writing assignment instructions; I use generative artificial intelligence tools to generate example/model texts; I encourage my students to use generative artificial intelligence as a writing assistant tool; Other.]*

Please add any comments on your previous responses. [text box]

If you are preparing your students for the **written assignments** of the state examination or any other English proficiency test (e.g. the Cambridge English exam), from where do you get the **writing assignments**? [multiple-choice: *I am not preparing my students for exams★; the regular textbook; dedicated materials (e.g. a separate textbook, web*

materials); public study materials / someone else's (e.g. a colleague's) materials; generative artificial intelligence; my own materials; Other.]

Please add any comments on your previous responses. [text box]

Please use the space below to comment on this survey, English textbooks, or any aspect related to teaching writing in English. [text box]

If you are willing to be contacted to further share your thoughts on this topic, you may share your (work) e-mail address here. [text box]

Appendix 2. Interview Questions

1. Milliseid tekste ja mis eksami jaoks õpetate kirjutama? (Which texts and for what examination do you prepare your students to write?)
2. Palun kirjeldage, kuidas kirjutamise õpetamine Teie/Sinu tunnis välja näeb. (Please describe what teaching writing looks like in your lessons.)
 - a. tundide struktuur (the structure of the lesson)
 - b. tagasisidestamine ja hindamine (feedback and grading)
 - c. tehisintellekti kasutus (the use of AI)
 - d. kirjutamise mõtestamine (understanding the reason for writing)

Appendix 3. The Teachers' Processes of Teaching Writing

T1 dedicates two 60-minute lessons to practicing writing at a time. In the first lesson, they either present the theory (structure of writing, what words to use and not to use, style, tips) using their own slides, elicit theoretical aspects from students, and/or analyze example texts with their students (both good and bad examples), depending on the text type and their intuition. The teacher asks students to take notes. Then the students receive the writing task and are allowed some time to brainstorm and gather ideas after which the students begin by writing the introduction (by hand), which is followed by peer feedback. The students edit their writing (i.e. mark the changes) based on the feedback and then write the following paragraph. This procedure repeats until the students have received feedback on all paragraphs or the lesson time is up.

In the following lesson, the students write a new text individually. The students are allowed to ask the teacher questions about spelling or any other aspect during writing (both while writing the draft and the version submitted for grading). The students are also allowed to use their notes, and they are provided a checklist for assessing their task completion and the appropriate grading matrix, the latter two of which students rarely use. Any use of AI is not allowed – the phones are on the teacher's desk while the students write.

T1 collects both the texts and the concept maps or notes and assesses the students' texts (not the notes) based on the grading matrix for the specific writing task. They also use a system of marking phrases or words with either green (good phrases) or pink (unsuitable or faulty phrases) and circling any forbidden words. Although correct use of language is important, **T1** stressed the importance of great ideas.

T2 begins by giving a theoretical overview (using their own slides) of the text, provides example texts, and outlines what one must do and must not do when writing a certain text. After analyzing the example texts, the students are given the writing task (which is close to the one in the examination) and begin writing on Google Docs (since the CAE is conducted on computers). The students are also given the grading matrix to remind them what they will be graded on. The students are allowed to ask questions during writing and the questions usually pertain to the structure (what information should or should not be included in the introduction, how many paragraphs there can be, etc.). In case there are any language-related questions, the teacher asks them to look it up on their own, but if they ask about the register appropriateness of a word or a phrase, that is discussed.

Once the writing is finished, the teacher gives feedback on Google Docs and the students are expected to make changes based on the feedback before submitting the final version. For feedback, **T2** highlights parts of the text with green (a great phrase or a well-used structure), yellow (a phrase that requires some attention, e.g., substituting a word) and red (unsuitable word or phrase). **T2** only highlights ungrammatical language (without correcting it) and adds comments about the structure. The aim of this feedback is to promote the students' learning and make them understand the process, not just focus on the grade. Some students come to ask additional comments about the feedback while others do not bother to look at the feedback. The final submission is graded according to the corresponding grading matrix.

The use of AI is not encouraged, but it is not forbidden either. The teachers have editing rights on Google Docs, which allows them to check whether the text appeared in under a minute or in 45 minutes. The use of AI is allowed for idea generation and questions about the structure, for instance. The teachers are trying to promote using AI as a tool but not as a replacement for the students' own thinking, but it is obvious that some students still copy-paste the output.

T3 does not prepare students for the examinations and lets their students write different kinds of texts that they may be required to write outside of the exam. Their general approach to teaching writing includes analyzing example texts (the structure, language), but then prefer to give the students freedom. They do not require a rigid structure but let the students decide how to best structure their content themselves, unless providing a specific structure would help the student. In the end, it is important to foster thinking and analysis skills in the student, not train them to adhere to one very specific set of criteria while writing. The students are motivated by new authentic contexts and topics, not by what they already know or have done.

Students write with pen and paper and are allowed to ask questions during writing. Sometimes T3 shares the etymology of a word or examples from a corpus with the whole class, but in other cases they let the classmates answer the question. Any use of AI is not tolerated: before writing, the teacher essentially trades the students' phones for a lined sheet of paper. However, T3 shared that students have used AI to complete their homework, which is why T3 prefers to let students write in class.

During assessment, T3 focuses on language use and how well the students followed the instructions as well as content, structure and other aspects, depending on their task instructions. Their writing instructions follow the principles of task-based learning, providing the students with a specific context in which they need to write, which also establishes the potential readers of the text (e.g., the students need to write a comment in response to a post on a forum). T3's written feedback focuses on what went well and one actionable recommendation (based on the areas that need the most attention), which they share on Stuudium (a study information system). According to T3, there is no point in writing feedback or marking corrections on the page itself since the students submit draft-like texts, may not even look at the feedback (only the grade), and may lose the sheet. An added benefit is being able to see what feedback has been given to each student. If the student submits late, T3 does not give feedback unless the student specifically asks for it as a way to protect their time.

Appendix 4. General Textbook Use by Estonian EFL Teachers by Grade

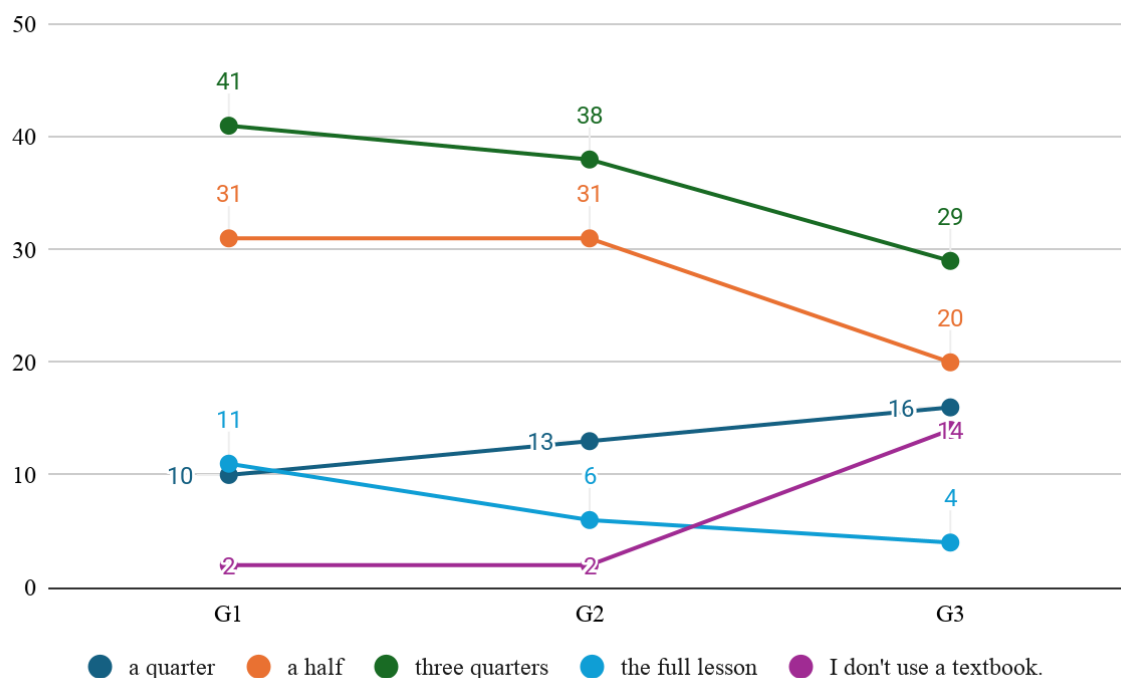


Diagram 4. *Grade and textbook-specific responses to* Approximately what proportion of your 10th*/11th**/12th*** grade language lesson materials come from textbooks?

Of the 102 total respondents, 95 teachers teach G1, 90 teach G2, and 83 teach G3. For G1 and G2 the textbook used was provided in 95.8% and 95.6% of the cases respectively, while a textbook was shared 86.7% of the times for G3. Diagram 4 shows that textbooks (as a source of lesson materials in general) become less used with each upper secondary grade, which is evidenced by the number of *a quarter* and *I don't use a textbook* responses increasing and the other options decreasing in number. A similar trend among Estonian language teachers has been observed (Kiik et al 2025: 7).

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Laura Kiik

Estonian Upper Secondary EFL Teachers and Teaching Writing / Gümnaasiumiastme inglise keele õpetajate kirjutamisõpetuse praktikad Eestis

Magistritöö

2026

Lehekülgede arv: 70

Magistritöö eesmärk oli kaardistada gümnaasiumiastme inglise keele õpetajate ($n = 102$) kasutatavaid kirjutamisõpetuse praktikaid Eestis. Magistritöö esimeses osas antakse ülevaade kirjutamise tähtsusest üldiselt, Eesti gümnaasiumiõpilaste kirjutamiskogemusest, eri lähenemistest kirjutamisele (tulemus- ja protsessikeskne kirjutamine), efektiivsetest kirjutamispraktikatest (nt eesmärkide seadmine, kaasõppija tagasiside), kirjutamisoskuse ülekandmisest ja õpikute rollist keeleõppes. Magistritöö teine osa kirjeldab andmekogumismeetodeid (küsitlus, poolstruktureeritud intervjuu, dokumendianalüüs) ja esitab tulemused meetodite kaupa, arutelu lähtub uurimisküsimustest. Õpetajate lähenemised on erinevad, kuid leidub ka ühisosi. Näiteks on sagedasim meetod õpilaste tööde hindamine hindamismatriksist lähtudes ja enamasti eelistatakse eksamiettevalmistusel eksamispetsiifilisi materjale. Tulemustest järeldub, et õpiku kasutamine kirjutamise harjutamisel eeldab õpetajalt täiendavat juhendamist. Tulemustest kumab läbi tendents läheneda kirjutamise õpetamisele eksaminõuetest lähtuvalt (vrd kirjutamise kui üldoskuse õpetamine).

Märksõnad: inglise keel võõrkeelena, kirjutamisõpetus, kirjutamine, gümnaasium, eksam

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

Mina, Laura Kiik,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) enda loodud teose

Estonian Upper Secondary EFL Teachers and Teaching Writing,

mille juhendaja on Liina Tammekänd,

1.1. reprodutseerimiseks säilitamise ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemise eesmärgil, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace-is lisamise eesmärgil kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse tähtaja lõppemiseni;

1.2. üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks Tartu Ülikooli veebikeskkonna kaudu, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace'i kaudu kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse tähtaja lõppemiseni.

2. olen teadlik, et punktis 1 nimetatud õigused jäävad alles ka autorile.

3. kinnitan, et lihtlitsentsi andmisega ei rikuta teiste isikute intellektuaalomandi ega isikuandmete kaitse seadusest tulenevaid õigusi.

allkirjastatud digitaalselt

Laura Kiik

Tartus, 12.05.2026

Autorsuse kinnitus

Kinnitan, et olen koostanud käesoleva magistritöö ise ning toonud korrektselt välja teiste autorite panuse. Töö on koostatud lähtudes Tartu Ülikooli maailma keelte ja kultuuride instituudi anglistika osakonna oma õppekava magistritöö juhendist ning on kooskõlas heade akadeemiliste tavadega.

allkirjastatud digitaalselt

Laura Kiik

Tartus, 12.05.2026

Lõputöö on lubatud kaitsmisele.

Liina Tammekänd

Tartus, 12.05.2026